

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

May
2012

977 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike
PO Box 1444, Bridgehampton, NY 11932

www.uucsf.org

We are a spiritual community.

Lifespan Religious Exploration

Fourteen UUCSFers, including Alison, met on a recent Saturday morning with Lara Campbell, a delightful fifth-generation Unitarian with an extensive background in religious education. She posed two main questions: What's it like to live in a multicultural and multi-generational faith community? And what changes, if any, would more fully realize your aims?

"We're not multicultural," one person instantly declared. Others, though, spoke of shared experiences within the South Fork's multicultural range - the wider community turning out in numbers for our events. "Free minds, open hearts" was cited. For one speaker our most potent message is, "Don't worry about Hell. There is no Hell."

Lara then introduced some trends and forces affecting faith communities today. Many people, for example, are apt to say they are spiritual rather than religious. Alison noted that this feeling often springs from having had "a bad relation with organized religion." Lara added that interfaith couples today are likely to find their common ground in the realm of values, rather than religion.

Another trend was the influence of individualism; "a move from the front porch to the back deck," as Lara put it. (The Grotto was identified as an exception: a front-porch idea, grounded in hopes of breaking winter's isolation.) The impact of the digital age, changes in family structure, and the influence of charismatic and evangelical religious ideas were also noted along with general changes in education. This last change inspired discussion of the merits of outdoor adventure and explorations, of risk-taking in a controlled environment, which accord well with our congregation's values.

After a short break - Sue Penny had set out cof-

fee, tea, and her delicious pumpkin bread - we turned to Lara's second main question: what do we want from our Lifespan Exploration program.

To summarize, our meetinghouse should be known as a safe environment for children, youth, and LGBTQ people. Our programs should be reinforced by "quality indicators," as well as by numbers involved. Every program we offer should have childcare, consideration given to transportation needs, and perhaps food. Programs should enhance the sustainability of the congregation.

One specific idea was to offer an OWL (Our Whole Lives) program at the meetinghouse for our young people as well as others from the community. A parent group could run at the same time. Training for OWL leaders would be necessary; at present, Alison is the only one in the congregation who is trained.

And what about Sunday morning? Currently, volunteer teachers from the congregation miss two-thirds of the service, which, over months, becomes a personal hardship. Should RE be offered before Sunday service? No one thought this would work. But how about hiring an RE Coordinator to arrange and supervise volunteer teachers who commit for short periods, or single mornings?

The group liked this idea and the expectation that the coordinator's weekly attendance as a teacher would ensure continuity for the kids. Because this change will make a call on both the volunteering energies of our congregation and our budget, it needs your careful consideration before the Annual Meeting on June 3.

Margaret Logan
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Thoughts from Alison ... *Remembering, as Prayer*



The springtime is a paradox. On the one hand, the world is made new by the full arrival of the season – trees leafing out, new crops breaking ground, young birds hatching. No matter how many times I witness the transformation of Earth,

still it feels all new, as if *this* spring were something radically, amazingly, newly invented.

On the other hand, spring also brings annual days of remembrance. Yom Hashoah, the day of remembrance of the Holocaust, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day ... these oh-so-human holidays that mark the march of years, connecting us with the collective past as well as the passage of our own lives.

So, immersed in the freshness of a world made new, we are offered a chance to reflect, and to remember.

In the rush of daily life, it is not always so easy to make time to remember. The days are easily filled with doing, with lists and tasks and chores and errands, moving forward rather than glancing back. And yet, acts of remembering – whether an historical event, or someone near and dear to us, or even someone we have never met – these are moments of prayer. They are open spaces, opportunities to connect with the larger stories around us. They are moments of connection, when grief may heal, a chance for the inbreaking of hope, the grace of forgiveness, to come in to our lives. These are indeed blessed times.

The book our study group is reading with folks from Temple Adas Israel was written by Bill Schulz, who was for a time the Executive Director of Amnesty International. AI, as you may know, helps ordinary citizens around the world to write to

those imprisoned for their actions on behalf of human rights. The letters are the physical manifestation of remembering. They bring to those imprisoned this message: *someone who you never met remembers where you are, who you are*. The Indonesian labor rights leader, Dita Sari, arrested seven times before her 23rd birthday, wrote to Amnesty activists, "Every time a letter of solidarity arrives, the rose in my cell blossoms." This is the power, and prayer, of remembering.

