



summer @ first.u. providence

The Monthly Newsletter for
The First Unitarian Church of Providence
Corner of Benefit and Benevolent Streets
Providence, Rhode Island

S U M M E R 2 0 0 9

Summer services begin at 10:00a
in the Meeting House

Prelude begins before 10:00a

Fellowship Hour following the service
(outdoors, weather permitting)

Program for Children in the Parish House

A well-planned and -supervised program for children, including stories, activities, and snacks, is provided in the Parish House each Sunday during the summer. Childcare for infants and toddlers is also available.

The program is staffed by members of the First Unitarian Senior High Youth Group.

I N S I D E

Continuing Programs	2
Summer Garden Gourmet Event	3
Summer Office Hours and Ministry Services	3

S T A F F

Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
Frederick Jodry, Music Director
Rev. Christana Wille McKnight,
Community Minister
Posey Kooris, Administrator
Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant
Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator
Jaime Durango, Building Manager
Paul Webber, Evening Security
Tadesse Tsega, Sunday Building Manager

N E W S L E T T E R

Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
Susan Fisher, Editor
Carol Pentleton, Designer

**Remember: The deadline for the
September newsletter is August 15.**

Summer Services

Our summer services this year invite you along on a wonderful variety of “Spiritual Journeys” with members of our congregation who have agreed to share their personal journeys. Whether moving toward the mystery, or god, or no god; whether seeking new lands or coming home; whether finding meaning in tiny neurons or giant stars – each spiritual story holds out truth, hope, and possibility – and just a bit of unrest – for all of us who come to hear them.

Each of the summer services will also feature the talents of our congregation’s musicians, adding another dimension to each spiritual journey.

We look forward to seeing you in church this summer.

— *The Worship Committee*

June 21 I Spoke to God This Morning and She Says ‘Hi!’

10:00a Ryk McIntyre

Music: Fred Jodry

The semi-exciting story of how an arrested adolescent’s journey from Unitarian Universalism out into the multi-theistic world led him back to UU, but as a Christian. Ryk will talk about how that search informs his writing and how he lives and sees the world. (And a little bit on why he finds so many fellow Christians embarrassing or infuriating or both.)

Ryk McIntyre has many facets; he’s like costume jewelry that way. He is a husband, a stay-at-home dad, a writer and performer, a columnist for the website gotpoetry.com, and a co-host at open mics in Cambridge and Providence. He’s a fair cook, but a limited dresser, preferring black. He is not much for daylight and would be fully nocturnal if he could. He lives in Johnston with his wife, Melissa Guillet, and daughter, Autumn Skye. He also has two sons who live with his ex-wife in Virginia.

June 28 Seeking Common Ground

10:00a Rick Richards

Music: Michael Dawkins, piano

In 2007, the Rev. Robert Latham said to our congregation, “It’s not your differences that make you strong, it’s what you have in common that makes you strong!” – an interesting statement to make to people who tend to treasure their differences and identify with what makes them unique. The idea that similarities matter a lot can be taken as a challenge to our constitutionally granted right to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. But is this necessarily true? Can life, liberty, and even the pursuit of happiness be enhanced by establishing and living within commonly held understandings of our nature and purpose?

Rick Richards is in his third decade at First Unitarian and has remained so long because he has experienced the saving power of words, particularly those spoken from the pulpit, many times at this church. You can infer from this that he sees himself in regular need of salvation. While this is true, he thinks it is important that you know he sees himself mostly in need of salvation from his own foibles, ignorance, and temper. He thinks church helps.

July 5 Staying

10:00a Heather Vail

Music: Michael Dawkins, piano; Claudia Ford, alto

As a faith that strives to be “radically inclusive,” Unitarian Universalism is deeply shaped by the presence of individuals who have found the faith through a score of different means. But what about those of us for whom the “free and responsible search for truth and meaning” has called us to stay put? Drawing on experiences growing up UU and settling down in a state where no one ever leaves, Heather asks the question: “What does it mean to stay?”

Heather Vail is a third-generation Unitarian Universalist, Brown grad, and wannabe Rhode Island native. She works at a nonprofit in Providence’s SouthSide, the Family Life Center, whose mission is to serve individuals returning to Rhode Island from prison.

CONTINUING PROGRAMS

The following programs will meet throughout the summer months. All sessions are held in the Parish House.

Benevolent Street Zendo

Every Monday, 7:00p

This ongoing Zen Meditation group is part of the Boundless Way tradition, an interfaith Zen community maintaining close connections with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association. (All three of its senior teachers, including our minister, James Ford, are also Unitarian Universalists.)

Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction is available to those who come at 6:45p.

Member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha (www.boundlesswayzen.org)

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford at benevolentstreetzendo@gmail.com

Knitting Connection

Every Tuesday, 7:00p

Join other knitters in the congregation for an evening of knitting/crocheting and conversation. Bring your own project or work on our group project. Beginners are always welcome! No registration necessary.

Contact: Julie Meyers at kelmey@cox.net

Reimagining Religion

Second and fourth Tuesdays at 7:00p

Reimagining Religion is an ongoing attempt to employ the best recent scholarship in coming to grips with issues raised by radically new developments in the study of religion and thereby achieving a fuller appreciation of what religious literacy entails in the twenty-first century. No registration necessary.

Contact: Tom Hall at 401.647.2925 or twh2nd@aol.com

These ongoing groups will reconvene in the fall:

Spiritual Cinema

UUMeN

Cornerstones of Wicca

Sylvan Circle

July 12 Why Not God?

10:00a David House

Music: The StrongHouse Quartet; Lynda Gulley, piano

As members of a liberal religion, we are encouraged to accept one another's beliefs and promote spiritual growth. Yet, how accepting are we? And how do we respond to those promoting a strong opposing view, within or outside of our congregation? Maybe the answer lies in humility and compassion.

David House is a house husband and father who is searching for a role in promoting environmental balance. As a street evangelist in his teens, he heard lots of arguments about religion but little about spirituality. Since then, his spiritual search has led him to a place of peace and happiness, at least some of the time.

Beth and Stew Armstrong and June and David House are experienced musicians and First Unitarian choir members who have enjoyed making beautiful music together for eight years.

July 19 Stranger in a Strange Land: A Unitarian at a Catholic College

10:00a Wendy Oliver

Music: Lynda Gulley, piano; Neil Bartholomew, oboe

As a Unitarian teaching at a conservative Catholic college, Wendy has made some interesting discoveries about Catholicism – some heartening and some a bit shocking. When she arrived on campus many years ago, she had stereotyped ideas about the nature of a Catholic college; since then, she has acquired a more nuanced view of Catholicism. Developing her identity and spirituality as a Unitarian has been helpful in negotiating the challenges inherent in being an “other” in her workplace.

Wendy Oliver teaches dance and women's studies at Providence College, chairs the department of Theatre, Dance, and Film, and runs the PC Dance Company. Her summer writing projects include a dance writing textbook and research on dance companies in higher education. She and her husband, Cy O'Neil, have attended First Unitarian since the early 90s, and their children Shannon (20) and Lincoln (15) both participated in the RE program.

July 26 Finding God in Neuroscience

10:00a Lachlan Franquemont

Music: Mike Shand, flute

How broad is our understanding of what it means to be intelligent? Most accept that we humans are intelligent. Many believe animals are intelligent. How about an ant colony? What would make a machine intelligent? What might intelligence look like on a much larger scale, over a much longer time? When an individual neuron in the brain is studied in isolation, the timing of its pulses looks random. Only when many cells are studied can the probability of a pulse firing be determined. Physics works on this larger scale, but in neither place is the question of Aristotle's First Mover answered. It may be that our own brains can bring us closer to an understanding of a subtle power that literally moves us all.

Lach Franquemont is a graduate student in neuroscience at Brown University, studying the interaction between cortical areas involved with movement. He has served in combat with the Army twice, worked in four countries, and been to five continents. He joined the UU faith in 1997 in Columbus, Ohio; since then, he has served on multiple committees in Columbus, Phoenix, and here; taught Sunday school; and is helping to organize the “between college-age and middle-age” contingent of the congregation into the Breakfast Club.

August 2 Rapt in Awe

10:00a Pete Peterson

Music: Marilyn Eanet, piano; David House, tenor

Albert Einstein is quoted as proclaiming: “The most beautiful thing that we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.” Pete shares his reflections from searching for some glimpse of the Absolute under the stars.

Pete Peterson is a father, a widower, an astronomer, and a small-business owner. He jokingly refers to his Barrington observatory as his “chapel.” Through study and through many dusk-to-dawn nights of observing, he has pondered whether there is a reality beyond what we can see.

August 9 Born-Again Atheist

10:00a **Ted Martin**

Music: Tricia Kammerer, piano

T. S. Eliot wrote: "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." This sermon is the tale of a lapsed atheist who, in his later years, after much exploration, finds himself returning to his intellectual "home."

Ted Martin has been a member of the church since 1989 and has served in a number of leadership positions. He has been married to Lucille Riccitelli for 42 years; they have two adult sons and two grandchildren. Ted retired from the RI Department of Health in 2002 after 30 years of service. He currently does some part-time consulting and likes to say that he is "semi-retired."

