



MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County

October 2013

Where every mind is free and every soul is welcome!

Sermon: If There Were No Limits, What Would You Choose? By Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman

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MARK IT DOWN

- ♦ Wednesday, 16 October, Board Meeting, 7:30 PM, Sonen Room

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Essex County is currently in dialogue with our spiritual and social activist neighbors, the Montclair Congregation, on the subject of a merger. As you know, church membership has dwindled in recent years, and it has become increasingly difficult for a small group of individuals to carry on a full program of worship, social action and other cherished events. We are surviving, but we are not flourishing. A merger with Montclair is a necessary first step towards restoring and renewing the vitality and support structure necessary to attract and build a new church community here in Orange. A merger with Montclair, would, of course, have to be thoroughly discussed and voted on by both churches. Several weeks ago, our church voted to pursue dialogue with Montclair. To facilitate and structure our ongoing dialogue on this important topic, three committees have been formed, to be co-chaired by one (or two) of our members with one Montclair member. Our committee Co-Chairs are:

- Treasury/Finance Committee Co-Chair: Bill Slezak
- Polity/Governance Committee Joint Co-Chairs: Wayne Eastman and Cindy Long
- Worship/Music Committee: Frank Barszcz

If you are interested in serving on a committee, please contact me at darcyhall@aol.com.

The following sermon, given by Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman on Sunday, 22 September 2013 at the UU Congregation of Montclair articulates some thoughts on the possibilities and potential of a merger between our two churches from the Montclair perspective.

When I originally came up with the title for this morning, I thought it would fit well with where I'd anticipated we might be heading today. Even though the content has changed significantly from what it might originally have been, I trust the underlying religious dynamics involved in it, are still very closely related. Instead of using more personal illustrations, as I'd intended though, we'll be looking at them through the lens of a congregational example.

What applies to the individual, very often applies to the community. I trust that in this

room there are individuals for whom our theme will speak directly into your current or long-standing life challenges. I'll hope that our exploration will be helpful on that personal level as well. As a community though, I hope this morning we

might look at this theme that asks us as a congregation, if there were no limits, what might we choose?

Recently at one of our Men's Group gatherings, I was reminded of a story that I'd come across a few years ago. It provides a good beginning for our exploration. The story is really an explanation about how fleas are trained in order to perform in a flea circus. It goes like this: a flea circus trainer places a number of fleas in a low, flat box. The fleas, for whom jumping is as natural as breathing air, initially try to jump out of the

box. But the trainer puts them back in the box and then puts a glass plate across the top opening. The fleas begin jumping again, but now they are hitting their heads against a plate of glass. They fall back down into the box.

Be doers of the word and not merely hearers. Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act--they will be blessed in their doing.

--James 1:22-25 (ESV)

October Sunday Services

6 Oct **Beloved Community Sunday**

Please see flyer on Page 3 for details.

13 Oct ***Report From GA***

Georgiana Hart

Musician: Linda Kochenburger, Senior Usher: Gregory Giacobe

Church member Georgiana Hart will bring us highlights from this year's General Assembly, held in Louisville, KY last June. Among those will be a workshop on the promises and limitations of the Roe v. Wade, and how they relate to one of the successfully passed Actions for Immediate Witness: Stop and Frisk policies.

20 Oct **East-West Family Spiritual Education**

11:15 AM Take the eastbound train to Orange arriving at 11:04 or drive.

We encourage members to attend and to invite people who might be interested. We'll continue to create an informal, café atmosphere conducive to an "all ages together" (babies and toddlers are most welcome!) alternative spiritual experience. This month will focus on China and on Confucius as a boy. We had a good roll-out last month, and are hoping for an even better follow-up this time. Tell your friends, especially if they have young children!

