



MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County

March 2016

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MARK IT DOWN

- ◆ Board of Trustees, Thursday, 10 Mar, 7 PM
- ◆ Daylight Savings Time Begins, 13 Mar, 1 AM
- ◆ Sunset Service, Sunday, 13 Mar, 6 PM

Where every mind is free and every soul is welcome!

Spiritually Speaking: The Wisdom of Play By Rev. Anthony Makar

Dr. Peter Gray, a Boston College psychology researcher, tells a story that always makes me smile. He'd been invited to play Scrabble with two young girls he knew. The girls were novices, and Gray saw this as an opportunity to teach them. The girls loved the basic setup of the game, but had no interest in the actual rules and instead made up their own. As he related in [Freedom to Learn](#), a *Psychology Today* blog:

Their unstated but obvious goal, on each turn, was to put down the longest, funniest nonsense word that they could, using as many letters as possible from their rack combined with at least one letter on the board. It had to follow the rules of English phonology (or, as they would have put it, it had to sound like it could be a word), but it could not be an actual word. The object was not to score points but to make each other laugh, and laugh they did! They laughed like only two high-spirited ten-year-old girls who have long been best friends can laugh. Sometimes one would 'challenge' the other's 'word,' asking for a definition, and the other would offer an hysterical definition that somehow seemed to fit with the way the 'word' sounded; and then they would laugh even harder. I realized, as I pulled back and watched them and began to laugh along with them, that my way of playing was something like what we usually call work. Their way of playing was play. I realized, too, that I used to play like that, as a child. What had happened to me in the interim?

Gray's story illustrates the vital difference between play and play. In the end, he is left wondering what the heck happened in his life, why he can't play like that, because play

like that is what aliveness looks like. Play like that is full of all good things.

As Gray explains it, part of it has to do with what makes play play. There are five factors, he says, each of which the Scrabble story illustrates. One is that the activity is freely entered into. For the two girls, there's absolutely no feeling of being pushed into something against their will, and no sense that it's impossible to quit. If a person feels coerced or forced, it's not freedom and therefore it's not playful.



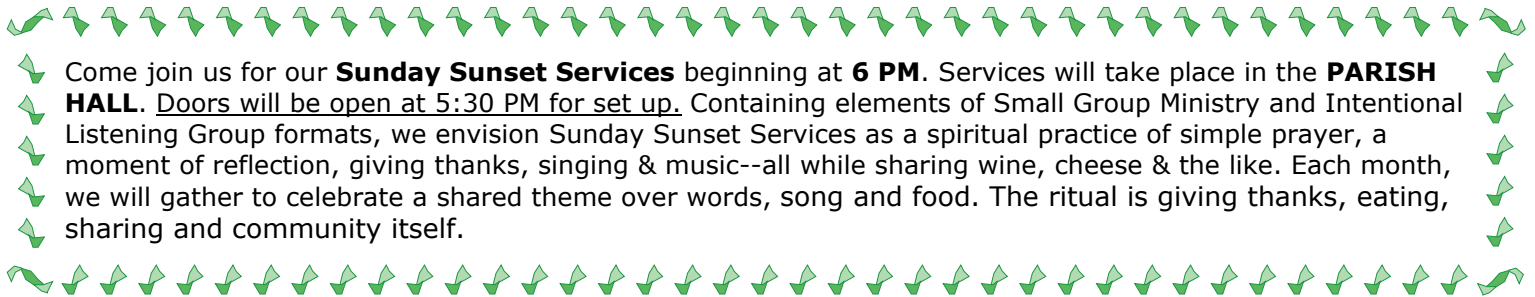
As for the second factor, think for a moment about how the girls are self-determining. They are free agents and determine their own rules and strategy, even in the face of Gray's protests. Gray thinks he knows best, just like all the people in our lives who think they know what's best for us, but it can't be playful for those girls if they are feeling micromanaged down to the details, and it's the same for us.