August 16 Growing Children, Aging Parents

10:00a **Ralph and Sally Caruso** **Music: Rod Luther, piano; Barbara Slater, vocals**

Ralph and Sally are wondering what an empty nest will feel like for the first time in almost 30 years and will share thoughts on nurturing our children and grandchildren, our extended families, our aging parents, and ourselves.

Ralph and Sally Caruso are lifelong teachers and learners: Sally teaches eighth grade in Bristol-Warren; Ralph is an adjunct humanities instructor at New England Tech, having retired in 2006 from Barrington High School where he taught English for 35 years. They joined the church in 1996; both have served as Coming of Age mentors and worship participants, and Sally as an RE and Pru Comm member. They have been married for 26 years, during which they've raised Ralph's sons Martin and Matthew (now parents themselves) and their daughter, Emma, 18, who goes to Skidmore College in September.

August 23 Seeing with New Eyes: Making the Spiritual Journey of One Hundred Universes

10:00a **Claudia J. Ford**

Music: Claire Rosenbaum, piano

Claudia will talk about her decades of wandering around the globe with her children and her discovery that the spiritual journey was not just about trains, planes, and rickshaws, but also about the necessity of empathy. As Marcel Proust said: "The only real voyage consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes; in seeing the universe through the eyes of another, one hundred others – in seeing the hundred universes that each of them sees."

In a 29-year career in international development management and training, Claudia Ford has worked in South Asia, South East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Southern Africa. She has published a book about child sexual abuse in South Africa and is the subject of a documentary film, No Past to Speak Of. She is founder and director of The Princess Trust, a charity dedicated to the rights of women and children. Claudia is currently the Director of the Office of International Programs at the Rhode Island School of Design. A life-long Unitarian, she lives in Providence with two of her four children.

August 30 Surrender

10:00a **Erik Resly**

Music: Martha Rice Sanders and Howard Boksenbaum, recorders; Claire Rosenbaum, piano

We like to think that we're in control of our lives. What does it feel like to helplessly watch that myth shatter before your very own eyes? Drawing on his battle with cancer, Erik will clear spiritual space for a healthy surrender to that which sustains and transforms all meaningful existence – God.

Erik Resly is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Harvard, in preparation for ordained parish ministry in the UU tradition. He also interns at the UUA's Office of International Resources. Erik grew up overseas and was confirmed in the Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde in Frankfurt, before returning to the U.S. to graduate magna cum laude from Brown. Erik's family of origin resides in Cincinnati, while Erik enjoys life with his girlfriend, Jaclyn Martínez, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

VERY SPECIAL EVENT



The Fifth Annual Summer Garden Gourmet Event

Saturdays, July 18 or August 8 at 3:00p

You don't have to travel the world this summer to enjoy beautiful settings and exotic cuisine. You have only to venture a short distance to the fifth annual summer meal at the home of Herb and Nancy Weiss-Fried. Relaxing with pleasant company among wild-plant gardens overlooking a pristine lake, you'll feast like royalty on a gourmet meal. And you'll be contributing to the creation of the new Atrium Garden on Benevolent Street.

\$55 per person. Choose one of two sunny summer dates: July 18 or August 8 – each limited to 18 people. (Some special diets can be accommodated.)

Reservations and payments can be made through the church office (401.421.7970 or admin@firstunitarian.org).

PLEASE NOTE

Summer Office Hours

The church office will be open from 9:00a to 4:00p starting June 15. The office will be closed for the July 3, August 10, and September 7 holidays and for staff vacation the weeks of July 20 and July 27, reopening on Monday, August 3.

Ministry Services from Mid-June to Early August

Nearby ministers will be available for pastoral emergencies from mid-June to early August. Speak with staff in the church office for names and contact numbers. In case of emergency during the vacation break (July 20 to 31), the message on the answering machine will provide contact information.

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September 6 Thinking of the People Who Brought Us the Eight-Hour Work Day

10:00a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Music: Steven Moye, organ; First Unitarian Church Choir

James will reflect on the union movement and what it has meant to the development of modern Western society. He thinks there's something spiritual in such a reflection.

September 13 Homecoming and Water Communion – An Intergenerational Service

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford; Cathy Seggel, DRE; and friends

Welcome to the beginning of our new church year! We will celebrate the gathering of waters and of our community. Please bring a small sample of water from your summer travels or your backyard and be prepared to say a brief phrase about your water. (We will have “metaphorical” water if you forget!)

