

news @ first . u . providence

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 5 Wholly Family, an Intergenerational Service
10:30a Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Cathy Seggel, DRE, and First Unitarian Families
 Come celebrate the diversity of our First Unitarian families, from single people to single parent to a man and a woman with or without children to same sex couples to inter-racial families -- all joined together in the fabric of our shared lives. Come and hear some stories, laugh and cry with our community. An annual event not to be missed.

*The Community Collection will be for the George Wiley Center.
 Origins /Play Circle and Pre-K (birth-4 years) open.*

Sunday, February 12 Love. In Spite of Everything.
10:30a Rev. Mary Margaret Earl
 It's easy to love those who are beautiful, bright, virtuous, and funny. How do we answer a call to love those who aren't? A reflection on what it means to care for those who don't inspire an easy love. James will assist at this service.

*We will be installing our Lay Ministers during the service.
 Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.*
 A **Congregational Conversation** will be held at 12:00p in the Auditorium to present and discuss the results of the recent congregational survey (pp. 4-5).

Sunday, February 19 The Symphony of Science
10:30a Rev. James Ishmael Ford
 Today is Nicolaus Copernicus's five-hundred-and thirty-ninth birthday. James wants to talk about science, scientism, and liberal religion. He thinks it's important.

Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.

Sunday, February 26 All Things Emily: A Music Sunday
10:30a Fred Jodry & Rev. James Ishmael Ford
 The writings of the Belle of Amherst have inspired many composers in the last 50 years; we will sing works by Jean Berger, Waylon Rodgers, Bradley Ellingboe, and Elaine Bearer, a longtime member of our church and faculty in the Brown Medical School. Fred will lead this service with music inspired by the immortal Emily Dickinson. James will share a brief homily. The adult choir will be featured, and cellist Daniel Harp will accompany the choir.

Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.

Sunday, March 4 Love Over Creed
10:30a Rev. James Ishmael Ford
 James finds himself thinking about Universalism, and the ways of the heart, and how this current within our tradition has all our miracle stories. He'll mainly focus on the life and ministry of John Murray. But he tends to wander.

Young people begin in their classrooms and worship in Chapel.



The Monthly Newsletter for the
First Unitarian Church of Providence

One Benevolent Street
 Providence, Rhode Island 02906
 Telephone; 401.421.7970
 Fax: 401.276.4291

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 Rev. Mary Margaret Earl, 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, Evening Security
 Henry Colpa, Evening Security
 Pedro Vasquez, Sunday Building Manager



We are a
 Welcoming Congregation

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

N E W S L E T T E R

Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
 Susan Fisher, Proof Editor
 Original Design by Carol Pentleton
 Next Deadline: February 15



WHEEL OF LIFE

Speedy Recovery to

Long-time member **Robert O. Jones**.
Judie Knilans, who had knee replacement surgery.

HATS OFF TO...

Jim Barfoot for donating the new speaker used to broadcast the Sunday morning worship service in the parlors.

The Deacons for providing morning refreshments and a fabulous lunch for all those who attended the Path to Membership Class. Your food was truly appreciated!

Appreciation to **Grace Burberry-Martin; Charlie Hunt; Judy, Jeremy and Jonathan Estey; Alec Kubas-Meyer; Kate Guilbault;** and **Lincoln and Shannon Oliver-O'Neil** for being readers at our Christmas Eve services.

Our **Coffee Hour Providers** last month: Mary Frappier, Anne Connor, Robert O. Jones, Nancy Weiss Fried, Robert Schacht, Fred Jodry, Karen Boulanger, Marilyn Eanet, Lisa Rose, Mary Kollar, Beth Armstrong, Steve McCloy, Mary Finger, Ginny Fox, Gerry Spremulli, Spence Hobbs, Donna DeForbes, Sally Barker all of you who brought something in to surprise us.

The Deacons' Corner

The role of the Board of Deacons is to serve the congregation by putting into action areas of the church's mission statement that pertain to the spiritual life of the church, including welcoming and encouraging new and ongoing membership.

We do this in the following manner: in the fall of each year, we call the members and friends of the church to see if they have concerns or questions, or just want to talk to someone. We assist, along with James Ford, Jennifer Nardone, and Cathy Seggel, in the Path to Membership classes, providing snacks and lunch for the meeting. One of our members is a greeter at Sunday services each week, and one Sunday a month we usher. We also participate in the communions that are held two or three times a year.

There are ten members, who serve five year terms, with two members being elected every year. We meet on the second Thursday of the month, and our meetings usually include a shared meal prepared by the Deacons.

This month, we continue with our Sunday greeting and ushering and will assist at the next Path to Membership class on March 1.

The Deacons: Judy Bowden, Mary Finger, Senior Deacons; David Bridgehouse, Russell Gifford, Mary Frappier, David Spremulli, Jacqui Nye, Ruth Arellana, Shirley DiMatteo, Steve McCloy



Monkey Mind

So, here we are, deep into our New England winter. It has been a strange one, possibly (up to this writing) the mildest of the twelve New England winters I've lived into. Still, it is winter. And with winter comes thoughts of warm places. For those native, I gather, that is often a thought of Florida.