Which takes us immediately to the third factor in all playfulness: imagination. Scrabble, in conventional reality, aims at real words; but the girls aim for nonsense words that sound real, are as long and silly as possible, and have invented definitions. In the hands of imagination, everything can be different or more than what it is. Imagination can find windows where there seemed to be only walls. It's Jules Verne in 1870, writing in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* about electric submarines—and eventually science was able to make that fantasy come true. Maybe this is why Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

This Einstein quote suggests the practical usefulness of play, and the usefulness is

Sunday Sunset Services

Services in Parish Hall start at 6 PM



Come join us for our **Sunday Sunset Services** beginning at **6 PM**. Services will take place in the **PARISH HALL**. Doors will be open at 5:30 PM for set up. Containing elements of Small Group Ministry and Intentional Listening Group formats, we envision Sunday Sunset Services as 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 Mar** *Play* **Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe** **Musician - Bill Stafford, Usher - Wayne Eastman**
- 10 Apr** *Sustainability* **Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe** **Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman**
- 15 May** *Parents* **Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe** **Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman**
- 12 Jun** *Blessings* **Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe** **Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman**



Spiritually Speaking [cont.]

tremendous. But the irony here is that the emphasis on usefulness actually violates the fourth factor in genuine play: that's it's done primarily for the sake of fun. Our Scrabble-playing girls aren't creating new words to improve the English language. They just want to make each other laugh.

And finally, the fifth factor in all genuine playfulness: it is completely absorbing. When you are playing, you are intensely focused on what's happening in the game. Above all, you are not distressed, you are not afraid of failure, you are not distracted by anything else.

All this is what makes play play. Activity, that is freely entered, is self-determining, is full of imagination, is valued primarily because it is enjoyable, and is characterized by a mindset of utter absorption. What's amazing is how evolution—which is as practical and ruthless as you can get—seems to love playfulness. It's because play develops your mind and keeps it sharp. It's because play can provide safe outlets for releasing aggressive impulses—who hasn't witnessed a generous, sweet friend at the game board turn into Donald Trump? It's because play of the specifically risky sort (like climbing, chasing and being chased, wandering and getting lost) teaches kids how to regulate fear and anger.

We play because play teaches people how to take turns, which is nothing less than the basis of civilization. We play

because it gives people the opportunity to connect and socialize. We play because it energizes the imagination and can open doors to new insights and connections. Nevertheless, just like Gray in the Scrabble story, we might find ourselves remembering how we used to play like the two girls but no longer do. Our lives have gone contrary to nature. What has happened?

The other day I was in Marshall's looking for silly socks to wear on a Sunday morning, because I want to be playful with my congregation. Some kids were playing chase and laughing and carrying on, and it was the sound of fun (loud), and I just wanted them to shut up, it had been a long day, I was upset about things. There I was—being contrary to the nature that surges within me and within you and wants playfulness, wants us to be alive and vital, wants us to feel charged up with the electrical charge of the soul.

Did I think I could solve things by being a Grinch? I think I did. But again and again, the playful approach is the powerful one. Maybe the playful approach can release us to work past whatever is hard for us.

If playfulness involves freedom to enter into and to leave, think of all the ways in which you might be tied to a position you can't afford to leave, or to a marriage, or to something else.

Spiritually Speaking [cont.]

If playfulness involves the ability to choose exactly how you will play, think of all the ways in which people of all ages are micromanaged—at school, at work, at home. In some schools, children come home every day with a color that indicates what their behavior has been like that day. Every day they are judged. Parents, every day, have to deal with it.

If playfulness involves doing something just for fun, think of all the messages you receive about getting on track, growing up, getting a life. Don't get a degree in philosophy or studio art! How are you going to make any money with a degree like that? If playfulness involves full absorption in what you are doing without any distress or pressure, just watch the evening news and allow the pain of the world to pour in and that will make you feel plenty distracted and distressed.

If playfulness involves imagination, just think of all the ways in which the world wants you to be serious and literal. All the literalism and conservatism out there that makes religion, for example, shallow and uncreative and violent.

If we could just flip the joylessness script for a moment.

Muslims say, "Take one step towards God and God takes seven steps towards you; walk to God and God comes running to you." If playfulness is anything, it is God energy stirring in us!

We want to take that one step, we want to start walking. Just taking that one step, just starting to walk, can feel so hard. Maybe the playful approach really can release us to work past whatever is hard for us. A little bit of playfulness can go a long way.

Rev. Anthony Makar, senior minister of the UU Congregation of Atlanta, a former professor of philosophy, and blogs at Soul Seeds. This essay, which appeared in the Summer 2015 issue of the UU World, is adapted from a sermon he delivered to the UU Congregation of Atlanta, GA on 15 February 2015.



