



Winter Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork



Free minds open hearts.

Meeting the Buddha

Everyone knows from fairy tales that if an old lady, her exhausted body crippled, comes looking for a drink of water at your well - or in modern times it might be a glass of milk - that you'd better give it to her so she can turn into a beautiful fairy who will grant you a wish.

I always wondered about this idea of kindness in exchange for *gelt* - New York City Yiddish for a reward. It seemed if it was a true test, the old lady would take what you gave her and go on her way. You would get nothing for it, and be none the wiser. But now, everyone knows to be prepared, and thus get the reward.

I got a different kind of gift for being obnoxious rather than generous; one of the most valuable gifts I've ever received.

Years ago, Tuna and I were going skiing for the weekend in Colorado: arrive Friday night, leave Sunday afternoon. A very tight schedule for such a long trip, and expensive too! It was a gift to ourselves to be able to ski in the beautiful light powder dumped daily on the steep snow-covered mountains. Tuna loved getting up early and making the first tracks on the perfect unmarked whiteness.

This time, however, we were very late, and when we went to check our skis I was already afraid they would not make it onto our plane. And what would be the fun of going all the way to Colorado to wind up using rented skis with dull edges? It would take up half our morning to get them, and leave us in an unhappy state for the rest of the weekend. Gone would be those sharp carving turns, sinking down into the powder while sending up ele-

gant white snow spray.

Without thought or hesitation I snapped at the small crouching man who was slowly and carefully loading skis down a chute into their special area.

"We're in a rush!" I snapped. "Can't you go any faster?"

When he didn't respond, I escalated. "We're on the next flight out. Can't our skis be put in before the later flights?"

Slowly he rotated his crouched figure. When his head turned up toward me I saw he was quite elderly for this job, maybe 75 or 80. He caught my eyes and spoke clearly, slowly and softly - a gentle response.

"Dear woman, I have been doing this job for almost 40 years. In all that time I have learned one thing. Do you know what that is?"

Pinned by piercing eyes, I responded with only a shake of my head.

"Well," he said, "in all this time, I have

learned that worry is useless. *Ninety percent* of what we worry about will never come to pass, and the other *ten percent* we need as a lesson."

I stood there looking at his wrinkled round face, turned by the sun to the color and texture of a walnut, and saw the calm Buddha looking back at me.

Now, across these many years since, when I am worried about something, his words come clearly back to me, and I ask myself, 'Is this part of that *ten percent* that really needs worry, and what action can I take?' Or, 'Is it part of that *ninety percent* where worry will not benefit?' And you know what? He was right.

And, oh yes, our skis arrived on time!

Pat Gorman





From the Minister

First Fruits—Celebrating Kwanzaa

Despite my serious aversion to the cold weather, I have always loved the winter holidays—making handprint construction paper turkeys for Thanksgiving, decorating the Christmas tree, singing Christmas carols. As I have matured, the winter tradition that has become most meaningful to me is Kwanzaa. Growing up, my family rarely celebrated the full seven days of Kwanzaa, but it always loomed as something we *should* be doing. Kwanzaa was a rare opportunity to celebrate African American culture and community. But seven days! As an adult, less connected to family and community ties, Kwanzaa has re-emerged as a way for me to connect to Black community and identity.

In researching the UU Black Empowerment Controversy of the 1960s and the formation of the UU Black Affairs Council, I was surprised to learn that among the recipients of the community grants, from the Black UUs to others engaged in cultural and political uplift for Black Americans, was Dr. Maulana Karenga—the founder of Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa, sometimes described as ‘*an alternative to Christmas*’ or ‘*the Black Christmas*,’ is a Pan-African holiday, developed in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana Studies. Karenga wanted to offer Black people in America and around the world, a holiday and a ritual that celebrates Black identity and Black culture. Kwanzaa is based not in religious belief, but in cultural heritage, history, and identity. Kwanzaa was also intended to move away from rampant commercialism, toward a “communitarianism” and a recon-

nection with collective goals and ancestry. The name: Kwanzaa, is taken from the Swahili: ‘*matunda ya kwanza*’ which means ‘first fruits.’ And so Kwanzaa encourages us to make our offerings of “first fruits” to the good of the community.

