

the chalice

Feb. 2005

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newsletter@uusharon.org

Deadline: Feb. 18, 5pm

Submit items via Email
or on Disk, please



Welcoming Congregation Work Continues....

As many of you know, this past fall our church became officially recognized as a Welcoming Congregation by the Unitarian Universalist Association. As wonderful as this achievement is, it is really only the beginning in the ongoing process of making our church a more open and welcoming place for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people. Our goal as a welcoming congregation is to be inclusive and expressive of the concerns of GLBT persons at every level of congregational life – in worship, in programs, and in social occasions – welcoming not only their presence but the unique gifts and experiences that each person brings. The need to continue our work on these issues is especially clear in light of the challenges that face us as we support equal rights including the freedom to marry.

One important aspect of the welcoming congregation process is the workshops that have been developed by the UUA and which we intend to offer again this spring. We encourage those of you who were unable to participate in the set of workshops last year, and even those who did participate, to join us this spring. Almost everyone who attends these workshops finds them enlightening and encouraging. Two of the favorite workshops will be offered again as a sort of catch-up/refreshers for anyone who missed the first set or would like to further explore the issues discussed. Following the catch-up workshops will be two others that we have not yet offered. The first of these will explore the stories, statements, interpretations and misinterpretations of homosexuality in the Bible. The fourth workshop will delve more deeply into understanding transgender identity.

The workshops will be held after church on Sundays in March and April.

See Page 6 for the schedule

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**Submit EMail
by 5pm to**
newsletter@uusharon.org
MS Word attachments
preferred
Or
drop off in the RED
Newsletter Mailbox in the
Church Office
(preferably on disk)

By Any Measure

The number 150,000 has been in the news a lot recently, and I've been wondering what 150,000 looks like. I measured out a pound of sunflower seeds and found out that there are consistently 5 cups in a pound of that kind of seed.

From the Minister

I measured out $\frac{1}{4}$ cup and counted the number of seeds in that. I repeated that process to find that on average there are just about 550 seeds in each $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. It's likely that there are about 2200 in a cup, and 11,000 in a pound.

To see what 150,000 looks like, I measured out not quite 14 pounds of this particular seed. I brought the seeds to church one Sunday and in the service we poured out the 150,000 seeds into a clear plastic box. This took a very long time and the room was very quiet as the seeds streamed into the box.

No wonder we've been so sad. Each seed represented a life that was suddenly gone. It also indicated something about the numbers of families left homeless, stunned and grieving.

Sadness doesn't go away. It can change over time, but when it hits us deeply it never completely goes away. However, sorrow that is acknowledged and felt changes, and though it remains with us it also somehow becomes more bearable.

At the end of the Sunday service we took the sunflower seeds downstairs and people took some home in plastic bags; I saved some to put in our Memorial Garden birdfeeder. The seeds will nurture the lives of many birds and small animals this winter, just as our money and our caring will nurture the lives of survivors of the tsunami.

This spring I hope the children in the church school also will plant some sunflower seeds, and when it is warm enough transplant them out around the playground. How many birds and animals might those flowers nurture next year as well?

Seeds of sadness don't magically change into something else. But seeds of sadness can also become seeds of hope if we let the love in our hearts find a way into action.

May we always be open to finding that way for our own good, and the good of our brothers and sisters in the world.

Blessings,
Deborah

Presidential Ponderings

Scheduling the various parts of the canvass, thinking about fundraising, discussing building use, getting updates from the accessibility committee, proposing an electronic newsletter—these are among the topics dealt with at the last Board of Trustees meeting.

Income from building rentals is up this year. We've already earned two-thirds of what was budgeted, and the year is only half over. Did you know members can use the vestry for children's birthday parties? Did you notice we've got "Meeting space available" on the announcement board out front? What do you think?

The BOT is excited about the canvass plans for this year. We will build on last year's very successful format, with some changes.

Would you just as soon read this newsletter in electronic form? Would you like to get it by email or read it on a password-protected site on the Internet? The BOT would like to save as much postage and as much paper as possible, and so we'd like your feedback on the issue. Would you print all of it out anyway, on one side? Would you read it on the computer and print out only the calendar page?

Please email the church at admin@uusharon.org to express your preference regarding an electronic Chalice.

The BOT also agreed to purchase two books for the congregational library, in recognition of our two outgoing Trustees from last year, Edele Panessidi and David Schoenfeld. Bookplates will note their much-appreciated service.