For me the warm thoughts are more about our upcoming denominational gathering -- our General Assembly -- which will be in Phoenix (June 20 through 24, thanks for asking). I served in one of the Phoenix area churches before coming out here to lovely old rocky New England. And while I never came to love Phoenix (I used to refer to it variously as the "great Satan" and as "similar to LA, but without the charm"), I did come to love Arizona, for its beauty, its grandeur, its astonishing variety of ecosystems.

So, it will be nice going back. Seeing old friends is always a good thing. Grabbing an extra day to explore the dirt, which truly, truly is holy, is an added benefit. But, also, this GA is going to be something special. Shall we say "hot"?

And not just for the temperature. The event is being called by some the Justice GA. The focus will be on matters of social justice, particularly addressing the thorny issues of immigration. Programs and workshops will all address these issues. There will be opportunities for service and witness. In general, we will be diving to the depths of what immigration and justice might actually mean, and what our spiritual response to this is, or maybe why our spirituality calls us to engage these questions.

Rich. Maybe even hot. "Hot" as in the beaker rendering base metal into gold in the great alchemy of heart.

So, I'm going. And, here's why in the midst of the cold winter I'm writing about this. Perhaps you might want to go, as well. We have a number of slots for official delegates. Might you want to be one? If you're thinking about maybe doing it, I suggest first googling "UUA General Assembly 2012" and rummaging around the many materials already posted. If this looks interesting, and you think you might want to go as a delegate, let the office know. We'll pass your name on to the Prudential Committee, who approve the delegates from our congregation.

It would be nice if we had a delegation worthy of this worthy event.

In the meantime, stay warm.

And, I look forward to seeing you in church,



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

Installation of Lay Ministers in February

At the Sunday service on February 12, we will be installing our Lay Ministers for the next year. Margaret Balch-Gonzalez will be joining the Lay Ministry team; Martha Manno will be stepping down after serving since the creation of the Lay Ministry program several years ago.

The Lay Ministry and the volunteers in the Care Crew help those in the congregation in need of calls, cards, visits, rides to the doctor's office, emergency babysitting, emergency elderly companionship, or meal delivery.

The "on call" Lay Minister for February is Mary Frappier. Referrals or calls to the church will be passed on to Mary, who will call upon Care Crew volunteers.

The Lay Ministry Team: Margaret Balch-Gonzalez, Andy Barrett, George Beshers, Mary Frappier, Kate Menard, Rick Richards, Bill Twaddell



Spiritual Pathways

Thirty Days of Love

February is a fine time to tend to relationships of all sorts and to nurture loving-kindness. The Spiritual Pathways Program for Children and Youth is based on relationship building. Young people are guided and supported in developing values and ethics, grounded in love. Teachers focus on various important curricular themes through a clear lens of fostering right relations and a caring, safe atmosphere.

The times we live in can be challenging to individuals, families, and communities. I was heartened to find that the national Standing on the Side of Love folks have created a process called "Thirty Days of Love," beginning on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and culminating with Valentine's Day. It is a collective visioning process about making sense of the present moment, and what we are called to do. The elements are self-reflection, active listening, sharing personal and community stories, and celebrating our lives and our heroes for their courageous love. You might want to learn more about this on their website (www.standingonthesideoflove.org/national-standing-on-the-side-of-love-month-the-story-of-us-the-story-of-now)

This month, in this congregation, I am inspired by the commitment and care of the RE Committee, staff, and our volunteer teachers that warm us as we nurture the faith formation of members of all ages and greet the returning light.

Take good care,

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

February Highlights from the Program for Children & Youth

- * The RE Committee for Children and Youth and I begin the annual cycle of goal setting and curriculum and program review.
- * The sixth-grade Neighboring Faiths group is visiting the Providence Zen Center and making Peace Flags with Ginny Fox.
- * Following their annual Pasta Supper fundraiser, the Coming of Age community is planning for the UU heritage trip in March.
- * All month, our seventh-graders, eighth-graders, Youth Group, and Young Adults from the congregation are preparing a total of 400 sandwiches, and fourth-graders will be collecting juice boxes to supply our share of the Crossroads RI Sandwich Brigade.
- * The Senior High is connecting with other UU youth at a conference in Sharon, MA.
- * Preschoolers had their field trip to our Chapel space and will soon be weekly worshippers.
- * Teacher luncheon will be held on Sunday, February 26.



Gift Card Drive Appreciation from RI International Institute

We received a beautiful photo of clients from the International Institute of Rhode Island, sharing the agency's gratitude for their holiday gifts received from First Unitarian.

Many thanks from Mary Ellen Lynch, Volunteer Coordinator, IIRI

UU Service Committee Guest @ Your Table Drive

Thank you to all who contributed to this social justice effort this year. The eighth-graders and their mentors counted the donations that were collected by January 8, with many boxes yet to be returned. The count continues and the final results will be reported soon.

February Is Crossroads RI Sandwich Brigade Month

Again this year, our Sunday School is participating in the Crossroads RI Sandwich Brigade, preparing 100 sandwiches on each Sunday in February.

The mission of Crossroads is to assist the homeless and disconnected on their journey toward a better quality of life through the provision of essential life services, advocacy and referral. The brigade is a collaborative effort between our Spiritual Development and Social Justice ministries. This year, our seventh-graders, eighth-graders, senior high youth group, and young adults will prepare the sandwiches. Parents from the program help deliver the lunches.

