



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2015

Services in the Meeting House

Sunday, December 6 "Hanukkah: To Dream the Impossible Dream"
10:30a **Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman**

Child Dedications will be celebrated during the service.

Young people pre-K–Senior High begin in the Meeting House, then go to their classrooms.

Newborn–three-year-old room is open.

Sunday, December 13 "Advent: Unafraid of the Dark": A Sermon of Music and Verse
10:30a **Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman**

Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.

Sunday, December 20 Multigenerational Holiday Pageant
10:30a **Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman & Friends**

Childcare for infants–three-year-olds will be open on the second floor of the Parish House.

Thursday, December 24 A Christmas Eve Celebration of Lessons and Carols
5:00p **Cathy Seggel, DRE & Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman**

9:00p (Prelude music at 8:45p) **Cathy Seggel, DRE & Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman**
These two services bring dignity and the values of liberal religion to a central celebration of the Western tradition. The 5:00p service is family oriented, while the 9:00p service is more meditative. Music at the 9:00p service will feature works for chorus, strings, and oboe and will include Boston composer James Woodman's cantata "The Midwife's Tale," a medieval text telling the story of Christ's birth through the eyes of a midwife assisting at the birth. Selections from Mozart's oboe quartet in F major will also be played.

The offering at both services will be dedicated to our First Unitarian Food Share Pantry.

Sunday, December 27 "Fire Communion: Like Sands through the Hourglass . . ."
10:30a **Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman**

No Sunday School. Childcare rooms open for nursery–three-year-olds.

Sunday, January 3 "This Is the Year": A Sermon -in-Song
10:30a **David Roth**

David will offer a "sermon-in-song" on new beginnings. His work celebrates ordinary people who do extraordinary things, how one person can make a difference in the world, and how simple and singular acts can indeed change paradigms. Join us for a rollercoaster ride of song and story.

David Roth strikes many chords, hearts, and minds with his unique songs, offbeat observations, moving stories, sense of the hilarious, and powerful singing and subject matter. To find out more about him visit his website (www.davidrothmusic.com)

Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.



We are a Welcoming Congregation

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Staff

- Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman, Interim Minister
- Rev. Gene Dyszlewski, Community Minister
- Rev. Gwendolyn Howard, Community Minister
- Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
- Frederick Jodry, Music Director
- Posey Kooris, Administrator
- Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant
- Jenn Nardone, Membership Coordinator
- Jaime Durango, Building Manager
- Paul Webber/John Forde, Evening Security
- Pedro Vasquez/Anderson Correa, Sunday Building Managers

Newsletter

- Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
- Susan Fisher, Proof Editor
- Design Consultant, Amy Webb
- Next Deadline: December 15

First Unitarian Church of Providence
 One Benevolent Street
 Providence, Rhode Island 02906
 Tel: 401.421.7970
 Fax: 401.276.4291

Web: www.firstunitarianprov.org
 Email: min@firstunitarianprov.org
dre@firstunitarianprov.org
admin@firstunitarianprov.org
mem@firstunitarianprov.org



From My Window . . .

Ah, yes, the holiday season is upon us! That thought sure means a lot of different things to all of us. I remember, some years ago, when my in-laws, Sid and Jean Blustein, came to visit our family for Thanksgiving. We all had a wonderful holiday weekend together and, as a finishing touch before Sid and Jean left for home, we went out for Sunday dinner at a pleasant, nearby restaurant. It was a very nice meal, and the service we received was more than ample.

And then at the very end, when the waitress brought the check to the table, she smiled a very big smile and said, "I wish you all a very Merry Christmas." I watched as the smiles on my Jewish mother- and father-in-law faded into something of a resigned stoicism. I could read in their expressions the realization that the annual onslaught of assumed Christian revelry was once again upon them. Both of them managed something of a smile and a nod to the waitress and wished her happy holidays in return.

This occurrence took place many years before the "war on Happy Holidays" began. This supposed "war" is a very silly and shortsighted ambition by conservative Christians to put Christ back in everyone's holidays – even if there was never a Christ there to begin with. I'm no Scrooge on this matter; I love saying "Merry Christmas," but I'm never comfortable saying it to anyone if I'm not quite sure that they celebrate Christmas. This is not the point of sharing this story with you though. The point of it is to suggest that the holiday season is one that often is loaded with all kinds of personal history and deep feelings about all kinds of things – religion, family, births, deaths, divorces, losses . . . the list goes on for quite some time.

The month of December, when nights are at their longest, compels many of us to want to spread good cheer. Goodness knows, in these very difficult times in our country and in the world, many of us can surely use a good dose of cheer. That said, we also need to remember that not everyone can deal with much cheer in any way during the holiday season. For some among us, the pain and fear of recent, or of even distant losses, are a bit too close to the surface during these holidays to cope with even a modicum gaiety.

Assuming that everyone wants to be festively enjoined in the merriment is . . . well, it's much like the waitress years ago wishing my Jewish family a Merry Christmas. It's well intended but insensitive. So please, be good to one another, be sensitive to others, and in that way, be the most loving holiday gift you are capable of being for the most people possible.

If you are someone who is grieving loss at this time, I want you to know that there are a number of folks in the congregation who don't think you need to just get over it. They are hard at work creating a group (or groups if need be) for folks who might want to engage with others in processing grief. Perhaps you would like to participate in such a group. Perhaps you would like to be a resource for such a group. Either way, going forward there will be a discrete sign-up notebook on the Joys and Sorrows table in the back of the Meeting House for you to let us know, or you can email me of your interest.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot? I certainly hope not. And I hope that whatever traditions, whatever needs, you have for December and the holidays, you find this time to be meaningful and fulfilling in every way it can be.

See you at church.

