



Spring Journal



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

We are a spiritual community.

Dear Readers and Writers...

This is our first seasonal journal. The snow is finally melting and spring is in the air. This journal includes thoughts from our minister and president, as well as writing pieces submitted by members and friends of our congregation. The next Journal will be published in the summer. All writers are welcome to submit pieces that illustrate the spiritual purpose of the Congregation, as well as reflect its community, environmental, ethical principles. Pieces for the summer Journal are **due on June 15**.

I hope you are enjoying our weekly online bulletin. The bulletin is designed to inform members and friends about the worship services and events at the UUSSF. The bulletin also includes important announcements, as well as information about the greater Unitarian Universalist community.

Martha Potter, editor
mtpotter@optonline.net



Daffodils on Jessup's Neck.

Home Energy Day

Save at home, save the world

May 3, 2pm - 4pm

At the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse
977 Sag Harbor/Bridgehampton Tpk

All you need to know to start saving energy and money today, and this day is FREE:
Solar Panels – Energy Audits – LED lighting –
Heat Pumps – Insulation

Becoming a Green Sanctuary

By John Andrews

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has established a process to certify congregations as Green Sanctuaries. The idea is to coordinate a variety of environmental activities under a single energizing goal. To become a Green Sanctuary a congregation initiates projects in four focus areas:

- Environmental Justice (at least 1 project)
- Worship and Celebration (at least 2 projects)
- Religious Education (at least 2 projects, 1 for children and 1 for adults)
- Sustainable Living (at least 4 projects)

In total we'll need 11 projects; the 9 above plus 2 "wild cards" in any of the focus areas. The Environmental Justice project is the central element in the overall program. In it, we will think and work with a group of people who have been marginalized and negatively impacted by the environmental choices of the larger society. The other projects invite a variety of creative ideas for key areas in the life of our congregation.

Whether UUSSF will embark on the Green Sanctuary voyage is an open question now. I am reaching out to our members and friends to help answer that. Your level of participation can vary. You might wish to be a member of the Green Sanctuary Team, which will plan and propose the program to our Board, the congregation, and the UUA. You might wish to take a creative and/or leadership role in one of the projects but not be an overall leader. Or you just might want to help out where you can. To participate, please talk to me or email me at candrews40@optonline.net.

The Green Sanctuary program has great potential to energize us, bring us closer together in a common effort, enhance our spiritual lives, connect us with the surrounding community, and bring new people of all ages into our own circle of friendship.

From the Minister, Rev. Nancy Arnold

“Gardeners of the Spirit”

We are in the “growing season.” Gardens are being hoed, seeds planted, and the ground watered. Gardeners who have wintered too long are now coming into their own. The “growing season” is the gardener’s season.

My mother was a gardener, as was her mother. As a child, I remember sitting under the grape arbor in my grandmother’s backyard to eat lunch on warm summer days. In what was probably a fairly normal-sized backyard, my grandmother grew vegetables and flowers and fruits. She recreated her ancestral Italy with her enormous tomatoes and fragrant herbs that eventually found their way to the table. She mixed flower with vegetable plants. Grandma spent most warm-enough days on her knees—in her garden. I can still picture her emerging from the rows of corn and tomatoes, with weeds clutched in one hand, and ripe vegetables grasped in her apron with the other. Her face was weathered and muddied, but her smile was radiant. On her knees, in her garden, my grandmother was one with her creator. *One with creation.*

My mother would disappear into our backyard into one of her many little plots. Tomatoes, basil, and peppers in one (in later years edged out by the Jerusalem artichokes which had mysteriously appeared several seasons before). In another area, she had several fruit trees surrounded by roses and herbs, and then her flower beds. My mother was most at-home with her flowers, but growing vegetables was a tribute to her heritage. The flowers were purely for *her* (and the slugs). She loved to gather the flowers into a bouquet for the dinner table, and would never have described gardening as creative or spiritual. She just did what she did. But her garden was a haven for her soul; a respite from the daily chores of being a stay-at-home wife and mother. The flowers reminded her of the beauty of life that she cultivated.

Living in a condo, I no longer have much space for a garden. But, like my grandmother, I mingle

flowers with vegetables and herbs in the limited area we do have. Some of the physical energy that once went into gardening has now turned inward. I have been cultivating my *interior* life, and growing my soul. The physical acts of planting and hoeing and watering remain necessities of life. “The growing season” now continues year-round. My identity as “gardener” remains intact. But what is being planted, and hoed, and watered, is more intangible than the gardens I used to tend.

