



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

July/August
2012

977 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike
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www.uucsf.org

We are a spiritual community.

A “Strange and Peculiar” Religion

What would it be like to have a Mormon in the White House? While it is impossible to predict exactly how any candidate will act as President, UUs can try to look beneath the surface of this religion to seek its wisdom, and understand its influence on its members.

As the descendent of pioneers who pushed their handcarts across 1,000 miles of the Great Plains to practice their religion freely, I was once a devout believer. Gradually, I left the church, but not my family, nor their legacy of hard work and devotion to one's beliefs.

How did they begin? Joseph Smith, Jr. founded the Mormon religion in the 1820s in upstate New York at a time of intense religious turmoil. At the age of sixteen, he claimed that he had seen a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, who appeared to him at night in answer to his prayer, asking which religion was true. Smith's 1838 account of this vision says: “I was answered by Jesus that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight.”

Though persecutions followed this pronouncement, the new faith drew converts as Smith began to dictate the *Book of Mormon*, written, it is held, on golden plates uncovered in Indian burial mounds. Smith claimed that the book was a history of early indigenous peoples of the Americas, Israelites, who arrived in three migrations.

Persecutions and a series of uprootings eventually brought the believers to Utah where, under Brigham Young, plural marriage was openly prac-

ticed. Plural marriage was the faith's most sensational characteristic, and vigorous opposition by the U.S. Congress led to a manifesto, in 1890, announcing its official end, thus allowing for the territory's acceptance into statehood.

Several smaller groups of Mormons broke with the church over the issue of plural marriage, with some traveling to Arizona and Mexico, where Mitt Romney's ancestors and some of my own settled.

In our own time, the Mormon church has been a proponent of monogamy, funding the repeal of gay

marriage in California. The church, extending its international reach with a vigorous missionary program, counts 14 million members. Following a revelation by the President of the church in 1976, men of color are admitted to the priesthood, but as much as the Mormon religion strives to become part of the American mainstream, it consciously

and intentionally retains its identity as a “peculiar people,” set apart by what it believes is its unique relationship with God.

According to Mormons, a Great Apostasy began in Christianity not long after the ascension of Jesus. Mormons believe that God re-established the early Christian church through Joseph Smith, making their church the “only true and living church.” Smith's successors are modern prophets who receive revelation from God to guide the church. However, they do maintain that other religions have a portion of the truth, and are guided by the Light of Christ.

To Mormons, life on earth is just a short part of



Mormon pioneers 1847.

Continued on page 2

Thoughts from Alison...

Transporting Summer



No matter how you look at it, life in this part of the world where many, many people choose to spend their summer, has a certain flavor, some of which runs counter to the way summer is generally understood by our cul-

ture. If summer is often known as a time to “kick back and relax,” what do we do about the crazy-busy traffic, roving crowds, frenetic building and landscaping and consuming that’s our lot out here? Yes, the irony is that it takes some creativity and commitment to find the qualities of summer ... in the midst of the summer season. But it’s worth it.

So, if your days are full of buzzing around, working, shuttling children and house guests here and there...

may you be transported by the peace of the night sky, the Milky Way, the waxing and waning moon, to the dark velvet touch of summer.

If you cannot get away to your dream trip, exploring a new part of the world...

may you be transported by a wonderful book to places new to your mind and your heart.

If the place you call home all year long seems beyond recognition with all the activity, people, commercialism of “the season”...

may you be transported by your garden, a patch of woods, a hidden cove, to the heart of nature, owned by no one, sustaining to all.

If your spirit is sagging, and dragging its heels through the dog-days of hot, hazy, humid...

may you find your way to us at the meeting-house, for we are open all year!

Truly, check out the listings in this newsletter for ways to stay connected with one another throughout the summer season: lend a hand in the Children’s Garden, spend an afternoon weeding

with Margaret, come to our annual picnic, try out the Caregivers’ support group, and always, always, come to Sunday services (and bring those house guests, too!) You’ll hear from diverse UU ministers, special speakers and musicians, and honor the work of our Worship Associates who plan and present these services with our guests.

Blessings,
Alison

Mormons, continued from page 1

an eternal existence, a place where they can learn to choose good over evil. In this process, people inevitably make mistakes, becoming unworthy to return to the presence of God. Through Christ’s atonement, Mormons can be forgiven by declarations of faith, repentance, and by participating in formal covenants or “ordinances,” such as baptism and marriage.