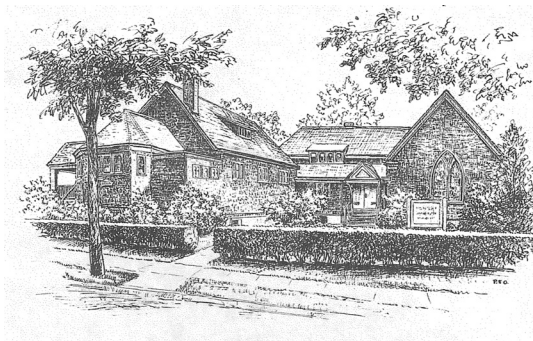
27 Oct ***A Few Things About Healthy, Growing Organizations - Including Churches***

Rev. Dr. Heidi Swarts

Musician: David Braham , Senior Usher: Cindy Long

Community organizing has valuable lessons for all organizations, including churches, that seek renewal, growth, and health. Rev. Swarts will explore some of these lessons.

Rev. Dr. Heidi Swarts is a community minister whose ministry has included teaching, scholarship on social movements in American politics, and preaching and rites of passage. She is currently in training as a chaplain at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York. Rev. Swarts has a special expertise in faith/institution-based community organizing.





Beloved Community Sunday

Sunday, October 6, 10:30 AM

***The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County
35 Cleveland Street, Orange, NJ***

**This is NOT a worship service!
This is NOT a political meeting!**

Beloved Community Sunday is a time when ALL people of all backgrounds who are interested in the future of Orange can gather to get to know each other, and work together.



“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.” ~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Beloved Community Sundays are the first Sunday of every month from October through May. For more information and directions, call 973-674-0010 or email minister@essexuu.org.

After a while, the fleas, conditioned to the presence of the glass, begin jumping just slightly below the height of the glass, so as not to hit it. Who wants to keep hitting their head against a hard surface, whether it can be seen or not?!

The trainer gathers different groups of fleas into various boxes with the glass plates set at different levels; six inches, 12 inches 18 inches and so on... When they've all been trained to jump just below the level of the glass on their box, the trainer removes the glass plates altogether. The fleas continue jumping to the exact same height. Then the trainer takes his amazing flea circus on the road and mystifies his audiences!

How many of us have "self-imposed" lids that prevent us from achieving new heights? How many of us might recognize it, if we were facing a new situation where our old limitations might be more crippling than they would be nurturing or protective. If there were no limits, what would you choose? Of course the Buddhist answer to this question is that there really are no limits, that all limits are imagined. I'm not altogether sure that's true, but somewhere between what we perceive to be true and what might actually be true, I have to believe there are far more possibilities than we are often willing to be aware of.

Let me share a story with you from our congregation's history. It's regarding an event that took place about 45 years ago, somewhere in the late 1960s. At that time, the parking lot, just on the other side of our driveway, was divided into two residential lots, each of which had an old house on it. Both lots were up for sale. My understanding is that the combined price for the two of them was about \$60,000.

Many members of the congregation thought it would be a good idea to buy the lots. Automobiles were becoming abundant and convenient parking was already something of an issue. The idea of the purchase had a lot of support. The president of the congregation at that time, who will go unnamed here, had other ideas. He claimed that the congregation had no real need for the property and that it could ill afford to spend or borrow the money to acquire it. Period.

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back... The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never have otherwise occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance.... Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

—Goethe

I don't know what glass ceilings that president or the congregation might have banged up against prior to that opportunity. Given the time-frame though, I suspect that he and many members of the congregation were children of the Great Depression. I would imagine that the Great Depression would have provided quite an indelible impression as to limitations, possibilities and risks... Something like a glass ceiling.

The congregation would have been well served in many ways, had we dared to think beyond the limitations and the boundaries that were imagined back in 1968. We would not be waiting at this, our moment in time, for the groundbreaking ceremony, which will likely take place within the next few months, at the onset of construction of the high-rise, senior healthcare facility that will soon be our next door neighbor. We would not be scrambling on Sunday mornings for parking places that are already a couple of blocks away, let alone trying to find just the few close-up spots that we need to have for our members and visitors with accessibility issues.


Through a lack of imagination, we lost the opportunity for any number of potential uses for those properties, which could have served our congregation well. The land was there. It was available. It was affordable. And we let it slip away... Not only from ourselves but also from our potential selves. Sometimes we have to imagine ourselves beyond who we are in any present moment. Sometimes we have to imagine ourselves as including those who might yet become a part of us, if only our vision is large enough to embrace them, too.