Being a gardener requires a certain amount of faith. We need to believe that there is a force at work in our lives that, as Clarissa Pinkola Estes puts it, “calls new seed to the open and battered and barren places, so that we can be resown.” (Estes, *The Faithful Gardener*) Like our gardens, we await the “faithful process of spirit and seed that touches empty ground and makes it rich again.” (Estes)

Alice Walker writes of her own mother:

My mother adorned with flowers whatever shabby house we were forced to live in...

Whatever she planted grew as if by magic, and her fame as a grower of flowers spread over three counties. Because of her creativity with her flowers, even my memories of poverty are seen through a screen of blooms – sunflowers, petunias, roses, dahlias, forsythia, spirea, delphiniums, verbena... and on and on.

And I remember people coming to my mother’s yard to be given cuttings from her flowers; I hear again the praise showered on her because whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden. A garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity, that to this day people drive by our house in Georgia – perfect strangers and imperfect strangers – and ask to stand or walk among my mother’s art. .. I notice it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that she is radiant, almost to the point of being invisible – except as Creator: hand and eye.



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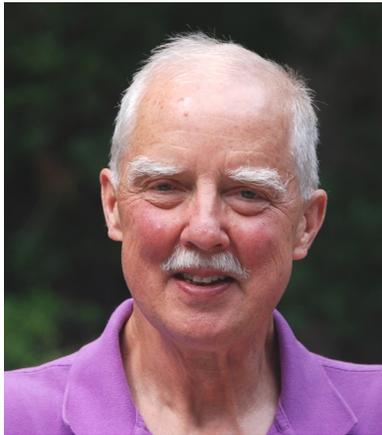
Letter From the President, Mark Potter

Strayed and Found

On the bookcase in my study is a St. James version of the Bible, its binding creased with age, a layer of dust over the pages; plain evidence of disuse. My father's closest friend gave it to me in 1951 to commemorate my confirmation into the Congregational Church. In that Congregational Church as a seven-year-old, my world was simple, with a Sunday School class of kind children, which included one of the toughest kids in town, now on his best behavior. And there were friendly adults who had only the highest expectations of me, in a place as secure and stable as a child could want.

It took only a few years, as a teenager, before ethical questions began to separate me from that church. Try as I might, I could not reconcile the Bible stories I learned in Sunday School with my sense of justice or of love: how to explain Abraham with his knife raised above Isaac, his oldest son? I, too, was an oldest son. Or, how to explain the seven plagues? Certainly some in Egypt were innocent. Or, how to explain the slaughter of Egypt's infant sons? Couldn't we pass-over all the children? And what of the Garden of Eden? Who was in charge of this garden in the first place? Was he asleep? Does the gardener really care?

As I left the Congregational Church, the new friends I made at school, boys exclusively, shifted and reorganized with sports seasons, summer jobs and chance. Our loyalties included not making fun of each other, no matter how silly we might look in the classroom or on the ball field, backing each other up in fights which were limited mostly to brava-do and jostling, and respecting another's girlfriend as off limits. With one or two exceptions we were friends with little else in common beyond sports, and a flickering interest in girls. One of us might drop away for a month or a year following an after-school job or a girlfriend and return or not; and we seemed not to notice. After school we went our separate ways.



My work life at every stage of my career, whether in the building trades, publishing, advertising or computer services, did not even offer such fleeting friendships. The social ties I formed or broke during my forty-five or so years working in organizations of all kinds were more competitive than in school. Our relationships were defined by our status in the organization; a status which stemmed less from the positions we held than the relative success we enjoyed in our individual responsibilities. In that light, an effective secretary enjoyed more status than a failing engineer.

At the risk of oversimplifying, we tried to maintain the image of an efficient, faultless human being, hiding any weakness that might appear to distract us: a poor education, a problem child, sickness, a needy parent. Needless to say, these masquerades provided little emotional comfort, even to those who were highly successful.

A few years before my father's death, perhaps looking for guidance in my own understanding of mortality, I asked him about his religious beliefs. By then his friend who had given me the Bible had died, and I might have feared that the choir my father loved and his activity as a deacon had led him to a magical understanding of his religion. Would he expect to meet his friend, or brothers and sister in an afterlife? Did he view the trials of his own life as a divine retribution? Instead, he talked to me of community; of the strength he received from that small congregation I had known many years ago.