Mormons believe in the Old and New Testaments, using the King James Bible as their official text, though incomplete and in need of restoration in the *Book of Mormon*, held to be divine scripture. They also believe that the United States Constitution is a divinely inspired document.

Is Mormonism a truly American religion? I have to say yes, and no. The Mormons’ dedication to their families and communities, as well as their industriousness and promotion of their beliefs, are recognized American values. However, their reliance on a patriarchal authority for revealed truth, intolerance of minorities, condemnation of gays, and restriction of the roles of women are at odds with today’s American culture. Their belief that their religion is true, while others are lacking, and their belief that the U.S. is exceptional, a nation founded upon a divinely inspired document, will encourage members to rely upon tradition and revelation for guidance.

This “American” religion was forged through the suffering of its members, who must now remember their painful history and embrace the rights and dignity of other marginalized people. That is their challenge.

Marilyn Mehr
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President's Letter

A question you are likely to hear, especially after mentioning that you are a Unitarian Universalist, is, "Do you believe in a personal God?"

In trying to answer this question for myself over the years, I've come upon at least four possible answers:

1. There is no God of any kind. As the Greek philosopher Democritus put it, "Nothing exists but atoms and the void."
2. There is an ultimate reality—call it God if you want—but it isn't personal. Think of Plato's Ideas, or the Force in Star Wars.
3. God is the Ground of Being, Being Itself, Ultimate Concern, etc. The fact that we are here proves that being includes personhood. Therefore God is personal, although It isn't "a" person, separate from the rest of reality. Paul Tillich checks in here.
4. God *is* a person, distinct from the cosmos, represented—within the limitations of words—by the God of the Bible.

Because we don't impose a metaphysical creed as a condition of membership, it is possible to be a Unitarian Universalist while holding any of these opinions. I can think of at least one representative of each in our own congregation. However, it seems to me that our kind of faith community will appeal most to those who think somewhere along the lines of numbers 2 or 3 in the above list. Opinion 1 folks tend to be turned off by any form of religion, while those who hold Opinion 4 are likely to be attracted to one of the more traditional religious denominations.

One of the reasons I am a Unitarian Universalist is that I am one of those "in between" people. I find it impossible to believe the "back story" of Christian orthodoxy—in which an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving God created the earth as a testing ground that results in some of us suffering eternal torment. As for the atoms-and-the-void view, it does not account for consciousness. Science knows a lot about what goes on in the brain when we are conscious, but it doesn't have a clue as to why the molecular interactions and neuron firings evoke subjective experience. There's good philosophical reason to think that the so-called "hard problem" of

consciousness is of a qualitatively different order from the many difficult questions that science has successfully answered.

To paraphrase what Vince Lombardi said about winning in football, consciousness isn't the main thing, it's the *only* thing. A universe without consciousness would be meaningless. In such a world, nothing would matter. And consciousness without love—well, that would be hell, wouldn't it?

Love makes everything holy. This is the good news of our faith. Let us proclaim it.

Peace,
John Andrews



On June 10, we held our Religious Exploration Celebration and annual Flower Communion. As part of the service, we gathered outdoors to celebrate the beginnings of the Children's Garden. Flynn Martin, with violin in the group photo, and Connor Burford, with guitar, provided some of the music.

July 8

The Nexus of Diversity

The Rev. Alison Cornish

Musician: Abby Fleming

This morning we introduce our summer services theme: The Nexus of Diversity. We invite you to join us in contemplating the current challenges and opportunities that come with the changing demographics of our neighborhoods and the larger world, and what meaning those changes may have for us as a community of faith.

July 15

Building Bridges – Success or Failure?

Isabel Sepulveda de Scanlon

with Worship Associate William Dalsimer

Latina activist, publisher, and film-festival organizer Isabel Sepulveda de Scanlon has lived on the East End for almost 20 years. She has seen growth within the Latino community, but also a continuing separation from the larger community. How can we change this for the future, moving from a paternalistic approach toward empowerment?