If there were no limits, what might we choose?

Some of you may have read my September column in our newsletter, the Gazette. In it I began to describe a conversation, already underway, about a potential for our congregation that none of us had begun to imagine until quite recently. My hope is that we will explore deeply this opportunity, which might lie before us, and that we might find our way toward living into a new potential for Unitarian Universalism here in Essex County. I would like to begin by placing the context of this conversation squarely within the language of our congregation's mission statement, particularly the part that reads we are, "...seeking transformation... In our congregation and in our communities." The opportunity before us is about the potential transformation of our congregation and the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County in nearby Orange.

Perhaps you are aware that we have been partnering with the folks in Orange over the past couple of years in an attempt to generate energy, momentum and growth in their congregation. The leadership of both congregations has been working to avert the loss of our Unitarian Universalist presence in this nearby, culturally urban setting. Still, the energy and balance needed to keep up the vitality of the Orange congregation, simply has not developed. In fact, over the past few months, they have lost even more of their stalwart supporters who have moved away and begun other new adventures of their own. The part-time minister they've had, Darrell Berger, has been called to an interim ministry with our congregation in Staten Island.

October 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6 BELOVED COMMUNITY 10:30 AM	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 SERMON: Report From GA 10:30 AM	14	15	16 Board of Trus- tees Sonen Room 7:30 PM	17	18	19
20 EAST-WEST 11:15 AM	21	22	23 Newsletter Dead- line	24	25	26
27 SERMON: A Few Things About Healthy Congs. 10:30 am	28	29	30	31	 Coffee Hour Coordinator for October: TBA	

Sermon: If There Were No Limits, What Would You Choose? (Cont'd)

Over this summer, I have been studying different UU models of multi-site congregations. I have had some exploration on conversations with ministerial colleagues involved in them. I am convinced that our best hope for maintaining a Unitarian Universalist presence in Orange is through a multi-site, consolidation of the two congregations.

Along with our President, Teresa DeSousa, our Music Director, Marcus Hauck, a member of our Council on Ministry, Irene Sanderson and the unanimous endorsement of our full Board, we have been engaged in an ongoing conversation with leadership of the Orange Congregation. Their President, Darcy Hall, and I are in full agreement that unless there is a radical change in the way their congregation functions as a Unitarian Universalist congregation and as a congregation within that culturally urban community, UU of Essex County will not likely exist for more than a couple of years, at best.

What is at risk if they go out of existence? For me, and I daresay for our Board of Trustees, this is not about trying to rescue an organization that has outlived its usefulness, albeit this institution is a UU Congregation that is about the same age as our own. What is far more at risk here is the prospect of losing a UU presence in a neighboring township, which has far more urban characteristics than otherwise. The only other urban setting for a Unitarian Universalist congregation in the state of New Jersey is in Plainfield. I believe that we are needed in Orange and that we need to be there.

We would do well to be there, not only to maintain a UU presence, but in order to make real the invitation of Unitarian Universalism, an invitation to a covenant that affirms and promotes the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the interdependent web of existence that connects us to one another and to our planet. We would do well to be there, in order to make real our message of religious unity through diversity in this setting where the community is so diverse and where we might provide an agency of unification. We would do well to be there for our own fulfillment, so that we might more truly walk the walk of social justice and human compassion. We would do well to be there, where justice and compassion are challenged at every step of the way, so that we might better learn to find and share ways of confronting the princes and principalities of racism and classism.

If there were no limits, what might we choose?

I would hope that we would dare to imagine our UU Congregation at Montclair becoming an agency of transformation that cares enough about the world around us that we are willing to move out into that world, by way of our neighbor-

ing community, in ways that would allow us to be more intentional in the creation of the beloved community. I hope that our imagination would allow us to move beyond the security of our own walls. I do hope that we could grow into such a vision as this.

What might such an effort entail? Quite honestly, it would entail a great deal of change on our part. It would not be easy or without growing pains... In short, it would mean merging the two congregations. Montclair would remain the "mothership," while the Orange site would become something of an interdependent extension, a "satellite." Orange UU would likely maintain their own name, but they would be part and parcel of who we are here as well.