I'm generally very happy with the way things are going. But I'm sad that only three people (I was one of them) showed up for the Futures Task Force report after the First Friday potluck. The rest of you missed a fascinating summary of what this congregation believes about itself and its role in the world. Look at the Futures bulletin board for a summary.

Valerie White
President

Staying in Touch

Remember to check the new directory so you can keep your EMail address book and/or phone book current.

If you have any updates or corrections for the directory, please send them to admin@uusharon.org.

What do You Contribute to Our "Stone Soup?"

Have you ever thought of our Church community as a fine soup?

Just as in the old story of the "Stone Soup," our Church provides a cauldron for including us together as the broth and separately as individuals who bring different flavors that enhance the feast for all.

We are fortunate to have a wonderful soup, a soup that satisfies our hunger for spirituality, personal growth, inclusiveness, diversity and community. This soup is good for the soul and can even be finer as more broth and flavors are added.

For our upcoming financial pledging canvass to be held during the evenings of March 18, and 19th and during the day on March 20th, think about what flavor you contribute to the Church and what other flavors satisfy your taste in our "Stone Soup".

Reflect upon the importance of these flavors in your lives, as well as your financial commitment for 2005/2006 to support our "Stone Soup."

Tom Yeransian and
Ellen Schoenfeld-Beeks
Canvass Co-Chairs

5 Ways to Live UU Values in the New Year

1. Learn more about the 2004-2006 Study Action Issue on global warming.

The UUA Commission on Social Witness has provided a wealth of information, in collaboration with the UUA's Washington Center for Legislative Advocacy. Read more about this important world issue and take action in your congregation and your community!

2. Become involved in a covenant group/small group ministry in your congregation.

Covenant groups are a transformational practice through which we, with others, can discover our own underlying assumptions about reality and examine our ways of being, some of which have become so habitual that they seem to us just 'the way things are.' Visit the Small Group Ministry website and the UUA's small group ministry page to find out more!

3. Become a more active lay leader in your congregation.

Our congregations need all of us to strengthen the voice of Unitarian Universalism in our community and the wider world. The InterConnections lay leadership site offers you QuickStart information, Frequently Asked Questions, a link to the InterConnections newsletter, and more!

4. Talk to other Unitarian Universalists and share information and learning.

The UUA hosts over 250 email lists and several bulletin boards which can help you connect to other UUs around the globe and share learning, ideas, and fellowship. Visit our communication forum page and follow the links to subscribe to uua-l, our news and information email list, or any of the others that will feed your mind and your deeper connection to our faith!

5. Nurture your spirit - read a Skinner House book!

Mary Wellemeyer's *Admire the Moon* has just been published, and offers a loving look at life, the spirit, and the worshipping center of our souls - perfect for reflection in this new year!

Gifts for (920) Kids

Thanks to Deb's extensive networking skills (and EMail list), the Gifts for Kids Program was able to cover all of the 920 kids who requested gifts.

We had fewer donors this year, but the monetary donations were strong so we sent out a troop of shoppers to purchase gifts for all those who remained.

My thanks to the Senior Youth Group and to all the church members who donated gifts or made a contribution. We created quite a commotion in the center of town during the drop off and in this controlled chaos (despite the lack of heat) it was exhilarating to see so many kids and adults working together to help others. We had over 100 classrooms from Sharon, Wrentham and Medfield and over 40 area Girl Scout troops participate this year.

The following is an excerpt from a letter a student wrote to the child her class was sponsoring and I think it speaks to just what this gift drive is all about.

" I am ecstatic to be able to bring Christmas joy to you this year. My teacher has a huge heart and came up with the idea to make your holiday merrier this year. We are all very eager to pick what we would like to get you. I really hope you enjoy your gifts. I got you the stickers!

Hearing about you made me appreciate what I have even more, but this made me even more determined to make your Christmas just as enjoyable as mine. May the Christmas joy be with you always."

A Happy and Healthy New Year to All.

Pat McDougal,
Coordinator

February's First Friday

Come unwind with church friends at First Friday on February 4 from 6:00 - 8:30 pm.

Arrive at this informal meal as your schedule permits and enjoy a relaxed, end-of-the-week communal meal in the vestry.

No sign-up or reservation is needed – just bring food to share (main dish, salad, vegetable or dessert) and your family's choice of beverage. Without any planning, we enjoy a delicious, varied menu. Clean-up is fast and easy, and we're all home early.

