



THE PIONEER

Vol. 43, No. 9

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE

May 2013

May Sunday Services and Religious Education



May 5

Service and RE at 10 AM

Looking Back — 150 Years of Free Thought

The Reverend Janet C. Bush and Rich West

Lessons and a celebration on the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Florence Free Congregational Society, our younger parent congregation. Children will leave for RE after the offering.

May 12

Service and RE at 10 AM

Ancient Mothers

The Reverend Janet C. Bush

Reflections on the power of stories and the legacies of Sarah and Hagar. Children will leave for RE after the offering.

May 19

Service for All Ages at 10 AM

Looking Forward – What We Do Will Matter

The Reverend Janet C. Bush and The Worship Committee

Celebrate and consider your part in the USNF of tomorrow through story and song. Stay to learn more at our brief annual meeting following the service.

May 26

Service at 10 AM

Spiritual Practice

The Worship Committee

A sampling of the many spiritual practices of our diverse gathered community.



NOTES FROM THE MINISTER

THIS FROM A FEW WEEKS AGO: I was near the ocean, walking across an open field. On either side of the field were the pools that rise up in early spring. The scrub brush beyond was full of birds and the air was loud with spring peepers.

VERNAL POOL

Peep
Peep peep peep
Peep peep peep peep peep peep peep

Weeds and wet, just ahead
Peep peep peep
Approach the edge
Stop and stare

No sound now

Nor peep
 of peepers

So wait
Stand and stare
Stare and wait

Accept defeat
Retreat
....

Peep
Peep peep peep

Stare at the weeds
At the weeds and wet
Here — or there —
Peep peep peep

Crawl on knees, inch through weeds
Stare and ...
Peep

I know you're there
Peep

In the weeds and wet
Peep peep

But where?
Peep peep peep

I returned from my brief time away to greet our daughter-in-law Syrisa and our granddaughters Cassandra and Kylie, who are here on an extended visit from the Philippines. It is a time of discovery for all of us.

May we find joy and blessings in seeing what we long to see. May we find joy and blessings in the sound of peeps when what we long to see is hidden. And may we find joy and blessings in discovering the unexpected.

Happy spring. I am ever grateful to be your minister.



HOW TO CONTACT THE MINISTER

Email: revjanetbush@gmail.com or minister@uunorthampton.org

Phone: 584-1390 x202 (office); 727-8497 (home – before 9 pm for non-emergencies)

Office hours: Please email or call for an appointment: Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays.

An Interdependent Web: Stewardship, Budgets, Demographics and Strategic Planning

from Cathy Lilly, for the Board of Trustees

THE GOOD NEWS: Our congregation has again raised over a quarter of a million dollars in pledges of financial support for next year.

The bad news: For eight of the previous ten years, we have had a deficit budget, an unsustainable practice that will eventually erode the Legacy Fund — our savings account — and make it more and more difficult for those who follow us in this congregation to successfully meet the problems of their day.

As the Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees examine these trends, it is becoming clear that the fact that we have trouble raising sufficient funds from our members to fund our operating budget is not a one-time, unusual situation. It suggests that we need to examine our fundamental assumptions about spending and fund-raising.

At the Council meeting this month, Cindy Beal explained how demographics of attendance and giving at religious organizations are changing, not just here but everywhere in the nation. People have many competing commitments in their lives. Some of us come less regularly than in the past. The structures of younger families and the patterns of how they participate are changing. The way we minister to families is changing, and will continue to change.

How are we going to respond? Here are a couple of first steps:

The Board of Trustees is beginning a strategic planning process that will gather data and help us chart our direction over the next few years. In these changing times, we cannot continue to do it “the way it has always been done” and expect to thrive. We hope everyone will participate.

The RE Council has begun a serious reconsideration of significant changes in their programs — a move from “RE classes for children” to “faith formation for families.” These are not easy changes. They are fostering an attitude of experimentation, a willingness to make mistakes and learn from them.

The Finance Committee is beginning the task of looking at methods of planned giving that will bolster the Legacy Fund.

This spring we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Free Congregational Society of Florence, one of our predecessor congregations. The USNF community of 150 years from now is hard to picture precisely. But I know its existence depends on our successfully navigating these seas of change. I am hopeful that the hard work we are doing together now, in planning and dealing with change, will be celebrated 150 years from today by a religious community that continues to make a difference in the world.

REPORTS AND ARTICLES

May Featured Climate Actions

THIS IS THE SECOND of a continuing series of monthly “Climate Actions of the Month”, brought to you by the USNF Climate Action Group (CAG). It is a way to provide encouragement and build a spirit of collective effectiveness as we each do what we can to tackle climate change. Each monthly bundle of actions touches on four levels: personal, community, state/national/global, and educational. Our website will be coming soon and will offer resources to support the monthly actions. To learn more about the CAG contact **Molly Hale** at hellomolly@comcast.net or 585-0791.