Please pray and act for peace and justice,

Charles Ortman



Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman, Interim Minister
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday
min@firstunitarianprov.org

Deacons' Corner

Deacons Calling. We are your liaisons. Please contact us with any concerns and questions you may have.



Relaunching our Wassail tradition.

The Board of Deacons invites you to a reception after the second Christmas Eve service. Our community maintained this tradition for many years as a chance to gather and enjoy one another's company. We hope that you will come. We hope that you can help bake something, help supply finger foods, set up or take down, or make a "wicked good" punch.

Deacons' Salon this month will be on Sunday, December 27. As many Deacons as can will be there to engage with you about topics that concern or interest you.

Black Lives Matter. Your Deacons want to be better informed about what it means to be engaged in this movement. How we connect with the rest of the world is a spiritual matter. The Deacons are starting with becoming better informed ourselves. We have explored the very broad array of items on the UUA website. Tom Getz is taking a vigorous lead in organizing a book group or groups around Michelle Alexander's *New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. We extend a special invitation to our youth to participate in these groups. We expect that they are way ahead of us in reading this book. Our friends at Bell Street Chapel are reading Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*.

The Board of Deacons also stands with those who want a vote to be placed before the congregation on this topic. It will be a sad day if we merely hang a banner on our church and think we have "walked the walk."

Mindful Grieving. There are many in our community who grieve. Some continue to grieve for years with no outlet for their pain. In 2016 the Deacons will assist in launching a program called Mindful Grieving. It will offer a group experience for people to share their grief. We are still designing this with the assistance of mental health and educational professionals. It will launch after the holidays.

Peace on Earth to All of Good Will!

The Deacons: Shirley DiMatteo, Steve McCloy, Senior Deacons; Rebecca Alberg, Stew Armstrong, Jim Barfoot, Kate Bowden, Tom Getz, Ariadne Greenberg, Sharon Kernan, Mary Spere



Spiritual Pathways

A Spark in the Dark

I have embraced the layer of my role that is able to curate resources, sometimes lessons or ideas that can inform and perhaps guide the faith development of children, youth, and adults. As the winter solstice approaches, I seek ways to share wisdom that I have found for myself and others. This

food for thought is more nourishing than the yummy treats I tend to consume when the colder, darker days arrive.

We are living in sad, fearful, and hopeful times. How can our UU living tradition be present in our ways of coping, thriving, and moving forward? And how do those who are blessed and burdened by nurturing and protecting the next generation fuel their own flames? While I'm sure that I do not have that answer, I can point to some pathways that I have found helpful.

Sharing our own stories of effort and actions for justice with children and youth is a direct way to model lives that are involved in making a better world. When we include and welcome our youth into congregational antiracist, nonviolent, peacemaking education and action, we are inviting them to live their values with us. When younger children are provided with ways to do small acts of kindness and generosity, they are directly taught that we care. From one of my sages, Anne Lamott: "We do the next right thing. We buy or cook a bunch of food for the local homeless. We return phone calls, library books, smiles. We make eye contact with others. These are blessed sacraments." Our children and youth are watching, learning, forming their own ideas of what is most important.

Perhaps our sparks are like those of a yule log, in it for the long haul. The light and heat of its fire were magic in the winter cold and dark. The sparks from its burning were said to create warmth in human souls. I don't know about you, but I am a shy extrovert who needs community. For me, the Unitarian Universalist Standing on the Side of Love campaign is more than a slogan or a logo. It is the way I choose to move through life. SSL states its goal as "harnessing love's power to challenge exclusion, oppression, and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, race, religion, or any other identity. Closely associated with Unitarian Universalism, but remaining steadfastly open to people of all faiths, and people whose only faith is LOVE!"

Perhaps, as Lindsay Bates writes: "We ignite our flames in worship, to face the world's shadows, a chalice of light. To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth, To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage. To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace. May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives."

Taking time for what we value is an ultimate spiritual practice. At winter holiday time, Unitarian Universalists of all ages celebrate, each in their own ways, from the traditions of their families of origin, as well as from their chosen faith. My hope is that we will feel our individual and community sparks in the dark.

From Addae Kraba:

Let this holiday season be a time for engaging heart to heart.

For those, who like the innkeeper, turned us away.

For holidays that didn't live up to our expectations.

For miracles gone unnoticed;

For wise men and women, whose gifts we rejected.

All these we remember, we forgive, we love.

In doing so, may we be granted an abiding peace.

Whatever your brand of celebration might be, my wish is that you will feel warmth, love, wonder, renewal, and the courage and will to make peace.

Take good care,

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

Holiday Season Schedule

Sunday, December 6

10:30a Children and youth begin in the Meeting House for congregational Child Dedications

12:00–1:30p Mentor/Mentee and Parents Lunch and Program

Sunday, December 13

10:30a Children and youth worship in Chapel and attend Sunday School classes.

12:00p Recycled Toy Sale in the Auditorium led by the sixth-grade class to benefit a cause to be determined by the young people.

1:00p Amnesty International Write-a-thon

Sunday, December 20

10:30a Our annual no-rehearsal, not quite traditional, multigenerational Christmas Pageant

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve Celebration of Lessons and Carols

5:00p Our family-oriented Service

9:00p Our meditative adult Service

Sunday, December 27

10:30a All ages are welcome at this "Fire Communion" service.

No Sunday School. Childcare rooms open for nursery–three-year-olds.

Sunday, January 3

10:30a Children and youth worship in Chapel and attend Sunday School classes.

Guest at Your Table boxes will be collected by the eighth-graders.

Youth Helping Others during the Holiday Season

Our children and youth are taking part in many congregational Social Justice programs around the holidays. See page 9 for details.

Find Us on Facebook!