A leader from Crossroads RI will speak with the Coming of Age community on February 5 after church in the Auditorium. All are invited to attend.

A Special Call for 200 Juice Boxes!

Our fourth-grade class is helping to coordinate a Juice Drive to meet our commitment to provide 100 drinks per week for the complete lunch bags requested by Crossroads. Juice boxes, small cans, pouches, or small bottled water are all welcome. Donations may be dropped off in our Atrium Food Pantry barrel or brought to RE Chapel or the fourth-grade classroom.

Sustainable Generosity: Daring to Dream Dreams

Each year around this time, we conduct our annual pledge drive to raise the funds for the following fiscal year. Over the next couple of months, we will be talking with you about our shared support for the financial health of the church in the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Our current annual operating budget is just over \$600,000, more than half of which comes from the payment of our pledged contributions. In these challenging times, the Budget Committee and the Prudential Committee have had to make very difficult choices to keep our programs going. Non-discretionary items (such as salaries, benefits, utilities, etc.) are a very large part of our budget, and we keep them in line with fiscal reality.

Our theme for the canvass this year is "May we dare to dream dreams." In order to realize our dreams, rather than just hold our ground, we all need to do what we can to increase the operating income of the church for the coming year. Most have heard us talk about the importance of stepping up to a pledge of 2% to 3% of adjusted gross income in order to pursue our dreams here at First Unitarian. Many of us have taken this step, and over the past few years we have greatly increased the number of pledges over \$2,000 (that's about \$167 a month or less than \$40 a week). If the 2%-3% goal is out of reach, please consider an additional \$10 per week above last year's pledge. Everything that you can do to help will be greatly appreciated.

May we dare to dream dreams together!

Canvass Committee: Jim Barfoot, Neil Bartholomew (co-chair), Carol Drewes, Graham Nye, Martha Rice Sanders (co-chair), Phip Wheelock

Burial Plots Available

First Unitarian owns a five-acre burial ground in Swan Point Cemetery. Swan Point has a rich and interesting history dating back to the 1850s. The First Unitarian section includes graves of friends and members of our congregation that reach back to the Revolutionary War era. Crematory plots are still available in our burial ground. For details, call Posey Kooris in the church office.

Planned Giving at First Unitarian

Are you considering leaving a bequest to the First Unitarian Church in your estate planning? If so, you can find helpful information on our church website (www.firstunitarianprov.org/getinvolved/giving.shtml). If you have additional questions, you can contact Posey Kooris in the church office (401.421.7970).



Sight Lines

I would like to make you aware of two related developments that reflect very well upon our congregation.

The first is the results of the all-church evaluation. On the next page, you will find a summary of the results of our fall survey, which was prepared by Graham Nye, chair of the Evaluation Committee, and presented to the PruComm at its January meeting. The results are impressive in their own right. The vast majority of the 133 respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction. When compared to the results of the survey conducted in 2004, however, the differences are astounding. While the 2004 results clearly showed dissatisfaction (and the minister ended up leaving at the end of that year), this year's results are overwhelmingly positive and clearly show how far we have come.

If you would like to hear more, please join us for a Congregational Conversation to discuss the results on Sunday, February 12 at 12:00 noon in the Auditorium.

This does not mean we can now rest on our laurels. The results offer suggestions on how we can improve our programs and activities, and our staff and committees will work on incorporating this feedback into future action.

A special thanks goes out to Graham Nye and the rest of the Evaluation Committee -- Rebecca Alberg, Dave Spremulli, and Gail Brule -- and to Neil Bartholemew who formatted the survey electronically and compiled the responses.

The second item I wish to highlight is our attendance numbers at Sunday services. I'm happy to say that the average attendance is the highest it has been since 1999, Tom Ahlburn's last full year at First Unitarian. Attendance averaged 260 in 1999, and since then it has ranged from 194 to 240. The number this year is 250. We should all feel great about all the new faces amongst us on Sundays and the increasing energy and engagement of the congregation.

Our growth bucks regional and national trends amongst many churches. The survey shows that there is a great deal of satisfaction with James's ministry and the overall programming provided. Our marketing campaign is likely also a factor. We are all working hard to build on these positives, and I am confident of our continued success.

Best regards,

Dan Kubas-Meyer
President, Prudential Committee
pres@firstunitarianprov.org

Treasurer's Report: At the Halfway Point

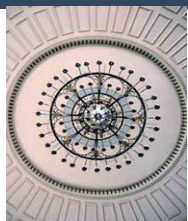
We struck an uneasy balance at the end of the first half of the fiscal year on December 31. Total income was off a little from last year, but total expenses, thankfully, were down a bit.

Income was behind in the amounts budgeted for money from new members and from checks in the Sunday plate that aren't committed to pledge payments. **Pledge income** seemed to be slipping this fall; but by the time December 31 rolled around, we had received a slight increase over last year at this same time. Pledge income is the single most important part of our operating budget, accounting this year for 53% of the money needed to keep things going. **Sunday cash collections** through December 31 are up 44% over last year and reflect what we've all noticed: more people in church on Sundays than we've had in a decade. **Rental income** from church buildings and parking lot are up 5%.

Expenses during this same period have been a little less than was budgeted for this period, particularly on utilities. The major expense to watch continues to be heating bills as we head into the depths of winter.