1. Personal: Make a personal pledge to hang your laundry to dry whenever possible. On average, 5.8% of U.S. residential energy use is from using clothes dryers. Laundry lines, umbrella-style outdoor drying racks, or wooden racks for indoors or outdoors are some of the many options, all available at your favorite local hardware store. A great source of info and support including FAQs about wrinkles, stiff clothes and drying in winter is <http://www.laundrylist.org>.

2. Community: Attend a meeting of a local climate action group. The *USNF Climate Action Group* meets after the 2nd service on 1st and 3rd Sundays: this month May 5 in the Sam Hill Room and May 19 in the Parlor. The local group *Climate Action Now* is meeting Sunday, May 19 at ARISE, 4pm-6pm, 467 State St, Springfield. Their website is <http://climateactionnowma.org/>.

3. State/National/Global: Donate to a group actively campaigning against climate change, e.g.:

350.org <http://350.org/about>

National Resources Defense Council <http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/>

Friends of the Earth <http://www.foe.org/>

The Sierra Club <http://www.sierraclub.org/>

Greenpeace <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/>

4. Inform yourself: The July 2, 2012 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine contains a pivotal article by Bill McKibben titled “*Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math.*” In it he clearly lays out the argument of why much of the fossil fuel resources now considered available by fossil fuel companies must stay in the ground if we are to avoid a severely compromised future climate. The article is also online at <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>.

Pioneer To Go Primarily On-Line in Fall

from Patricia Wright

RESPONDING TO THE RISING COSTS of mailing the paper newsletter, and looking to the visual advantages of on-line publication, the Coordinating Council voted in March to move toward distributing *The Pioneer* electronically this fall. "We would still mail copies to members who do not have email and would make some print copies available here in the building," said **Lisa Britland**, Congregational Administrator and Coordinator of the newsletter. Importantly, on-line formats have the potential be more colorful and lively, especially by using photographs. Questions? Comments? Interested in being a Photo Editor? Contact me at pawright1@verizon.net or 586-7790.

PLEASE NOTE: CHANGE IN SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES FOR MAY AND JUNE

MAY AND JUNE ARE BUSY MONTHS for families, and our attendance typically declines at year's end. **ALL MAY SERVICES WILL BE AT 10 AM.** We will have special RE classes and activities including opportunities for artistic expression – please come if you can. May 19 is a service for all ages, followed by Annual Meeting.

On June 2, we'll hold our annual Coming of Age Credo Services at 9:15 and 11:00 AM. On June 9 we will have our final service for all ages for this school year, followed by our annual picnic in Look Park. Janet will be preaching at 10 AM on June 16, and lay-led summer services will begin on June 23.

Concerning Drones

from Bill Diamond for the Social Justice Committee

FRANCES CROWE AND PAKI WIELAND ARE passionate and credible peace activists in the Valley. They recently came to a Social Justice Committee meeting asking us to endorse two documents concerning drones. We did. The Social Justice Committee speaks only for itself, but we will be asking the USNF congregation to endorse these documents at the annual meeting.

You can read the two documents, as well as an informative and accessible *New York Times* column by Maureen Dowd, by going to: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6ty4gdhcadzx0pg/1ClqJfG9VN>. These documents were not developed locally. Individuals and communities across the nation are endorsing them.

Why is the use of drones as a weapon problematic? Drones are unmanned aircraft that can be as large as a small airplane or as small as a bird. They present moral and policy challenges when deployed as weapons overseas. The documents present more detail, but three main arguments are:

1. Janet told us, on a recent Sunday, that dehumanization and objectification are two of the roots of mindless obedience and mindless aggression. (This is a paraphrase of what Janet said. Janet did not speak of drones.) Drones allow “sanitary” killing at a great distance, which allows attack without great consideration of the humanity of the targets.
2. Drone strikes are executing people without due process of law.
3. America's use of drones has become a recruiting tool for terrorist organizations.

Why is the domestic use of drones problematic? Increasingly, law enforcement organizations at all levels are using drones as unobtrusive surveillance equipment. There are great concerns about erosion of privacy and civil liberties when the birds sitting outside our windows...aren't birds.

What difference does it make if our little congregation endorses these documents? We answer every week: “What we do here matters.”

New Series of "Welcoming Congregation" Workshops Held at USNF in March, April

from Joanna Brown

WHERE WE WERE: The Welcoming Congregation, an innovative, multi-session adult education program about gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, developed through the Unitarian Universalist Association, was first offered at USNF in 1992. During the next few years, the program was repeated a number of times and our board, together with a working group within the congregation, took the formal steps to apply for qualification as a "Welcoming Congregation" by the UUA. We felt, and rightly so, that our congregation was on the leading edge of awareness about gay and lesbian issues.