This glorious spring, I offer you some opportunities to engage in the act of remembering as prayer:

- Amnesty International, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/>, 5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001, will help you to write letters to those imprisoned around world.
- Our Unitarian Universalist Church of the Larger Fellowship has a prison ministry program that connects UUs to inmates through the writing of letters: <http://clf.uua.org/penpals.html>, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108-2823.

Or, try this personal spiritual exercise. List fifteen people who are very important in your life. They may be alive or dead. You might choose to include ancestors whose energy or personality you share. Or teachers who imprinted your life in a valuable way. Or great human beings of history. In remembering these people, you celebrate them, and you also bring them in to your own life story – allowing you to call upon them to assist you in life's struggles, or to be with you in play and celebration. Remember them. Bring them in to this springtime.

Blessings,
Alison

President's Letter

Our March 25 service on Water Justice was the culmination of a half-year of effort by the Living our Unitarian Universalist Values Team, in short, the LUUV Team. Tip Brolin, Ken Ettliger, Myrna Truitt, and I presented four possible projects that our congregation might undertake under the theme of Water Justice. Of these four projects, two garnered most of the discussion and interest:

- Develop an on-site children's garden and a worm composting area. Ken Ettliger did a show-and-tell using a big compost tub in which several thousand worms were happily turning kitchen waste into garden soil. He had many creative suggestions for making the proposed garden a fun place for both children and adults to learn about the practical aspects of organic gardening, and the larger relationships between agricultural practices and water quality.
- Work with local environmental groups to address water-quality issues on the East End of Long Island. Myrna Truitt described threats to local water quality and efforts of local environmental groups to preserve and improve it. A key element of this project will be to cooperate with others, rather than to set up a stand-alone group. The concern exhibited by members of our congregation about our fragile water resource was evident.

At its April meeting, our Board approved a resolution authorizing these two projects to go forward as congregational efforts. Now the hard part will come—translating ideas into reality. In the coming weeks we'll hold two meetings, one relating to each of the above projects. We'll invite those who've already expressed interest, and post a wider invitation to all, whether or not you were able to attend the March 25 service.

Selecting projects for our Water Justice initiative has gotten a fair amount of publicity within our congregation. There's another aspect to the LUUV Team's vision, though, that also must be highlighted. That is the quick-response role of the Social Justice Committee.

It should not be a rare event where a select few of us become concerned with some local or global

issue relating to our values, and ask the congregation involved in a constructive response. We need a way to alert the congregation, to help us to decide what, if anything, we should do. Sometimes a decision must be made quickly. Whatever the urgency, we need a process whereby all can be heard, and the will of the majority can be determined. With such a process, even those who disagree can feel that their views have been respected. As independent-minded as we are, if any of us can go through several years without being in the minority on an issue, then it probably means that we haven't done very much. That's why we need a vibrant Social Justice committee.

Peace,
John Andrews



Tulips were Carolyn Willberg's favorite flower, and members of her Sharing Circle passed out bulbs to people who attended her memorial service last fall. Although deer usually chomp our tulips, they quite miraculously left these alone, giving us a fresh reminder of Carolyn and all she did for UUCSF, particularly its site beautification, during her membership. Margaret Logan

Upcoming Events Unless noted, events are free, open to all, and held at the meetinghouse.

Sunday, May 6, noon

Congregational Conversation to discuss creating a children's garden as described in this month's President's Letter. This gathering will include a call for volunteers to help build and run the project.

Thursday, May 17, 6:30 pm

Film: "Pink Smoke Over the Vatican". See page 8.

Sunday, May 17, noon

Qi Gong: a time of growth and renewal. Find your flexibility and adaptability with these simple movements and massages from ancient Chinese tradition. Free, and all are welcome.

Sunday, June 3, noon

UUCSF Annual Meeting. See this page.

Saturday, June 9, 6 pm

Campout for All Ages. Dinner, campfire, and sleep in tents pitched on the meetinghouse grass. See Sue Penny for more information.