Endowment: As of December 31, the total value of the three endowment funds (Consolidated, Sunday School, and Property) had declined by 7 percent from a year ago. The financial markets had finished the calendar year of 2010 with a flourish that cheered investors but set a benchmark that 2011 failed to meet. Because of the recession, we've had to depend on smaller amounts from the endowment, which now only make up 31% of support for annual operations.

-- Tony Allen, Treasurer



Sight Lines

A Summary of the Results of Our 2011 Congregational Survey

The purpose of the survey was to collect information from First Unitarian members and friends in order to analyze what aspects of our church programs are of greatest importance and to measure satisfaction with offerings.

We received 133 completed surveys. This number compares favorably with 144 returned for the survey done in 2004, when there was an abundance of controversy.

There were 65 items on the survey, which could be ranked from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) or N/A (not applicable or no answer). Categories of items included Sunday services, Religious Education, adult programs and activities, stewardship, lay and professional leadership, and staff.

The average ranking was between 3 and 4 on all but three items, which appears to signify a high level of satisfaction.

A comparison of results from the 2011 survey with the 2004 survey reveals some significant differences:

Comparison of Results by Year	2004	2011
Respondents regularly attending	52%	69%
Respondents not regularly attending	29%	12%
Sunday Service is inspiring/spiritual	27%	83%
Sermons are thought-provoking	23%	86%
1st U is welcoming to newcomers	30%	83%
Good communications, newsletters, etc.	76%	90%

Only three items received an averaged rating below 3:

- * Provision of quality of services for young adults (2.9)
(56% of respondents left item this blank)
- * Involvement in denominational affairs (2.7)
- * First U is well supported by all members and friends (2.6)

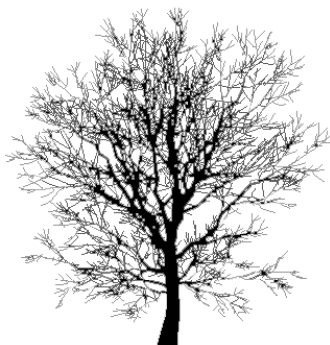
Recommendations from the Task Force:

- * A similar survey be done every five years.
- * While the internet survey was a good device, modifications should be made to allow for reminders to be sent and for easy access to the survey after the initial emailing.
- * Prudential Committee members should review all comments from respondents. It is particularly important that respondents know that their concerns were reviewed. This should be included in any follow-up meetings and all written summaries for the congregation.

A special thanks for the terrific job Neil Bartholomew did in computerizing the survey.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

The 2011 Congregational Survey Evaluation Committee:
Rebecca Alberg, Gail Brule, Graham Nye, Dave Spremulli



Revived History Committee Looks to Bicentennial

A newly reconstituted History Committee is considering how to help make the history of the church a more vibrant part of our community life as we approach the bicentennial of the Meeting House in 2016 and the tricentennial of the congregation in 2020.

The committee held its initial meeting in October under the leadership of Robert O. Jones, a long-time church member and architectural historian, who co-chaired the committee that oversaw the building of the new wing. The committee discussed a number of possible projects, including:

- * Conduct research for a public event to celebrate the creation of our third (and current) Meeting House (built between 1814-1816).
- * Develop a publication about the five-acre First Unitarian burial ground in Swan Point Cemetery, with a special emphasis on Pastors' Rest, where several former ministers and their families are interred. The booklet would increase awareness of the historical interest of this site and possibly raise funds for the maintenance of Pastors' Rest.
- * Gather the church archives, which had become scattered and disorganized in recent years, in the History Room (at the top of the Parish House stairs) and conduct an inventory of the materials. Once an inventory is complete, a (volunteer) librarian or archivist would be recruited to advise on how to organize and maintain the archive.

Work has begun on each of these projects. The committee made a field trip to Swan Point to become familiar with the site. The consensus was that there were many people of historical interest at the site.

All archival material has now been collected in the Antoinette Downing History Room and the inventory has begun. Materials relating to our former ministers will be used in preparing the section of the booklet on Pastors' Rest.

Anyone interested in the burial ground can look for the detailed map that hangs in the Paneled Parlor.

The History Committee: Richard Boober, Elsie Buffum, Mary Finger, Susan Fisher, Helen Haynes, Robert O. Jones (chair), Cy O'Neil, Janet Downing Taylor

March All-Parish Supper

Friday, March 9

The World Affairs Committee will present a program entitled "Towns of the Future Are Here Today." The featured speaker is Mike DeForbes, who has been presenting programs and leading discussion groups at our church on "peak oil," what it means, and how it will affect us all. He will be joined by Tina Clarke, an official trainer from the "Transition Towns" movement, which helps to prepare and guide communities to cope, adapt, and enjoy. Don't miss this peek into the future.

The Women's Alliance

Monday, February 6

10:30a Business meeting, 11:00a Program, 12:00p Catered Luncheon (\$9)

Topic: My Lives in the Theater

Speaker: Lynne Collinson

Lynne's love of theater began with acting and continues, through a variety of "roles," to be her passion. She shares her story and the knowledge of how theater changes and expands you. Lynne is Executive Director of 2nd Story Theatre in Warren.

All are welcome to the Alliance's monthly programs and luncheon.

