

THE UNITARIAN NEWSLETTER a publication of

# THE Unitarian Church of Staten Island

Founded in 1852

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Director of Religious Education, Patricia H. Murphy  
Co-Directors of Music, Dr. Carolyn Clark and Dr. Peter Yourke

Church Secretary, Stella Fishman  
Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds, Brian Fontana  
Building Attendant, Frank Caterina

May 31, 2009

10:45 AM

## ***SOCRATES AND JUNG—PERSPECTIVES ON LIVING WITH INTEGRITY***

**Rev. Susan Karlson**

In reviewing a popular adult curriculum on *Ethics* by Richard Gilbert, I found reference to Socrates' saying, "the unexamined life is not worth living" while Carl Jung twists the expression to "the un-lived life is not worth examining." How do we live ethical, authentic lives?

In the Pulpit: Rev. Susan Karlson

Music Director: Dr. Carolyn Clark

Worship Associate: Kathy Santo

Flowers: Ellen Pratt

Greeters: John Adrian and Rafael Martinez-Perez

Board Welcome: Maureen Curran

Hospitality: Judith Hill, Annette Pierce Lapcevic, Kristin Nawrocki, Alex Suarez-Papp,

Paola Suarez-Papp, Kyla Torgersen

June 7, 2009

## ***Religious Education Sunday: Journeying through the Labyrinth of Life***

10:45 AM

Journeying through the Labyrinth of Life - tracing our paths, finding our guides, choosing our companions. The young people of this church invite the congregation to join with them in an active exploration of the brave new world they will inhabit and influence.

In the Pulpit: Church Youth

Music Director: Dr. Peter Yourke

Worship Associate: Chris Johnson

Flowers: Carol Lodato

Greeters: Marjorie Ramos and Margaret Cantrell

Hospitality: Religious Education

Board Welcome: Ralph Martell

June 14, 2009 ***Born That Way: Dismantling the Myth of Gay By Choice (Annual Gay Pride Service)*** 10:45 AM

Our Annual Gay Pride service is sponsored by the Welcoming Congregation Committee. Member, Claudette Duff, will be the speaker and Merav will add her mellow voice to the service.

June 21, 2009

## ***Just An Ordinary Man: The Gift of Our Fathers***

10:45 AM

This service will explore the gift of our fathers and the challenge of being an ordinary man in a society that wants men to still be strong and hard working, yet sensitive and caring. We will hold a Child Dedication ceremony for any interested parents and youth. A child dedication ceremony in Unitarian Universalist congregations involves a mutual relationship between the members and friends to support and nurture the parents and the children who are growing up in our midst. Each ceremony is a little different and Rev. Karlson will work with the interested families to plan this ceremony that takes place during the church service. Please contact Rev. Karlson if you are interested ([PSKARL3@gmail.com](mailto:PSKARL3@gmail.com) or 347 466-0864).

Caring Team: Our congregation now has a Caring Team. If you or your family are experiencing an extended illness, hospitalization, family death, birth, adoption, move or other transition, please let us know so that we can send a card, make a visit, help with transportation, child care, meals or other miscellaneous needs. Please contact Ann Kalil at 718- 556-0438, or [akalil@si.rr.com](mailto:akalil@si.rr.com), or Rev. Karlson, at 718- 442-1012, (home) or 347-466-0864, with any caring concerns. The Caring Team is part of the caring ministry of this congregation

The next UCSI newsletter deadline is **Monday, June 8, 2009, at 9 AM.** Please get all material to Stella at the church office

## *Simply Susan*

The Unitarian Church of Staten Island has turned a number of corners this year. We almost doubled what we made at the Jolly Holly Fair and the Auction because of the hard work and creative ingenuity of those committed individuals who planned and hosted both events. Pledges coming from the IMAGINE! Canvass amount to almost \$20,000 more than last year. All of these are very good signs about the enthusiasm and potential of the congregation to reach towards a balanced budget and be able to sustain the church programs, worship and outreach activities.