July 22

Soulful Sundown Morning

The Rev. Jennifer L. Brower,

Worship Associate Martha Potter

Musicians: The Gathering of Friends band

One aspect of exploring the Nexus of Diversity is to explore new ways of worshipping as a community – a new Order of Service; different genres of music; using audio-visual or computer-based technologies; worship that engages body as well as mind. This morning we invite you to experience contemporary worship in the Soulful Sundown model. We encourage you to bring your friends, family, and neighbors of all ages to this multi-generational service of music and reflection. Jennifer Brower serves the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset as the Minister for Pastoral Care.

July 29

Redrawing Borders: Our UU Calling

The Rev. Ned Wight,

Worship Associate John Andrews

Musician: Walter Klauss

We will explore the Nexus of Diversity in which

we find ourselves as Long Islanders, as residents of an increasingly diverse country, and as UUs trying to ensure the survival and proliferation of our values. Boundaries and borders play a significant role in the mental maps we carry around in our heads to “make sense” of our encounters with “the other.”

Ned Wight, Director of the UU Veatch Program, has recently returned from Shelter Rock’s Partner Church in Transylvania. He will bring some very fresh experiences with crossing borders and confronting the unfamiliar.

August 5

Let the Games Begin!

But Are the Odds in Our Favor?

The Revs. Carol and Hollis Huston,

Worship Associate Sue Penny

Musician: Peter Weiss

There's nothing going on in the popular movie and novel trilogy of *The Hunger Games* that hasn't already happened somewhere, sometime. What does this epic say about our political games? In her 20-year ministry, Carol Huston served congregations in Rochester, Michigan and White Plains, NY. She is now a New York City resident, working on social justice issues, especially the rights and needs of women in developing countries. Hollis Huston serves as Pastoral Care Coordinator at MJHS Hospice and Palliative Care.

August 12

The Great Divide

The Rev. Charles Magistro,

Worship Associate Jeanne Wisner

We say we believe in equality. What do we mean by that affirmation? Is equality about opportunity, or the material conditions of life? Our upcoming presidential election is essentially about this question. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class is shrinking. Minister Emeritus of the Central Nassau Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Charles Magistro, also served congregations in Stamford, Brooklyn and Attleboro, Massachusetts

August 19

Nature's Lessons in Diversity

The Rev. Alison Cornish

Modern science offers us provocative insights into diversity. On the one hand, we know that the aligned sequence of DNA of humans and chimps is about 99 percent identical; on the other hand, the necessity of biodiversity to the survival of our planet is just now being truly appreciated. What lessons can we draw from the natural world which might help enlighten our very human interactions?

August 26

**Classism: America's,
and Unitarian Universalism's, Third Rail**
The Rev. Alison Cornish

An authentically and historically American religion, Unitarian Universalism shares with our country its reluctance to take on the hot issue of classism. In his book "Elite," UU minister Mark Harris writes, "Many Unitarian Universalists are torn between who is actually sitting in our pews and who we wish was sitting there. Do we really want multicultural communities and diverse churches?" Uncovering some of our very mixed history on this front, Harris offers us much food for thought.

Service Date	Greeters	Hospitality
July 8	Logan/Coulter	O'Neill/Littman
July 15	Wittenbergs	Trunzo/Curran
July 22	T. Brolin	Schmitz/Penny
July 29	Truitt	Ettlinger/Dalsimer
Aug. 5	C. Giordano	Wittenbergs
Aug. 12	Potters	Ewald/Helfant
Aug. 19	Logan/Coulter	C. & L. Giordano
Aug. 26	Truitt	Gordon/Corliss
Sept 2	C. Giordano	Liss/Strieby
When you find a substitute, please call the administrator: 537-0132 or email uucsf@optonline.net .		

Upcoming Events

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

Thursday, July 12, 7 PM

Board and Council meeting.

Friday, July 13, 6:30-8:00 PM

Caregivers Circle at the meetinghouse. See article on page 7.

Sunday July 15 and August 12, noon

Qi Gong. Be ready for summer's heat and the joys of the season. Open your heart, release your body, and ease your mind with these simple movements and massages from ancient Chinese tradition. Wear comfortable clothes. For more information call Tina, 631-723-1923.

Thursday August 9, 7 PM

Board meeting.

Sunday July 29, noon
Summer Picnic/Potluck Lunch

Rain or shine at the meetinghouse. We'll offer a selection of burgers, hot dogs, and beverages. Please bring a small salad or dessert to share. Consider bringing your own chair, musical instruments, friends, and family. Please respond by July 22 to Jeanne Wisner, 631-208-8154, so we know how much food to buy.