Service Date	Set Up/ Greeters	Hospitality
May 6	Logan/Coulter	McCabe/T Murphy
May 13	T. Brolin	Dailey/Ewald
May 20	Hoenigs	Thurman/Mason
May 27	Truitt	Helfant/Martin
Jun 3	Logan/Coulter	M. Koerner/Jarsky

When you find a substitute, please call the administrator: 537-0132 or email uucsf@optonline.net. If you'd like to volunteer, please speak to Jeanne Wisner at 631-208-8154, jkwisner@optonline.net

Annual Meeting June 3

Members of UUCSF will approve a budget, elect a Board member, elect committee chairs, and possibly approve changes to the bylaws. Details will be sent to members by mail. All are welcome to attend the meeting, to be held after our Sunday service. Only members will vote.

News from UUA

If you are attending Justice General Assembly 2012, there is now a Facebook page (which you can find in your own Facebook account). Unable to attend but would still like to participate? Register at www.uua.org/ga/business/offsite/ and cast your vote.

Are you a writer? Skinner House Books is searching for authors of new books about wedding services, ideally with a UU orientation. Check this website and submit your proposal today: uua.org/publications/skinnerhouse/6094.shtml

The Hub: Young Adult UUs have a Facebook page. Don't miss it at www.facebook.com/HubYAUU.

If you are involved in finance or are interested in how nations spend their money, the UUA has unveiled a pdf entitled "Priorities for a Faithful

Budget." Download faithfulbudget.org/files/2012/03/Priorities-for-a-Faithful-Budget.pdf.

The UUA has announced its "UU College of Social Justice" to teach service learning and justice education: uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/198953.shtml

For the Lifespan religious educators and thinkers, check out "Virtue Ethics" from Tapestry of Faith, a high school curriculum: www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/virtueethics/

Okay, future leaders. Here's an opportunity to learn amazing and exciting things. E-mail Chris Morris (cmorris37@optonline.net) of the Long Island Leadership Institute. They're currently teaching Sessions 5 and 6, but why not find out about how YOU can sign up for the next round?

Pam Wittenberg
cpwittenberg@optonline.net

Upcoming Services Sunday services begin at 10:30 AM

May 6

The Invention of Air

**The Revs. Donald McKinney and
Alison Cornish**

Our good friend Don leads us through the compelling story of Joseph Priestly: scientist and theologian, protégé of Benjamin Franklin, friend of Thomas Jefferson, 18th century radical thinker who played a pivotal role in the invention of ecosystem science, the discovery of oxygen, and the founding of the Unitarian Church in America.

May 13

Let's Talk About Sex

Marie Alford-Harkey, M.Div. with

Worship Associate Bill Dalsimer

Musician: Claude Soffel

Marie Alford-Harkey is the Director of Education and Training for the Religious Institute, a multi-faith nonprofit organization co-founded by Unitarian minister Debra Haffner, working to promote sexual justice, education, and healing in faith communities and society. Marie will introduce us to the work of the Religious Institute, and to some surprising truths about sexuality and religion. She holds a Master's in Divinity from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has begun the process of ordination as an Episcopal priest in the diocese of Connecticut. She is a provincial coordinator for Integrity USA, and a board member of Integrity/Connecticut, an organization promoting full inclusion of LGBT people in Episcopal faith communities.

May 20

**A 'Strange and Peculiar' Religion: What Every
UU Should Understand About Mormonism**

Marilyn Mehr with Worship Associate

Jeanne Wisner

Musician: Abby Fleming

With a devout Mormon as a prospective candidate for the U.S. Presidency, UU's are bound to wonder what it would be like to have a Mormon in the White House. What are the beliefs that might shape critical decisions on domestic and foreign policy? While it is impossible to predict how any

candidate will react as President, we can look beneath the surface of this little-known religion, seek its wisdom, and understand its influence.

Marilyn Mehr is a long-time member of the UUCSF, and served as its co-president before relocating to New York City. She grew up in a Mormon family, and is author of the novel, *Holding the World Together*, about her family's religious experience in the American West.