Parents: child care is not provided, so parents please bring a quiet activity for your children.

Thoughts from the Talmud

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now.

You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

Little Things Mean a Lot....

Sometimes it's the little touches that make all the difference, the warm greeting at the door, a lovely flower arrangement in the sanctuary, tasty coffee to sip while we chat. That we all chip in to provide these is spiritual to many.

We need greeters and/or people to provide flowers (or art, or some other type of meditative object) nearly every Sunday between March 13 and June 12.

If you haven't already done so, please check the coffee sign-up sheet at the bulletin board in the back of the downstairs vestry to refresh your memory about your commitments, to check on which Sunday you've been assigned for coffee, and to sign up for greeting and/or "flowers."

If you need to switch with someone else, please update the information on the sheet to be sure it's accurate, so the order of service also will be accurate.

Contact Patty Fitzgerald with questions.

Futures Task Force (Preliminary Report)

The Task Futures Task Force (guided by the work of Richard Southern and Robert Norton, *Cracking Your Congregation's Code: Mapping Your Spiritual DNA to Create Your Future*) created a small group format and questions, recruited facilitators (Wilbur Edwards, Ellen Schoenfeld, Jack Armstrong, Suzanne Howard and Susan Allison), hosted meetings on November 19-21 and November 29, and analyzed results. More than 60 congregation members participated in the small groups.

When we counted all responses, people said the top five values of our congregation are:

Tolerance/Diversity (20)

Social Justice/willingness to act/ caring for greater good/moral values and ethics (10)

Children and children's RE (9)

Opportunity for Intentionality and Mindfulness/ being involved and engaged (6)

Spiritual and Intellectual Balance/ reasoning/curiosity/staying flexible (5)

See Page 6

Welcoming Congregation Work Continues....

From Page 1

The schedule is as follows:

- March 6: Introduction: What We Know
and How We Learned It
- March 13: Gender Socialization and Homophobia
- March 20: Religion and Homosexuality
- April 3: Transgender Identity

The process of becoming a welcoming congregation and the same-sex marriage debate have caused many of us to think more about GLBT issues than we would have otherwise. We all have something to learn and something to share on these topics. We hope that many of you will come and share your experiences and thoughts as we explore these issues in a caring, supportive atmosphere.

Watch for the sign-up sheet in the vestry, and please sign up!

The Welcoming Congregation Committee
Janet Limke, Gare Reid, Jon Slavin,
Reverend Deborah Cayer
welcoming@uusharon.org

Futures Task Force

From Page 5

We asked: How Could we Deepen and Expand these Values? Participants said by:

Proselytize; publicity; outreach to people of color and other groups in the community; singles without children; disabled; families with mixed religious backgrounds; diverse income and education levels;

Social Action/Collective Action as part of our ministry; act more globally;

More Outreach—more challenge to grow spiritually and in numbers; especially grow our social action

Futures Task Force

Work through our discomfort with God talk

Teach people to support others (training to follow up on Joys and Concerns as ministry)

At the end of each meeting, we asked people to write the top three values of the congregation on cards. The top values of individuals correlate with the responses in the small groups:

Tolerance/Openness, Acceptance and Respect

People believe that as a congregation we currently strive to be open, to listen to one another, encourage diversity of thought, race, sexual orientation, support each other's search for truth and meaning, support each other's choices, and tell the world what we think about certain issues that are important to us; we are engaged in spiritual and personal growth, and we have a strong RE Program.

We asked "What would this church look like in 3-5 years if we intentionally act on our values?" Individuals' most hoped for future is

- to be a stronger presence in the larger community through service/social justice advocacy
- to be more diverse in terms of beliefs, age, race, sexual orientation, size, and ideas.
- to be vibrant, bustling and dynamic—for our building to be busy all week, hosting a variety of programs to benefit the larger community.
- We want some quiet reflective space as well
- we want more opportunities for spiritual and personal growth, as individuals and in worship.
- We want to grow in both numbers and fellowship.

Gary Webber, Chair, Beth McGregor,
Laura Raymond and Rev. Deborah Cayer

Learn more about this important work after the February 4th First Friday Potluck and in future issues of the Chalice.

Among UUs

We offer the condolences of the congregation to Susan Allison; Susan's father, Matthew Allison, died early on Christmas Eve morning at the age of 90.

We offer our condolences as well to Susan Rich and Brian Cook. Susan's father, Robert Rich, died in mid January in Hanover, N.H.

