



## SERVICES IN JANUARY

### **Sunday, January 2**      **Digging into the Question Box**

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

In many UU churches, the minister occasionally sets aside the Sunday sermon and instead responds to questions that are offered. In some congregations, those questions are submitted in advance and carefully culled. But not James. No, sir! So, bring your questions, write 'em down – and he will work through them. Watch him squirm. We might even be able to squeeze a little wisdom out of him.

*No Church School classes*

*Origins (birth-2 years) and Play Circle (2-3 years) rooms are open for our youngest children.*

*Following the service, James will bless our mitten tree. (See page 9.)*

### **Sunday, January 9**      **The Royal Road to Romance: A Meditation on Spiritual Tourism and What It Can Mean for Religious Liberals**

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

When James was young, one of his favorite books was *The Royal Road to Romance*, a travel adventure book written by Richard Halliburton in 1925. It was filled with photographs of strange and mysterious and wonderful places, often with spiritual significance. And James has never forgotten it, nor the taste of joy in life that it called for. Today is Halliburton's one hundred eleventh birthday, and James wants to celebrate and, perhaps, offer a criticism of spiritual tourism.

*Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.*

### **Sunday, January 16**      **What Martin Luther King, Jr. Taught Me**

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

James reflects on the nature of race in our country, what it has meant in his life, and what it can teach us as we try to live lives of integrity and honor in a world that has a bit too little of each.

*The Community Collection will be for the San Lucas Health Project. (See page 8.)*

*Young people in grades pre-K-7 begin in the Meeting House, then go to their classes.*

*Origins (birth-2 years) and Play Circle (2-3 years) rooms are open.*

### **Sunday, January 23**      **Why Marriage Equality Is So Blessedly Important**

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

James will reflect on the nature of politics and religion, of justice and the ways of love. He may be controversial.

*Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.*

*A meeting of the congregation following the service will discuss and decide whether to ask Members to endorse the marriage equality bill being debated at the State House. (See page 10.)*

### **Sunday, January 30**      **Damon and Pythias: A Consideration of Friendship**

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

E. M. Forster once famously observed, "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." James will explore the nature of friendship, its glories and its limitations.

*Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.*

*Following Coffee Hour, our Chalice Circles will be offering sample small-group ministry gatherings, using this sermon as their point of departure.*

### **4:00p**      **A Celebration of Music and a Nontraditional Communion Service**

Rev. James Ford will lead this eventide communion service, assisted by members of the board of Deacons, with music by Philip and Jacqueline Wheelock.

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

J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 1

#### ALL-PARISH EVENTS

#### Return the Guest at Your Table Boxes

Sunday, January 9

#### All-Parish Supper

Friday, January 14

#### A Conversation with a Zen Master

Tuesday, January 18

#### Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 23

#### Coming of Age Pasta Supper

Saturday, January 29

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#### S T A F F

Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister  
Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education  
Frederick Jodry, Music Director  
Posey Kooris, Administrator  
Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant  
Jenn Nardone, Acting Membership Coordinator  
Jaime Durango, Building Manager  
Paul Webber, Evening Security  
Henry Colpa, Evening Security

#### N E W S L E T T E R

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

DEACONS' CORNER



The annual Thanksgiving Dinner, run by the Deacons for the first time, was a huge success. Over 50 people participated, and \$97 was donated to the UUSC Guest at Your Table fundraiser. A good time was had by all.

Keep January 30 at 4:00p open on your calendar for the 4:00p Communion Service. This service is in the liberal tradition, non-creedal, emphasizing themes of remembrance, reconciliation, thanksgiving, and interdependence. There will be musical accompaniment by the Wheelocks.

We are still in the process of making our annual congregational calls, and if you have not heard from us, you should soon.

Happy New Year from the Deacons!

—Robert O. Jones, Janet Downing Taylor,  
Senior Deacons;

Judy Bowden, Mary Finger, Mary Frappier,  
David Bridgehouse, Russell Gifford,  
David Spremulli, Ruth Arellana, Jacqui Nye

**The Lay Ministry and Care Crew**

The Lay Ministry and Care Crews are ready to help those in the congregation who are in need. Please call on us if you, or someone you know in the congregation, needs a hand. Just a friendly word at the time of a death in the family, an illness or injury, or even the happy event of a new addition to the family.

While we cannot provide ongoing services, we are able to provide calls and cards, visits, rides to the doctor's office, emergency babysitting, emergency elderly companionship, meals delivered.

The "on call" Lay Minister for January is Martha Manno. Referrals or calls to the church will be passed on to Martha, who will call upon Care Crew Volunteers.

—The Lay Ministry Team:

Mary Frappier, Martha Manno,  
Kate Menard, Rick Richards, Bill Twaddell,  
George Beshers, and Andy Barrett



**Monkey Mind**

Indulge me. As many of you know, one of my principal spiritual disciplines is koan introspection. Koans are those peculiar phrases like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" People often think they are meant to startle people into new and wondrous states of mind. In fact, they are assertions about reality, together with an invitation to a conversation. So, here's the "indulge me." I want to make an assertion and from that assertion invite a conversation.

Now, in Zen there's a basic assertion that we human beings (and every blessed thing from atoms to galaxies) have two faces, kind of like the divine Janus, the god of gates. One face is who and what we are, you and I as discrete and real and precious - and, oh yes, passing. Think of the first UU principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person, extended to include everything. And at the very same time, we have another face, where every blessed thing (including you and me) is joined so very closely that we can say we are one. Think of the seventh UU principle about being part of an interdependent web.

So, let me offer, as an assertion and an invitation, a koan that might be of use as we embark upon this new year. It comes from a twelfth-century collection called the Biyanlu, most commonly translated as the Blue Cliff Record. Case 61. The relevant part for our purposes goes:

*Fengxue gave instruction, saying, "If one raises a speck of dust, the nation prospers. If one does not raise a speck of dust, the nation perishes."*

The koan goes on a little, but that's more than enough. Fengxue Yanshao was born at the end of the ninth century and became one of the great Zen masters of his era. And this is a pretty good example of why.