We are staffed to grow. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) recommends not just having adequate staff for your existing church membership and current programs but staffing so that you can meet the needs and have enough paid employees to carry out the dreams and visions of the congregation. We have more staff than most small congregations. We have excellent and very dedicated staff members as well. All of this is very good news—positioning us to grow and be able to function well.

The other side of our funding is that we have money to help us stay afloat that comes from our Endowment. Members have left money to the church or we have sold property and so have been able to keep this small church running year after year by taking money from the Endowment principal to cover operating expenses. Every year, as I understand it, people talk about this practice and warn against doing it but every year ultimately we draw from the principal anyway. If we continue this practice, the church will run out of its Endowment in the foreseeable future and then there will be no cushion to pay our expenses. We would then have to eliminate staff positions. We will have to take a hard look at how to keep our doors open.

I knew all of this when I came to the church. As the minister, I feel it is my responsibility to add my voice to those who call for looking at some very serious cuts if we cannot increase our pledges or our income substantially.

If we cut staff positions, we will be understaffed. Unless congregation members are able to voluntarily take on some of those jobs or portions of those jobs, we will also be unable to meet the needs of the congregation. The UUA recommends that a congregation only call a full time settled minister when it has a pledging membership above 125. Members of this church have mentioned this before. I certainly knew it before I came here. I am dedicated to the long term welfare of the congregation even when we must face harsh and painful realities together. For this reason, I believe we must seriously look, with love and mutual respect, at the possibility of cutting the minister back to  $\frac{3}{4}$  time with a concomitant decrease in salary.

The choice is up to the members and friends of the congregation whether to face the dilemma now and in the years ahead with a concerted plan or to continue our current course, making the inevitable cuts when we have no other solution.

This situation is not due to the current economic crisis though this crisis certainly produces the climate to take a deeper look at our financial picture. We are coming to the end of another church year that included so much energy, joy and expanded vision. All of the signs are good that we will bring that enthusiasm and dedication to another year. I hope that we can approach the financial life of the church with that same kind of vigor, looking at the big picture and evaluating the next steps that will lend us greater stability and clarity.

Simply,  
*Susan*

### **Sunday Service Reminder:**

Please note the following times for Sunday services:

Musical Prelude: 10:45 am

Worship Service: 11:00 am

### ***A Message from the President:***

All voting members of the church are encouraged to attend the Annual Congregational Meeting of the Unitarian Church of Staten Island to be held on Saturday, June 20, at 11 AM in the Parish Hall. Look for a complete Agenda for this meeting in the next newsletter.

Kathy Santo

### **Ruth Benson Testimonial:**

When I made my "High Five" pledge during Nate Walker's tenure as interim minister, due to my somewhat unorthodox financial situation, I pledged 5% of my after-tax, after-medical expense, after-professional expense income. How did I arrive at this formulation?

In order to continue to pay off a fairly hefty mortgage, I still work full time. I enjoy my profession, but at the age of 70, I'd rather do it three days a week. I had no pension or 401K until I was in my mid-50's. Now, as my own employer, I fund a Roth IRA and a SEP to the max allowed under tax law. I am also my own employee, so pay FICA twice, once as employer and once as employee. And as employer, I also pay my Medigap health insurance. I haven't even mentioned my professional expenses as a licensed psychotherapist -- rent and office expense, continuing education/ seminars.

Needless to say, I'm not left with a lot of discretionary income, but enough to at least go to the

theatre occasionally and visit my older son and his family in Santa Fe a couple of times a year.

However, following the proposed 2009-2010 Budget meeting at church on May 17th on the financial situation of the church, I decided to increase my 2009-10 pledge from a fairly comfortable \$170 per month for the upcoming church year to a much less comfortable \$250 per month. I pay my pledge monthly because I have to take it from current income.

I made this decision on my way home from the budget review meeting because I was inspired by Susan's offer to reduce her hours -- in effect to become a part-time minister, which would represent a major sacrifice on her part. This generous offer should be gratefully declined, since Susan's proposed sacrifice only enables the congregation as a whole to evade the harsh realities of balancing the church's budget.

How can I then not dig a little deeper and sacrifice a little more? I live fairly modestly, but comfortably, and I feel that I can afford to do more for the church that means so much to me.