First Unitarian's Facebook page is loaded with updates, useful links, photos, and more!



Type "First Unitarian Providence" in the search box and check it out!

If you are interested in posting a church related event email to Membership Coordinator Jenn Nardone (mem@firstunitarianprov.org) or contact the church office.



Sight Lines

“True peace is not the absence of tension but the presence of justice.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

In November, I had the great fortune to participate in a workshop on Pre-emptive Radical Inclusion, lead by my friend Cindy Beal, who is a Justice and Peace consultant and a Director of Religious Education. Some of the powerful lessons from the workshop included: a) how we can lead through a philosophy of manifesting just, creative, and loving spaces; b) the power of intentionally positioning ourselves, before we know anything at all about who is present in our midst, to presuppose that everyone (those of different beliefs, races, gender presentations, sexual orientations, social class . . .) is already, and always, with us; and c) the value in becoming more aware of what we do not see because of our many privileges and the importance of extending our privilege to hold up those whose perspectives might differ from our own, . . . to listen and perhaps even give up our leadership/privilege to allow ourselves to guide us.

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” – Mahatma Ghandi

In November, the Prudential Committee initiated a conversation among the congregation about how we can engage with and support the Black Lives Matter movement. There was a lot of emotion and energy in that conversation, and it is gratifying to see so much action come from it. Book group discussions of Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* are being planned; the October Parish Supper program included presentations and discussion with leaders in our community from housing, public safety, and the NAACP; and we are seeing a renewed interest in Standing on the Side of Love, and a mindfulness about how our youth can partner with us toward addressing the conversation productively. I am so very pleased by this energy and look forward to seeing and hearing more.

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves.

... Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.” – Rainer Maria Rilke

In this year of transition for our community, I am learning to be a leader who can sit with uncertainty. Another message from the Pre-emptive Radical Inclusion workshop is that certainty comes at the expense of learning, for when we are certain we already know about things, there is no room for learning. In our intention to learn, we need to accept that we might make mistakes, that others’ feelings might be hurt, and that we might need to make room for apologizing and making amends. I am hoping to be a leader who models listening and an understanding that there are those who know more and see more and experience more than I do. I am so very grateful to all of you for sharing your insights, perspectives, and lives with me.

Happy and healthy holidays to all!



Cynthia Rosengard
President, Prudential Committee
pres@firstunitarianprov.org

Treasurer’s Report

Where are we financially as we approach the mid-point of our fiscal year?

With 33% of the fiscal year completed, we have received 29% of the amount budgeted as pledge receipts. It should be noted that our endowment was down slightly on October 1. This will not affect our endowment income this year, and currently the stock market has recovered by approximately 9% over the past month.



So, what is our endowment? It is the accumulation of funds we have received over many years as gifts and bequests to maintain our church and our programs. Currently, its value is approximately \$4,950,000, divided among three accounts; Property, Sunday School, and Consolidated. The first two accounts are self-explanatory. The Consolidated is the single fund which includes all non-restricted gifts.

In building our annual budget, we take 5% from the total endowment to supplement other income sources (pledges, rentals, etc.). This is the maximum recommended draw on nonprofit endowments.

– Graham Nye, Treasurer

Winter Storms and First Unitarian

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff decide whether church services will be canceled. If the City of Providence announces a ban on street parking, church will be canceled.

A cancelation decision will be made by 7:00a on Sunday and conveyed to the following media outlets:

- TV channels ABC 6, NBC 10, WPRI 12, Fox Providence, RI-PBS
- Radio stations 630WPRO, 920WHJJ, 1180 CCNX news radio, WRNI, Lite Rock105, B101, 94HJY, 92ProFM, 98.1Cat Country, 93.3Coast FM, 95.5 WBRU.

If church is open during a storm, no one should make heroic efforts to get to church. Use your own best judgment about whether it is safe to drive or come to church on foot during any stormy weather.



Our Ministerial Search

Your Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) continues to work at an accelerated pace to complete the phase of our search in which we listen to the congregation's desires for our next minister in multiple ways and analyze what we've heard. So far we have held a Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop, led six congregational discussion meetings, met with 18 past and current presidents of the congregation, interviewed eight current staff members, and conducted a survey of all First Unitarian members and friends. Now we are busy writing, editing, and compiling information about us for searching ministers to read.

We would like to share with you a brief summary of the survey we asked all members and friends to complete earlier this fall. A huge thank-you to each of the 256 people who participated.

Who we are

First, here are some demographics based on those who took the survey. Most of us are over 40 years of age, 91% are white, and we are heavily female (62%). Most identify as heterosexual (84%) and are married (73%). First Unitarian is well educated: 94% have a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and 66% have a master's or doctorate degree. Geographically, 91% of us live within a 30-minute drive of the church and 50% within a 15-minute drive.

Our religious backgrounds are predominately Christian: Protestant (35%), Catholic (29%), none (18%), as well as UU (14%), Jewish (3%), and Buddhist (2%). We have a healthy spread of both new and long-time attendees: 31% for 5 years or less; 28% for 6-15 years; 31% for 16-35 years; and 10% for 36+ years.

Most of us attend church regularly and participate in church activities. In fact, over half of us spend 3-10 hours or more a week on church activities.

What we value personally and spiritually

When asked what is most important to us about our relation to First Unitarian, the top three responses were community/fellowship, the minister, and intellectual stimulation. Our top four reasons for attending Sunday services are personal reflection and meditation, spiritual experience, intellectual stimulation, and sense of belonging.

Our top two most important elements of the worship service are sermons (76%) and music and choir (61%). The sermon topics we most appreciate deal with values and ethics, social justice, and spiritual growth. The two celebrations within our church calendar that we rank highest are the eighth-grade Coming of Age service and the service led by our Senior Youth.