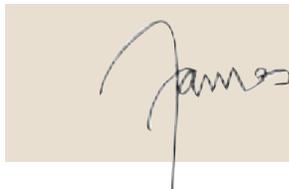
The Zen Buddhist way has an inclination to play down the phenomenal world with words like *dream* and *illusion*. More usefully, I think, for people committed to life in the world, such as we Unitarian Universalists, we are invited here to encounter the world as "the nation," as the republic of hope, as the place where we live, raise families, work, love, fight, do all those things that make up our individual lives.

"The nation prospers" as we appreciate the individual, the separate, how we are unique, and precious - and, oh yes, passing. This is our way.

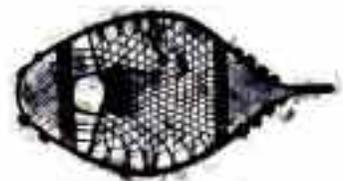
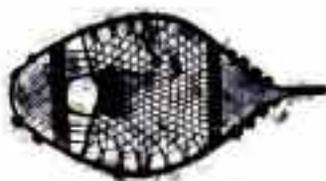
But it is at our peril that we forget the background, that other face. And this is the lesson. At the very same time we exult in the individual, we need to know this world births with a thought, a speck of dust, the first sense of separate, not unlike Eve's taste of that forbidden fruit. And it is a two-edged sword. The thing that keeps us from spiraling ever farther away from each other is that moment before the nation arises, before we saw our separation, before we took that taste of the forbidden fruit of our knowledge of self and other, of high and low, of good and ill. That oneness is as important as our separateness.

We need to notice, simultaneously, our common root, the deep truth that we are all born out of each other; *and* how, in the final analysis, we are all one. At least, that's what I say. This is a conversation. What do you have to say? How will you choose to live in this coming year? As one separate? As one? Or? Let's talk about that "or" . . .

See you in the Meeting House,



Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister  
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday,  
9:00a -12:00p Appointments are recommended.  
min@firstunitarianprov.org





## Spiritual Pathways

*If you are going to meditate by candlelight, do not hurry to light the candle.  
The glow may concentrate your energies, but it will cost you the contours  
of the room.*  
—John Marsh

This January, as we gather resolve to improve on this or that in our lives, we should remember the month's namesake, Janus, the Roman god of doors. It's a good time to look backward and forward and to honor the positive message of balance that January brings. I hope we will take time to go within, to rest and reflect during this, the darker, colder season.

This winter, the Religious Education Committee and I will take up our annual practice of focusing on current goals, evaluating explicit, implicit, and null (missing) curricula and stretching our creative energy toward adaptive, fresh ideas. Through many cycles and seasons of congregational life, we have taken stock and gathered new resolve to improve and grow. This process will remind us that it is important to also look at our best efforts, gaining inspiration for next steps in fostering congregational change.

Here are just a few highlights from the first semester of our Spiritual Pathways program:

- The Preschoolers visited all of our classrooms to sing carols, with jingle bells and full voices.
- The Kindergarteners have been helping with the "Hundreds of Hats" social justice effort.
- The sixth/seventh-grade Neighboring Faiths group visited the Vendanta Society of Providence, meeting with Swami Yogatmananda for a meaningful discussion on faith and common threads of tradition. They also attended a family Shabbat service at Temple Beth-El, where that congregation's sixth-graders led the service with Rabbi Les Gutterman.
- The eighth-grade Coming of Agers and their mentors designed chalices for monthly worship and wrote "I am from . . ." poems as they build their relationships.
- The fifth-grade Toolbox of Faith group has been gathering ways to understand Unitarian Universalist values and practices. They created Peace Flags with leader Ginny Fox.

I am proud of and grateful to all of our volunteer teachers and our children and youth as they learn and grow in Unitarian Universalist faith formation. I look forward to welcoming even more continuing and new families into our congregation. I, too, will be seeking balance along the way. And time for reflection and peace.

Again, from John Marsh:

*If you walk the night forest by flashlight, the electric beam may reveal details on your path,  
Shut off the light and you will travel the night forest as one who belongs.  
If you are going to meditate by candlelight, do not hurry to light the candle.  
The glow may concentrate your energies, but it will cost you the contours of the room.*

Take good care,

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education  
401.421.7970  
dre@firstunitarianprov.org

## Don't Miss the Coming of Age Class of 2011 Pasta Supper!

Saturday, January 29 at 6:00p (Snow date: Saturday, February 5)

The eighth-grade Coming of Agers and their parents warmly invite you to join them for the annual Pasta Supper in the Parish House. Come enjoy the community and fine table service by our youth wait staff. In conjunction, there will be a raffle, featuring exciting goods and services donated by class parents and friends. This fun-filled event is a fundraiser to benefit the group's annual overnight visit to the UUA headquarters in Boston. Tickets for both the supper and the raffle will be on sale all month in the Atrium during Coffee Hour.

Supper tickets: \$8/person, up to \$25/family

Raffle tickets: \$1 each, 6 for \$5



### Time to Return Guest at Your Table Boxes



Sunday, January 9

The UU Service Committee Guest at Your Table Boxes will be collected on January 9 by our seventh- and eighth-grade classes. Please leave your filled boxes in the baskets outside the Haynes classroom in the Atrium.

### Will You Share Your Family Story?

Our annual "Wholly Family" service will be held on Sunday, February 6. This multigenerational service has become an annual tradition that allows us to share diverse family stories that connect us to one another.

We are looking for families interested in participating in the service and sharing the unique story of their family. Is it your turn this year?

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Contact: Cathy Seggel,  
Director of Religious Education  
(401.421.7970 or [dre@firstunitarianprov.org](mailto:dre@firstunitarianprov.org))

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### Time Really Isn't Money

One essential element of a healthy congregation is broad participation in its programs, and we at First Unitarian are fortunate to have that. We have many vibrant social justice programs because we have many people putting time into them. One reason we have a wonderful religious education program is that volunteer teachers show up and make it happen, and one reason we have superb music is that a dedicated and talented group of singers show up at 9:00 every Sunday morning. (Outstanding paid staff are, of course, the other reason for both of those.) We have a healthy governance structure because of the countless hours given by the Prudential Committee and other leaders.

