



MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County

October 2015

Inside this issue:

Sunday Sunset Services	2
Sunset Haikus	3
Happenings @ Montclair	3
October Calendar of Events	4
Clean Up & Construction	5

MARK IT DOWN

- ◆ Daylight Savings Time Ends, Sunday, 1 Nov, 2 AM

Where every mind is free and every soul is welcome!

Spiritually Speaking: Part 1 Back to Nature By Dr. Gus DiZerega

At first glance, nothing seems more removed from the realities of the modern world than the world of nature.

Fresh air and quiet are rare today. The relentless drone of the internal combustion engine pollutes even wilderness areas and national parks. Our homes and places of work insulate us from the rhythms of the seasons, for most of us spend most of our time inside. Artificial light hides the daily cycles of light and dark. From the perspective of the institutions and individuals who dominate our world, everything that exists has become either a resource for or impediment to the serving of human desires. In such a world, nature religion can seem as remote, irrelevant, and out of place as a banana patch in Alaska, or a polar bear in Barbados. But this judgment is myopic.

Now it is the city dwellers who find higher and deeper meaning in nature, while all too many raised in the countryside continue to see the land primarily as a source for money. For them it is vital to subdue it completely, controlling it like a machine. Such rural people are as embedded in consumer society as many urbanites. The rise of secular values has strengthened this materialistic bias to the breaking point. The spirit of money is almost universally worshiped ahead of the spirit of the land-and often ahead of the spirit of the monotheistic God to which lip service is paid. For many

Americans this transcendent God has fallen silent. Perhaps this is why the nature religions are again finding an audience.

Encounters with wild nature first demonstrated to many of us the limitations of our society's dominant worldview. It is in nature that we most easily encounter a reality greater than human plans and aspirations. In nature our preconceptions and prejudices are most easily quieted, for they are not continually reinforced by encounters with others. In quiet alertness, our perceptions open to a meaning and

goodness unconnected with human ends. Spirit in nature reaches out to us through beauty, through peace, through the openness of heart it evokes within us, and through our direct experience of its presence. Nature religion is hardly the only spiritual path open to humanity, but today it is a particularly powerful and appropriate one, for it teaches us lovingly to

accept and embrace our world as a manifestation of the sacred.



Dr. Gus DiZerega is currently a visiting assistant professor of government at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY, and is the author of Pagans and Christians: The Personal Religious Experience (Llewellyn Worldwide, 2001). This piece is excerpted from his essay, "Nature Religion and the Modern World: The Returning Relevance of Pagan Spirituality," which appeared in the November 2001 issue of the CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) newsletter. This article originally appeared in November/December 2001 issue of the UU World, page 14.

Continued on Page 2

Sunday Sunset Services

Services in Parish Hall start at 6 PM

INTRODUCING: SUNDAY SUNSET SERVICES

Come join us for our **NEW WORSHIP FORMAT** starting with **INGATHERING SUNDAY**, 13 September 2015 beginning at **6 PM**. Services will take place in the **PARISH HALL**. Doors will be open at 5:30 PM for set up.

The First UU Church would like to introduce our new service format - "Sunday Sunset Services". Containing elements of Small Group Ministry and Intentional Listening Group formats, we envision a spiritual practice of simple prayer, a moment of reflection, giving thanks, singing & music--all while sharing wine, cheese & the like. Each month, we will gather to celebrate a shared theme over words, song and food. The ritual is giving thanks, eating, sharing and community itself.

DATE THEME

13 Sep	Friendship [INGATHERING SUNDAY]	Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobbe	Musician - Bill Stafford, Usher - Wayne Eastman
18 Oct	Nature	Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobbe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman
15 Nov	Gratitude	Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobbe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman
13 Dec	Solace	Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobbe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman

Spiritually Speaking: Part II What is the nature of nature?

Rev. Myriam Renaud

If you were asked to award top prize in the Odes to Nature category to Kenneth L. Patton or to Henry David Thoreau, you might hesitate. Patton (1911–1994), a Unitarian Universalist minister who served the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston, is known for this hymn:

We are the earth upright and proud;
 in us the earth is knowing.
 Its winds are music in our mouths,
 In us its rivers flowing.