Kwanzaa is celebrated over seven days, from December 26–January 1.

Symbols of Kwanzaa

The Kwanzaa table, centerpoint of the family’s ritual, is set with seven symbols:

1. The *Mkeka* is the woven grass mat where the other symbols rest. It is a symbol of tradition and history.
2. The *Kinara* is the candle holder; it holds 7 candles.
3. The *Mishumaa Saba* are the seven candles: 3 red, one black, and 3 green.
4. The *Mazao* are the fruits and vegetables of the harvest. They harken to a way of farmers working together to produce a good harvest, and this shows the bounty of their cooperation.
5. The *Muhindi* are ears of corn (separate from the *mazao*.) Ordinarily one ear of corn is displayed for each child in the household, sometimes with an extra ear to symbolize unborn generations. The ears are the fruit of the cornstalk, and represent the dreams of parents for their children and future generations.
6. The *Kikombe Cha Umoja* is the cup of unity—the chalice. The unity cup is used to toast all those who have come before us, including enslaved Africans who struggled to survive and build a new life.
7. The *Zawadi* are the Kwanzaa gifts given to children. Similar to Hanukkah traditions, where there is a gift every evening, the gift is not the major focus of the celebration. Kwanzaa gifts are usually intended to be educational.

Principles of Kwanzaa

Like Unitarian Universalism, Kwanzaa has seven principles or *Nguzo Saba*. Each night, during Kwanzaa the family or larger community gathers and lights one of the candles, which represents one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

1. *Umoja* (unity)—To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.
2. *Kujichagulia* (self-determination)—To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.
3. *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility)—To

build and maintain our community together and make our siblings' problems our problems, and to solve them together.

4. *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics)—To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.
5. *Nia* (purpose)—To make our collective vocation the building and development of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
6. *Kuumba* (creativity)—To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
7. *Imani* (faith)—To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

These are principles worth reflecting upon all year long. Like Unitarian Universalism, Kwanzaa celebrates our roots and our branches. It reminds us to stay grounded in our history, as we build for the future.

Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson



Words from the President

This winter, whenever possible, I practice yoga in our Meetinghouse sanctuary overlooking the woodlands. It brings me peace to be in a sacred place that is open to many types of spiritual practices that I can intertwine with Unitarian Universalism. One of the poses is Downward Facing Dog. It is a challenging and uncomfortable position for me, but hanging upside down somehow clears my head. As sermonized so eloquently this winter by The Reverend Kimberly Quinn Johnson in the theme of "Justice," discomfort can be a teacher, whether we choose it or not. What is to become of justice if the minor daily discomforts and difficulties are not mindfully resolved, especially when others are struggling to get through discomforts caused by an injustice that is not of their own choosing? When the world seems upside down, severe weather patterns and fires are wreaking havoc on lives, and we are faced with rampant racism, discrimination, and sexism, then choosing discomfort through daily practice is one small way of breaking down resistance to face the inevitable, unjustifiable, and uncomfortable situations of no one's choosing.

Pam Wittenberg

Tapovana Yoga meets every weekday morning and Sunday at our Meetinghouse. For information check on line www.tapovana.com/



Carol Holstein and Arden Edwards welcome Steven Romm, who joined our congregation January 14.

Christine Jean Epifania April 8, 1949–November 20, 2017

A favorite quote of Chris' was Eleanor Roosevelt's, "*Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm,*" and this is how she lived her life. Full of optimism, she believed that with time and patience, all would work out. A friend visiting her in the intensive care unit at Sloan Kettering, just two days before she died, recalls how eager she was to get out of bed, and accompany her to see the Rockettes at Radio City in New York.