Coffee Hour Goes Kid-Friendly!

We have an addition to our Coffee Hour this year, thanks to the RE Committee. On multigenerational Sundays, there will be a special "Kid-Friendly Foods" table in the front parlor with donations from the RE Committee and parents featuring treats just for kids. Look for the bear!

Our Coffee Hour is a cooperative effort with donations from our congregation of breads, brownies, cookies, fruit, cheese and crackers, sandwiches, coffee cake, and more. To satisfy the ravenous crowd each Sunday, it takes 6-8 people bringing donations. Sign up with Janet Downing Taylor in the front parlor during Coffee Hour and go home with a reminder.

The Atrium Bookstore

Each Sunday during Coffee Hour, the Atrium Bookstore offers a broad selection of books of interest to churchgoers. Subjects include religious liberalism, daily meditations, and social activism. There also are books for children. Among the wide range of authors are poet Mary Oliver, Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, and writers from the First Unitarian Church including our minister, James Ford. Profits go to supplement the church's annual operating budget.



Community Life

February All-Parish Supper

Friday, February 10

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.

For the Food Pantry: Please bring toothbrushes and toothpaste if you can.

7:45p Program in the Auditorium: "The Best of Atwater and Donnelly"

Aubrey Atwater and Elwood Donnelly are a dynamic and inspiring pair of folk singers/performers who have been entertaining American audiences since the late 1980s, when they were active members of our church family. Their repertoire features traditional American and Celtic folksongs and percussive dances, and their vocals have been described as "gorgeous and soulful." Their performance will include an astonishing variety of instruments, including guitar, mandolin, dulcimer, tin whistle, and "limber jacks." Aubrey and Elwood are excited to be performing for us once again.

Reservations for the dinner are strongly requested. Please fill out the sign-up sheet in the Sunday Meeting House Times and drop 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 Supper

Saturday, February 18 at 6:00p

Hosted by David and Doris Bridgehouse, 138 Stillwater Road, Smithfield, RI.

Reservations are required. To reserve your space, please contact Shirley DiMatteo (shelly-dimatteo@cox.net or 401.861.1537) to indicate number of people and what you would like to bring.

An Evening Path to Membership Class

Thursday, March 1, 6:00-8:30p

If you've been thinking about attending a Path to Membership class but haven't been able to make it on a Saturday morning, there is an evening class coming up in March! The class is an opportunity to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and the First Unitarian Church of Providence and to see if membership is for you.

Please join us for our next Path to Membership class on March 1. This session will be led by the Rev. James Ford, our Director of Religious Education, Cathy Seggel; and Jennifer Nardone, our Membership Coordinator. You are encouraged to bring your questions -- and your appetite, as the Deacons will provide light supper fare to enjoy during the class.

Register by Friday, February 24. You can fill out a registration form (available on the Membership bulletin board in the Parish House, at the Welcome tables, and in the Newcomers' Café), call the church office (401.421.7970), or by email Jennifer (mem@firstunitarianprov.org).

Winter Storms and First Unitarian

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff decide if church will be cancelled. A cancellation decision will be made by 7:00a on Sunday and conveyed to these media outlets: TV channels ABC 6, NBC 10, WPRI 12, Fox Providence, RI PBS and radio stations 630WPRO, 920WHJJ, 1180 CCN News Radio, WRNI, Lite Rock105, B101, 94HJY, 92ProFM, 98.1Cat Country, 93.3Coast FM, 95.5 WBRU.

If the City of Providence announces a ban on street parking, church will be cancelled.

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

Have You Changed Your Address? Phone? Email?

If your contact information has changed recently, please let the church office know so we can keep our records up to date.

Contact: Walter Sotelo (assist@firstunitarianprov.org or 401.421.7970)



Community Life

Welcome Our Newest Members!

It is a pleasure to welcome our newest members. They are Amy Amidei, Patrice Roberts, Jesse Posl Rhinehart, Rachel Morrison, Kristen Caproni, Andrea Actis, Sabrina and John Apczynski, Amy Bonnici Bodah and David Bodah, Ruth Otto, Shirley Brown, Everett Leonard, Mark Sachar, and Kathryn and William Carey.

Look for their pictures on our Membership Board so you can welcome them, too.

Making Connections at First Unitarian

There are many ways to deepen your involvement at First Unitarian. One way is to participate in one of the group or solo art shows in the Parish House. The **Art in the Atrium** gallery sponsors a new show every month for all in the community to enjoy. This creative group is always seeking new participants. Contact: Chiara van Erp (romano-vanerp-design@cox.net) to get on the email list.

Chalice Circle groups are a great way to enhance your spiritual growth within a smaller setting. Groups of six to ten people meet twice monthly to discuss and share on a more intimate level. New groups will be forming in the New Year. To get involved, contact Ruth Arellana (rkarellana@yahoo.com), Jean Lawlor (jeanlawlor@cox.net), or Dianne Mailloux (mailloux2@cox.net).

A **Green Sanctuary** group just getting started here. This group is looking to deepen its environmental consciousness and improve green strategies for the congregation and community. All are welcome and encouraged to join. Contact: Jackie Wheelock (jackie.wheelock@verizon.net).