Patton used we to designate all of the world’s religions and cultures. At its core, he wrote in his book A Religion for One World, religion is an expression of humanity’s “impassioned affirmation of life”—we deeply love “the stars when we get a chance to see them clearly, bright clouds on a summer afternoon, the animations of a child, a drink of cold water.”

However, Patton believed that when we sing of our love for nature, we are more fundamentally celebrating human life. We are lifting our voices to the stuff from which “life evolves

and is sustained.” We may “have sympathy for other forms of life,” but this sympathy “begins with, and circles back” upon our situation. Patton was convinced that nature provides no clues as to the meaning or purpose of our lives. It is we who project our own needs and emotions onto nature and then read those needs and emotions back again.

Über-individualist Thoreau (1817–1862), who had little use for institutional religion, wrote in his poem “Nature”:

O Nature!
 I do not aspire
 To be the highest in thy choir,—
 To be a meteor in thy sky,
 Or comet that may range on high;
 Only a zephyr that may blow
 Among the reeds by the river low . . .

Unlike Patton, Thoreau deemed us capable of exploring the details of nature without projecting ourselves upon it.

SUNSET HAIKUS



Below are haikus on the theme of Friendship written by those who attended our premier Sacred Sunset Service on 13 September 2015 —

Autumn leaves fall
Friendships fade — With patience
Flower friends bloom again

Growing up together
Exciting exploration
Sixty we unite

You carried the burden
Graciously, unstintingly
Til your back was bent

Twelve days of dark weather — Rain
The fog lifts like gossamer
You usher in light

Friends are common souls
Enjoyment discovery
Together through time

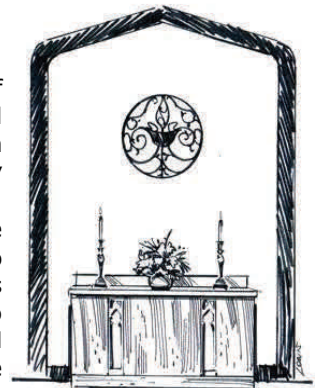
Our intense union
In warm green bright September
Ends in cold and rain

Your hip was broken
My visit with a flower
Mended many years

I find your good eyes
Penetrating my lone soul
With deep connection

Happenings @ Montclair

- **Women's Group — Friday, 2 October, 7 PM (Rotunda).** Please join us for the launch of UUCM's Women's Group! This is intended to be a social group (mostly) free of agenda and structure. Come as you are; feel free to bring your dinner if you're coming straight from work, and of course liquid refreshments are encouraged. For more information, contact Mary Moriarty at 973-800-0575.
- **Solo UU's — Friday, 9 October, 6 PM (Rotunda).** Solo UU's are adults living the single life from our unique perspective within the UU community. We find many opportunities to connect socially, while we build a support network with adults currently living solo. Activities include joining together for discussions and dinner, and going to a movie, concert or play. To find out more, join us on the second Friday each month at UUCM where we meet at 7:00 PM for drinks and appetizers, and then socialize at a restaurant in Montclair. Newcomers are welcome! For info, call Ed Harris at 973-783-7645 or edwardbharris022@verizon.net.
- **Men's Group — Saturday, 10 October, 8:30 AM (Alliance).** Are you a man? Are you a UU man? Would you enjoy getting together with other UU men? All UU men are welcome to join a thoughtful, mutually supportive group. Friendly, fraternal conversations provoke reflection, insight and more than a little uplifting humor. Visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uucammen/> to learn more about our group.
- **Senior Lunch Bunch — Wednesdays, 14 & 28 October, 12 Noon (Peierls Room).** We generally choose a topic at each meeting for the next meeting, but the conversation usually wanders over several topics of interest to the group assembled that come up spontaneously (and with plenty of laughter thrown in). Everyone is welcome! For info, email Gary Sanderson at gwsanderson@verizon.net.
- **Halloween Party — Saturday, 31 October, 12 Noon – 2 PM (Fletcher Hall).** Sponsored by the Senior Youth Group. Contact Dana N. Moore, Senior Youth Coordinator, sryouthcoord@uumontclair.org.



October 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 SUNSET SERVICE: Nature 6 PM	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Spiritually Speaking con't

These details, for Thoreau, are not metaphorical. They hold great significance in and of themselves.