Pat Daner is happy to report that she is well on the way to recovery as she recuperates from successful major surgery in mid January.

Congratulations to Kathie and Marc Malefatto whose daughter, Katherine Elaine was dedicated in a family ceremony in the Meetinghouse in early January.

In December, Rev. Deborah Cayer completed an "All Options" training at Harvard Divinity School which was offered to clergy by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) of Massachusetts.

Rev. Cayer will be on study leave from February 16 through March 2. Part of her time will be spent in Madison, Wisconsin (brrrr!) at a conference on science and religion; her remaining time will be spent reading. A local UU minister will cover any pastoral emergencies while she's away. If you need assistance during this time, call the church office, 781/784-3652, or the congregation's President, Valerie White. They'll know who to call.

Tsunami Aid

If you are looking for a way to help survivors of the devastating quake & tidal waves in Asia, we recommend Mercy Corps. We are donors, know someone who works there, and have been impressed with Mercy Corp's efficiency & willingness to go to areas other groups avoid. You can learn more about this international relief charity and Mercy Corps' humanitarian causes at: <http://www.mercycorps.org>.

Karl Arruda and Laura Raymond

Across the Miles

Erin Rosenbaum, the daughter of Stephen and Melissa Mills (and someone who, as she puts it, "practically grew up in the church") writes:

I am a part of the Model United Nations at Cal State L.A. We are trying to raise money to attend the Model UN conference in New York, from March 22 to 26, 2005, where we'll simulate UN debates on issues that have been considered by the UN during the past year.

This year we expect to have 32 students participating, representing the Republic of the Congo. Nearly 3000 students from 250 universities, almost half from foreign institutions, will attend.

I've been assigned to the **UN Population Fund**. We'll be creating resolutions on these issues: creating sustainable livelihoods to eliminate poverty; population and sustainable development in the 21st Century; and the advancement of women in a globalizing world. We will learn to create resolutions to these real problems that affect our world. Our resolutions will be reviewed by the UN and kept in the UN library. The UN is currently under much scrutiny, but is an intricate part to international peace keeping.

Our goal as students of political science is to become future leaders and innovators and the experience we'll gain at the conference will teach us the workings of the UN. Our hard work and dedication to these issues are what have gotten us this far, but because of the California State University budget cuts **we each need to raise \$2,000** in order to attend the conference. For this reason I ask for your help.

The **Global Alliance for Student Advancement International (GASA)** is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit organization (Tax ID number 20-0332147) created to support international youth activities. Please send tax deductible donations (specifying "California State University, Los Angeles, Model UN Organization" in the memo line) payable to GASA International to: Erin Rosenbaum, 78 N. Greenwood Ave., Pasadena, CA 91107. Specify whether you want your donation publicized. We greatly appreciate your help.

For more info, contact me at roseyj5678@yahoo.com or 408/644-4711. Thank you!

Donate Your Car to Benefit the Church

We are very excited to announce a new service and fundraiser for our friends and members! If you have a car that you would rather not sell or trade-in, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Unitarian Church of Sharon. You can take the deduction and we'll take your car off your hands. While we won't actually take your car, we have partnered with a national car donation company that will send a tow truck to tow away your old car. I recently donated our 1988 Volvo to the Church and know of another donation as well. It couldn't have been easier. Please call me and I'll give you details.

Peter Raskin, Treasurer

Calendar Notes

Events take place **at church** unless otherwise noted.

Event times are "**pm**" unless otherwise noted.

Choir rehearses Weds. at 7pm and Sun. at 9am.

Services and child care begin at 10:15am Sundays.

F	Feb. 4	First Friday Potluck 6-7:30 (on flow) Futures Task Force 7:30
Su	Feb. 6	Senior Youth Group 5:30-7:30 Goodwill Alliance 6 (at Melissa Mills')
M	Feb. 7	Women's Support Group 7:30
W	Feb. 9	Board of Trustees 7:15
Th	Feb. 10	Men's Group 8
Sa	Feb. 12	SCMA Concert 7
Su	Feb. 13	SCMA Concert 2 **tentative Senior Youth Group 5:30-7:30
M	Feb. 21	Women's Support Group 7:30
Th	Feb. 22	Men's Group 8
Tu	Mar. 1	Adult Education 7
F	Mar. 4	First Friday Potluck 6-7:30 (on flow)

Alliance Schedules Favorite Books by the Fireside

Goodwill Alliance women's group will meet on Sunday, February 6 at 6pm at Melissa Mills', 31 Maple Ave, Sharon, 781/784-8894. There will be a fireside chat about the favorite books we have read. Bring a reading or book to share.