What we value in our next minister

The survey asked about skills and enthusiasms we seek in our next minister. At the top of our list is preaching, followed by worship, spiritual guidance, and community building. When asked what human qualities we would most like our minister to possess, the number one quality was compassion. Other qualities we value are tolerance, sense of humor, inclusivity, intelligence, good speaker, and good listener. We also want the new minister to become a part of the community and get to know its members, including the quieter people.

In summary, our congregation wants an excellent preacher who offers inspirational and stimulating sermons and a strong worship experience. We want a compassionate minister who is tolerant, patient, and listens well. S/he needs to be intelligent with a sense of humor and a collaborative leadership style.

Where we want to go

Our vision of the future concentrates on two related topics: growing our community and strengthening our finances. More diversity in our growth is a priority.

As far as the work we want to accomplish together, we are passionate about many topics and prefer a multidimensional set of priorities. We would like to maintain a broad spectrum of projects.



Ministerial Search Committee:

(top, l to r): Wendy Oliver, Rick Richards, Shelley Stephenson, Domenic Napolitano; (bottom) Bill Koteff, John Simmonds (chair), Lisa Sampson

MUCH APPRECIATED!

The MSC would like to thank the following for their assistance in the search process during the past two months.

Notetakers at Cottage and Ministry Meetings
Stew Armstrong, Neil Bartholomew, Kate Bowden, Gail Brule, Michael Capelli, Sharon Kernan, Martha Manno, Ted Martin, Steve McCloy

Editors for Congregational Record
Margaret Balch-Gonzalez, Susan Fisher, Bev Koteff

Negotiating Team
Ann Boyd, Graham Nye, John Simmonds

Photography
Richard Boober, Phil Lieberman



Community Life

December All-Parish Supper

Friday, December 11

Everyone, young and old and in between, is welcome at these monthly gatherings of members and friends of the congregation.

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

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

8:00p Program in the Meeting House: A Child's Christmas in Wales

Our after-dinner program will be a special holiday celebration featuring the Aurea Ensemble's presentation of *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, by Dylan Thomas. This beloved story will be narrated by renowned British actor Malcolm Ingram, with musical interludes of old English carols and holiday chamber music from earlier times. The ensemble will include our own Fred Jodry (voice and harpsichord), Chris Turner (harmonica), and a string quartet led by Consuelo Sherba with Robin Bollinger, Megumi Stohs, Cristof Hubner, and Emmanuel Feldman.

Heavily discounted tickets available for those who attend the supper. Plan to be with us for this family celebration. Tickets can be purchased after church in the Atrium or at the supper.

Reservations for the dinner are strongly requested. Please fill out the tear-off form in the *Sunday Meeting House Times* and put it in the collection plate; see Jim Estey at Coffee Hour; or call the church office in advance (401.421.7970). Childcare for infants and children to age 8 will be available for parents who request in advance; call Jim Estey (401.351.1748).

Saturday Social Suppers

Saturday, December 5 starting at 5:30p

On December 5, there will be two Social Suppers: one at the home of Janet Downing Taylor in Providence and the other at Rich Rudert's, also in Providence.

People new to the church are encouraged to attend; it's a very nice way to meet others from our church family.

For reservations, contact Shirley DiMatteo (shelly-dimatteo@verizon.net, 401.477.9668) with the number of people in your party and what you would like to bring.

The January 2, 2016 Supper will be at the home of Steve McCloy in Providence.

January All-Parish Supper

Friday, January 15, 2016

Our after-dinner program will be about the Black Lives Matter movement, which is spreading across our nation and which has been endorsed by the UUA. What is this movement about? What issues and problems does it hope to address? Our church is considering giving support to this movement. What actions might we take? A panel of speakers will help us in considering these important questions. Please plan to join us.

Flowers for Sunday Services

Flowers each Sunday are donated by members and friends in honor or memory of a loved one. Donors are acknowledged in the order of service. Whether the flowers are a florist's arrangement or picked from a garden, people always comment on how they brighten the pulpit.

Jacqui Nye will be glad to explain how you can provide an arrangement and to schedule your donation. Your Sunday flower offering will be greatly appreciated.

Contact: Jacqui Nye (funjac@hotmail.com) with "Sunday Flowers" in the subject line.



Glass flowers by Chris Belleau
from the Gallery Belleau on Wickenden Street

The Women's Alliance

Women's Alliance Monthly Program

Monday, December 7

Business Meeting: 10:00a

Program: 11:00a followed by luncheon (\$10)

Providence Raptors

Speaker: Peter Green

Birds perched high on Providence buildings may look like ordinary pigeons, but a keen eye and powerful lens bring the rare peregrine falcons into view. For years, these fastest animals on the planet have patrolled the downtown skyline, protecting their territory and successfully rearing over thirty chicks. These raptors are perfectly at home in the landscape of bricks and concrete.

Peter Green is an urban wildlife photographer and graphic designer living in downtown Providence. He walks the city, documenting the peregrine falcons and other urban wildlife from red-tailed hawks nesting on rooftops to kestrels hunting in alleys.

Non-members are always welcome to join us for our monthly programs and luncheon.

2015 Tax Credit Available from the Woman's Alliance – If You Act Now!

If you donate items for the Alliance spring Antiques & Uniques Indoor Yard Sale before December 31, you can get a tax deduction for what you say it is worth, which will count toward your 2015 tax return. Please think about donating items that you no longer use or need but that are too nice to just give away.

For more information contact Janet Downing Taylor (401.751.7969 or jdtaylor39@verizon.net)

Women's Alliance Annual Cheese Sale

Just in time for the holidays! Besides having everyone's favorite cheddar cheese from Vermont, the Women's Alliance will also feature goat cheese from Simmons Farm in Johnston. Watch for the sale at the Alliance Coffee Sales Table in the Atrium on Sundays.

