



### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day

Monday, January 17th, our Religious Explorers and other children from the community celebrated Dr. King's life and work through learning, drama, and service. Organized by Mary Hernandez, the day began with a guided viewing of "Selma, Lord, Selma" a story focusing on a young girl's awakening to community action. After lunch the children wrote and drew their own dreams for our country while watching Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech followed by Bobaloo Basey engaging the youngsters in reenacting the Rosa Parks story while the youth braved the cold to solicit food donation outside the Key Food supermarket on Forest Ave.

More than 17 shopping carts full of canned and packaged food plus \$37.00 were collected and donated to Project Hospitality's Food Pantry.

Thanks to the other volunteers who made the day go well: Mary Campbell, John Adrian, Rafael Martinez, Rev. Susan Karlson, Patricia Murphy, Diane Matyas, Morna Martell, Virginia Allen, Simone Andrews, Vivian Vassar, Delia Vassar-Semanchik, Louis Vassar-Semanchik, Mark Semanchik, James Ceribello, and Sally Jones.

### Empty Bowls Project

Well, first you make the bowls. This takes a couple of Sundays so they'll be brilliantly decorated. Then you make the soup - hearty and garlicky for a winter Sunday. Then you sell the bowls and donate the proceeds to hungry neighbors - this year to the tune of \$272.00 to PH Food Pantry. This has been a wonderful tradition at the UCSI and many thanks are due to Steve Nutt for his leadership and expertise.

### February Religious Exploration Schedule

#### **R.E. Early Childhood [ages 2-5]**

*Celebrating Me and My World*

Feb. 6 - "I Can Help"

Feb 13 - "I Can Listen"

Feb. 20 - "I Can Remember"

Feb. 27 - "I Can Dance"

#### **R.E. Explorers [ages 6 - 12]**

Feb. 6 - Chinese New Year, Mary Hernandez

Feb. 13 - Toolbox of Faith, Viv Vassar & Mark Semanchik

Feb. 20 - Art Day - Viv Vassar and Risa Anderson

Feb. 27 - Toolbox of Faith, Mary Hernandez and Risa Anderson

#### **R.E. Youth [ages 13 - 18]**

(This group meets twice a month)

Feb. 6 - Morna Martell and Margaret Currie

Feb. 20 - Simone Andrews and Richard Currie

## New Orleans: Here We Come!

### Feb. 4th. \$10 suggested

And there will be singing  
dancing  
essays and poems

Celebrating the spirit of New Orleans

*Performed by the Youth and Directed by*

*Morna Murphy Martell*

## SERVICES, CONT'D

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**February 20, 10:45 a.m.    *The Prophet Muhammad****In the pulpit:*            Rev. Susan Karlson

Some Muslims celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad while others consider it a sacrilege. In these days of intense rhetoric about Islam and Muslims' rights to build a mosque in this location or that one, we lift up the Prophet Muhammad and his message of peace and justice.

*The name Nuhammad in traditional Thuluth calligraphy by the hand of Hattat Aziz Efend*

**March 6, 10:45 a.m.    *Mardi Gras Celebration: In the Wake of the Katrina Blues****In the pulpit:*            Rev. Susan Karlson

In a little over a month, our youth will leave for a service trip to New Orleans. Mardi Gras is a big deal all along the Gulf Coast. Mardi Gras is from the Christian tradition of Shrove Tuesday, the day before the fasts and privations of Lent. In this post-Katrina landscape, the people of the Gulf Coast are so resilient—balancing the blues, grief and a passionate zest for living.

**February 27, 10:45 a.m.*****Black History Month Worship Celebration****In the pulpit:*            Virginia Allen, Robert Pipkins  
and other members of UCSI

Guest Musician:        TBA

We celebrate Black History Month this morning with music, readings and reflections illuminating the joys and struggles of Americans of Color.

Soul Food Picnic follows the service. Please sign up to bring dishes - recipes will be available if needed.