May 27

Integrity and The Seven Realms

Bill Burford with the Rev. Alison Cornish

Musician: Megan Chaskey

What are we doing when we are not thinking? How do we view our lives outside of thought and imagination? Bill Burford introduces a means understand our lives in terms of seven distinct realms of interaction with one another, only one of which has to do with imagination and thought. In this new approach to portraying characters onstage, drawn from both intuitive and scientific traditions, we find a fresh way of considering character in our lives. How much of the confusion and injustice in our world comes from mistaking one kind of perception, intelligence and action from another?

Bill Burford is an independent theatre producer, director, writer, designer and educator. He recently formed Bloodstone Theatrical, serves as its artistic director and through it conducts research and workshops in story-based performance. Bill teaches playwriting, independent producing and performance lab for Southampton Arts' new MFA Program in Theatre & Film at the Southampton and Manhattan campuses of Stony Brook University.

June 3

Discovering Our Place

The Rev. Alison Cornish

Wendell Berry writes, "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are." With our modern ease of mobility, and technologies that "collapse" both time and space, what is the meaning of a specific place, particularly that which we call home, in our lives today? And how do we go about discovering that meaning?

Skeletons in the Closet

A Mohawk war party had the good luck to kill an ancestor of mine. As a child I imagined a clean hit in the heart from a flint arrow head while he was plowing. More likely it was an arrow in the leg and an iron ax that finished him. In any case, he is now buried on a hilltop in western Massachusetts. The warriors went on to take my long-ago grandmother and a few of her children, my great-aunts and uncles, as captives to Canada.

It is easy to understand why these natives felt they had originated in this land. They descended from families who walked to this country. It took many generations and thousands of years, long enough to forget their long journey from the Asian steppes. It is even easier to understand their hard feelings toward the European immigrants who overwhelmed North America in the 17th and 18th centuries.

That Mohawk war party had no way of knowing they would be among the first of a time honored American tradition. We don't particularly like immigrants.

Once we are nicely settled, with a snug roof over our heads and reliable meals, along comes a family of strangers speaking an indecipherable dialect, or perhaps an entirely new language, with habits not ours and unknown religious beliefs, again not ours. And though they are certainly human, they are immigrants. It does not seem to matter to us that our neighbors and cousins need these people to work on their farms and in their factories, or that we are all immigrants, should we look back far enough.

On my mother's side I am descended from a family brought here as laborers from Sweden to build wire rope. They worked for the Roeblings, who constructed the Brooklyn Bridge. Their daughter married a young man who earned a degree in civil engineering at night school. He helped build the Holland Tunnel and named three streets in Rockville Center, Long Island for my mother and her sisters.

Such casual glances into the past are the best sort of history; cheerful and uplifting. My mother, the daughter of second-generation immigrants,

married into a family descended from early settlers. It is a true picture of the American melting pot, but it might not pay to look too carefully.

A few years before my mother died we sat with an album of black and white snapshots, memories of her childhood. Among the pictures of first communions, picnics, bathing suits, new cars and ever larger boats was a parade of white-hooded men carrying a cross.

"Oh, that," my mother remarked, "I don't know." I put my hand on hers as she reached to turn the page. "They were unhappy about the immigrants," she explained. "Daddy was curious." At least he was taking the picture, and not marching.

During the early 1920s the KKK was active in Long Island. In 1924 the police chief of Freeport led a procession of 2,000 robed men, which was probably the march in my grandfather's photograph. The objects of their anger? Catholics and Jews. This information about my grandfather was a sad surprise, but I had more to learn.

I recently acquired a box of letters and journals from a great, great-grandfather on my father's side, who moved from the Massachusetts farm to make his future in New York City. The second half of the 1800s was a good time to build a business in the city, and he acquired a small fortune in real estate, becoming a prominent figure in New York politics.

You can only imagine my shock when I learned from one of his letters that this honored ancestor attempted to have the Statue of Liberty sent back to France. He objected because the wrong political party would get the credit for accepting it, and he didn't care much for the immigrants the statue would welcome.

There is a lesson to be learned here. Should you decide to examine your own roots closely, don't be surprised to find some dirt clinging to them.