An alternate meaning of the word 'fold' dates back to our farming ancestors. In this meaning the fold is an enclosure for a flock of sheep, or herd of cows, and by an anthropomorphic extension, people banded together for comfort and safety.

Despite rejecting the theology of my childhood, sixty years later I find that I haven't traveled very far from my father's beliefs. In the strength I receive from our small congregation, it appears that I have returned to the fold.

A Thump on the Window

By Tina Curran

I scooped the little thing up gently and held her in my hand. Her breaths felt rapid, but what is the speed of normal bird breaths? When she opened her beak the inside of her mouth was bright red.

I'd actually felt the speeds-of-breaths of birds twice before. About ten years ago, I heard a thump on the window right next to my computer, and caught a visual blur. I went outside and there she was, a small goldfinch sprawled on the ground under the window. I held her in one hand – two would have been superfluous. Her eyes were open and seemed to regard me calmly. I imagined her attention was directed inward, to regaining.

So I sat on the deck chair and held her in the light of that early-summer day. I stroked the feathers of her head just a bit, to let her know she was covered, as well as held. She was dry to the touch, and warm, and so light compared to my mass. I realized I had nowhere else I needed to be, nothing I needed to do. So I held her and I sat. She was almost olive drab, with delicate driftings of yellow showing through the grey and brown of her neck and breast and the top of her head.

We sat. Nothing moved; not the sun in the sky nor the leaves on the trees, except her delicate feathery breaths. Then I saw a flicker of yellow in the fir trees. Birdsong began to fill the air. The trees around the deck were hiding my goldfinch's friends. They flitted, and gathered, and sang. They stayed a long while, I think, in bird time. And then, all in a moment, though nothing changed, she was gone, with no pushoff on my hand, really. Simply, the wings spread, and grasped the air. She joined her tribe and they all flew off.

The second time was a warm and rainy day two

springs ago. He lay on the wooden foot mat, a little black bird, a black-eyed junco I later learned. There's a small overhang above the door, enough to shelter me as I held him, mist on my arm and hand. I was confident, after my goldfinch sojourn, that the junco would be fine, as I stood cradling him in my palm. He was black, with rainbow tracings and



white bits at the tips of the wings and the belly. My hand is small, but he didn't overflow it. He was secure; his attention was not on me.

Again, ages passed in bird time; I would say about forty minutes in mine. At one point, I remembered my camera which was just inside the door, and we both went in to get it. Back outside, I shot his portrait as we waited.

And then, without warning, he flew off.

Today, the little chickadee was in my hand. She was even tinier than those other birds, and there was that bright red each time she opened her beak. We stood by the wide glass of the door, with sunlight sparkling off the snow.

I stood. She sat in my hand, and breathed her bird breaths. What if she dies, I thought, as I hadn't with the other two. I'll have to dig

a hole in the frozen ground to bury her. Chickadees had been my favorite bird since I began to distinguish between the species. They have a deep and slightly mournful two-note cry. High, low. Wheet, whoot.

Even worse, I realized, she might leap off my hand and – then what? Crash into the windows again from the inside? I held her and felt her grow and shrink with each breath.

I placed a cloth napkin over my hand and held her, but still couldn't bring myself to open the door. Yet I knew she was a creature of the cold. Chickadees overwinter in the north, tiny warm things that they are. They sometimes lower themselves into a

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Welcoming Our Immigrants

The Social Justice Committee is sponsoring a letter-writing campaign to the Town Council of Southampton regarding language access to town government services. If you think government access is complex, imagine if you didn't speak English. Language accessibility is mandated by law, but it is not always available here in Southampton despite our immigrant population of 10,000. We urge you to write a letter to the Southampton Town Council. Sylvia Baruch and Myrna Truitt can provide you with the necessary names and addresses and a sample letter.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear _____:

As a resident of this community I am writing to urge you to make language access a priority for those who are not fluent in English. Under Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act, language access is required for all federally assisted programs. Both New York State and Suffolk County, through Executive Orders, specify that those with limited English proficiency should have equal access to all government services. **THIS IS NOT HAPPENING HERE.** It is important to provide signs, bilingual phone messages, interpretation services and critical forms in other languages.