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 Start at \$20
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March 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Board of Trustees Sonnen Room 7 PM	11	12
13 Daylight Savings Time Begins, 1 AM SUNSET SERVICE: Play 6 PM	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Explaining America's Growing Inequality



Presented by:

David Cay Johnston

Income/wealth inequality is creating serious problems for America's middle class and has worsened the plight of those in poverty. Maintaining and expanding the middle class while preserving the safety net is essential to stability and democracy.

David Cay Johnston is an American investigative journalist and author, a specialist in economics and tax issues, and winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting. He has also been honored with the IRE Medal and the George Polk Medal.

In addition to acting as contributing editor of the anthology *DIVIDED: The Perils of Our Growing Inequality (2014)*, Johnston has also authored several other books and publications, including *Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich - and Cheat Everybody Else* (the 2004 Investigative Book of the Year award winner as well as a New York Times and Wall Street Journal best seller).

Johnston is a Distinguished Visiting Lecturer, Syracuse University College of Law and Whitman School of Management, where he teaches the property, tax and regulatory law of the ancient world and how the law evolved to today.

TUESDAY,
MARCH 1, 2016

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Talk, Q&A, Book
Sale/Signing

CONVENT OF
SAINT ELIZABETH

2 Convent Rd

Morristown, NJ 07960

(Dir: turn off Madison Ave onto
Convent Rd, cross tracks, make
right and park in front of large
building w/portico - bldg. 4 on
<https://www.cse.edu/global/pdf/about-cse/campus-map.pdf>)

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SEATING IS LIMITED
PRE-REGISTER TODAY

www.njppn.org or
info@njppn.org

North Jersey Public Policy Network
is a non-partisan, 501c3
organization committed to providing
authoritative information on key
public policy issues to its network
and to the public.



BEYOND BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Luncheon, Presentation, Poetry, Jazz

Sponsored by the Undoing Racism Committee

Sunday, 12:30 - March 6, 2016

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair,
67 Church Street



Key Speaker:

Mary Moriarty

“The Ferocity to Flee:
Journeys of Women Out of
Slavery”

Ami Brabson
Spoken Word, Vocals



Dave Braham &
Greg Bufford

RSVP required:
973.744.0974
felicec936@aol.com
donations accepted

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County

Now is the time for HUUB
A newly forming Outreach, Community
Service and Advocacy program in
Orange, NJ

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County has been a social anchor of the City of Orange for 125 years. A once bustling manufacturing center with all of the cultural and social amenities of a thriving metropolitan city, Orange has suffered and survived the effects of deindustrialization, urban renewal and suburbanization of the middle class.

FIRST CHURCH AND THE CITY OF ORANGE ARE AT A CROSSROADS.

Now is the time to open the doors of our hearts and minds and our sacred space to the beauty, potential and needs of those around us. Now is the time to end our practice of faith in isolation and raise our voices and resources for compassion, justice and equity in all of our human endeavors.

Please RSVP by 4/10/2016 to Charlie Wirene,
Managing Director of HUUB.

Finding Our True Purpose as a Religious Community

Sunday, April 17, 2016
3:00 to 5:00pm
35 Cleveland Street, Orange, NJ

Please join us as we consider the
issues of Urban Ministry:

- How best can we support the people of Orange who have lived, worked, and supported this community for many generations?
- How best to recognize the worth and dignity of every person in the public discourse for the future of this city, our state and the nation?

Reverend, Dr. John Gilmore, Unitarian Universalist Minister, former District Director of Racial and Social Justice for the UUA, Author, Life-Coach and Spiritual Healer will lead a discussion on how we can bring our diverse talents and resources together to answer these pressing questions and to help us develop a pathway toward true community.

To RSVP email OrangeHUUB@gmail.com or
call 973.624.0010 to reserve a seat.

We are on the web: essexuu.org

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Mailing Address:
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Orange NJ 07051-0998

Church Phone: 973-674-0010

Office Email: office@essexuu.org

Web: essexuu.org

**Acting President: Mindy
Thompson Fullilove**

**Vice President Pro Temp:
Frank Barszcz**

Treasurer: Bill Slezak

Secretary: Greg Giacobe

Administrator: Greg Giacobe

Sexton: Tony A Jones

**HUUB Director: Charlie
Wirene**

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.

Orange NJ 07051-0998

Making the connections