Humans belong to the whole, he wrote in his journal, and are never apart from nature. Still, we can, with enough attentiveness, discern its sacred meanings—sacred because the physical world is the realm of spirit, the place where God can be found. There is no beyond—nature is neither a gateway to a higher spiritual realm nor a system of coded revelations from God. The physical world is rich with value. It contains truth. For this reason, seeds are more precious than diamonds—diamonds sparkle but seeds contain the principle of life.

James Luther Adams (1901–1994), a UU minister and ethics professor, would have rejected both Thoreau’s and Patton’s points of view for moral reasons.

Nature, Adams insisted, offers no guidance about what is valuable for human life. It cannot help those of us who want to live a life attuned to universal moral demands.

In his lecture “The Prophetic Covenant and Social Concern,” Adams argued against attempts “to understand man primarily as related to and embedded in nature.” Why? Because in his view “nature has no culture.” In nature, ideas come into conflict and bonding occurs, only because of instinct. God, on the other hand, transcends nature and is thus capable of calling us into relations of mutuality. Even though, in our freedom, we can resist this call, God succeeds where nature fails, since the demand for mutuality, if it is to be moral and universal, must cut across culture and across our “natural instincts and tendencies.”

Rev. Myriam Renaud is a Ph.D. candidate in theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School and managing editor of Sightings, which analyzes religion in current events. This article appeared in the Summer 2013 issue of UU World, pages 64–65.



Clean up.....

First UU held a Clean Up Evening on Thursday, 24 September 2015 beginning at 5 PM. Six people arrived to help the church clean out the last of the refuse that has been around for years. We would like to very much thank Bill Stafford, Building & Grounds Chair for leading & coordinating, Georgiana Hart, Mindy Thompson, Rickey Slezak, Becky Doggett from UUCM & Kathryn Ornstein. Photos courtesy of Rickey Slezak.



Continued on Page 6



.... & Construction

On 10 August, construction began on the church's long-anticipated site improvement project. This will replace the old and crumbling ramp and porch, located by the main entrance, with a new platform structure with planters and walkways in finished concrete. This is phase one of this project. Phase two will relocate the ramp to the Parish Hall side entrance and replace the side entrance door. Handicap parking will also be relocated to behind the Parish Hall. Estimated completion date is the middle of October. Photos courtesy of Bill Stafford & Frank Barszcz.



PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN

BY DANA SIMPSON



New Jersey Peace Action's 58th Annual Fall Peace Gathering

Saturday, November 14th, 2015

Where: **Bloomfield High School** Social Hour and Silent Auction: **1:00PM**
160 Broad Street Program:**2:00PM**
Bloomfield, NJ 07003 Event Ends:**4:00PM**

Silent Auction features theater tickets, jewelry, subscriptions and restaurant gift certificates.

Refreshments will be served.

Why I Went To Prison For a Nuclear-Free World



“Our ‘crime’ was to draw attention to the criminality of the 70-year-old nuclear industry itself and to the unconscionable fact that the U.S. spends more on nuclear weapons than on education, health, transportation, and disaster relief combined.”

– Keynote speaker **Sister Megan Rice**, an anti-nuclear activist and Roman Catholic Religious Sister of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

In July 2012, at the age of 82, Sister Megan and two other activists, members of Plowshares, a group that seeks the global elimination of nuclear arms, broke into the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Having cut through barbed-wire fences at the Oak Ridge complex, Sr. Megan and her accomplices made their way to a bunker that stored nuclear weapons and support material. There they hung banners and strung crime-scene tape; the three also painted messages such as “The fruit of justice is peace” and splashed human blood on the bunker wall.

After being convicted in May 2013, Sr. Megan was sentenced to three years in prison. On May 8, 2015, an appellate court ruled that the government had overreached in charging the three with sabotage, and ordered them set free.

Sister Megan became active in the anti-war movement in the mid-1980s. She has been arrested more than three dozen times and had served two six-month terms for trespassing before her conviction for Oak Ridge.

TICKETS and Information:

NJ Peace Action • 673 Bloomfield Avenue • Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Phone: **(973) 259-1126**

Email: **events@njpeaceaction.org** • Web: **www.njpeaceaction.org** (online order)

We are on the web: essexuu.org

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

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President: Georgiana Hart

**Vice President: Mindy
Thompson Fullilove**

Treasurer: Bill Slezak

Secretary: Greg Giacobe

Administrator: Greg Giacobe

Sexton: Tony A Jones

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



**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Essex County**

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