I should probably interject at this point that this is not something that either the board or I are trying to create on your behalf. None of this can or will take place without an affirmative vote to do so by the current membership of both congregations. We are working on a mechanism whereby leadership from our congregation and some of their leaders will create a plan that the full membership of the two congregations will use to decide whether or not to pursue merger.

We are in the process of creating merger teams that will work out a proposal for structures for what a combined congregation might look like. Here are some initial thoughts on how the proposal might look in four key areas, along with a look at some of the challenges that will need to be addressed:

Worship/Music

In order to promote a consistent and professional ministerial presence in the Orange pulpit, an essential element for any growing congregation, we would likely downstream the readings and sermons from here in this sanctuary, three Sundays of each month. In addition, we have been in conversation with Rev. Gordon Bailey. Some of you will remember Gordon who was only recently an Affiliated Minister with our congregation. We've been talking with Gordon about the possibility of a halftime ministry in which he would preach in Orange on the fourth Sunday of each month and be involved there in developing the local liturgy around those sermons on the other three Sundays. Gordon is very excited by this prospect. Our Board Member and Worship

Continued on Page Next Page

Church Calendar Open—New Social Events & Volunteers Needed

We have openings in the church's social calendar for events promoting church community building. If you have an idea - and aren't afraid to roll up your sleeves - please contact the church office at 973-674-0010 or at office@essexuu.org. We will contact you to confirm your date. Thank you.

Committee Chair, Cheryl Crawford, along with Marcus Hauck, are prepared to head up this merger team, along with the leader from Orange.

Polity/Governance

It will not be easy to merge the workings and by-laws of two congregations into one, but that will be the challenge. We will need to find ways of creating a Council at Orange, which has enough authority and autonomy to fill the needs of that location, while at the same time we re-create a Board of Trustees here that will serve the singular governance of the merged congregation. This will require something of a delicate balance, to say the least. Our former Board of Trustees member, Shirley Matthews, will be working along with Andree Laney, as well as at least one leader from Orange, in heading up this merger team for us.

Treasury/Finance

The question is, how do we go about merging two treasuries, while maintaining integrity, respect and fiduciary responsibility for the history that created both of those treasuries? How can the folks in Orange be reassured that we don't just want to swallow up their financial assets and, in the end, provide nothing in return? How can we be assured here, that our assets will not be evaporated by liabilities or risks that might come about from new exposure to unforeseen vulnerabilities? I trust that these questions can be answered. And I trust that we have the right merger team who is prepared to work with finance people from Orange on it. They include our Treasurer, Chris Corbett, and our immediate past Treasurer, Judy Strachan. They will be supported in this work by our entire Finance Committee.

Life Span Religious Education

We are unable to form a merger team for this category at this time because there is currently no Religious Education Program in Orange. Clearly this will be a topic requiring early intervention and major efforts towards getting things rolling, if the merger is to move forward.

We have been assured of support for this entire project by the District, Region and national bodies of the Unitarian Universalist Association. This support would be in the form of financial assistance, technological expertise and resource persons who have experience in the areas of creating multi-site congregations. Studies have shown that much of the recent growth in Unitarian Universalist congregations, as well as in other faith traditions, has been with in just such a multi-site combinations. In fact, across faith lines, multisite efforts have shown a 90% success rate.

If there were no limits, what might we choose?

We have to remember that we are not the only ones who are

doing the choosing here. I spoke at the beginning about how the content of sermons often changes between the time of inception and the time of delivery. Sometimes they change even in the midst of writing them, as has literally been the case at this point in my writing.

Yesterday morning I received an e-mail from Darcy Hall, president at Orange, which promoted a telephone conversation with her. It seems that a portion of the Orange Board is quite reluctant to move ahead in these discussions, despite a Congregational vote to do so, taken only two weeks ago. Darcy has asked that we slow the pace of our conversation for another month

while their congregation undergoes further discernment about its future with us, its future without us, or its lack of a future altogether.