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April Board/Council Meeting Summary

- Ken Ettlinger, Tip Brolin and John Andrews are working on ways to reduce the meetinghouse's LIPA bill.
- Bob Hoening having resigned due to his new employment demands, Chris Epifania was appointed as interim chair of the Finance Committee. Ken Ettlinger has been appointed Building and Grounds co-chair, charged with the internal workings of the meetinghouse.
- John Andrews will attend the Metro District Meeting May 4-5 in Stamford CT. He can transport others in the congregation who want to attend.
- LUUV team's Water Justice report given; see President's Letter.

Myrna Truitt
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Readers' Forum

As beach season came early this strange spring, I found this in a new translation of *Buddenbrooks* by the Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann.

The novel's main character, the overburdened inheritor of a German merchant family's many rules and long traditions, loved the sea in his youth. In middle age, though, he experiences the "endlessly surging waves" as "bleak and pointless, filled with woes."

"What sort of people prefer the monotony of the sea?" he wonders. "It seems to me it's those who have gazed too long and too deeply into the complexity at the heart of things and so have no choice but to demand one thing from external reality: simplicity."

He contrasts being by the sea with "boldly scrambling about in the mountains... happy, confident [with] defiant eyes full of enterprise, resolve, and courage." But the eyes of people who "watch the wide sea and the waves rolling in with mystical and numbing inevitability [have] something veiled, forlorn, and knowing about their eyes, as if at some point in life they have looked deep into gloomy chaos.... A man climbs jauntily up into the wonderful variety of jagged, towering, fissured forms to test his vital energies, because he has never had to spend them. But a man chooses to rest beside the wide simplicity of external things because he is weary from the chaos within."

We love to hear from you. Please send your responses to marlogan@optonline.net.



Alison's cap set the tone for her April Fool's Day service, "Loving the Fool In Us All." She explored the idea that we all have an inner fool. By recognizing and loving our fool, we can hear its wake up calls, see how it can puncture the pompous proud and lift up the innocent and humble.

Photo:Aubrey Burch



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Deadline is the 15th of each month. E-mail copy, photos and events to Margaret Logan marlogan@optonline.net
Please start your subject line with "UU newsletter".

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Free minds, open hearts.

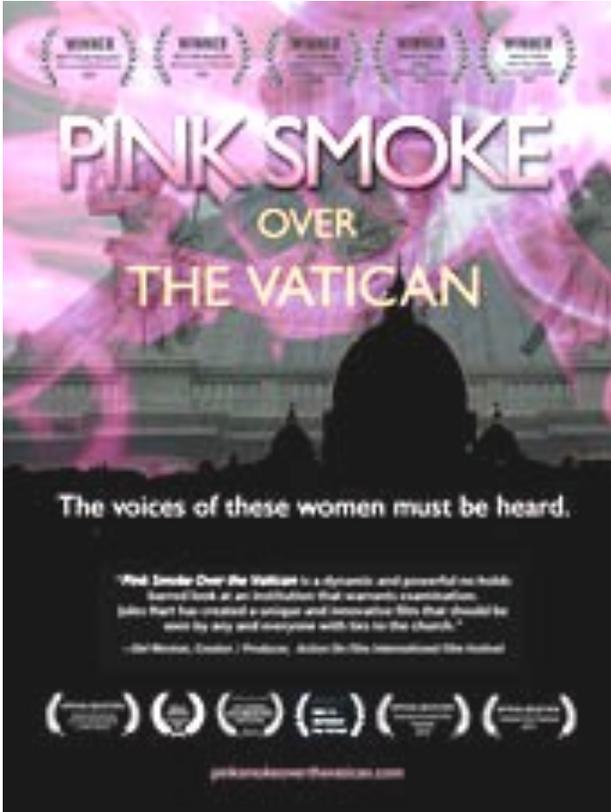


Photo: Mindy Block

Carl Wittenberg, member of the Stewardship Committee, devised boxes to illustrate for the congregation the relative sizes of income sources, on the left, and our different kinds of expenditures, on the right.

“Pink Smoke Over the Vatican” Thursday, May 17, 6:30 pm

Screening of Jules Hart’s documentary film about the controversial movement of women seeking to be ordained as priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Discussion to follow, facilitated by Eda Lorello. This program is co-sponsored with Canio’s Cultural Cafe; donations will be appreciated.



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