In addition, I will commit to continuing to work on the Fair Trade Coffee Program as a means of bringing in additional funds to the church. Without the official tally, it looks like we made \$500 for the church in the five months from January through May, just by selling Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate for home consumption.

*-Ruth Benson*

**Summary: Board of Trustees Meeting, May 13, 2009****Treasurer's Report – June 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009:**

Total Income YTD \$99,524.08  
 Total Expense \$149,171.43  
 Deficit (\$ 49,647.35)

Discussion of the continuing spending of the endowment principal to cover the annual deficit in the church budget. It has been determined that if the UCSI continues to spend down the endowment at the current rate, the church will run out of money in the foreseeable future. The current pledge levels do not cover the annual operating budget; they also fail to provide for necessary capital expense and repairs.

**Committee Reports:****1) Canvass:**

Kathy Santo reports on behalf of Tom Seluga, Chair of the Finance Committee, as of today the pledge totals stand at about \$78,000. He projects a grand total of about \$80,000 before the end of the fiscal year. This figure is still \$40,000 short of the projected 2009-10 budget.

**2) Task Force on Committee on Ministry:**

The task force reports that three candidates have agreed to serve rotating three-year terms of service on the COM. These names will be presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting on June 20.

**3) Summer Forum:**

Judith Hill, one of our newest members, has agreed to work with Kathy Santo on the Summer Forum series.

**4) Membership:**

Still no chair, although the committee continues to expand.

**5) Welcoming Congregation:**

Marjorie Ramos reports that 16 people have signed up for the Gay Pride parade on June 6th. She also reports that Mary Campbell has designed a beautiful banner with our UCSI logo and flaming chalice.

**6) Social Concerns:**

Famed "peace mom" and George Bush confronter and founder of "Camp Casey" in Crawford, TX, Cindy Sheehan, will be appearing in an open forum at the UCSI on June 24th.

**7) Caring:**

Ann Kalil reports that new member Judith Hill has joined the Caring Committee. She also expressed concern about how to get notification to the congregation in a timely way. She notes that the committee is thinking of developing a questionnaire concerning the kind of help one might be willing to offer to church members in need.

**8) Committee Restructure Task Force:**

Marjorie Ramos presented the task force's recommendations in the form of a structural chart with five umbrella groups covering 14 standing committees with their subcommittees or task forces. Events are coordinated through the Church Council. A copy of the structural chart will be posted on the Parish Hall Bulletin board.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Benson, Board Secretary

**R.E. NEWS and NOTES:**

**News: The trip scheduled for May 31st is postponed to June 14th so we can spend May 31st creating dynamite props and rehearsing for R.E. Sunday.** For the last 2 years the young people of this church have wowed the congregation - and, I am told, really taught them something. Let's do it again! Please come downstairs immediately, try to bring outfits and props as we discussed this week.

**Notes:** Next year's curricula has been established: the Upstairs Group will work on Coming of Age from 7th grade on. Spirit Play will continue for kids from Kindergarten through 6th Grade - a new Nursery Class will be established for 3-4 year olds and their curriculum will be "We Are Many We Are One". Most teachers have re-upped for which our congregation should be tremendously grateful.

**Please check out the R.E. bulletin board this Sunday and add to it as you are moved to do by June 14th.** My final column for the newsletter will be largely devoted to reflections on and by the R.E. teachers and I'd like to include yours. If you prefer you can email me at [patriciahmurphy@mac.com](mailto:patriciahmurphy@mac.com).

Thank you all - especially those who came early on Sunday to discuss policy, and those who helped the kids refine the R.E. Sunday program concept.

Gratefully yours, Patricia

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Metro New York District  
 UU Anti Racism Conclave  
 Saturday, May 30, 2009  
 Community Church of New York  
 8:45 am – 400 pm  
 Registration fee: \$30**

**On-line registration** is available at:  
<https://www.formdesk.com/uiforms/Conclave.htm>.  
 Questions? Need a paper registration form? Contact the Rev. Wendy Pantoja at [revwendypaz@aol.com](mailto:revwendypaz@aol.com) or (201) 568-5540 ext. 1



*Photos by Ruth Benson*

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