So, as well as anything else you may have gleaned, here's what I would hope you might take away from this morning's message:

- Very often the limitations we experience in the world are self-imposed.

- On occasion in the past, our congregation has self-limited itself in ways that have impaired our hospitality and potential for sharing the good news of Unitarian Universalism.

- A potential exists for the possibility of UUCM to merge with the Orange UU congregation, which could result in our expanded capacity to share that good news, to combat the forces of racism and classism and to promote the beloved community.

- Finally, we do well to see ourselves beyond who we are in any present moment. Sometimes we have to imagine ourselves as including those who might yet become a part of us, if only our vision is large enough to embrace them, too.

We cannot decide for the folks at Orange whether or not to move forward with this merger. We can only offer our partnership and our leadership in this endeavor. There is another Buddhist philosophy I would cite. It would indicate that we do well to put our minds, hearts and souls into whatever we do as best and fully as we can, and that then we have to let go of the outcome.

I hope that our congregation will choose to be a partner in this venture. I hope theirs will too. I can't control the outcome of the decisions to be made, but I do know that I can live with whatever the results might be. I just hope that in the process, we will all be able to see beyond our imagined limitations, limits which are based on what has been. I hope that we will be able to see into an unlimited future of what yet can be.

Que sera, sera. Whatever will be, will be. But still, we can make ready for, and even expand the possibilities of that future, by our approach to it. I am, as I trust you are too, so incredibly grateful to be walking into whatever that future holds as a part of this community, as a part of what this community is becoming.

Be doers of the word and not merely hearers. Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act--they will be blessed in their doing.
--James 1:22-25 (ESV)





FALL ISSUES WORKSHOP 2013

Saturday, October 19, 9:00am – 2:30pm

Hosted by the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield

724 Park Avenue • Plainfield, NJ

(see www.fusp.org for directions)

This gathering will be a working session to:

- Discuss and determine UULMNJ focus issues for the coming year
- Learn how you can work with UULMNJ in your home congregation
- Meet with justice leaders from other congregations

Special guests

- Keynote speaker, **Sue Fulton**, a 1980 West Point graduate, part of the first class to admit women, and a key player in the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy
- **Giving Voice**, a women's a cappella chorus founded by Penny Gnesin, will provide musical inspiration

Who should attend?

- People who want to make a difference by putting their faith into action
- Anyone interested in the work of UULMNJ
- Congregational liaisons, action team members, leaders and staff
- Task Force members

Liaison and Volunteer Training

- Immediately following the conclusion of the workshop - stay for an hour and learn how to use UULMNJ resources to take action in your congregation.

Check-in at 9:00am with coffee and bagels; the meeting will begin promptly at 9:30am.

There will be a working lunch provided.

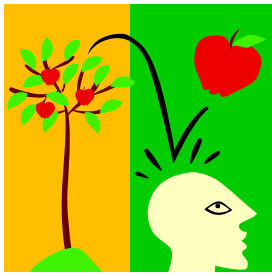
We rely on your donations to cover the cost of food and materials for this event.

To register go to: www.uulmnj.org

For details, talk to your congregational liaison.

Or contact us at 609-672-7331 or workshop@uulmnj.org.

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey is to provide the comprehensive structure for New Jersey Unitarian Universalists' non-partisan activism. We work for a socially just public policy in collaboration with like-minded organizations through Education, Research, Advocacy, Witness, and Service.



Defying Gravity...

Wonderful Ways to Worship

Leading your congregation from the edge of awe

A joint program offered by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock and the UU District of Metro NY

Saturday November 9, 2013 9am - 4pm

UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, 48 Shelter Rock Rd, Manhasset NY, 10030

Coffee and bagels at 9:00am; program starts at 9:30am. Registration \$30 – Lunch included; scholarships available

Leadership in a congregation can feel like a heavy responsibility. Come to the Defying Gravity Leadership Day and find out how to ease your mind, lighten your heart, and inflate your soul. This multi-track conference will provide specific skills instruction tailored just for you, uncovering the link between leadership and your personal spiritual growth.