## SIMPLY SUSAN

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***Lessons from Ice and Snow And  
Other Winter Storms***

I thought, "Susan, you've really adjusted to New York City winters! Why do people complain about how cold it is here?". Then the blizzard and subsequent snow flurries and ice hit. New York City winters aren't nearly as severe as I imagined they would be. When I shared that feeling with one of our members, she responded, "They won't ever be as bad as you imagine!"

A major piece of theology there! Our minds can imagine all kinds of worst case scenarios. The storms of life aren't only in our imaginations—one winter day in January, a person with a gun went on a shooting spree in Tucson, Arizona. We can't really imagine why anyone would do that but it is part of our common experience. It's part of our nature to try to explain why bad things happen. Through our efforts, we hope to lessen the pain, predict the unpredictability, and control the chaos.

These kind of winter storms are tiring—just when I think the violence has dwindled in Port Richmond and elsewhere, another young man is killed and a number of others are beaten. I go to the vigils, I attend the meetings, but I feel frustrated and sorrowful. I long for some place where all our children are safe and only have to deal with the usual aches and joys of growing up.

But then I watch our youth sit through a long film about a young African American girl's participation in the Civil Rights struggle in Selma. The children are quiet, attentive and respectful. A few hours later, they collect food outside the supermarket for a food pantry. I realize all children encounter something of the pain, sorrow and tragedy inherent in life. Gautama Buddha was sheltered from these harsh realities, but the suffering ultimately inspired him to get to the root causes. The children learned something about this too through participating in the Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day.

The children raised more than \$300 for the Empty Bowls project and the youth have worked diligently all fall and winter for their service trip to New Orleans where they will understand more about racial and economic injustice that undermines recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast.

I went to the Anti Bias Summit at Port Richmond High School and heard youth share what they've learned about hunger, public transportation and poverty through a course sponsored by faculty and students at Wagner College and their high school. Those youth were astounding and the Eye Openers youth who work with their peers on non-violence, respect and inclusion, always inspire me.

Ice, snow and winter storms create yearnings for spring and prod the imagination. Yet it is the contrast between the seasons of our lives that broadens and stretches us in ways we couldn't imagine before the storms hit.

May you find sources of inspiration to warm you when the chilly winds blow and sparks of passion and glimpses of beauty to enliven your heart through the winter months ahead!

Be well!

*Susan*

*Painted Wall Mural near Agra, India*



## FEBRUARY EVENTS

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**Small Group Ministry**

Three small groups are now meeting at the UCSI and leaving an empty chair at each meeting - perhaps for you! Small groups are more than a discussion group, being designed to strengthen the relationships you find in church through deep listening, awareness of one another, and service. Current groups meet bimonthly on Monday morning, Monday evening and Wednesday evening. See Rev. Karlson, Jill Hueckel or Judy Davison, the coordinators, for more information.

**Superbowl Party! Feb 6th at 6:00!**

Church Hall, \$10 each, \$20 per family

Big Screen TV!

Food and Soft Drinks Included!

Beer available for purchase!

Love of Football not required!

Childcare Provided!

Invite Friends, open to all!

Sponsored by the UCSI Men's Group, donations of salad or desserts most welcome - [superbowl@uucsi.org](mailto:superbowl@uucsi.org)

**Family Friendly Potluck Supper**

Saturday, February 12, 6-9pm

Church Hall

Bring a dish to share, all food persuasions welcome, but please coordinate with Steve Nutt.

Also see Steve, [membership@uucsi.org](mailto:membership@uucsi.org), about Circle Dinners a chance to get to know one another in a social environment.

**Minister's Discretionary Fund**

Limited financial assistance may be available to those having hard times. Contact Rev. Karlson in confidence to seek help.