Another essential element of a healthy congregation is broad participation in its financial sustenance. The operating budget for each year depends on how much we are willing to offer to cover the costs of programs. Without that money, we cannot pay the utility bills, the staff salaries, and the many other (largely non-discretionary) expenses which make possible all of the programs to which our volunteer time gives shape and life.

As we approach the annual pledge drive when your gifts will determine what is possible for the 2011-2012 church year, it is important to remember that the time we give to our congregation does not contribute to paying the bills. Every volunteer makes a valuable difference in the life of our church, and every financial contribution makes the life of our church possible.

Let us all reflect on these realities as the pledge drive approaches.

– *The Canvass Committee: Jim Barfoot, Neil Bartholomew (chair), Herb Fried, Graham Nye*



### Reminder about Access and Parking

Space for the vehicles of visitors and the handicapped are part of what makes First Unitarian a warm, welcoming church. Please leave the spaces marked for Visitor Parking and Handicapped Parking for those who need them. There are two of each in the church parking lot, and there is more handicapped space on Benevolent Street. Be sure to display your handicapped placard.



## Sight Lines

As we enter our busiest time of the church year, there are lots of things to report. Your Prudential Committee has been working hard to grow and develop all our many programs. It might be helpful to list the members of that committee (with their offices or liaison assignments); all of them would love to talk with you about

what is going on in our congregation: Martha Rice Sanders, Past-President; Stewart Armstrong, President; Dan Kubas-Meyer, President-elect; Gail Brule, Clerk; Tony Allen, Treasurer; Pete Peterson, Assistant Treasurer; Rebecca Alberg, Community Life; Anne Connor, Spiritual Development; Bob Cox, Social Justice; Peter Gray, Personnel; Merritt Meyer, Planning; and Graham Nye, Finance and Investment.

The December meeting of the Prudential Committee was, again, one with a packed agenda. Happily, the committee approved the appointment of Jennifer Nardone as Acting Membership Coordinator for the remainder of the 2010-2011 year. Jenn is off to a fantastic start in her new position! We were also pleased that Susan Fisher has volunteered to develop a part-time position to help longer-term members and friends stay connected. There are lots of opportunities for people who are searching for ways to get further involved. Please speak to Jenn or Susan if you are interested.

The committee also approved a number of committee chairs: Membership, John Dooley and Stacey Allen (co-chairs); Standing on the Side of Love, Brian Paradis; World Affairs, John Petell; Denominational and Interfaith Connections, Beth Armstrong; Neighborhood Social Justice, Joe Salvatore; Canvass, Neil Bartholomew; Finance, Cy O'Neil; and Nominating, Michael Currier.

Cy O'Neil presented the good news that funding is in place for the publicity/advertising campaign developed by John Dooley and his Outreach Committee. He and James Ford reported on the progress to date (which will be revisited at spring Pru Comm meetings). The committee also approved a revised set of policies concerning church finances. And it was reported that the auction/fall fundraiser was a huge success, netting some \$7,500. Thanks to all who worked so hard on this important project!

Our highest priority item was the revising and solidifying of the five-year plan developed at the November Leadership Retreat and All-Ministries Event. We now have a list of priorities by year, designating which folks or groups will be responsible for implementation. This is our most important work and will shape the future of our church. We hope to get everybody on board. To this end, there will be a Congregational Conversation on Sunday, February 27, after church. Look for news and information about this meeting, and please plan to attend. Your input is so valuable!

Have a wonderful new year!

Stewart Armstrong, Jr., President  
pres@firstunitarianprov.org

## Treasurer's Report for December 2010

**Income:** Pledge receipts (51% of our operating budget) for FY11 stand at \$131,106, about 2% above our year-to-date budgeted amount and 9% above last year's receipts at this time. Rental income (9% of budget) was sluggish in November, associated with two unrented parking spaces. Rental income YTD is \$21,653, about 7% less than anticipated but not far enough off budget to be a concern. The auction/dinner fundraiser resulted in an impressive net profit of \$7,546.

Endowment income represents 32% of budget. The combined value of our three funds (Consolidated, Sunday School, and Property) stood at \$3,930,395 at close of trading on Friday, November 26, surprisingly up 1.4% from last month and up \$107,681 (2.8%) YTD.

**Expenses:** \$216,426 has been expended YTD against a budget of \$600,847. We are 14% below budget.

In summary, with the continued volatile economy, I find it remarkable, yet reassuring, that First Unitarian's finances are right on track.

– *Herbert (Pete) Peterson, Assistant Treasurer*



## Around the Church

### Greetings from Our New Membership Coordinator

Hello! I am happy to be serving the congregation as the Acting Membership Coordinator. I have been on the Membership Committee for several years now and have worked as co-chair and chair of the committee for the last year and a half. It is comforting to know I am not saying goodbye, just taking a different seat at the table. I appreciate the committee's support in this transition, and all of the kind words I have received.



My family and I have been attending the First Unitarian for about ten and a half years. During this time, I taught in the RE cooperative Sunday school, volunteered with the Food Share Pantry, and met (and still meet) with the same Chalice Circle group.

I look forward to helping newcomers navigate their way through the many avenues that can lead to membership, and the many opportunities to engage in church life that make First Unitarian such a lively place. Please introduce yourself if we have not met before. I am usually at the front door before the Sunday service and in the Newcomers' Café after the service.

—Jennifer Nardone, Acting Membership Coordinator ([mem@firstunitarianprov.org](mailto:mem@firstunitarianprov.org))

## We Welcome 13 New Members!

At the first Path to Membership class of this church year on November 20, we welcomed 13 new members. They were recognized the following Sunday during our New Member Recognition along with those who had joined since our last recognition.

Our newest members are Beth Anterni, Maria Boulmetis, Lauren Allegrezza, Chris Faria, John Mensinger, Scott Davis, Karen Boulanger, Nicholas Townsend, Anita Garey, Paul DeFrusco, Kathy Mack, Tiffany Reed, Gary Ciminero, Kim Goldthwait, Amy Dolan, Rob Davis, Michelle Dotzenrod, and Jayson Dotzenrod.