Keynote – Rev. Christine Robinson



Christine is a life-long UU who has been the minister of First Unitarian in Albuquerque for 25 years, during which the church has doubled in size to 800 members. Last Summer they dedicated a new sanctuary and are learning how to offer a graceful and exciting worship service in that space. The congregation has three branches in small towns who worship using videos of the morning service and a cadre of lay worship leaders in all four campuses. They have also pioneered contemporary worship for UU's. An always well-received speaker, she was the Berry Street Lecturer at GA in 2008, gave a part of the Minns lectures in 2010, and has spoken at several district and regional gatherings. She is the co-author of three books, "Heart to Heart" and "Soul to Soul," resources for small group ministries, and "The Twistered Tao," an interpretation of the Tao Te Ching, produced with her husband William, a graphic artist.

Contemporary Worship Musician – Vance Bass

Vance is the contemporary music director at First Unitarian Church in Albuquerque and has provided music at many UUA General Assemblies. His Blog, Liberal Religion Gets Loud, looks at trends in contemporary worship.



Worship as Adult Faith Development – Pat Infante

Patricia is the CERG (Central East Regional Group) Faith Development Consultant, and will lead a general session on the formational value of worship.

Afternoon Workshops

Choose ONE of these expert-led workshops tailored to exploring the joys and challenges of your specific leadership role. Descriptions of workshops are posted online at http://uumetrony.org/events/Defying_Gravity_2013_track_descriptions.pdf

1. Christine Robinson on best practices in worship and her experiences with branch, or satellite congregations.
2. Liberal Religion Rocks Out - Vance Bass
3. Spirit-Driven Stewardship - Tricia Hart, UUA Stewardship Consultant
4. Faith Development and Beyond – Patricia Infante, CERG Faith Development Consultant
5. Leadership: Serving with Grace - Renee Ruchotzke, CERG Leadership Consultant
6. Leadership Basics 101 - Mark Bernstein, CERG Growth Consultant
7. Ministry and Worship in the Age of Technology - Tim Atkins and Lara Campbell, CLF Staff
8. Worshipping Together: Bringing Multiculturalism to Life - Musician Matt Meyer and Peggy Clarke, District Justice Ministries Consultant
9. Recovery, Renewal and Resilience after Sandy with Susan Karlson, CERG Disaster Response Coordinator and Alan Kindler, GreenFaith Fellow
10. Defying Human Nature by Embracing It! - LoraKim Joyner, District Right Relations Consultant
11. Storytelling in Worship and Faith Development
12. CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING (no additional charge; MUST register by October 28): A full day's active program.

*Also: weekend workshop for Youth and Advisors – WORTHY (WORship and THEology for Youth) Fri 6pm-Sun 9am (separate registration process)

Register online at <https://www.formdesk.com/uufoms/DefyingGravity>

We are on the web: essexuu.org

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Mailing Address:
PO Box 998.
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Meeting Address:
35 & 47 Cleveland St
Orange NJ 07050-2907

Church Phone: 973-674-0010

Office Email: office@essexuu.org

Minister's Email: minister@essexuu.org

Web: essexuu.org

Minister: Rev. Darrell E. Berger

President Darcy Hall

**Vice President: Mindy Thompson
Fullilove**

Treasurer: Bill Slezak

Secretary: Greg Giacobe

Custodian: Anisha Sanders

Administrator: Greg Giacobe

WE VALUE: Community... Exploration... Fellowship... Spirituality... Liberal Religious Education... Diversity... Freedom... and Action.

OUR VISION: To be a life-affirming liberal religious community where people of diverse beliefs, ideas and background come together to provide spiritual and intellectual growth to one another and to work together in Orange, New Jersey for a greater good in the world.

OUR MISSION: To study and practice religion in freedom and fellowship. To provide support and care for our community and the community at large.

Founded in Orange in 1890 as the First Unitarian Church of Essex County, the congregation has worshipped in the present Sanctuary since its construction in 1892-3. The Church continues the ministry of the Union Universalist Society (also known as the Church of the Redeemer), founded as the First Universalist Society of Newark in 1834.



**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Essex County**

PO Box 998.

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Making the connections