FAST FORWARD ABOUT 20 YEARS: Some of the members who had participated in the Welcoming Congregation in the 1990s are still here; others have moved to other parts of the country and some of the early participants have died. Last fall, **Joanna Brown** and **Tynan Power**, members of the Big Ol' Gay Committee, began talking with **Rev. Janet Bush** and a few trustees about their wish to re-start the Welcoming Congregation workshops to increase the number of USNF members who are knowledgeable about current and historic issues regarding sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. A decision was made to invite board members and a few other individuals to be the first participants in a re-designed, six-session Welcoming Congregation workshop, and Joanna, Ty, and Janet agreed to co-facilitate the sessions. As I write, five sessions have taken place and the final session, appropriately titled "Where do we go from here?" will be held on Sunday, April 28, after the Big Ol' Gay Committee worship service.

SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Members of this current class agree that we have all learned a great deal from the revised curriculum (20 years ago, there wasn't even a module on Transgender issues), through

readings, exercises, and of course, the personal sharing that has taken place in class. Our intention is to share some of what we have learned in a worship service in the fall, and to offer more Welcoming Congregation classes that will be open to members who want to sign up. (Note: An important aspect of the class is to have a balance of participants who identify as gay, lesbian, heterosexual or transgender, so we will seek to maintain that diversity of voices and points of view in future classes.)

We invite you to attend either the 9:15 AM or 11 AM worship service on Sunday, April 28, and then stay for the coffee hours after both services to talk about what you liked, learned, want to hear more about, etc. The Big Ol' Gay Committee wants to know what you think (including whether we need a new name) and how we can "stand together" to be a truly welcoming congregation to persons of any sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. We hope that everyone in USNF will march behind our UU banner in the Northampton Pride Parade on the first Saturday in May. There will be educational programs and entertainment (and many food vendors) at the Three County Fairgrounds following the parade, so plan to combine food, fun, and learning there, too! To find out how to get involved with the Big Ol' Gay committee (which is open to everyone), email joannabr@comcast.net.

Call for Updated Contact Information

Have you recently moved, or changed your phone number or email address? We're updating our database and want to make sure we have your correct information. Please send it to office@uunorthampton.org — Lisa Britland

An Amazing Legacy: 150 Years of Religious Freedom To Be Celebrated May 5

by Rich West

WE ALL KNOW THESE FAMILIAR WORDS:

“Respecting in each other and in all, the right of intellect and conscience to be free, and holding it to be the duty of every one to keep his mind and heart at all times open to receive the truth and follow its guidance, we set up no theological condition of membership, and neither demand nor expect uniformity of doctrinal belief; asking only unity of purpose to seek and accept the right and true, and an honest aim and effort to make these the rule of life. And, recognizing the brotherhood of the human race and the equality of human rights, we make no distinction as to the conditions and rights of membership in this society, on account of sex, or color, or nationality.”

These are the founding principles of the Free Congregational Society of Florence, which was incorporated 150 years ago this coming May 3. Much as the Declaration of Independence has acted as a signpost for the culture in its efforts to realize a fully democratic society, the Florence statement of 1863 articulated a vision of a tolerant society that we have been striving to achieve ever since.

What led them to this radical act? While the Society formally organized in 1863, its roots stretched back to 1842, with the founding of the Northampton Association of Education and Industry. Many community members had been forced out of their ancestral churches because of their abolitionist views and were embittered toward organized religion. They came to the Northampton Community committed to a nonsectarian form of spiritual life. This meant no “church,” no “minister,” and no “creed.” Instead, they gathered on Sunday afternoons for moral and religious discussions, at which all were invited to speak.

When the Community disbanded in 1846, dozens of its members remained (and incidentally founded the town of Florence in 1852). They had abandoned their hopes of transforming society by example, but they continued to cherish the idea of a creedless spiritual life, so they continued their informal Sunday afternoon meetings. In April of 1858, the worship group took an important step toward permanence when it asked Charles Burleigh, Connecticut abolitionist and editor, to become its resident speaker. In that role, Burleigh, whose portrait hangs above the door to the church offices in the parlor, led about half of the Sunday discussions throughout the year. In 1863, the group decided to further formalize their commitment to one another and incorporate as the Free Congregational Society of Florence.