Two more Path classes will be held this year: Saturday, February 12, 9:00a-12:30p, and Thursday, March 24, 6:00-9:00p. For more information or to register for a class, contact the Acting Membership Coordinator, Jenn Nardone ([mem@firstunitarianprov.org](mailto:mem@firstunitarianprov.org)).

## Watch for the “Are You UU?” Campaign Rollout

Our new Outreach Committee has developed a comprehensive plan designed to let people know about our congregation through a dynamic multimedia campaign. Be on the lookout for social media ads on Facebook and Google, posters at bus shelters, and local television ads during *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, and MSNBC programming. A new website at [www.AreYouUU.org](http://www.AreYouUU.org) will give basic information about Unitarian Universalism and direct visitors to our church website.

Next up will be opportunities for members of the congregation to pitch in: you can put a bumper sticker on your car, hand out question cards when you're asked about the campaign, or make a financial contribution. This is arguably one of the most important investments you can make in the future of this church, this community, this state, and this world!

Contact: John Dooley ([dool@cox.net](mailto:dool@cox.net))

## Making Connections

A key to making connections and getting to know others in our community is to participate in some way, small or large, in the activities or tasks going on here. Some first steps to getting active are ushering on a Sunday morning, which can extend a feeling of inclusion, or signing up to provide Coffee Hour snacks, which we always need (a lot of!). Our Food Share Pantry takes a lot of planning and volunteers; some initial ways to get involved are donating monthly food items or helping out on Distribution Day. Just one hour of your time can be helpful and will be appreciated.

Contact: Jennifer Nardone (in the Newcomers' Café or [mem@firstunitarianprov.org](mailto:mem@firstunitarianprov.org))



## WHEEL OF LIFE

**Condolences** to the family of **Faith Barnett**, who recently died at the age of 92. She was a member of this church since 1963 and a long-time member of the Women's Alliance.

**Congratulations** to member Ophelia Alves and Stephen Palazzi on their marriage, October 30.



## HATS OFF TO . . .

**Tamara Barney** and family for gathering and delivering the coats for the Annual Coat Drive on the day after Thanksgiving.

**Judy Bowden, Janet Downing Taylor, and their fellow Deacons** for putting on an extremely successful Thanksgiving Dinner, which was enjoyed by some 50 people.

**Helen Haynes, Nancy Libby Fisher, and Susan Fisher** for their help in decorating the church for the holiday season.

Our November Coffee Hour Providers: **Carol Adams, Marilyn Eanet, Kate Guilbault, Michelle Dotzenrod, Erica Hanson, Ryk McIntyre, Kate Menard, Beth Anterni, Anne Connor, Erica Napolitano, Sara Lopolito, Lynne Hoppin-Fazzi, Elke Jones, the Deacons, Mellissa Guillet**, and all of you who brought something in to surprise us.

## Winter Storms and First Unitarian

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff will decide by 7:00a on Sunday if church will be canceled and will notify TV channels ABC 6, NBC 10, WPRI 12, Fox Providence, RI PBS and radio stations 630WPRO, 920 WHJJ, 1180CCNX news radio, 1290WRNI, Lite-Rock105, B101, 94HJY, 92ProFM, 98.1Cat Country, 93.3Coast FM, 95.5WBRU.

No one should make heroic efforts to get to church during a storm. If Providence bans street parking, remember that space is limited.



## Find Us on Facebook!

First Unitarian's Facebook page is loaded with updates, links, and great photos! Type "First Unitarian Providence"

in the search box.

**February All-Parish Supper** 🌟

Friday, February 11

**Program: The Aurea Ensemble Plays Schuman and Brahms**

For our February after-dinner program, the talented and accomplished Aurea Ensemble will return for a mid-winter soirée and recital featuring the music of Clara and Robert Schuman and their friend Johannes Brahms. The music, including two piano quartets, will be interspersed with the reading of letters, poems, and stories about the lives of these wonderful musicians. Nigel Gore, Charles and Consuelo Sherba, Emmanuel Feldman, and others will perform. You won't want to miss this outstanding program! (Please note: This program is subject to the availability of outside funding.)

**The Atrium Art Gallery** 🌟

Show Opening, Friday, January 14, 5:00p

The January Atrium Art exhibit will be a joint showing of two artist-photographers and a poet: James Corbin and David Bridgehouse, with poems by Doris Bridgehouse.

In February, the Gallery will present a photography show by Frank Scheel; and, in May, the work of the Cerulean Group, a group of artists that includes our member, painter Irene Allen.

There may be a few open spots in the spring, pending various confirmations. Inquiries about showing your own work or about the Gallery shows are welcome.

Contact: Chiara Romano van Erp  
(romano-vanerp-design@cox.net)

**Coffee Hour Co-op!** 🌟

Our Sunday after-service Coffee Hour is a cooperative effort. We need providers for January. You can bring in home-baked or store-bought goods – cheese, crackers, and fresh fruit are welcome alternatives.

Sign up with Janet Downing Taylor at the Coffee Hour Bakers Table in the First Parlor any Sunday during Coffee Hour.

**Neighboring Congregation**

**Open Mike Coffee House** 🌟

January 15, 7:30p

at First Parish Church, Taunton, MA

The \$5 admission includes a cup of coffee or tea. Performers are welcome; please inquire.

Contact: Judy Sheehan  
(jlynnsheehan@verizon.net)



**Community Life**

**January All-Parish Supper** 🌟

Friday, January 14

Everyone – young, old, and in between, newcomer and old-timer – is welcome at the All-Parish Supper and the program following. Reservations are strongly requested, please!

**5:45p Social Hour:** Bring hors d'oeuvres to share and/or wine for your own party if you wish.

**6:15p Potluck Dinner:** Bring a dish to share that serves at least eight people. You can bring a main dish, a vegetable, a salad, or a dessert.