Chris married her partner of over thirty years, the artist and writer, Ruth Jacobsen, in their Southampton home in July of 2013. Their wedding rings were passed around to each guest, and prayers and good wishes were said over them. Her love for Ruth was extraordinary and unwavering. When it came to Ruth, a hidden child in Holland during World War II. Chris couldn't do enough to ensure her safety and happiness. Even when she was struggling with her own illness, she

organized an art show of Ruth's works, hosted large birthday parties for her with all sorts of her favorite treats, and even had the guests sing "Happy Birthday" to her in Dutch. She hired people to take Ruth to the movies and out for ice cream. When Ruth, an animal lover, wanted a dog, Chris got a silky terrier from ARF, Sadie. If Ruth was happy, Chris was happy. Her ability to keep up with all of her responsibilities: taking care of her own increasing medical problems, finding the best caretakers for Ruth, the dog, repairs to the house, as well as her job as Director at Alternatives, a drug and alcohol counseling center, was, to say the least, something to marvel at. Instead of complaining, she would say "Let's get together for dinner," when she saw friends. One needn't feel defensive with Chris; there was an openness and acceptance about her. She was extremely bright, intuitive and uplifting.



She valued social justice, and in her job as Director of Alternatives developed drug and alcohol education outreach programs for students and parents. She coordinated and provided services to the Shinnecock Nation. In the early 90s, she worked at Riker's Island managing healthcare. She instituted a "Compassionate Release" program for inmates with HIV/AIDS. Her Facebook page has many posts supporting LGBT rights and Black Lives Matter. She helped a lot of people, and when a member of UUCSF was temporarily out of work, she made sure he was hired to paint and do repairs at Alternatives.

As UUCSF's two-term president, from 2007-2010, Chris often referred to the congregation as "the beloved community." She helped to organize the move to the new Meetinghouse in Bridgehampton, and facilitated the installation of our first settled minister, Alison Cornish; two major milestones. She supported the Rainbow School's move into the building. She helped develop year one of the coming of age group and expanded the religious education program, as well as starting to develop a music program. Four sharing circles began under her leadership, one of which continues to this day. She made sure that Gay Pride Day was celebrated in a service each June. As president she began the *Unsung Award* which honored someone who had done a great deal for the congregation. In one of her *Letters from the President*, which she wrote weekly for the newsletter, she quoted Eleanor Roosevelt, "*It takes as much energy to wish as to plan. Moving on now, from vision toward reality, I do believe we can accomplish whatever we put our collective energy toward.*" Concerned with growing our congregation, and she said that "Growth itself refers not just to numbers, but also to the depth of the congregational experience, its offerings and vision. In the congregational setting, we come looking for a place

that emphasizes the relationships that can be created within a community to feed our deepest yearnings. Priceless and precious, this endeavor creates a bottom line different from all others.” Chris saw challenges as opportunities to stretch and grow. She often posed provocative questions such as, “What should our congregation define as vital? How should we measure our strivings?”

She valued process and individual participation, and wanted every voice to be heard. Living room conversations gave small groups a chance to get together and talk about what they wanted from their faith community. She sometimes felt that decisions were arrived at too quickly without ample discussion. And, that if people are passionate about what they are trying to do, if they are guided by their core beliefs and if they can draw upon communal support, that makes for a powerful mandate that is healing to the human spirit. She remained committed and involved in our congregation even while struggling with illness, keeping up on what was happening, and often inquiring how the service was.

Chris read cookbooks like novels. Cooking was a favorite hobby and was something she loved, especially during snow storms. Entertaining and sharing her food and table with others, often seasoned with lively political discussions, happened a lot. She once cooked a delicious breakfast for the entire congregation; newcomers, asking hopefully, if this happened every Sunday. Julia Child’s quote, *‘The best way to execute French cooking, is to get good and loaded and whack the hell out of the chicken,’* was posted on her Facebook page.

She wrote about her aunt and mother, newlyweds in the 1930s, who shared a box of laundry soap, as neither household could afford one on its own. With each woman giving what she could, the job got done. Everything each of us can openheartedly give of ourselves to our faith community is a sign that however tough the times, we are okay. And when each of us gives what we fully can, the clothes get washed.

“They existed. We can be. Be and Be better. For they existed.” Maya Angelou.

Diana Lindley



Aubrey Burch in round 1 with our hearty beanstalk.



We had 15 or 20 people helping clean up last Fall. Here are a few of them, from left: Martha Potter, Carl Wittenberg, Pam Wittenberg, Mark Ewald and Mark Potter.