Alison's Summer Schedule

As usual, Alison's summer will be a mix of work, study and vacation. After returning from General Assembly on June 21, Alison will be in town and working through July 22. She'll be on vacation from July 23–August 2, and attending a university course at Royal Roads University, Victoria, B.C. from August 3–16.

While Alison is away, there is always a Unitarian Universalist minister from Long Island on call for pastoral emergencies. Please call John Andrews if you are in need. (631-725-3367)

The Green Corner:

South Fork in the Raw

We live on a narrow strip of sand, thrust like a finger into the eye of the ocean, yet at the first sign of a hurricane we gather in the breaks of the dunes to watch. While it might be more logical to wait out the storm behind a television, somehow our tidy homes and workplaces seem anemic when wild doings are afoot.

It didn't take me long after we moved here to discover that the South Fork's posh veneer hides many places to brush up against nature's rough surface. The first place we discovered was behind the county golf club on Barcelona Neck. A trail leads through highbush blueberries past a long-abandoned house to Cuffee's Landing, at the edge of a shallow bay enclosed in a marsh. There is a giant white cedar here which the wind and salt have pruned so perfectly it could be a model for the garden in a Shinto shrine. This is Northwest Creek. There are few places west of Montauk where you can look out on such a large expanse of undeveloped waterfront, a half mile wide and two miles from end to end. It is easy to imagine three or four dories on a dark night rowing down to Cuffee's landing on an incoming tide to unload their cargo of whiskey into a waiting Buick.

On the other side of Barcelona Neck are walking dunes, a recurring geographical feature of our South Fork. The sandy bluff which feeds these dunes can be seen from as far as Orient Point. They tower seventy feet above Sag Harbor Bay, and although the Bay is busy, you will most often be alone on these dunes, except for the occasional turkeys and deer in the oaks behind you.

If you want to escape the sound of traffic, another magical walk is in the Mulvihill Preserve. Enter it on the trail a few feet south of the junction of Brick Kiln and Stony Hill roads. The treasures here are the overgrown ponds busy with ducks, muskrat, frogs, salamanders and, early in the year, a chorus of peepers. Nature has written over the traces of

human activity: a forgotten brick kiln, a stitch of barbed wire, a field gone to birch and brush. Continuing south up the hill under the power lines, we enter a forest of ancient beech and oak which somehow escaped the axes of 19th century builders. The dense canopy high above our heads, the stately trunks of the trees, and a forest floor clear of undergrowth remind us that nature is not a random force; the chemical structures which hold things together have an artist's sense of symmetry and drama.

The daughter of a whaling captain left us another untouched woodland. Emma Rose was born at sea, somewhere off the coast of Hawaii. Her husband inherited her family's property and left much of it in her honor to the town of Southampton. The Emma Rose Elliston Park is located off Millstone Road in North Sea. For me the most exciting portion of it abuts the park north of the fork created where Millstone meets Scott's Road. There you will find a woods road, another whiskey runner's road, which skirts the marsh and leads you through a mature beech forest. Ignore the empty 1960s era hunting camp which the Nature Conservancy now owns and instead follow the road directly out into the Sebonac Creek



Sebonac Creek marsh.

marsh. The first time I entered this marsh I felt as though I had stepped into the 18th century, or perhaps another country, which somehow had never learned of the land prices in Long Island.

I once sat here for an hour perched in a tumble-down duck blind at the edge of the woods, watching the sun set beside the dairy farm a mile off in the haze. An osprey somewhere above me called his mate with that ventriloquist whistle. I couldn't help but wonder if he noticed the wild ocean waves only four miles off? Or, like the human watching from below, did he see only his responsibilities, his mate, their chicks and the fish he'd set out to catch in the creek.

Mark Potter
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Caregivers' Circle

Several caregivers of aging parents met with Alison at the meetinghouse on April 28 and June 1. Various types of caregiving configurations were described, ranging from across-the-miles coordination, to elderly parents remaining in their own homes, to parents living with their children, or moving to assisted living or nursing facilities.