**7:45p Program in the Meeting House: "Monologues on Resolutions"**

Join us for a special New Year's program featuring a UU version of the Kevin Broccoli Show on the theme of "New Year's Resolutions." Kevin is a talented and creative Rhode Island author and storyteller who writes engaging and entertaining short monologues about the human condition, and he recruits local actors to perform them. This is a performance that tells humorous and poignant stories about some of our best intentions - aspects of our lives that we decide to change, like dieting or bad relationships - and what happens when our resolutions do or don't work out. The show will be followed by questions and discussion between the audience and the performers. This should be a fun evening!

You can register for the dinner by filling out the sign-up sheet in the Sunday *Meeting House Times* and dropping it in the collection plate; or see Jim Estey at Coffee Hour, or call the church office in advance at 401.421.7970. For childcare, call Jim Estey at 401.351.1748 to sign up.

To support the Food Pantry, please bring hearty canned soups. Pull-off tops are best.

**Round-the-Table Dinners Are Back!** 🌟

Saturday, January 22

Avoid the post-holiday slump – you know how that can be, ughhh! – and sign up for the first Round-the-Table (RTT) Dinner of the year. These are small sit-down dinners for six to nine adults held at multiple homes. They are wonderful opportunities for sharing a co-op meal and fellowship with a mix of newer and more long-time members. RTT dinners have been hugely successful in the past and we expect to have over 20 simultaneous dinners around the state on this special Saturday evening. You do not need to be a member of First Unitarian to participate.

So, mark your calendars and look for guest reservation forms in the *Meeting House Times* on January 2, 9 and 16.

If you would like to host and your table will comfortably seat six to nine, please contact us.

Contact: Janet Noble (401.732.0256) or Carol Adams (401.433.4365) anytime.



**The Women's Alliance** 🌟

Monday, January 3

Business meeting at 10:30a, program at 11:00a

The January program of the Women's Alliance will feature Anne Nolan, President of Crossroads Rhode Island, who will address the growing price of homelessness, the impact on families, and what is being done to seek solutions.

A catered luncheon (\$9.00) follows the program at 12:00p. The program and luncheon are open to everyone.



Anne Nolan, President of Crossroads Rhode Island

**Church Directory Opt-Out**

We'll be issuing a new (non-photo) directory in January. If you do **not** want your information to appear in it, please contact the church office before January 5, 2011 (admin@firstunitarianprov.org or 401.421.7970).



## Spiritual Development

### Putting on Buddha's Clothes: A Conversation with a Zen Master

Tuesday, January 18, at 7:00p

The Benevolent Street Zen group of First Unitarian and the Providence Zen Center have joined together to bring our old friend Barbara Rhodes, better known in some circles as Zen Master Soeng Hyang, for a talk and conversation. Bobbie is the spiritual director of the Kwan Um School of Zen, the largest Zen community in the West. This is a rare opportunity, so don't miss it! A \$5 donation is requested.



### The Ethical Thing

First Tuesdays, January 4, 7:00p

#### January Topic: Marriage Equality

This month's discussion – on marriage equality – will focus on the role of the state in regulating marriage rights. There are compelling ethical questions before us as the new Rhode Island state legislature once again takes up the issue of marriage equality. Is there any ethical reason why the government should favor one form of marriage over any other? Does the state have a compelling interest in recognizing and regulating *any* marriage? All are welcome.

Suggested reading: "State Interest and Marriage: The Theoretical Perspective"  
([www.hofstra.edu/PDF/law\\_lawrev\\_bix\\_vol32no1.pdf](http://www.hofstra.edu/PDF/law_lawrev_bix_vol32no1.pdf))

Contact: Carol Pentleton ([carol@thedigitalartist.com](mailto:carol@thedigitalartist.com))

### Voices of Hope: Women Singing for Inspiration

First rehearsal, Sunday, January 23, 12:00-1:30p, at First Unitarian Church

Voices of Hope: Women Singing for Inspiration is a non-auditioned chorus of women from Rhode Island who come together to celebrate the power inherent in women's voices and to learn and perform a variety of choral music.

Women of all ages and backgrounds are welcome, with the goal of making connections through the magic of music. The music will be chosen from many sources and styles, including classical, folk, jazz, gospel, pop, and spirituals, with an emphasis on music written by and for women, and could represent the music of many cultures and countries.

For information, contact: Beth Armstrong ([bestar3@cox.net](mailto:bestar3@cox.net))

### UUMeN

Sunday, January 9, 7:00-9:00p

#### Topic: Confronting Our Mortality

Although we are mostly preoccupied with living, we are all eventually going to die. How and to what extent does the shadow of death influence the way we live? Do we really want to live a long life? What do we have yet to experience or accomplish? What is it that you would like to have written in your obituary or on your coffin?

All interested men are welcome to join us for discussion and for fellowship.

January Facilitator: Burr Harrison (401.943.1541)



## CONTINUING PROGRAMS

### Benevolent Street Zendo:

#### An Ongoing Zen Meditation Group

Every Monday at 7:00p

Benevolent Street Zendo is a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha, an interfaith Zen community ([www.boundlesswayzen.org](http://www.boundlesswayzen.org)) that maintains close ties with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association.

Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction will be available at 6:45p. We are a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha.

<http://www.boundlesswayzen.org>

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford  
([benevolentstreetzen@gmail.com](mailto:benevolentstreetzen@gmail.com))

### Natural Wisdom and Compassion Meditation

Every Wednesday at 7:00p

These guided meditations of love and wisdom from Tibetan Buddhism have been adapted into new forms that can touch the hearts and minds of people from all backgrounds and faiths to help each of us bring out the best in ourselves within our relationships, service, and social action.

Contact: Ken Bent ([kenbent@cox.net](mailto:kenbent@cox.net))

### Reimagining Religion

Tuesdays, January 11 and 25, 7:00p

We continue our examination of Ecclesiastes, seeking insights from a recent translation by Lloyd Geering, a professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, and from the introduction to his forthcoming book on his favorite Wisdom sage. Discover why this famous scholar has frequently translated the Hebrew *Elohim* as "Nature" rather than "God."

Texts may be requested from Tom Hall.