A Farm Boy's Yuletide

Christmas morning on Tamarack Hill Farm began at 5:00am, a pagan hour. "It's daylight in the swamp," was my father's cheerful wake up call, his good cheer at that hour particularly offensive to his four sons. Cinnamon toast and coffee would hold off our hunger until breakfast, when work was done.

I remember best the cold and the dim light, a fly-specked fluorescence in the barn, and in the barnyard and fields the gray of a winter sun behind the hills. While Father milked the cows, his sons swept the mangers, grained the cows, wrestled bales of hay from the mow, fed the calves and gathered eggs. Fifty cows and 500 hens supported us back then, with no cash for a second pair of school pants, a bicycle or a hired hand.

Morning chores never lasted forever, particularly not on Christmas morning. By the time the sun was high enough to suggest some warmth, a fantastic dream had begun. Father lined us up at a closed door outside the living room, youngest to oldest, bathed now and stomachs full. Mother entered first to plug in the lights. Behind this door a mystery, a wonderland where each wink of the lights on the tree promised some new treasure, a pair of skis, a tricycle, adult-style ski boots, a cap gun, as well as the things we truly needed, sweaters, socks, gloves, a book.

By the age of fifteen I realized that my mother's parents financed this bounty. But that took nothing away from the excitement we enjoyed and the pleasure of seeing our mother and father relaxed, opening their own gifts, helping us with ours, with no thought of the money they owed, the sick cow, or a car with snow tires worn slick.

Christmas was a time to ignore the rules that protected the living room from the farm. We fit our new skis in front of the fireplace on the rug, ran a train set through the legs of the couch, tested the erector set on the coffee table's patent leather insert, another gift from my grandmother. And one year Dad's fingers slipped as he tested my new bow and zipped an arrow through an oil painting my family considered quite valuable.

We had no *crèche* in the years I lived at home. There was a wreath at the front door, mistletoe in the hall, a tree with lights, strings of ground pine and stockings tacked to the mantel. Despite regular Sunday school for the children, Father, a

church deacon, and Mother in the bell choir, the only hints that this was a Christian Christmas were in the carols we sang. If Santa could have gathered our ancestors living thousands of years ago in the North Sea countries, I'm certain they would have felt right at home with us.

If my parents were alive today, I'm not sure I'd ask them to explain the missing Christ child. I can only guess that orthodox Christian mythology: an immaculate conception and a virgin who happens to give birth near the shortest day of the year was too much for a farm family to take seriously.

By midday the spicy scent of Mother's Swedish Glogg filled the house with its promise of adult mysteries. She always saved a rib roast for these family celebrations, the gift of a 3-year old Holstein who didn't produce enough milk or couldn't get pregnant for her second lactation. Dessert would be fruit cake, plum pudding and hard sauce which we shared with guests who began to arrive early in the afternoon.

As the sun dipped below the tree line, way too soon, only four days after solstice, the buzz from our new toys had begun to fade. It was time for evening chores, nearly identical to those of the morning, perhaps not as cold but in the gathering twilight equally dark -- yet with a difference. In each of us lingered the memory that back in our rooms or carefully stored in the garage lay our new gifts, the physical evidence that we were truly loved.

Mark Potter



Martha Potter and Margaret Pulkingham, January 20, Women's March in Sag Harbor.

Black Lives Matter

The article below was part of the 12/10/17 service introducing the campaign to support the work of Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism:

How can a small UU congregation live up to the promise and practice of our faith? One answer is to step outside of our comfort zone and support the work of BLUU—Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism. It's fundamental. It's living our principles.

I'd like to share with you my journey surrounding the challenge of white supremacist culture in our denomination and society. Briefly, the UUA was rocked by controversy in March 2017 over hiring practices which left people of color out of senior leadership. A denomination-wide charge to dismantle white supremacy culture within the UUA was initiated.

My husband and I have been UUs for 30 years, proudly stating that we are part of a religious movement that is progressive, open minded, welcoming to all. *White supremacists!* This could not apply to us or our religion. Why use this term? It's only going to alienate members. What good does it do? I can't help how I was brought up. Can't we call it something else??