The Society began with 35 men and women, white and black. At first, it met in the Florence schoolhouse, a one-story building located where the Community Center now stands on Pine street. In 1864, Hill erected a two-story building designated Florence Hall, which served the town as its school on the first floor and meeting hall and library on the second floor. But the Society under Burleigh flourished and quickly outgrew its modest quarters. In 1873, the Society built a grand meeting hall in the center of Florence (where the Civic Center now stands) that had a five-story tower and seated 700 people. The new hall, dubbed “Cosmian Hall” by the Society’s resident speaker

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150 Years of Religious Freedom

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at the time, became one of the most recognizable symbols of the free religious movement in America. The Society's lectern was graced by a pantheon of 19th century liberals, among them Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Julia Ward Howe, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, and many other brave men and women less well-known today. It is hardly necessary to say that the Free Congregationalists were not aligned with any organized religion. They were not in step with the Unitarian Church of 150 years ago and the Unitarian Church would not have had them. It was only after hard times befell the Society at the turn of the century that it allied itself with the Unitarian Association of America and then, in 1944, merged with the Northampton Unitarian Church at our present location at 220 Main.

Come celebrate this amazing legacy on Sunday, May 5, when we will hold a special 150th Anniversary celebration at 10 AM in the Great Hall.

Special Event: Free Congregational Society of Florence Walking Tour, May 4

Celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding May 3, 1863, by joining a walking tour led by our own **Steve Strimer** at 10 AM on Saturday, May 4. We'll begin at the Sojourner Truth memorial statue on Pine Street and visit homes and graves of the founders and leaders, the sites of Cosmian Hall and the Florence School House, the Hill Institute, Lilly Library, and the Davis Block. For more information contact Steve Strimer at stevestrimer@gmail.com.

The following mission statement for the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence was unanimously approved at the annual meeting of May 5, 2009:

“The Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence is an inclusive and welcoming intergenerational congregation of diverse spiritual beliefs and practices. Our mission is to build a caring community where children and adults can safely learn and grow — where we are supported and challenged on life's journeys, called to service and to our higher selves, and inspired to better our world.”

BULLETIN BOARD

INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS ON BUDGET SET FOR MAY 5th, 12th

from Cathy Lilly, Treasurer

On April 15, the Board of Trustees voted to recommend a budget to the congregation at the May 19 annual meeting. Despite a generous response to our congregation-wide appeal, raising more than \$17,000, it is still a deficit budget with cuts to staff, house and property, and religious education. We will continue to be a Fair Share congregation with the UUA and to pay at least a Living Wage to all our employees.

Copies of the budget will be available at meetings in the Parlor on May 5 and May 12, at 9:30 AM preceding the 10 AM services on those mornings. Members of the Board will be available to answer your questions. If you would like a copy of the budget prior to the meetings, contact me at treasurer@uunorthampton.org.



FINAL FIRST FRIDAY CRAFTY: This year's last First Friday is May 3rd! Come for the friends and family fun with crafts. Come for the evening's sing-along for all ages. Dinner starts at 6:00 PM in the social room. Donations pay for the food. First Fridays are sponsored by the Web Weavers. — *Kate Collins*

LET'S KEEP THOSE BOXES FULL: I love those boxes that clutter our foyer. They shout out to me, "You belong to a caring congregation!" One box gets filled with toiletries for those who use the cot shelter, another with items for animals at a shelter, another with food for those who are hungry in our community. I feel great pride when I see those boxes. A big "thank you" to all who keep those boxes full.

— *Alice Zuvers*

TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT SUMMER SERVICES! Contact **Lynne Marie Wanamaker**, Worship Committee chair, at trainer@compassionateconditioning.com or 527-8317 if you would like to contribute to a summer worship service as a service leader or support person.

Small Group Ministries Contemplates "The Healing Path"

from Katie Olmstead

APRIL'S TOPIC BROUGHT UP intense feelings and also a sense of connection. One member said, "It's not all that happens to you and around you that make you happy or unhappy. It's up to you in how you react and deal with things." Over and over, we heard how demeaning it is when someone says, "hey, get over it," and how supportive when someone voices understanding that healing or grieving takes as long as it needs to, that it comes up and surprises you sometimes, and this is all OK. We laughed at what was said while trying to light a candle, agreeing that this was somehow profound: Light the not-dark place.

Here is my favorite quote from the session itself: *"I tell and retell my story. I worry that I am a broken record. I tell myself to get over it. But I realize that each time I tell my story, it changes a little, or my perception of it changes, or I change, and bit by bit, I am healing. I am not going round and round but spiraling upward, each time hearing my own story from a slightly different vantage point."* — *Unattributed*

May's topic is "Love Letters to Life." June will be our last session for this year. New sign-ups happen in September.

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THE PIONEER
THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE

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PIONEER DATES

DEADLINE

Thursday, May 23

PUBLICATION

May 30

Articles should be 350 words or less. Submit to Patricia Wright at pawright1@verizon.net. Include the word "PIONEER" in the subject line.

Office hours: Tuesday through Thursday 9:30-3:30
Contact the Society at 584-1390. Visit us online at www.uunorthampton.org.

Go Green – Send an email to office@uunorthampton.org to receive your *Pioneer* online only