Leader: Tom Hall ([tw2nd@aol.com](mailto:tw2nd@aol.com))

### Sunday Pulpit Flowers

The wonderful floral arrangements at the pulpit on Sundays in the Meeting House are provided by members and friends of the congregation to honor a loved one or celebrate a special occasion. You can donate flowers for a particular Sunday service; after the service, you can take them with you or give them away.

Contact: Jacqui Nye ([funjac@hotmail.com](mailto:funjac@hotmail.com)); type "Flowers" in the subject line

**Our November Community Collection**

The Community Collection on November 21 raised \$1,203 for our Transylvania Partner Church. Many thanks to all who donated.

**Neighborhood Social Justice** 🌍🌱

*Sunday, January 9 at 12:15p*

*and Thursday, January 20, 7:00p*

Baby stuff! We are helping Children's Friend, Rhode Island's oldest child welfare agency, collect disposable diapers, wipes, and baby formula. The agency's drop-in centers in Providence and Central Falls have recently had more requests for these items than they can fill, so the need is great. We'll have the bins at the NSJ table. Thanks in advance for your generosity.

The NSJ Committee is reviewing ideas regarding the David St. Germain Fund. Anyone that would like to offer their idea, please stop by the NSJC table in the Atrium.

All are welcome at our monthly NSJ meetings. Hope to see you there.

Contact: Joe Salvatore (joesuu@gmail.com)

**First Unitarian's Social Justice Ministry**

Our Social Justice Ministry (SJM) enters the new year with 14 active committees addressing the economic and social needs of people at the local, national, and international levels. The SJM committees are Community Food Share, Standing on the Side of Love (SSL), Neighborhood Social Justice (NSJ), Habitat for Humanity, Green Sanctuaries, Knitting for a Better World, Denominational and Interfaith Connections, Peace Flag Project, Transylvania Partner Church, UU Legislative Ministry, UU Service Committee (UUSC), Village Bank, World Affairs, and Wholly Rollers.

The SJM committee chairs will meet on Thursday, January 20 at 7:00p at the church. Future needs for each committee will be the focus as we begin to prepare a budget request for the next church year.

You can contact the Prudential Committee liaison to the SJM, Bob Cox, for more information on the work of the committees and how you can get involved.

Contact: Bob Cox (rcox45@cox.net or 401.274.8384)



**Social Justice**

**San Lucas Health Project**

The San Lucas Health Project (SLHP) was born in and has been supported by First Unitarian for 18 years. We have a simple two-part mission: to provide direct medical and dental services to the people who live in and around San

Lucas Toliman, Guatemala, and to train and educate health promoters who minister to the health needs of their communities. Some 50 miles west of Guatemala City, San Lucas is 90 percent Maya.

Over the years, many people have gone from First Unitarian to San Lucas as students, nurses, nutritionists, social workers, physicians, and dentists. We generally spend a few weeks visiting the small villages and farms around San Lucas to provide health education, check-ups, dental extractions, and treatment of illnesses that we find. In addition we have trained some 15 health promoters who volunteer to assist their neighbors with illness and with prevention of. We have outfitted a dental clinic and trained the staff to provide dental treatments when there are no visiting dentists.

The Sunday collection on January 16 will be donated to the SLHP. SLHP is totally volunteer-run, so your donations directly benefit the people.

Contact: Steve McCloy (steven\_mccloy@brown.edu) or visit [www.slhp.org](http://www.slhp.org)

**News of Our Guatemala Village Banks**

While he was in Guatemala in November, Steve McCloy took time to find out how the two village banks our church has supported there were faring. Here's what he learned:

The Oasis Bank is thriving. With the assistance of the Guatemalan office of FINCA, I visited with the members of this bank (in photo), located in one of the rougher and poorer sections of Guatemala City (it holds 13 million people, and I doubt I would have found the bank on my own). The women are using their loans in various ways. Several buy materials to form terra cotta images for the tourist trade. Others sell prepared food or fruit in the market. They send their most sincere messages of gratitude for the opportunity provided by First Unitarian. We have made a difference.



Only after arriving in Guatemala City did I learn that our second bank was disbanded when the women were unable to pay off their collective debt. The funds that were left in the second bank have been transferred back into the Guatemalan FINCA office.

**Standing on the Side of Love Encores *Thy Will Be Done*** 🌟

*Sunday, January 16 at 12:00p in the Auditorium*

The Standing on the Side of Love Committee is excited to offer an encore showing of *Thy Will Be Done: A Transsexual Woman's Journey through Family and Faith*, a documentary video first presented in November. The film features Sara Herwig (who spoke at the October All-Parish Supper transgender discussion) and her path to ordination in the Presbyterian Church. The evangelical conservatives do not see her as a female and question her fitness to be a pastor. They challenge her candidacy because of her same-sex relationship, bringing up issues of gender justice and sexual equality in the faith communities. Sara candidly discusses her family relationship and the need for acceptance and faith.

Please join us for the film and discussion to follow. Refreshments will be available for purchase.

Contact: Brian Paradis (briananddeacon@comcast.net)





## Social Justice

### The Blessing of Our Mitten Tree

Sunday, January 2, following the service 🌍

Join our Kindergarten class for our first-ever blessing of the Mitten Tree, which blooms each winter at First Unitarian. All ages are welcome participate as our tree is blessed and then lovingly and warmly decked out with scarves, hats, mittens, gloves or socks for our neighbors who need them. Bring your warm thoughts and any new or gently used contributions to beautify our tree.

The Kindergarten class, in partnership with Knitting for a Better World, has been busy making hats for the Hundreds of Hats Challenge (see below). Some will be sent off to keep the heads of homeless folks warm and others will decorate our First Unitarian Mitten Tree.

Contact: Kathy Ahlquist (katherine.ahlquist@gmail.com)

### Hundreds of Hats! 🌍

Knitting for a Better World, the knitting group at First Unitarian, has set a goal of knitting 200 hats this winter. Some hats will be hung on our own Mitten Tree; others will be given to English for Action and homeless shelters. So far, we have made or collected 56 hats - we are well on our way!

In December, Julie Meyers delivered the first 25 hats to English for Action; they were raffled off to EFA students at their recent graduation ceremony. EFA's Education Director, Kim Kohler, tells us, "They were a hit!"