The immigrant population is important to our community. There are about 10,000 immigrants in Southampton. Of those who speak another language at home, half of them speak English less than "very well." This can severely handicap them in their daily life, and it is well known that the complexity of government makes it difficult even for those who are proficient in English.

I urge you to make language access a priority in Southampton town government. It will reflect a welcoming community, and embrace the diversity that immigrants bring us.

Cordially,

(Your name)

(Your address)

Member, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork
Bridgehampton, NY.

Soup Making, à la Jeanne Wisner

Soup making is fun and flexible. Over the last couple of years, I have evolved a process of making soup for Sunday lunch. I start with a ten quart pot, but you can decide how much soup you want to make, and choose the pot size accordingly.

The categories of ingredients include proteins, starch and vegetables. My seasoning is always *21 Seasonings* by Trader Joe's, and salt. I have several bottles of *21 Seasonings* and I would be glad to give you a bottle. The *21 Seasonings* enhance every soup I make.

Here is how I create a vegetarian soup, also free of dairy and wheat. The kinds of proteins include tofu, lentils, spilt peas or any kind of bean (I buy them canned.) To ensure complete proteins, combine beans with rice, or lentils or peas with brown rice. There is also brown rice pasta. But tofu is a complete protein.

- ◆ I start by filling the pot half full of water. I use filtered water, but spring water is also fine. (Please avoid tap water.) The base could also be diced tomatoes for the stock. If I am using lentils or split peas and/ or brown rice, I cook those first in the stock. Sometimes I puree lentils, split peas or beans to thicken the soup.
- ◆ Then I chop up organic carrots and celery and put them in the pot.
- ◆ Next I put in a selection of vegetables such as broccoli, kale, spinach, corn, green beans, and potatoes. I buy the frozen organic vegetables, but other vegetables are also fine.
- ◆ Next are the onions and garlic. I chop up two yellow onions and saute them slowly in a *generous* amount of olive oil in a pan. Then in another pan, I do the same with the garlic.
- ◆ The last touch is the seasoning. I put in a little salt and a little *21 Seasonings*, and taste it. Then I keep tweaking the seasoning until it tastes right to me, but be careful with salt and seasoning.

Have fun making soup. This process has been foolproof for me, and it will be for you, too.

Enjoy!

We strive for peace in our hearts and in the world around us.

2015 East End Songwriter's Share

Enjoy 6 evenings with 6 brilliant songwriters, some of the best of the East End. Come to one or come to all. Behind each song is a story. In this new concert series, our songwriters share their thoughts, ideas, and inspirations. Each songwriter has selected a local charity to donate, sharing half of the proceeds of ticket sales with **Katy's Courage, Maureen's Haven, The Retreat, Community Action of Southold Town, and The Bridgehampton Child Care Center.**

Concerts begin Friday nights at 7:30 and end with a reception and time to mingle with the musicians. The entrance fee for each event is \$15.

Our thanks to Nancy Remkus, Sue Penny and Margi Pulkingham for all their hard work.

Gardeners... continued from page

She is involved in work her soul must have. Ordering the universe in the image of her personal conception of Beauty.

(Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*)

When we tend to the work our souls must have, we become "gardeners of the spirit" who plant and nurture the seeds to replenish the empty places in our lives. And gardening becomes a spiritual practice that fills us with hope, and creates a universe in the image of our personal conception of beauty. Our work is to be in "the growing season," now, and all the days of our lives.

A Thump... continued from page

state of hypothermia in the middle of the night, which, apparently, they usually spend alone, so not even the body heat of the flock warms them. After a period of stillness, the beak opened and showed no red this time. I took a flat soup bowl and placed the napkin and the bird on it. I held my still life a little longer. The bird seemed unperturbed in her new setting, as though my hand and my warmth had made no difference whatsoever.

I placed her outside the door, in the cold, and checked on her; every few minutes at first, then every half hour, beginning to lose hope that she would recover.