We'll be collecting books (preferably non-fiction hardcover or paperback, used or new, and current textbooks, all in good condition) to donate to Teen LEEP (Leadership Employment and Enrichment Program) Books. Teen LEEP employs youths placed in youth service programs to operate an online bookselling program that empowers them to learn technology, business and employment skills. Book donations from the community are resold books online. Why? When teens age out of foster care, over 60% do not have a diploma or any job experience. They are at high risk for a host of negative outcomes, including homelessness and criminal activity. Teen Partners gain marketable skills and increased self-confidence, leading to greater success when they transition to community jobs and independent living. For more info about Teen LEEP Books phone: 781/443-4939, EMail: jodi@teenleep.org.

Please join us in a fun evening of socializing and help us support this worthy cause.

A Lasting Gift

Have you, a loved one or friend been thinking about being memorialized with dignity, buried with honor and remembered with affection?

Our church owns two burial plots in Knollwood Memorial Park which were donated to us many years ago. There are several locations within Knollwood to choose from.

Each plot will accept one body or two cremations. Market value per plot is \$1450. Contact Melissa Mills for more info.

BCD ACADEMY FOR HEALTHY CONGREGATION DEVELOPMENT

Seminars for Congregational Leaders

The Ballou Channing District Academy for Healthy Congregation Development aims to enhance our congregations' effectiveness and well-being by offering leaders opportunities for education and training. Academy sessions will offer a grounding in congregational systems, practical tools, case studies from the experience of fellow BCD congregations, and opportunities for discussion. They are designed for the officers, board members, ministers, committee chairs, and professional staff who make up our congregations' leadership, supplementing the more general offerings provided at our conferences.

This year's series of workshops focuses on the theme of building strong, effective communities that can endure the conflicts and tensions inherent in our diverse congregations, turning them into opportunities for deepening and growth.

Saturday, January 29. The Ties that Bind: Covenants and processes that help hold us together, even when the going gets rough.

UUA Trustee Eva Marx and former BCD President Bill Robinson will explore the kinds of structures and agreements that every congregation should have in place, whether they think they need them or not—because eventually they will.

Location: Murray UU Church, Attleboro, MA, 9 AM-noon, coffee 8:30.

Saturday, March 12. Conflict for Cowards: No one wants it, but it won't kill you.

This program will offer advice from professionals in conflict training and mediation, along with a congregational case study in conflict management.

Tentative Location: First Parish Duxbury, MA, 9 AM-noon, coffee 8:30.

Name: _____ **Congregation:** _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

Jan. 29 _____ **March 12** _____ (\$20 each)

Please make checks payable to 'BCD' and send to:

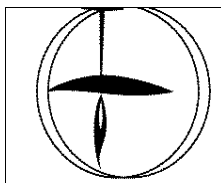
Ballou Channing District Office, 325 W. Elm St., Brockton, MA 02301

the church

FIVE WAYS TO LIVE UU VALUES
BCD WORKSHOPS

WELCOMING CONGREGATION WORKSHOPS
OUR OWN STONE SOUP
HOW CAN WE HELP?

Mailing
Label
Goes
Here



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

UNITARIAN CHURCH
OF SHARON
4 NORTH MAIN STREET
SHARON, MA 02067

FEBRUARY SERVICES

SERVICES AND CHILD CARE BEGIN AT 10:15 A.M. JOIN US!

February 6
Train

Sky

In honor of Black History Month this morning we consider what the amazing life of Harriet Tubman has to say to Unitarian Universalists. Rev. Deborah Cayer, worship leader. The Choir will sing today.

February 13
Love

No Greater

In 1965, the Rev. James Reeb, a UU minister from Boston was murdered in Selma, Alabama where he had gone to support the work for voting rights. There's a direct connection between his death and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of

February 20

When There Is No One Left

Guest Preacher Rev. Ken Reeves will discuss different types of equality and cross-cultural themes in spiritual journeys.

February 27

About the Bible

Rev. Jan Knost was originally going to join us in January, but courtesy of the Blizzard of '05 will be here this morning instead. He says, "The prospect of teaching a course on the old and new testament is not as easy as it sounds. True, there's a lot of good stuff but what does one do with the "R" rated material? The bible is full of this!"