You can help us reach our goal! Knit with us on Tuesday nights or on your own, or donate yarn or money to buy yarn. You can also donate purchased or gently used hats, mittens, and scarves - every contribution is welcome and will count toward our goal. Our collection basket is in the Atrium.

### Pitch In at the Food Share Pantry 🌍



Distribution Day, Monday, January 17, 1:00-6:00p

**January is hearty canned soup month.** Pull-off tops are best. Donations can be placed in the barrel in the corner of the Atrium.

The Food Share Pantry is our single largest Social Justice Program, and it takes lots of human energy to make it happen. Share in our passion for food! We have volunteer opportunities for all who wish to be involved and help fulfill our mission and commitment to the community. Distribution is the third Monday of each month, and there's a lot to be done before, during, and after that day in order to serve the more than 150 families who rely on our Pantry.

- Food Bank Shoppers go to the RI Food Bank in Cranston once a month to pick up pre-orders and choose items from the shelves to bring back to the church. You need a van or wagon, the ability to lift heavy boxes, and approximately two hours during work hours. You would be partnered with an experienced shopper. Our Pantry cannot exist without this task; *we desperately need help.*
- Recycling volunteers sort cardboard at the end of distribution and prepare boxes to return to the Food Bank. Someone to oversee this portion of operation would be great.
- Distribution Day Volunteers work in three shifts: 1:30-3:30p (set-up), 3:30-5:00p (shopping with clients), 5:00-6:00p (clean-up, recycle, restock food). If you speak Russian, Portuguese, or Spanish, your translation skills are needed.

There are also smaller ways to contribute to the Pantry. You can buy and recycle magazines (see sidebar) and bring in donations for the food item of the month.

Contact: Martha Manno (Mmanno7@comcast.net), Amy Webb (amy.webb7@verizon.net), Nori Duncan (nori.duncan@gmail.com) or call the church office (401.421.7970)



### Knitting for a Better World 🌍

Every Tuesday, 7:00-9:00p

Come join fellow knitters for a casual evening of knitting and conversation. Work on your own project or join in one of our many group efforts: knitting warm clothes for immigrants learning English through English for Action in Olneyville, prayer shawls for women in the Middle East, dolls for children in Haiti, or hats and mittens for First Unitarian's own Mitten Tree. Beginners are always welcome. We have plenty of yarn and needles to get you started.

Contact: Julie Meyers (kelmey@cox.net)

### Habitat for Humanity Work Day 🌍

Saturday, January 15

The First Unitarian Habitat Work Group volunteers once a month with the Providence chapter of Habitat for Humanity Rhode Island ([www.habitatprov.org](http://www.habitatprov.org)), which usually has several houses under construction. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome; the only requirements are a willingness and ability to do physical work and a minimum age of 16. Our work day is the third Saturday each month. Sign-up is required as space on each month's crew is limited.

Contact: Peter van Erp (401.351.4881 or [petervanerp@cox.net](mailto:petervanerp@cox.net))

### Support the Food Pantry:

#### Buy Recycled Magazines 🌍

Sundays in the Atrium during Coffee Hour

Fabulous magazines have been rolling in to our magazine recycling project. We now have *Science*, *Utne*, *Archeology*, *Scientific American*, *Poetry*, *Rolling Stones*, *Motorcycle*, *Fishing*, *Yoga*, *Shape*, and *Self*, to name but a few.

Now we need you to take some of those magazines for a donation of 50¢ or \$1. All money goes to our Food Share Pantry to help buy items not available from the Food Bank. Our goal is to generate \$100 to \$150 a month to offset the cost of those items. Imagine how much one magazine can generate for the food pantry if we keep recycling it!

**Getting to Know . . . the UUA**

**General Assembly**

June 22-26, 2011, Charlotte, North Carolina

At last year's General Assembly, the following issues were discussed and voted upon:

**Statement of Conscience:** Creating Peace

**Resolutions:**

- Confronting sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination
- The green revolution in religion
- GA 2012, scheduled to be held in Phoenix

**Actions of Immediate Witness:**

- Clean up the Clean Energy Bill
- Gulf Coast environmental and economic justice 2010
- Oppose anti-immigrant measures at the state level

**Responsive Resolutions:**

- A reminder to support our youth and young adult groups
- Responsive resolution on right relationships
- Responsive resolution regarding 2012 GA

**Current Study/Action Issues:**

- Ethical eating
- Immigration as a moral issue

Who wants to go to Charlotte to vote on, act on, and study these issues and the new ones started in 2011? GA is fascinating, funny, exciting, exhausting, emotional, and wonderful. It's on the East Coast this year. First Unitarian needs to be there. Who wants to go?

Let me hear from you.

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Beth Armstrong,

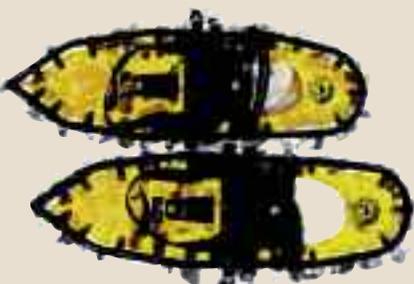
Denominational and Interfaith Connections  
(401.253.7987 or bestar3@cox.net)

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**Atrium Bookstore**

*Every Sunday during Coffee Hour*

The Atrium Bookstore helps members and friends find the perfect book for gift-giving or for their own reading. Books are purchased from the UUA's own Beacon Press and Skinner House and more recently from Skylight Paths Publishing, an interfaith publisher of various faith traditions. And there are books written by several church members and by our own minister.



**Social Justice**

**An Important Message on Marriage Equality from the Standing on the Side of Love Committee**

From time to time over the long history of the First Unitarian Church of Providence, the congregation has felt compelled by our belief in social justice and equality to take a stand on issues of great significance in our times. When we do this, we are following in the footsteps of our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors, who in their individual churches have taken stands on the important issues of their times, issues such as abolition. We also do this in accordance with the tradition of taking stands on civil rights and social justice issues as an association of congregations during annual General Assembly meetings of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The Standing on the Side of Love Committee of the First Unitarian Church believes that we are in the midst of one of those important times in our history. We believe that all people deserve the opportunity to attain the legal protections and safeguards of civil marriage, and therefore we have proposed that, as a church, we publicly endorse marriage equality in Rhode Island. We believe that, as the flagship UU church in Rhode Island and a beacon of hope for all people whatever their sexual orientation, it is right and necessary for us to take a public stand. We believe we should do this through a vote of the congregation.