Honest sharing was ensured with Alison's caution, "What's said in this room, stays in this room." That said, general issues raised included safety, timing, personalities and family roles, finances, guilt, dementia, boundaries, low-functioning sib-

lings, and fatigue. Thus ensued a litany of challenges and frustrations, triumphs, helpful suggestions, fears, and hopes for the future. We shared several helpful resources:

- Jane Gross's *A Bittersweet Season* is a daughter's thoughtful and detailed first-person accounting of her elderly mother's care requirements. With a journalist's penchant for research, the book contains a wealth of information about coping with Medicare, Medicaid, long term care insurance, assisted living and nursing home facilities, etc. Gross is particularly effective when discussing medical treatment options for the elderly infirm, and in describing the emotional/physical/financial toll exacted upon caregivers.
- Virginia Morris, a local author, has agreed to discuss her book, *How to Care for Aging Parents*, with our group, with details still pending.
- Southampton Town Senior Services hosts an Adult Children of Aging Parents support group which meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7pm. Call for details, 728-1235. This program might fill a need for those who are unable to attend our Friday evening meetings.

All agreed that it would be helpful to meet monthly, so our next meeting will be Friday, July 13, 6:30-8:00pm, at the meetinghouse. Alison welcomes thoughts and suggestions for what might be included or addressed at this next gathering.

Please feel encouraged to pass this information along to any whom you think might benefit.

Bev Krouse

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Alison Cornish

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Neighborhood Groups

As introduced in the June 3 service, our congregation is starting Neighborhood Groups, opportunities to better help each other. Watch for an invitation to a gathering in your neighborhood later this summer, or early in the fall. It will be good to stay in touch in fresh and new ways.

News from UUA

For the religious educators in our congregation, how about five (yes, five glorious days!) of R&R by attending "Religious Educators' Week By The Sea" while learning about how to strengthen the religious education program. Check out <http://cerguua.org/cergevents/272-reweek2012.html>.

Are you a looking for a job and willing to relocate? Then be sure to look at the job opportunities at <http://uumetrony.org/district/jobs.html>.

The big local news is that First Universalist Church of Southold has been recognized by the UUA as a Welcoming Congregation.

Pam Wittenberg

cpwittenberg@optonline.net



Minister: the Rev. Alison Cornish

Office hours:

Mon. and Fri. 10:30am-1:30pm

Except for weeks of July 9 and 23:

Mon. 4:30-7:30pm and

Sat. 10:30am-1:30pm

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Vice President: Mark Potter

Secretary: Myrna Truitt

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Sue Penny

Margaret Pulkingham

Newsletter Information:

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".

Editor: Margaret Logan 283-1586

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Readers' Forum

Jim Newton's recent *Eisenhower: The White House Years* concludes with quotations from Ike's farewell speech, given in 1961. Two members of UUCSF recommended its provocative and sharp warnings for this column.

The President noted that assuring national defense had "compelled" the creation of "a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions."

"The conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience....[We] must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

"In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, of the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

"We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery...with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."

Ike's speech may not have coined "military-industrial complex," but he certainly lodged it in the national mind. And did any of you instantly think "Halliburton?" Let us hear from you!

Contact: marlogan@optonline.net

Annual Meeting Highlights

On June 3, UUCSF members unanimously approved the slate proposed by the Nominating Committee for the Board of Trustees. There were no nominations from the floor.

John Andrews will continue as President, Mark Potter as Vice President, and Imke Littman as Treasurer. Myrna Truitt will serve as Secretary. Margaret Pulkingham will continue as Board member, and Sue Penny will begin a three-year term as Board member.

Committee Chairs elected for two-year terms are Hillary Helfant (Arts), Ken Ettlinger and Margaret Logan (Building and Grounds), Martha Potter (Communications), Pam Wittenberg (Fellowship), Christine Epifania (Social Justice), and Sue Penny and Kent Martin (Religious Exploration). The Finance chair is yet to be determined.

The Treasurer's healthy report was applauded, and the proposed Budget of \$126,240 passed unanimously, following a brief discussion from the floor.

Also passed were several text amendments to our minister's Letter of Call which clarify her relationship, in the reality that full-time ministry is not currently affordable.

An enabling resolution to establish The UUCSF Endowment Fund was passed. This amendment to our bylaws will allow us to support the mission and work of our congregation through transfers of stocks, real estate, charitable bequests in wills, assignment of life insurance, and other such sources.

Margaret Logan



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