These are just some of the many ways to get involved. If you would like to figure out what will fit you best, I invite you to come and talk with me in the Newcomers' Café after Sunday service (you do not need to be a newcomer, all are welcome!). I would be happy to answer questions or direct you to someone involved in these programs. Or contact me by email (mem@firstunitarianprov.org).

Jennifer Nardone, Membership Coordinator

Art in the Atrium

In February, Jim Anderson will show his amazing photographic testimony of the 1968 student revolution and American political events of that year. His black and white pictures give us an interesting perspective and reflection on present events.

The schedule for the following months is full of talented artists from our congregation, including youth: the high school class will have a show in June.

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

Spiritual Development

Announcing the 2012 Summer Services Worship Theme

Our worship services from mid-June to Labor Day weekend are led by members and friends of the congregation and occasional guest speakers. They are planned and hosted by the Worship Committee.

For summer 2012, the theme will be "Nourishing the Spirit," inviting talks on experiences or insights that have been inspiring or supportive or even life-changing. Such spiritual renewal or recognition could have happened anywhere at any time -- perhaps even right here at First Unitarian.

The Worship Committee has begun planning for the summer services and would like to hear from anyone who has ideas for individual service topics or speakers. You could suggest others as speakers or nominate yourself if you would like to share your spiritual nourishment with the community. We also want to hear from anyone who would like to share a musical talent during summer services.

Please share suggestions for speakers or music with any member of the Worship Committee.

The Worship Committee: Richard Boober, Keith Brown, Jesse Cohen, Steve Cuzner, Marilyn Eanet (co-chair), Jim Estey, Susan Fisher, Lynda Gulley, Ryk McIntyre, Joan Richards (co-chair), Claire Rosenbaum, John Simmons, Rev. James Ford, RE Director Cathy Seggel, Music Director Fred Jodry

Giving Flowers for a Sunday Service

The floral arrangements at our Sunday worship services are provided by members and friends of the congregation to honor a loved one or celebrate a special occasion. You, too, can provide flowers, and after the service, you can take them with you or give them away.

Contact: Jacqui Nye (funjac@hotmail.com). Please type "flowers" in the subject line.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Innate Wisdom and Compassion Meditation Workshop

Wednesdays 7:00-8:15p, March 7, 14, 21, 28

Join us for a four-week introduction to Guided Meditations of Innate Wisdom and Compassion. These meditations are powerfully transformative practices from Tibetan Buddhism, adapted into new forms that can touch the hearts and minds of people from all backgrounds and faiths, to help them bring out the best in themselves, within their relationships, service, and social action.

You will be introduced to the practice step by step, in a supportive, fully guided setting. All sessions include description of the practice, about one-half hour of actual practice, and time for questions and comments. Whether you are a beginner or experienced meditator, you will benefit from the deep connection with your inmost being these practices provide.

Please pre-register by e-mail to the workshop leader, Ken Bent (kenbent@cox.net)

Benevolent Street Zendo

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 is available to those who come at 6:45p.

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

UUMen

Sunday, February 12, 7:00-9:00p

All men are warmly invited to these evenings on the second Sunday of the month devoted to issues facing contemporary men and discussion of what it means to be a man in the world today.

February Facilitator: Steve McCloy (401.244.5321)

Reimagining Religion

Tuesdays, February 14 and 28, 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)

Community Collection

The January 15 offering for English for Action brought in \$978.77. Thank you to all who so generously contributed.

February 5 Community Collection for the George Wiley Center

For more than 20 years, the George Wiley Center has been the statewide "voice for the voiceless." It organizes to solve the economic and social justice challenges faced by low-income, disabled, and elderly Rhode Islanders. Providing affordable energy plans with reasonable shut-off protections are a priority interest. Another challenge is reaching out to the 44% of the eligible people currently not receiving the benefits of food stamps. The Center also advocates for universal free breakfast in all school districts. Our collection will help the Wiley Center continue to give "voice" to those that our rich nation has often turned its back on.

Ethical Eating Tip from the Ethical Eating Interest Group

SHOP THE PERIMETER

By avoiding the middle aisles of the supermarket, you will bypass processed foods and be able to concentrate instead on whole foods such as fruits and veggies, dairy, meat, and fish.

WHY: Foods that are not processed are usually better for your health and use fewer resources (e.g., no additives, excess packaging, etc.).

Recycling Your Magazines = Food for the Food Pantry

Here's how it works: donate your high-interest magazines for others to purchase for just 50 cents to \$1. Popular categories: science, gardening, kids' magazines, handyman, *Geographics*, cars, yoga, fishing, cooking, craft, foreign affairs, current events (no weeklies), and personal improvement, just to name a few. No catalogs, please. Last year this program earned close to \$500 for our Food Pantry.

Contact: Ruth Arellana (rkarellana@yahoo.com)

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!



Social Justice

Neighborhood Social Justice

Potluck and Discussion with Providence "Occupiers"

Friday, February 24, 5:30p

We are hosting a Potluck Dinner for the Occupiers of Burnside Park, to be followed by a community meeting to explore the roots of the Great Recession and what together our two communities can do about it. We will begin with a meet and greet at our church, followed by a potluck dinner and a community meeting to explore how our communities can work together to promote a just and care society here in Rhode Island. Please mark your calendar, as this is a must-attend event!

Sandwiches for the Loaves & Fishes Ministry

Thursday, February 16 at 3:30p

We will also be assisting the homeless community by stocking a catering truck provided by Mobile Loaves & Fishes ministry, which will be here on February 16. Volunteers are needed to make sandwiches, stock the truck, and ride into the city to feed the homeless. Supplies are also in great demand.

Sign up for both projects at the NSJC table in the Atrium during Coffee Hour.

The next monthly meeting of NSJC will be on Sunday, February 5, at 12:15p in the Haynes Room. All are WELCOME!!!! Please help us help those in need!

Contact: Joe Salvatore (joesuu@gmail.com)

Standing on the Side of Love

The SSL Committee is expanding its focus to work on justice for immigrants in our community. We plan to sponsor a forum this spring, so come by the committee's table in the Atrium after services to get on our email list and stay up to date on our activities.

We encourage all to attend the potluck dinner and discussion with Providence "Occupiers" on February 24, hosted by the Neighborhood Social Justice Committee.

Contacts: Jan Seymour-Ford (seymourford@gmail.com) & Brian Paradis (briananddeacon@comcast.net)



Volunteer at Our Food Pantry

February is Toothbrush and Toothpaste Month.

Distribution Day: February 20

The biggest social justice program at First Unitarian is the Food Share Pantry. It takes a lot of 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-3:00p

Shopping with our clients: 3:00p-5:00p

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

Contacts: Martha Manno (Mmanno7@comcast.net), Amy Webb (amy.webb7@verizon.net), Nori Duncan (nori.duncan@gmail.com)

Knitting for a Better World: Many, Many Mittens Project

Every Tuesday, 7:00-9:00p

Last year, Knitting for a Better World successfully collected over 200 hats, many of them handmade, for our Hundreds of Hats project. We also collected many scarves, sweaters and socks. This year, we have a new challenge. After speaking with representatives from different communities, we have realized the need is greatest to cover heads and hands. Since our focus was on hats last year, we have decided to focus on mittens this year. We will be collecting many, many mittens in a basket in the Atrium, with a goal of collecting 100 pairs of mittens. Please help us reach our goal by bringing in new or gently used, hand-made or store-bought, mittens and gloves. Hats, scarves, socks, and sweaters are also greatly appreciated. These items will be distributed to veterans at the VA hospital in Providence, help out chilly folks in South Providence, warm new immigrants in Olneyville, and hang on our own Mitten Tree throughout this winter.

If you would like to knit with us, or if you want to learn to knit, please join us any Tuesday night in the Parish House. Bring a project of your own, or come and knit mittens with us. We can provide yarn, needles, patterns, and mutual support.

Contact: Julie Meyers (kelmey@cox.net)



Social Justice in Action – What Our Committees Are Doing

Community Food Share Pantry

Continuing its monthly distribution of free food and household products to low-income and needy families. Always welcomes more volunteers - especially for clean-up on Distribution Day, the third Monday of every month. Looking for more storage space, better lighting - and some day a van.

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

Knitting for a Better World

Knitters interested in reaching out to communities that need warm clothes. We give warm clothes to English for Action (immigrants); prayer shawls to Middle East women; dolls for Haitian children; hats and mittens for our own Mitten Tree.

Contact: Julie Meyers (kelmey@cox.net)

Neighborhood Social Justice

Currently organizing three activities: 1) Another "Y'all Come" Community Lunch (for the homeless) in May with Beneficent Church; 2) a Community Pot Luck Dinner on February 24 with invited guests of the 99% Movement; (3) the Mobile Loaves & Fishes catering truck to bring food to homeless.

Contact: Joe Salvatore (joesuu@gmail.com)

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Coordinates First U Religious Education children sponsoring the UUSC's "Guest @ Your Table" program. Currently planning for a meeting after services on March 25 (Justice Sunday).

Contact: Dianne Mailloux (mailloux2@cox.net)

Village Bank

Working to raise \$5,000 to provide small loans to women to start businesses in impoverished countries. Guatemala and Haiti have been recent recipients. Annual Holiday Sale provides funding for these village banks.

Contacts: Marilyn Eanet (meanet@cox.net) & Polly Walker (pwalker41@cox.net)

Peace Flag Project

September is always the Month of Peace, but events take place all year. Organizing for the 2012 Month of Peace includes another Peace Walk at Waterfire. Peace Flags are being made by First Unitarian's sixth-graders and the Coming-of-Agers.

Contact: Ginny Fox (ginfox32@yahoo.com)

Transylvania Partnership

Maintains the congregation's connection with our partner Unitarian church in Transylvania. Planning a visit in April to our partner church in Romania.

Contact: Tom Getz (thomas1getz@prodigy.net)

Legislative Ministry

Continues acting on legislation in RI & MA that reflects UU Principles & Purposes. Current priority in RI is working with SSL to pass Marriage Equality. Contact: Bob Cox (rcox45@cox.net)

Standing on the Side of Love (SSL)

Passage of Marriage Equality legislation in Rhode Island is still a major focus, along with denomination-wide advocacy for immigration reform. First Unitarian will again be a participant in the 2012 Pride Day. SSL is a step to help create the "beloved community."

Contacts: Jan Seymour-Ford (seymourford@gmail.com) & Brian Paradis (briananddeacon@comcast.net)

Ethical Eating

Following a well-received Parish Supper about the health, environmental, and social justice implications of our food choices both in this country and internationally, several group meetings are being held to explore "ethical eating" meals.

Contacts: Polly Walker (pwalker41@cox.net) & Marilyn Eanet (meanet@cox.net)

World Affairs

Sponsoring the March 9 Parish Supper program on "Peak Oil and Transition Towns." This is a "ground-up" concept for creating sustainable communities when oil soon becomes too expensive and scarce to maintain current life styles.

Contact: John Petell (picskate@aol.com)

World Affairs/Amnesty International

Hosts the annual Providence Write-a-thon for Human Rights in cooperation with the World Affairs Committee. Last December, a standing-room audience heard a Chinese prisoner of conscience describe his experiences. He was representing the group Issues on China.

Contact: Marcia Lieberman (marcia.lieberman@gmail.com)

Habitat for Humanity

A group of First Unitarian volunteers who help build homes in Providence with Habitat. Up to six volunteers are needed on the third Saturday of the month, as weather permits.

Contact: Peter Van Erp (petervanerp@cox.net)

Green Sanctuary

Currently looking for members to help focus our interest on the many environmental issues facing our communities (energy conservation), state (resource recovery), nation (urban sprawl), and world (climate change). Need to fulfill "green strategies" for the congregation and community to meet UUA objectives.

Contact: Jackie Wheelock (jwheelock53@gmail.com)

Wholly Rollers

Participates in bike tours to raise funds for National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Contact: Paul Hossfield (aus.robustus@gmail.com)

**Enrich your life!
Join a Social Justice Ministry group!**



A HISTORIC AND UNIQUE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Unitarian Universalists are being called to join together this year in Phoenix for a historic, one-of-a-kind UUA General Assembly -- one focused on justice and human rights. In a time when our country is experiencing a host of injustices this General Assembly calls us to:

- learn about and bear witness to some of the major civil rights and economic justice issues of our time in Arizona and around the country.
- become partners with human rights organizations in Arizona who have invited us to work with them to defend human rights.
- learn ways to bring our learning and experience home to create a more just environment for all in our own congregations, communities and states.

This General Assembly is intended to be multigenerational, actively involving youth, young adults and families of all ages. There will be less business and more worship, learning, networking, public witness and work.

This GA has the potential to move us to a higher level of involvement in our communities and the world, not just this year, but into the future.

Along with workshops and events addressing justice issues, GA will also include many traditional features that make every GA memorable - the Service of the Living Tradition, the Ware Lecture, the GA Choir, the Exhibit Hall, daily and Sunday worship services, prominent speakers, presentations and workshops.

We hope hearing about this unique General Assembly energizes you and gets you thinking about what it could mean for you, for your congregation and for the Association. Over the next several weeks a bi-weekly special bulletin -- Justice GA Notes -- will be sent specifically to church offices, congregation leaders and staff, and social justice committee chairs telling about General Assembly features and logistics, and about immigration and the other justice issues that will be explored at GA. But everyone is invited to get the bulletin. Send your name and email address to bcdoffice@verizon.net with "Subscribe to GA Bulletin" in the subject line.

But for now, we hope you will:

- Start making plans to attend and find out who else in your congregation, including newer members and youth, might want to also go
- Create ways to raise funds to support people going
- Take advantage of UUA resources, including adult education curricula, to deepen your understanding of immigration and economic justice issues at <http://www.uua.org/immigration/index.shtml>
- Follow the GA web pages at <http://www.uua.org/ga>

and

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN
FOR MORE INFORMATION
FROM THE BCD 2012 GA TASK FORCE
ABOUT JUSTICE GA AND THE REALITIES THAT INSPIRE IT.

The Ballou Channing District General Assembly Task Force: Rev. Catherine Cullen, Beth McGregor, Eva Marx, Bob Cox, John Glasheen, Rachel Tedesco, Margaret Rice Moir, Rev. Jill Cowie, Rev. William Zelazny

FEBRUARY 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Prudential Committee 6:00p Meditation 7:00p	2	3	4
5 Sunday Service 10:30a History Committee 12:00p Mentor/Mentee 12:15p Neighborhood SJ 12:15p	6 Women's Alliance Business 10:30a Program 11:00a Zendo 7:00p	7 Canvass 7:00p Lay Ministry 7:00p Peak Oil 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	8 Meditation 7:00p	9 Deacons 6:00p Worship 7:00p	10 All-Parish Supper 5:45p	11
12 Sunday Service 10:30a Congregational Conversation 12:00 Membership Comm. 12:15p UU Men 7:00p	13 Zendo 7:00p	14 Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	15 R.E. Committee 6:30p Meditation 7:00p	16 Mobile Loaves & Fishes 3:00p Standing on the Side of Love 7:00p	17	18 Habitat Work Day Saturday Social Supper (Bridgehouse's)
19 Sunday Service 10:30a	20 Presidents' Day OFFICE CLOSED Food Pantry 2:00-6:00p Zendo 7:00p	21 Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	22 Meditation 7:00p	23	24 NSJC/Occupy Providence Dinner & Program 5:30p	285
26 Sunday Service 10:30a Teacher Lunch 12:00p	27 Zendo 7:00p	28 Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	29 Executive Committee 7:00p Meditation 7:00p			