Our bylaws provide a framework for such a congregational vote:

*Whenever it shall appear to the Prudential Committee, under such rules as it may from time to time adopt, that the congregation should be called upon to take a stand on an issue of public interest, it shall call a special meeting of the Church. If a majority of the members present at said special meeting shall so vote, notwithstanding Article XII, Section F, a plebiscite by mail on such issue shall be taken of the members entitled to vote, with provision made to insure secrecy in the plebiscite. If at least one-third of the total eligible voting members shall vote and if two-thirds or more of the ballots returned shall be in favor of the proposition stated in such issue or shall be against the proposition, then the consensus of the congregation shall be deemed to be in favor thereof or against it, as the case may be, and shall be published as the stand of the Church on such issue, with reference being made to the actual number of votes pro and con and the total number of members entitled to vote.*

**The proposed language for the endorsement of marriage equality is as follows:**

"Whereas, a just society guarantees to all of its citizens certain civil rights, and

"Whereas, every adult deserves the opportunity to attain the legal protections and safeguards gained through civil marriage, and

"Whereas, the First Unitarian Church of Providence, Rhode Island affirms and promotes the Unitarian Universalist Association's principles of

"The inherent worth and dignity of every person,

"Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, and

"World community, liberty, peace, and justice for all,

"We, the congregation of the First Unitarian Church of Providence, by a vote of our membership, endorse marriage equality in the state of Rhode Island. Further, we call upon Rhode Island's legislators to pass this legislation and for the Governor of Rhode Island to sign it into law."

In order to give members of the congregation opportunities to discuss the pros and cons of making a public endorsement for marriage equality in Rhode Island, we have scheduled Congregational Conversations on the dates below. Please bring your questions and concerns for discussion.

**Sunday, January 9 at 12:00p in the Meeting House**

**Wednesday, January 19 at 7:00p in the Haynes Room**

**On Sunday, January 23**, following the procedure in our bylaws, the congregation will vote whether to go forward with a plebiscite by mail of the full membership on endorsement of marriage equality.

January 2011

"Wisdom is the quality that keeps you from getting into situations where you need it." -Doug Larson

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday



**1**  
New Year's Day

<p><b>2</b> Sunday Service 10:30a No Sunday School</p>	<p><b>3</b> Women's Alliance 11:00a Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><b>4</b> The Ethical Thing 7:00p Lay Ministry 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p</p>	<p><b>5</b> Prudential Committee 6:00p Meditation 7:00p</p>			
<p><b>9</b> Sunday Service 10:30a Mentor/Mentee 12:00p Marriage Equality Conversation 12:00p Neighborhood Social Justice 12:15p UU Men 7:00p</p>	<p><b>10</b> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><b>11</b> Canvass Committee 7:00p Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p</p>	<p><b>12</b> Meditation 7:00p</p>	<p><b>13</b> Deacons 7:00p</p>	<p><b>14</b> Parish Supper 5:45p</p>	<p><b>15</b> Habitat for Humanity 8:30a-2:00p</p>
<p><b>16</b> Sunday Service 10:30a Membership Committee 12:15p Standing on the Side of Love Movie 12:00p</p>	<p><b>17</b> <b>MLK Holiday</b> <b>Church Office Closed</b> Food Pantry 1:00p-6:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><b>18</b> Finance 6:30p Bobbie Rhodes 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p</p>	<p><b>19</b> Marriage Equality Conversation 7:00p Standing on the Side of Love 7:00p Meditation 7:00p</p>	<p><b>20</b> Social Justice Ministry 7:00p Neighborhood Social Justice 7:00p</p>		<p><b>22</b> Round the Table Dinners</p>
<p><b>23</b> Sunday Service 10:30a Cong. Meeting 12:00p Womens' Chorus 12:00p <b>30</b> Sunday Service 10:30a Chalice Circle 12:00p RE Committee 12:00p Womens' Chorus 12:00p Communion 4:00p</p>	<p><b>24</b> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p <b>31</b> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><b>25</b> Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p</p>	<p><b>26</b> Executive Committee 7:00p Meditation 7:00p</p>			<p><b>29</b> Coming of Age Pasta Supper 6:00p</p>

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We are a  
Welcoming Congregation.

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[mem@firstunitarianprov.org](mailto:mem@firstunitarianprov.org)

## Chalice Circles: An Invitation to Spiritual Growth

Chalice Circles offer one of the principal opportunities at First Unitarian for ongoing spiritual growth in our large faith community. Each small group of six to ten people, meeting over a period of weeks or months, becomes an intimate and welcoming spiritual community in which participants support, nurture, and minister to each other's quest for religious insight and spiritual meaning.

Each group adapts to its members interests, but the groups share common elements: a simple format (centering, brief personal sharing, discussion of a topic or activity, and closing) and a covenant (developed by the group) for how they will relate to each other and to the larger community. The groups are led by trained facilitators who are members of the church.

Chalice Circle members commit to meet twice a month for two hours for at least eight sessions, to ensure continuity and build a sense of community.

If you are seeking to make connections, to gain a greater sense of community, and to grow ethically and spiritually, consider joining a Chalice Circle.

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Contact: Dianne Mailloux (401.353.0137)

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### Drop-in Chalice Circle: On Friendship

*Sunday, January 30, 12:30-2:30p at the church*

This month's Chalice Circle drop-in is an opportunity to reflect on and discuss the nature of friendship, building on James Ford's sermon that morning. Everyone is welcome to participate in these small-group conversations, whether you're trying it out to see if Chalice Circles is right for you or just wanting to slow down and enjoy a thoughtful conversation with fellow congregants.

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Session coordinator: Dianne Mailloux

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