But three hours later, I went to the door and she was gone.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SOUTH FORK

LIVE MUSIC! \$15.00

All concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. followed by a reception with the artist

977 Sag Harbor-Bridgehampton Turnpike-Info: 537-0132 or 725-3938

2015 East End SONGWRITER'S SHARE

FRIDAY, APRIL 10
Peter Landi PLAYING FOR "KATY'S COURAGE"

FRIDAY, APRIL 17
Fred Raimondo PLAYING FOR "THE RETREAT"

FRIDAY, APRIL 24
Terry Winchell PLAYING FOR "MAUREEN'S HAVEN"

FRIDAY, MAY 1
Gene Casey PLAYING FOR "COMMUNITY ACTION OF SOUTHOLD TOWN"

FRIDAY, MAY 8
Caroline Doctorow PLAYING FOR "THE BRIDGEHAMPTON CHILD CARE CENTER"

FRIDAY, MAY 15
Inda Eaton PLAYING FOR "THE SAG HARBOR COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY"

Songwriters share their inspiration and Share with a local charitable organization — a line up of amazing musicians!

POSTER BY IRON HORSE GRAPHICS / NARROW LANE STUDIOS / 631-337-3400



Carl Wittenberg kicks off our pledge campaign with a 3-Penny Auction.

Southold Congregation

Please keep the members of the Southold congregation in your thoughts. On Saturday night, March 14, their historic building burned to the ground.

The loss of this historic building is a tragedy for the Southold Universalist members and for our faith. The congregation is currently meeting in space made available by local organizations as it pulls together to plan for the future.

When one of our congregations suffers, we all suffer. Please demonstrate your support for the congregation by making a financial contribution to meet its current and future needs. Thank you for your usual generosity of spirit.

To give you can mail a check to Imke Littman our treasurer who will include it in a contribution from our congregation. Or you can mail a check payable to First Universalist Church of Southold and send it to: **First Universalist Church of Southold, PO Box 221, Southold, NY 11971.**

Nancy



Fellowship Update Spring, 2015

The Fellowship committee ushered back in our Neighborhood Groups, just in time for the winter storms. Personally, it was good to know that my group was doing all right during the worst of the snows, and that the bit of contact between us made me feel less isolated. If anyone needs to know which group they belong to, please let me know.

Spending more time indoors prompted Fellowship to rethink our Welcome Table. In an effort to create a more welcoming, open, and accommodating environment in our building, we are experimenting with moving tables, furniture, bulletin boards, and greeters around. As always, Fellowship welcomes your feedback as we continue to explore and improve how we interact.

Pam Wittenberg



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[Find us on Facebook.](#)

[Go to our web page.](#)

UUCSF Board:
President: Mark Potter
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Secretary: Myrna Truitt
Treasurer: Imke Littman
Margaret Pulkingham
Pamela Wittenberg

Journal Information:
Deadlines are Mar 15, Jun 15, Sep 15 and Dec 15. E-mail copy, photos and events to Martha Potter mtpotter@optonline.net Please start subject line with "UU Journal".

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Ken Ettlinger

The Green Corner

Skunk Cabbage: A Harbinger of Spring

By Anita Wright

It would be a lie if I told you I'd seen (or smelled!) skunk cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, at the time of this writing. I haven't seen it; not because it hasn't emerged from the frozen ground yet, but because I haven't emerged from my own winter cocoon quite yet!

The first part of skunk cabbage to pop from the late winter ground is called the spathe, which is brownish-purple and sometimes streaked with yellow. Inside the spathe is a cluster of yellow flowers. Skunk cabbage can sometimes be seen pushing up through snow and ice because of its ability to produce heat by using enzymes and oxygen to break down stored carbohydrates. The temperature inside the spathe can be maintained at 20 degrees warmer than the outside temperature. In a sense, the plant thermoregulates, much like mammals do!

The flowers also produce a foul smell, often compared to the "skunky" smell of rotting flesh.

Although this may not remind humans of the sweet smell of spring, the inside of the spathe is a warm, welcome attraction for the first pollinating flies and other insects of the forest ecosystem in late winter and early spring.



After pollination, the flower forms a brownish-purple fruit head, and the spathe withers away. Bright green leaves now grow around the fruit head, and when crushed, the leaves emit the same foul smell as the flowers did. The fruit of skunk cabbage is an important food source for many birds, including wood ducks and pheasants. The

leaves, on the other hand, are toxic to most herbivores.

It might be a good weekend to head out to Big Reed Pond in Montauk and walk the Blue Trail, a beautiful loop that winds through low lying red maple swamps. These wetlands are a perfect habitat for skunk cabbage: a true harbinger of early spring.



Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of the South Fork

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