**In February**

**Feb. 1st - Membership, Ann Kalil's, 7:30 pm**

**Feb. 4th - New Orleans: Here We Come!**

**Feb. 5th - SJ Committee, Library 9:30 a.m.**

**Feb. 6th - SUPERBOWL PARTY!**

**February 7th, Monday - 7:30 - 9:00**

**Adult Religious Exploration Workshops begin; innovative workshops based on the lyrics of Spirit of Life by Carolyn McDade - 9 workshops in all. Week 1 - Exploring Spirituality for UUs. Register with Rev. Karlson.**

**Feb. 9th - Board of Trustees, 8:00 pm, all members welcome**

**Feb 12th - Potluck**

**Feb 21 - Adult R.E. "Sing in my Heart" 7:30**

**Member Announcements**

**February 13, 2:00 pm S.I. Philharmonic "Music From the Heart", Dr. Carolyn and Kevin Clark, members, \$35/person, \$30/seniors, includes champagne reception St. Paul's Church, 275 St. Paul Ave.**

**Feb. 13th, Art at Bay, 70 Bay St., No charge "Damned Scribbling Women Do St. Valentine" Heart-skewering prose and poetry [adult content]members: Morna Martell, Susan Master, Diane Matyas, Patricia Murphy**

**Feb. 18, 19, 20th - "Wacky Love", short plays sponsored by the S. I. Playwrights Collective, at the UCSI, half proceeds go to church. Members involved: Lawrence F. Schwabacher, Diane Matyas, Risa and Mike Anderson**

## LAST WORD

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**February President's  
Message**

I have been thinking a lot lately about authenticity. Being true to our mission. What is our authentic experience? I am proud of the Unitarian Church of Staten Island's work in this community - visibly standing against hate, working to end hunger, sheltering those most in need. I am curious about how well we are fulfilling our vision - to be a welcoming spiritual community guided by our principles.

I support all of you (and me too) to become more welcoming and more spiritual and more guided by our principles. We members are both the consumers and producers of the spirit we generate. Guided by our principles, we are each responsible for our own experience.

If you want to participate in the Unitarian Church of Staten Island in a new way, fill a role you see needs enacting, please talk to me.

We are all the Unitarian Church of Staten Island. All we have here is each other: in that way we are rich.

Last year I worked hard to save a teen relationship abuse prevention program from being cut from the City budget; the social workers whose jobs I helped save gave me and my boss gifts of massages. Three weeks ago, we went to a spa in Fort Greene near BAM and Brooklyn Tech, on the second floor of a rehabbed brownstone. For a lovely hour I was totally cared for and warm, wrapped in gratitude and scented oils. On my ferry ride home I finished reading a cozy mystery and found out I knew who done it after all. As I walked to meet John in the St. George Park & Ride, I was thinking about swinging by the Library, returning the book, withdrawing another. We could still be home and fed before Jeopardy.

Imagine my surprise when I fell and hit my head and spent the

evening at the emergency room ruling out a concussion. I felt cheated. One moment changes everything. Lying in bed, one eye swollen shut, I heard the radio report of the tragic senseless Arizona shooting. One moment changes everything. And what if . . . What if I had walked a few inches left or right? What if the cops had detained the shooter at his traffic stop? What if the bystanders killed had been standing elsewhere? What if mental health care was abundant and stigma-free? What if it was harder to buy high tech ammunition at the Wal-Mart? What if the everyday heroes who stopped the shooter had had less courage?

If these experiences are our raw material, what sort of world can we make of them?

What can we make of them together?

*Rona*

**UUA STUDY ISSUE**

*Immigration with all its controversy is suggested as a Study Issue which many folks at the Community Meeting seemed to like a lot.*

**Keep the Pantries Full**

*Remember to bring canned or boxed food to be donated to various food pantries - protein products are most welcome [canned meat, fish, beans].*

**Is it your turn?**

*To provide hospitality or be a greeter? Lisa or Randy will be glad to find you a partner for hospitality. Email the office if it's your turn!*