

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County

September 2015

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Where every mind is free and every soul is welcome!

Spiritually Speaking: Playing with the Italians By Rev. