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NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FRIDAY, JANUARY 27TH **5**РМ Submit articles to

newsletter@uusharon.org

IANUARY WORSHIP SERVICES

10am Family Service 10:30am Adult Service (while children are in their religious education classes)

Jan. 1, one service only at 10:30am, childcare provided:

"Time, Change, and Timelessness"

We will explore the concepts of time and change and how they relate to normal daily life. We will be joined by UU's from our 5 Point Cluster of UU Congregations. Jim Robinson will be preaching.

Jan. 8: return to the 10am and 10:30am Sunday morning format

"Empowerment and Engagement"

Our speakers will be Martin Venay and Rev. Susan Chorley from the UU Urban Ministry. How do we empower ourselves and our communities to work for social justice? How can we do it effectively? How do we engage as allies with others groups and communities?

Jan. 15: "How I Got Over" **Martin Luther King Sunday Service**

Our speaker will be Adrienne Williams. Adrienne led last year's MLK service and the congregation found it one of the most powerful services of the entire church year.

Jan. 22: "Encouraging Healthy Relationships"

This service will explore basic guidelines for fostering healthy relationships, especially within families and friendships. Jim Robinson will be preaching.

Jan. 29: "Celebrating Our Present and Envisioning Our Future"

We will welcome members who joined with us this past fall and then take a visionary look at our future. We will hear from our Ministerial Search Committee and also from "AIM II" (revitalizing our sanctuary space). What do we want our future to look like?



Weather Related Cancellations

Call the church at 781.784.3652 to learn whether services or other activities are canceled due to weather.



From the Minister

Retirement Plans

I have five more months as your minister. My last Sunday service will be May 26th. So I have been thinking about what life will be like after I retire from the full time ministry. My wife and I thought about moving to Cape Cod (where we have dear friends) but decided it was too far from the grandchildren (whom we want to be able to visit regularly during the week). Then we explored moving closer to our daughter and family in Watertown and found that we could not afford to buy a house. We could afford a condominium but we have three small dogs and that is a no go for condos. So we decided to stay in Sharon. We think Sharon is a great town to live in. Having the former minister live near the church can be awkward, so it will be important to be clear about the appropriate guidelines for me in relation to church members and friends. We will go over those guidelines in the coming months.

I am retiring (at age 67) because I want more time with my wife, daughter, son-in-law, four grandsons, and my close friends. I also want more time for my own spiritual life and interests. I have decided that I would like to volunteer up to ten hours a week to help another UU Church or Fellowship. This could either be as a spiritual director/counselor in a larger UU Church or as part time minister in a smaller UU fellowship. I have begun exploring possibilities and will share with you whatever unfolds.

Just as I am thinking about my life after May, you must do the same for this beloved spiritual community called the Unitarian Church of Sharon. The service on Sunday, January 29th, will explore what that future might look like, both in the short run and in the long run. This is a wonderful and vibrant community and it has been an honor and privilege to serve as your minister.

-Jim Robinson

From the Director of Religious Education

Crossing the Threshold

At our RE Yule party last month, I found myself drawn to the yule log ritual. At the moment before we crossed the threshold into Program A/B with our yule log, we stopped and said a blessing in which we welcomed the log into our home. We took time to notice what we were allowing to cross from the outside world into our inner sanctum. And then we welcomed it in. The moment's pause made me think about what I allow into my family's space – and what I welcome in.

The threshold of a home is a wonderful symbol of the boundary that defines a family. There are many simple ways to acknowledge that threshold and celebrate what is special about your family. Many cultures prepare for the new year with a ritual cleansing of their home – sweeping last year's dust out the front door to make way for good fortune in the new year. Some people decorate the threshold throughout the year (some on the outside, some on the inside) to remind themselves that they are crossing over from inside to outside space. Our first and second graders once decorated the entry of their classroom for this purpose.

If you've never created your own family ritual, trying out a celebration like this might seem artificial. But I encourage you to think of it as an experiment. A good family ritual lasts about 10 minutes, includes everyone, is fun, can be solemn at moments, and often is followed by a tasty and possibly symbolic snack.

Unitarian Universalism does not require us to do this. All it asks is that we seek meaning in life. Taking time to notice the thresholds in our lives and paying attention to the meaning of our everyday comings and goings are ways to celebrate what matters to each of us.

Blessings,

Louise



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

January in Religious Education

On January 8th we will be welcoming our RE students back from their holiday break.

Learning about our church community will the theme for the **Preschool-Kindergarten** class this month. The children will create jigsaw puzzle pieces to show how they and their families are important parts of our church community. The children will have the opportunity share some hospitality with their families, and they will also learn about the celebrations we have at church for unions of love and baby dedications.

The Grade 1-2 class will discuss hospitality while learning about UU Minister John Murray. The class will explore some different aspects of worship, such as saying grace, attending RE classes, and attending church services or special celebrations. They will discuss the students' individual gifts to highlight their contributions to their faith community. The class will end the month by commencing a special card making project that reaches out to members of the community in need of warm wishes.

The Grade 3-4 group will spend a session discussing forgiveness while learning that some memories should be written in sand while others can be carved in stone. They will learn about the importance of being welcoming to all regardless of differences through a Middle Eastern folk tale about a man who has two different experiences due to his appearance. This group will also begin a project that develops a relationship with Syrian children living in refugee camps.

Stillness, presence, silence and listening will be the focus of the **Grade 5-6** sessions. The group will try a breathing meditation, hear a story about Henry David Thoreau, and another story about a peaceful demonstration where simply being present made a difference. They will also hear about one man's campaign to preserve silence and the sounds of nature, and engage in activities to promote intent listening.

The **Grade 7-8** students who are participating in the OWL program will continue with their OWL sessions this month. The curriculum fosters empathy and understanding, while exploring topic such as sexuality and disability, and healthy relationships.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education for Grades 5-6

Parents of 5th and 6th graders are encouraged to mark your calendars for the official opening of the *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) for Grades 5-6 program on **Sunday, January 8**. Your participation (and that of your 5th/6th grader) is required at this Parent-Child Orientation in order for your child to participate in the eight-session OWL program.

The Orientation runs from 12:30 until 3 pm. A lunch of soup, bread, and fruit (along with WOW! Butter sandwiches) will be provided at noon (free of charge). Fun care for siblings will be also available free of charge – so that all parents can attend the orientation if they wish. If you have a question or concern, please contact Louise Marcoux.

<u>Starting 2017 Right:</u> <u>Teacher Breakfast Meeting on January 22</u>

If breakfast is the most important meal of the day, breakfast on January 22 might just be the most important meal of the year for RE teachers. All RE volunteers are encouraged to gather for a 9 am breakfast meeting with your colleagues to discuss concerns, resolve problems, strategize about RE Sunday, and work out a team schedule for the second half of the church year. Louise will be available to consult with your team and offer an array of useful resources. Please bring your laptop or tablet to help you access your team's online calendar.

The RE Committee will provide a delicious breakfast for RE volunteers and their children. Childcare is provided. See you on Sunday, January 22, 9-10 am, in the Vestry.

<u>Ni Howdy! – A multicultural, multigenerational</u> celebration

Chase away those winter blues! Everyone's invited to gather for fellowship and fun on Saturday, February 4, from 4-6 pm, in the Congregational Church's Fellowship Hall (29 N. Main St.)

Howdy: The first hour will involve a fair amount of aerobic clapping, stomping, and two-hand turns with your partner as we try out some simple traditional New England country dances (with Louise calling out the steps). Curious about the dances? Check out http://tinyurl.com/zjf36fr

Ni Hao: Once we're good and tired, we'll say hello to Chinese New Year with special performances by dancers and actors. There will also be games and activities.

Fun for everyone ages 4 to 104. Co-sponsored by the RE Committee and the Membership Committee.

January Programs

Meditation Group meets each Tuesday evening, 7:30pm-8:30pm, and new comers are always welcome.

UCS Book Group will participate, as a team, in the Sharon Library's "Literary Trivia Contest" to be held on Wednesday January 4th, 7:30pm-9:30pm, in the community room at Sharon Public Library. Come be part of the UCS team!

Adult Choir is always looking for new voices. Contact choir director Jennifer Spencer at nifandi@comcast.net.

Children's Choir is always looking for new voices. Contact choir director Forbesy Russell at forbesyrussel@hotmail.com.

Pot Luck Supper on Friday, January 6, 6pm in the vestry. Bring a dish and enjoy the company.



Conversations at the Meetinghouse - Friday, January 6, 2017, 7pm "The Politics of Environmental Protection and the EPA"

Our speaker will be Tom D'Avanzo. Tom will provide an over view of the Environmental Protection Agency's work from his 37 years with the EPA, both in Washington and in their Regional Office in Boston. Both from a personal and political perspective, Tom's talk will include an overview of EPA's politicization during the early Reagan years and offer comparisons with what might happen during the Trump era. He will also highlight major EPA successes such as the clean up of Boston Harbor. Tom retired from the EPA this past September.

Emerging Adults UU Conference will be held at UCS from Friday evening January 6th through Sunday morning January 8th. Organized by Gare Reid Jr. and Yvonne Marcoux, this conference will be a chance for UU's in the late teen or early 20's to connect and explore how to live our UU values in the world.

UCS Covenant Groups are open for new participants. These are small groups which use clear sharing guidelines to discuss key spiritual and ethical themes. If you would like to join a covenant group contact Jim Robinson at revrobinson@uusharon.org.

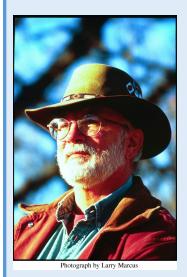
UCS Women's Support Group is open for new women to join. If interested contact Kathleen Guilday at k.guilday@comcast.net.

UCS Men's Support Group is open for new men to join. If interested contact Jim Robinson at revrobinson@uusharon.org.

Movie Night will be Friday, January 13, at 7pm. We will view and discuss the film "The Danish Girl". This is the real life story of the Danish painter Einar Wegener who in 1931 became the first man to undergo a sex change operation.

Let's Laugh Today on Saturday, January 14, 11am—FREE! You can add more laughter to your life in 2017! Enjoy this unique exercise of simulated laughter combined with gentle breathing that brings more oxygen to the body's cells. Any age and any level of physical ability can participate in this uplifting experience! Led by Certified Laughter Yoga Teachers, Linda and Bill Hamaker. Please bring your water bottle and at least one canned good for the Sharon/Stoughton Food Pantry. New laughers are always welcomed! See www.letslaughtoday.com for more information.

January Programs, Continued



Not Just Another Coffee House

Saturday, January 14, 7pm Bill Staines in Concert!!

For more than 40 years Bill has travelled back and forth across North America, singing his songs and delighting audiences are festivals, colleges, and coffee houses. His music has been used on sound tracks of feature films and television programs. He had recorded 29 albums/CDs. Bill is one of America's finest folks singers alive today. Arrive early for it may sell out. And of course you can enjoy our Fair Trade beverages and home made desserts.

Art in the Heart will meet Friday, January 27, at 7pm. Join us for an evening of play, fun, creativity, and community. We will provide for you a variety of artistic media under the guidance of our Art in the Heart team of Kate Parker O'Toole, Mare Parker O'Toole, Dia Cheney, Jean Fox, and Appleseed Robinson. This is art without right or wrong, good or bad, better or worse—rather it is art for everyone to enjoy. Let your inner child play!

Writer's Group will meet Sunday, January 22, from 12 noon to 1pm. Bring a poem or prose piece to share, or come along to enjoy hearing what other's have composed.

January Art Display in the vestry is the photographic work of Kari Thostenson. Her artwork will remain on display through February. If you are interested in sharing your art work, contact Jim Robinson at revrobinson@uusharon.org.

5 Point UU Cluster - Small Group Suppers

The 5 Point Cluster of UU Congregations (composed of the UU congregations in Sharon, Easton, Stoughton, Foxborough, Canton) invite you to join a small group supper on Saturday evening, January 28th. These suppers will be held either in private homes or at the local UU church. Each supper will be for between five and ten people. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to meet UU's from other congregations. If you would like to attend one of these "circle suppers" contact Jim Robinson at revrobinson@uusharon.org.

Join us for **Our Town** by *Thornton Wilder* on Saturday, February 4 at 8:00pm at *Mansfield Music and Arts Society*. The evening starts at 7:00pm with a potluck reception if we have enough people and the show starts at 8:00pm. The ticket price is \$26.00pp.

Our Town is a 1938 three-act play by American playwright Thornton Wilder. It tells the story of the fictional American small town of Grover's Corners between 1901 and 1913 through the everyday lives of its citizens. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

We welcome any UU members and friends to join us for an evening of socializing and great entertainment. Please contact Pat McDougal if you are interested.





SHARON ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Monday, January 16, 10am First Baptist Church – 2 S. Main St. Sponsored by the Interfaith Sharon Clergy

Informed by the example and teachings of Martin Luther King, our theme will be: "Working for Justice while Finding Common Ground". Key note speakers will include both clergy and laity. Let's explore together how we can move towards a world free of racism. There will be special music and a chance for small group sharing.



Learning that the Islamic Center of New England, located in Sharon, received hate mail, the Senior High Youth group created this card to send to the Youth Group at the Islamic Center.

Islamic Center Tour

The **Sharon Pluralism Network** is organizing a **tour of the local mosque and a conversation with the Imam** on Sunday afternoon, January 8th, 1:30 - 3:30 PM at 74 Chase Drive, Sharon. Please consider coming, especially if you have not been there before. The people there are very welcoming, and our goal is to help people learn a little about the mosque. Any questions, feel free to talk with Beth Hoke.

Symphony Hall Performance

Please come and share my "bucket list" experience with me on January 14th. Once a year, the Boston Symphony Orchestra invites musicians, who have kept up their music while working professionally in another field, to perform in Symphony Hall under the guidance of Maestro Thomas Wilkins. I was selected this year to be part of this group and to perform on my French Horn. When I was studying music in college in Houston, I used to enjoy watching Arthur Fiedler conduct the Boston Pops in Symphony Hall. So, this is a real special experience for me to perform on stage in Symphony Hall. Our culminating concert will be on Saturday, January 14th, at 1:30 PM. The concert is free and open seating. Please come and share this thrilling opportunity with me!

Mia Joiner-Moore

On the 12th Day of Christmas my true love gave to me
One last Party before taking down the Tree.
--Traditional

OPEN HOUSE

at the McGregors' 52 Upland Road, Sharon

Saturday, January 7th 6-10 PM

No RSVP needed—Just drop in!

Tidbits for the table are welcomed.
As you will, join in our annual Yankee Swap-Bring a wrapped gift you wish you hadn't received.

From Our Partner Churches....



In December, the John Pounds Church had a Christmas Eve Carol service. They sang the same Unitari-

an- based hymns that we sang at one of our services. All of the offerings were donated to the Yemen Crisis Appeal to help children in that country.

Helen Cato, the liaison from the John Pounds Church, recently received a number of postcards from people in our church which have been put on display. She will also acquire a pictorial directory to inspire church members to connect.

Fun Fact: Did you know that Charles Dickens may have attended the John Pounds Church when young? Whether that is myth or fact, the official Charles Dickens Birthday Lecture is held at out partner church on a Saturday close to <u>February 7th</u> every year.

Dear Unitarians of Sharon!

We wish you merry Christmas and a wonderful new year!

We want to thank you for supporting us. God bless you!

Best wishes,

Simo Zsuzsanna and the Unitarian Congregation from Gyulakuta

Our dear Friends,

Winter has arrived here in Transylvania with great strength. However we are looking forward to the arrival of the most beautiful holiday of the year with warmth in our hearts. We have started to prepare for the holiday in our congregation, too.

Together with my wife we are keeping manual art workshops and activities for the children while they are learning Christmas carols and poems, which they are going to sing and recite in church in front of the congregation. These activities and workshops are attended by children from Csokfalva, Erdoszentgyorgy and Gyulakuta, too. Especially those students are invited who haven't been confirmed yet, or those who are little. We hope that our celebration will be beautiful.

The scholarships which were sent for the students and organist by you have been given to they. They gratefully thank for the help.

Last month we organized a meeting for the priests in our vicarage and 20 priests from the surroundings attended it. On the event we prayed, we sang and I presented my book in a pleasant, great atmosphere. There was another important event in our village.

Three weeks ago the president of the Hungarian Parliament was our guest. Here in our region he is a leader with a high rank.

Up to then I wish you and your congregation in Sharon blessed waiting time for Christmas.

With love, rev. Tokes Lorant (Csokfalva-Erdoszentgyorgy-Gyulakuta)



SOCIAL JUSTICE UPDATES - JANUARY 2017

Come to Nicaragua in July 2017! You will be warmly welcomed and taken care of by the people of Chacraseca, a large rural community outside of the Pacific coastal city of León. The weather will be hot, but it's not the hottest time of year there. Nights are cooler, and you might choose to sleep on a cot in the open air, or indoors in a bed.

Our daily activities will include a mix of work and play. Our central purpose is to help a family get a new, sturdy house and latrine – and we will be provide financial support and some of the labor, according to the abilities of those of us on the trip. Tasks range from digging trenches and carrying bricks to twisting endless pieces of wire to make support columns. Professional builders and family members will complete the project after we leave. Other activities for our group could include gardening, visiting schools to meet with teachers and students, visiting a community of artisans and learning about their lives, and seeing some of the natural wonders of the country. Here are the details:

When? July 15-25, 2017 (maximum, possibly returning July 23 or 24)

Who? Adults from the church community and beyond, working with FNE International (fneinternational.org)

How much? Individual costs will be around \$1000, depending on cost of airfare. We will raise \$2450 for the house, partially supported through a Brown Envelope month.

What else? Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2017 at church. At that time, if there are at least six people committed to participating, it's a go! Please join us for this important meeting, even if you are just interested in learning more, and contact Janet Schmidt (jcscoch@gmail.com) with your questions, concerns, and ideas.

2016-17 UUA Common Read: There are several copies of *The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement* in our church library and in the Vestry during coffee hour. It includes a timely analysis of how to build alliances for the common good from groups with disparate agendas. We will be organizing discussions and more in early 2017, but you are encouraged to borrow a copy any time. You can also purchase your own copy through Beacon Press (www.beacon.org) or as an e-book through your preferred vendor.

Are you already engaged with this important book? Please consider sharing a single paragraph reflection on it with your thoughts, emotions or reactions to Reverend Barber's approach to social justice. We are planning a Social Justice Service in February, and we will use the collective wisdom of those who respond as a starting point for our discussion of *The Third Reconstruction*, and how, together, we can be a force for change. Don't wait until you finish the book – please share your reactions to it at any point so that we can dig deeply into this topic. Send your paragraphs to agreid@rcn.com, and we will compile them, anonymously, for the service. Thank you.

Brown Envelope Update: On Sunday, December 18, we presented a check for \$2798.53 to Ala'a Elshaar, a representative from the Syrian American Medical Society (www.sams-usa.net), recipient of our November Brown Envelope collections. December Brown Envelope funds will support the food pantries in Sharon-Stoughton, Canton, Foxboro, Norwood, and Walpole, with all Christmas Eve offerings supporting residents of MainSpring House in Brockton. In January, Brown Envelope money will support the work of the UU Urban Ministry, based in Roxbury. Thanks to all for your generosity!

Social Justice Committee Meets Tuesday, January 10 at 7:00 PM: Everyone is welcome to attend our monthly meetings, where we plan and coordinate the social justice activities of the church and discuss current issues.

(Continued on page 9)



SOCIAL JUSTICE UPDATES - JANUARY 2017, Continued

(Continued from page 8)

Individual Opportunities for Social Justice Updates and Actions:

UU Mass Action - Sign up to receive updates from the state action network organizing and mobilizing 140 UU congregations and 20,000 UU's around issues of social justice. Go to uumassaction.org and click on *About Us* on the home page to get to the sign-up link.

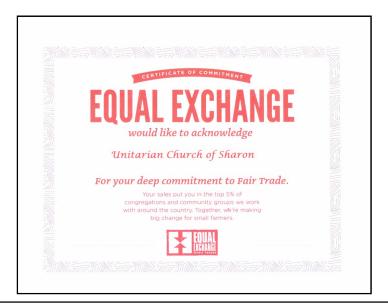
Become a UCS Social Justice Change Agent – Receive monthly email alerts about opportunities to act on time-critical social justice issues, primarily by contacting state and federal legislators. To participate, please email Kari Thostenson at kjhoste@gmail.com.

Shopping For Justice – You can buy **Shopping for Justice** cards at church during coffee hour or order extra cards in advance. We have cards in various denominations for Shaws, Stop & Shop, and Big Y, and +/-5% of the value stays with the church to help fund our social justice projects in support of people who experience food and housing insecurity locally and beyond.

Upcoming Dates:

- -Sunday, January 8, 11:30 AM Lunchmaking for MainSpring House, led by the Senior Youth Group (with peanut-free, dairy-free WOWBUTTER)
- -Tuesday, January 10, 7:00-8:30 PM Social Justice Committee Meeting
- -Monday, January 23, 7:30-8:30 PM Nicaragua Service Trip Meeting

The support of the UCS community for the principals of Fair Trade has been recognized by our primary supplier, Equal Exchange. Thanks to the power of your commitment to responsible shopping, we are helping to make the world a more just place, one small step at a time. Thank you for choosing Justice when you make your shopping choices!





January 2017 Calendar

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Family Worship Service 10am Worship Service 10:30am Religious Education Classes 10:30am Covenant Sharing Group 7pm	Women's Group I (Closed Grp) 7:30pm	3 Meditation Group 7:30pm	4 Book Group 7:30pm Choir Rehears- al 7:30pm	5	6 Pot Luck Supper 6pm Conversations at the Meetinghouse 7pm Emerging Adults Conference (Fri-Sun)	7 Emerging Adults Conference (Fri- Sun) Committee Chairs 9am 5 Point Cluster Planning Mtg. 10am
8 Emerging Adults Conference (ends 8am) Family Worship Service 10am Worship Service 10:30am Religious Education Classes 10:30am Covenant Sharing Group 7pm	9	Children's Choir 5:30pm Social Justice Committee meeting 7pm Meditation Group 7:30pm	Board of Trustees 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm	Second Women's Group 7:30pm Men's Group 8pm	13 Movie Night 7pm	14 Let's Laugh Today 11am Circle Suppers 6pm
Family Worship Service 10am Worship Service 10:30am Religious Education Classes 10:30am Senior Youth Group 5pm Covenant Sharing Group 7pm	16	17 Children's Choir 5:30pm Meditation Group 7:30pm	18 RE Committee Meeting 7pm Caring Committee 7pm Choir Rehears- al 7:30pm	19	20	21 Coffee House 7pm
Teacher Breakfast 9am Family Worship Service 10am Worship Service 10:30am Religious Education Classes 10:30am Writer's Group 12pm Senior Youth Group 5pm Covenant Sharing Group 7pm	Nicaragua Service Trip meet- ing 7:30pm	24 Children's Choir 5:30pm Meditation Group 7:30pm	25 Choir Rehears- al 7:30pm	26 Women's Support Group 7:30pm Second Women's Group 7:30pm Men's Group 8pm	27 Newsletter Deadline 5pm Art in the Heart 7pm	Worship Commit- tee 9am 5 Point Cluster Small Group Sup- per 6pm
Family Worship Service 10am Worship Service 10:30am Religious Education Classes 10:30am Senior Youth Group 5pm Covenant Sharing Group 7pm	30	31 Children's Choir 5:30pm Meditation Group 7:30pm			org/calendars most up to date o	to reserve meeting calendar.

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FOR INFORMATION ABOUT WORSHIP AND ACTIVITIES CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE AT 781/784-3652 SEND AN EMAIL TO ADMIN@UUSHARON.ORG OR VISIT US ON THE WEB AT www.uusharon.org