Gourmet Coffee Sale in the Atrium

Impress Your Guests or Your Hostess!

The gourmet coffee sold by the Women's Alliance is a perfect gift to bring to your hostess or to serve to your own guests. You can choose either beans or ground coffee in several organic varieties. We have regular and decaf. Some people buy two different varieties and mix their own special blend. The coffee is from New Harvest Coffee Roasters, a local company, so you will be helping the RI economy as well. All proceeds help the Alliance support community charities.



Community Life

Blessing the Mitten Tree

Sunday, December 27 following the Sunday service

Join us for our annual Blessing of the Mitten Tree. Once again, we will deck our giving tree, located next to the Meeting House on the Benevolent Street side, with new or

gently used hats, scarves, mittens, gloves, and socks. Our tree will be stocked with warm items as the weather requires until the first day of spring.

– Kathy Ahlquist, for Knitting for a Better World



Looking Toward Our Upcoming Anniversaries

In preparation for upcoming 2016 and 2020 anniversaries of the church, the History Committee met with folks in the congregation who expressed interest in the research, writing and editing for the proposed projects. The first project will be for the 200th anniversary of the Meeting House in 2016. The second project will be an updated history of the last 30 years for the 300th anniversary of the congregation in 2020. Both are daunting projects and the History Committee is grateful for the help of these volunteers. Future newsletters will document the progress of the committee.

– Janet Downing Taylor, for the History Committee

Our Transylvania Partner Church

At the October Parish Supper, the Partner Church Committee gave a presentation of our trip to Szentegyhaza, Romania, and environs. It was an interesting trip and we experienced much of Transylvania's cultural history while we visited the northern part of Romania.

The weekend we visited our partner church was a whirlwind of activities. Not only were we invited to a dress rehearsal of the community's festival presentation, but we also attended a local festival that focused on Transylvanian traditions of song and dance. We enjoyed family time with our hosts and joined in the Sunday service, followed by a delicious traditional meal.

As you may know, our partner church is small. The first floor of the building is used for services, but it cannot accommodate the entire congregation. The upper floors are the home of the minister and his family. The congregation's priority is to build a new church, and they have been raising money for that purpose. Naturally, this is a long-term project.

In addition, the winters are harsh and they need to reduce their energy usage on the property. In order to do this, they are weatherizing the doors and windows and insulating

the building. Another initiative is to stream their services over the Internet. The economy makes it necessary for people to take jobs in other parts of Europe to provide for their families. This streaming will allow these 30 to 40 individuals to remain connected with the church in Szentegyhaza.

In the last month, word has spread in our church about the Parish Supper presentation of our wonderful trip to Szentegyhaza. There have been inquiries about a second presentation. This possibility is being discussed for a showing in December or January. Stay tuned for more information on this event.

– The Transylvania Partner Church Committee



The group from First Unitarian with fellow UUs who visited Transylvania in June.

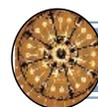


(l-r) Joan Richards, Janet Downing Taylor, Mary Speare, and Nori Duncan attend a worship service at Szentegyhaza

Don't Let the Grinch Steal Coffee Hour!

The holidays are here! When shopping or baking for these special times, remember to make or buy extra for our Coffee Hour! This cooperative effort is organized by The Women's Alliance with donations from our congregation of baked goods, brownies, cookies, fruit, cheese and crackers, sandwiches, coffee cake and more.

Our Coffee Hour Co-op needs *you!* We welcome donations made at home or bought at a store. In order to feed the ravenous crowd each Sunday, we need eight people bringing donations that serve 24 each. Sign-ups are preferred in order to plan for each upcoming Sunday. Sign up in the first parlor during Coffee Hour and go home with a reminder.



WHEEL OF LIFE

Condolences to:

Holly Dobbs on the death of her father.

Herb and Nancy Weiss-Fried on the death of their grandson, Martin. He was the son of Will Fried, who grew up in this church.

Neil Bartholomew on the death of his father.

Michael Cappelli on the death of his mother.

HATS OFF TO ...

David House for putting together a spectacular Variety Show Fun/draiser and to **the talented performers:** Roxanne Stern, Jean Dolan, Marcia Taylor, Ryk McIntyre, Charlie Ortman, Neil Bartholomew, Adele Andrews, Melissa Guillet, Chris Sanzo, Burr Harrison, Kate Katzberg, Kate Bowden, Russ Hopson, David Osborne, Kelly Smith, Tom Terceira, and the Stage Crew including Lydia Hopson.

Our Coffee Hour Providers last month:

Kristin Ivy Moses, Steve McCloy, Mary Kollar, Lynne Fazzi, Mary Frappier, Suzanne Craig, Roberta Groch, Paul Almeida, Gaby Petruck, Anne Connor, Marilyn Eanet, Claire Rosenbaum, Karen Boulanger, Bobbi Fisler, Lisa Rose, Tom Getz, Carol Adams, Derek Smith, Lyn Bradford, Tony Allen, Arlene McGonagle, Martha Cussler, Yvonne Federowicz, Martha Torrance, Jessica Duckett, Sally Barker, Polly Walker, Joyce Boober, Janet Noble, Kelly Smith, Judy Ortman, Shirley Brown, Cindy Bapties, Maureen Pryor, Dolores Braica, Ann Boyd, Rita Rossi, Cathy Orloff, and all of you who brought something in to surprise us.



Community Life

Welcome Our Newest Members!

On Sunday, November 1, the congregation recognized 12 new members with a ceremony of covenant and welcome. Look for them at church and add your personal greetings. Not shown are James Berry, Jessica Borrell, Caitlin Buffum, and Arek Schneyer.