We are privileged in many ways. One area is that we are part of the President's Council of the UUA. As a result, we have access to UUA leadership. We participated in teleconferences last spring with the three acting presidents, all people of color. I heard for the first time of the promises the UUA Board made to support blacks in our faith in the 1960's that were NOT fulfilled. I did not know the history where African American membership was substantial and that many had walked away as it was evident that black lives did NOT matter to UUs.

I took part in our white supremacy culture teach-in. I attended General Assembly, the annual meet-

ing of UUs in New Orleans and participated in workshops run by BLUU leaders. I heard a phenomenal presentation by Bryan Stevenson on the vast inequality in the US justice system for people of color.

You might think that all of this is leading to the ultimate enlightening of Carol Holstein, a white, well-off woman of blue collar background, heading into her senior years, who now sees the light. Not so easy, and not there! I am uncomfortable, I am questioning; I do not understand it all.

But, in listening to the leaders of BLUU, it became clear that although we believe we are welcoming to blacks in UU congregations, that is not *their* experience. Black young people identify as UUs, and want to continue in this faith and be an integral part of the life of their congregations. But they have experienced roadblocks over decades. I do see BLUU working toward ways to make a true place for people of color in our faith, not just as tokens of how progressive we are. I am putting my faith in the work of BLUU as a step toward correcting our past mistakes.

Two long-time supporters of Unitarian Universalism, Julie and Brad Bradburd, have now put out a challenge to all UU's, pledging to match contributions to BLUU up to \$1,000,000. Their request is not only to big donors, but to each and every UU congregant. Your Board has backed this and now it is up to each of us to show our support. This campaign to meet the promise and the practice of our faith will benefit every one of us. Diversity, new ideas, new approaches, new ways to worship and communicate, make us all better. This is our chance to make Unitarian Universalism more inclusive.

I have faith that you will feel called to be part of this movement.

Carol Holstein



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Levers of Justice

The Nobel Prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen wrote a book titled, *The Idea of Justice*, which he begins with this story: Three children are quarreling over a toy flute that each would like to have. One points out that she made the flute and by rights it should be hers. The second child is the only one who can play it. Surely she should have it. She could make music that would be pleasing to all. The third points out that he is so poor he doesn't have any toys at all, whereas the others have lots of toys. Surely his need is greatest.

If you think the flute maker should have it, that's libertarian justice. If you think the musician should have it, that's utilitarian justice. If you think the needy one should have it, that's egalitarian justice. Sen's point is that justice has more than one face.

The nature of justice has been a matter of contention among philosophers ever since Plato. I'm not going to try to answer what the greatest minds in history could never agree on. Instead, let me paraphrase a famous saying about pornography by Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in the 1960s. He said that he couldn't define it, but he knew it when he saw it.

Similarly, we may not be able to define justice exactly, but we often recognize injustice when we see it (especially when it's being perpetrated by others). In that regard, perhaps the most practical thing we can do is to figure out some ways to leverage political action to fight obvious injustices without pretending to achieve perfect justice or to be perfect ourselves.

In November a group of us attended one of Kimberly's Wisdom Path sessions in which a variety of approaches to justice were discussed. I took the liberty of distilling them into the following goals, which I like to call levers of justice, recalling John F. Kennedy's reference to the levers of power available to the American president. We may not have access to that power, but we can pull on the levers of justice through collective action. Our discussion group identified some of these. I've summarized the problem each addresses in italics:

1. Educate girls, empower women. *Patriarchal structures enslave the bodies of women and the souls of men.*
2. Impose a cost on greenhouse gas emissions. *Climate change hurts most, those who least deserve it.*
3. Fight corruption. *Corruption is a tax whose proceeds promote the general affliction.*
4. Insist on responsibility in return for privilege. *Those with wealth owe their good fortune to society as much as to themselves.*
5. Promote international workplace standards. *Free trade confers benefits but does not guarantee fair distribution of those benefits.*

Each of these levers will further an idea of justice that takes in the best of Amartya Sen's forms of justice even though they will not produce perfect justice. There may not even be such a thing as perfect justice. In any event, perfection is not on the menu. Politics is the art of the possible. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't reach for the stars, but let us not feel we have failed if we only get to the moon.

John Andrews



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