Steve Murphy and Jorge Armesto



Jorge and Steve first attended First Unitarian in 2010 when the family moved to the East Side from Easton, MA. They are the proud dads of Khemrin (15) and Kaila (13). Khemrin went through the Coming of Age program two years ago and Kaila is in the program now. Jorge is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence and he serves on the RI Parole Board. Steve is a middle school math teacher and is director of the middle school at the French-American School. The family was active in their previous UU church for many years and is happy to have found a vibrant UU community in Providence.

Claudia Castellanos



Born and raised in South Providence, Claudia graduated from Classical High School and Northeastern University in Boston. She started attending First Unitarian two years ago with her fiance/partner of 10 years, Norvel, and their twins, Junior B and Junior G. When she is not organizing workers with SEIU 1199, she enjoys listening to NPR, attending panel discussions, volunteering on campaigns, and frequenting many of the area's festivals and cultural activities. She is bilingual in Spanish, proficient in Portuguese and French, and studying Arabic.

Alison Green



Alison has been attending First Unitarian since moving Providence in the spring of 2014, and has jumped right into congregational life, co-leading the women's spirituality course "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" earlier this year and joining the RE Committee this fall. A life-long UU, Alison has served on the staff of three UU churches, most recently at First Parish in Lexington, MA as their youth programs coordinator from 2006 to 2014. She currently is employed by a yarn company, and in addition to her many craft pursuits, she sings jazz, blues, and soul with her band, The Daybreaks.

Dave Lewis



Born a UU, Dave's life started at the Channing Church in Rockland, MA. He and his family moved a lot in the earlier years. In the late 1950s, he spent a lot of summers in Canada in the underground for abortion rights. He was politically active starting with George McGovern's run for President and worked hard *against* Vietnam. In the '60s he joined the Marine Corps, but left and went back to politics (a complete turnaround). He spent many years at Westminster Church in East Greenwich. After divorcing, he met Rev. Tom Ahlburn, who really developed his religious background. At that time, he joined First Unitarian but regrettably left for N.H. to enable the merger between ATT Broadband and Comcast. Dave is happy to be back home here.

Kate Mashburn



Kate is thrilled to join this wonderful and warm community. She had not attended church for 39 years and realized something was missing. She visited First Unitarian for the first time in late summer and knew very quickly that this is where she belongs.

Kate grew up in New York State and moved often with a career in the hospitality business, spending the most time in Dallas and Memphis. She has lived in Barrington for nine years with husband, Mike, and son, Ian, joined two years ago by Garrett, a hound dog rescue from Kentucky. After working in hotel asset management for many years, she is now "looking for the next opportunity," relishing the chance to be involved in UU activities as well as to practice knitting, Tai Chi, Reiki, yoga, gardening, and enjoying food (gluten free!) and wine with good company. She is a graduate of Cornell University and the University of Texas at Austin.

Nancy Safer



Nancy moved to Providence in 2011 to be near her daughter and family. Before that she lived for 35 years in Silver Spring, MD where she and her late husband, Brian, raised their two children. By profession, Nancy is a special educator and taught special education in the Philadelphia Public Schools while attending graduate school. After moving to Maryland, she worked in the U.S. Department of Education, as well as on national special education technical assistance projects, and also headed the Council for Exceptional Children, a professional association advocating on behalf of special needs students, including students who are gifted.

Since retiring Nancy works as an occasional consultant and volunteers on behalf of special needs children and their families. She enjoys travel, her new-found hobby of painting, and exploring New England with her two grandchildren. Her son Matthew is a musician who has recently moved to Los Angeles.

Derek Smith



Derek was born and raised in a Northern Virginia suburb of Washington, DC and has been living in Attleboro, MA for the last two years. He is slowly acclimating to New England living and is always on the lookout for something new and fun to do and new people to connect with. He's been coming to First Unitarian a short time, having been introduced to the community by his wife, Meghan, who is active in the church. Derek and Meghan have two boys, both enjoying the RE program on Sunday mornings. He likes motorcycles, cars, trains, the San Francisco 49ers, the Yankees, of course his home town Washington Capitals, and history.

Holiday Happenings

Our Annual Winter Gift Card Drive for Dorcas International Institute

Pick-up recipients' names: Sundays, November 29, December 6 & 13 in the Atrium. Bring gift cards to church by Sunday, December 20

As the holidays approach, the annual gift drive is one way that we reach out to help families in the Rhode Island community. Warm winter clothes are the priority for families served by the Dorcas International Institute, based in Providence.

Gift cards are preferred, enabling the agency to assist our neighbors in choosing their own appropriate necessities. Gift cards might not be as exciting as tangible gifts, but they make a big difference in people's lives.

Please purchase gift cards to stores accessible by public transportation, such as Walmart or Ocean State Job Lot. Wrapping isn't needed but holiday cards are welcome.

In keeping with First Unitarian tradition, our Senior High Youth Group and their advisors will facilitate this project.



HOLIDAY SALE to BENEFIT GIRLS' EDUCATION

Sundays: November 15, November 22 & December 6
10:00am – 12:30pm in the atrium



FAIR TRADE ITEMS from
the GLOBAL MARKETPLACE



CASH, CHECKS AND CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

Children's Recycle-a-Toy Sale

Collection of Toys: Sunday, December 6

Toy Sale: Sunday, December 13, 12:00–12:30p in the Auditorium

This year's Children's Toy Sale offers a way for kids to buy gifts for family and friends on a very small budget. Toy prices range from 25 cents to \$2. We hope that our children will seize the spirit of the season and shop for others they love.

The sale is open to the full church community.

We encourage families to donate gently used – or even new – toys, games, and books for preschool through high school-age children. Donations will be collected on the Sunday prior to the sale. Our goal is to encourage children to recycle their toys and do good for their community. Through a democratic process, young people will choose the recipient for the money raised. All toys not sold will be donated to Camp Street Ministries in Providence.

The sixth-grade class is organizing this event with help from RE Committee members and parents.

For questions, contact John Dooley (dool@cox.net).

Christmas Plants to Decorate the Meeting House

Submit orders to the church office by Sunday, December 13

Each holiday season, the church is filled with poinsettias given in memory or celebration of a loved one(s). The cost is \$20 per plant per person.

To order your poinsettia, contact the church office (401.421.7970) or fill out the form in the order of service on Sunday. Please specify the first and last name of each person you are honoring as well as your name and phone number (in case we need to contact you).

Seventh-Grade UUSC Holiday Card Sale

Beginning on Sunday, November 29 and Sundays as long as supply lasts

Our seventh-grade class is selling beautiful greeting cards from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Look for them at the RE table in the Atrium during Coffee Hour. Proceeds benefit social justice efforts of the UUSC. By buying these cards, we choose compassionate consumption and support human rights efforts.

Young Members Solstice Party

Tuesday, December 22, 7:00–9:00p

Come celebrate the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year! We will explore some solstice traditions and perhaps do some baking in the kitchen.

To RSVP, or for more info about the Young Members group, contact Alison Green (alisongreenwill@gmail.com)

Atrium Bookstore

Books make great Hannukah, Christmas, and holiday gifts! Browse our Atrium bookstore for the perfect match. The bookstore is open every Sunday during the regular church year in the Atrium at Coffee Hour. Besides the books that we get from the UUA's own Beacon Press and Skinner House, we have begun to offer books from Sky-light Paths Publishing, an interfaith publisher of various faith traditions. And don't forget: we also carry books written by several church members.



Spiritual Development

Child Dedications

Sunday, December 6 during the service

The next child dedication ceremony will take place during the Sunday service on December 6. Church members with a baby or smaller child who needs dedicating are invited to contact the church office (401.421.7970).

Chalice Circles News

All Chalice Circles fall semester groups are well under way. To support all our facilitators, a monthly "brown bag lunch" meeting with the minister started in November. There was a lively exchange of information for topics and sharing of group joys and concerns with each other. All agreed that this support is vital for a healthy program.

The next "brown bag lunch" will be December 11 at noon.

Spring semester recruitment will start in January for Chalice Circles, which is the small group ministry at First Unitarian Church.

First Unitarian Caring Network

Many thanks to all who responded to the questionnaire volunteering to care for each other and to be part of different support groups proposed for our congregation. The overwhelming response has been wonderful! The process of organization has begun and will continue as more responses come in. We will keep the congregation informed of our progress in the monthly newsletters.



– Shirley DiMatteo and Steve McCloy, Senior Deacons

Art in the Atrium

Many artists from our congregation are participating to our December Annual Collective Holiday Exhibit. The opening reception will be the Friday, December 11, the night of the Parish Supper.

In January, we will be showing paintings by Margaret Worthen.

There are still two months open for artists who would like to exhibit: April and June. Please contact: Chiara Van Erp (romano-vanerp-design@cox.net)

Interested in Buying a Piece of Art in the Atrium?

From time to time, people have asked if they could purchase a piece of art from the Gallery exhibit. In response, exhibitors are allowed to sell their pieces. The artists agree to give 25% of the sale price as a donation to the church.

If you are interested in buying a piece, look for the binder on the coffee table in the Atrium for prices and contact information. Please contact the artist directly.

UUMen

Sunday, December 13, 7:00–9:00p

What is courage? When are we able to summon it, and how do we find the strength to do so? We often associate courage with physical actions. What about the inner courage to deal with friendships, marriage, families, and work situations? Churchill said that "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."

Our men's group will explore courage, including these questions: what is the most courageous thing you've ever witnessed? And what is the most courageous thing you've ever done? Screw up your courage and join us!

Facilitator: David Riley (davidpriley@aol.com)

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 that maintains close ties with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association. Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction available at 6:45p.

Leaders: Cindy Bapties and George Beshers

Innate Wisdom and Compassion Meditation

Every Wednesday at 7:00p

This drop-in group offers guided meditations of wisdom, love, and compassion. These practices are adapted from Tibetan Buddhism into new forms that can touch the hearts and minds of people from all backgrounds.

No previous meditation experience required. You can visit our website (foundationforactivecompassion.org/audios-videos-texts).

Contact: Ken Bent (kenbent@cox.net)

Tai Chi

Every Tuesday at 7:00p

Tai Chi class for beginners to advanced, children to seniors. All inclusive. Instruction and performance. For information or to sign up, contact Sean Connor (seanconnor@cox.net).

Reimagining Religion

Second and fourth Tuesdays, 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.

Leader: Tom Hall (twh2nd@aol.com)



Social Justice

Annual Write-a-thon for Human Rights

Sunday, December 13, 1:00–5:00p

The Global Write-a-thon is the world's largest letter-writing event in celebration of International Human Rights Day. The Providence celebration, an Open House suitable for young people and families, is held at First Unitarian and sponsored by the World Affairs Committee, assisted by the Providence chapter of Amnesty International. Refreshments provided. Drawings for prizes.

Our guest speaker is Muhudin Janay, a newly arrived refugee from Somalia. While sitting with friends in a cafe, they were all shot in the head by Islamic fundamentalists with Al-Shabab. In critical condition, Muhudin managed to escape to Uganda. Granted asylum in the U.S., he was treated after arrival at Rhode Island Hospital. He lost an eye and has a bullet in his brain too risky to remove. Reunited with his wife, they have a one-month-old infant.

No registration necessary. Contact: Marcia Lieberman (marcia.lieberman@gmail.com)

Welcoming Refugees to Rhode Island

Sunday, December 6 at 12:15p

The Social Justice Ministry invites you to hear Anne Dombroski of Beautiful Day–RI, a nonprofit created three years ago by the Providence Granola Project (PGP). During the past five years, PGP has trained 45 refugees – either in food production or in sales and marketing at farmers' markets – and more than 80% of these workers have moved on to full-time jobs elsewhere. PGP's nonprofit, Beautiful Day, now owns and operates the Granola Project, with more than 700 customers. The project not only produces revenue, but also spreads the word about refugees in our community. Beautiful Day also receives donations from individuals and private foundations, and now is cultivating partnerships with churches to welcome refugees and to support the project in providing an opportunity for refugees to learn skills to support themselves and their families. Please join us to learn more about ways we can help refugees.

Visit the Beautiful Day web site (beautifulday.org).

Ways to Help Refugee Families

Want to keep tabs on what is going on at First Unitarian with hosting refugee families? Interested in helping host refugee families? Taking classes on mentoring refugees at Dorcas/International? Hoping to teach English? Have furniture that may be available for families?

For information, contact Ruth Arellana (rkarellana@yahoo.com) or visit

Neighborhood Social Justice

Monthly Meeting

Sunday, December 6 at 12:15p

The NSJC takes on projects to lighten the load of low-income and homeless Rhode Islanders. Please join us to learn more about our work and to contribute some ideas of your own.

Loaves & Fishes Mission

Tuesday, December 1, noon to 7:00p

This month, as always, we could use your help – whether time, goods, or money – with carrying out our monthly Loaves & Fishes Mission for the men at Harrington Hall. On the first Tuesday of every month, volunteers deliver food, clothing, and respectful companionship to the men of Harrington Hall, a homeless shelter in Cranston.

Since Harrington Hall may shelter some sex offenders at times, children under 18 are not allowed there, but they are more than welcome to come to the church at 12:00p to prepare sandwiches or at 3:00p to collect clothes and help to load food and clothes in the cars.

There are three shifts: noon–1:00p: sandwich crew; 3:00–5:00p: clothing organizers and supply loaders; 5:00–7:00p: delivery crew

Contact Joe Salvatore (joesuu@gmail.com) for details.

First Unitarian's Food Share Pantry Volunteer at Our Food Pantry

Distribution Day: Monday, December 21

The biggest social justice program at First Unitarian is the Food Share Pantry. It takes many volunteers to keep the program going! Volunteer with your van or truck to transport food from the RI Food Bank to the church, or volunteer for a shift on Distribution Day:

Set-up: 2:00p–3:00

Shopping with clients: 3:00p–5:00p

Restock, recycle, and clean up: 5:00p–6:00p

Contacts: Martha Manno (Mmanno7@comcast.net) or Nori Duncan (nori.duncan@gmail.com)

The Pantry Is Open to All

You probably know that volunteers at First Unitarian run a very well attended food pantry. But did you know that members of the congregation who are in need are also welcome to take part and receive food? You do not have to be receiving government help or otherwise demonstrate need. Just come to the church after 2:30p on the third Monday and fill out a brief registration form.

Donate 2016 Calendars and Holiday Cards

Please donate all those calendars and cards from charities and businesses for the clients at the Food Pantry. You can leave your donations at the magazine recycle table.

Volunteer Opportunity

Looking for three to four people, one hour a week, to set up and staff the magazine recycling table during Coffee Hour. All funds received will support our Food Pantry.

Contact: Ruth Arellana (rkarellana@yahoo.com)

Knitting for a Better World

Every Tuesday from 7:00-9:00p



Come join fellow knitters for a casual evening of knitting and conversation. Work on your own project or knit for one of First Unitarian's social justice projects. Drop in any Tuesday evening. Beginners are always welcome. We have yarn and needles to get you started.

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

For more information on these and future programs (meeting locations, contact information, etc.), see details in this newsletter.

December 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Loaves & Fishes Mission 12-7:00p Tai Chi 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	2 Prudential Committee 6:30p Nominating Comm 7:00p Meditation 7:00p	3 Annual Budget Drive Comm 5:30p Worship Comm 5:30p Search Committee 7:00p	4	5 Saturday Social Suppers (Taylor/Rudert)
6 Worship 10:30a at 11:30a Girl Effect Sale at 12:00p Mentor/Mentee Neighborhood SJ at 12:15p Welcoming Refugees	7 Women's Alliance 10:00a/11:00a Zendo 7:00p	8 Tai Chi 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p Reimagining Religion 7:00p	9 Meditation 7:00p	10 Deacons 5:30p Search Committee 7:00p	11 All-Parish Supper 5:45p Program 7:45p	12
13 Worship 10:30a at 11:30a Used Toy Sale at 1:00p Amnesty Int'l Write-a-thon UU Men 7:00p	14 Zendo 7:00p	15 Tai Chi 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	16 Meditation 7:00p	17 Annual Budget Drive 5:30p Search Committee 7:00p	18	19
20 Worship 10:30a	21 Food Pantry 2:00p-6:00p Zendo 7:00p	22 Young Members Solstice Party 7:00p Tai Chi 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p Reimagining Religion 7:00p	23 Meditation 7:00p	24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES 5:00p Family 9:00p Meditative 10:00p Reception	25 CHRISTMAS DAY CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 Worship 10:30a No Sunday School at 11:30a Deacons' Salon Blessing of the Mitten Tree	28 THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ALL WEEK					29 Tai Chi 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p
	30 Meditation 7:00p	31 NEW YEARS EVE				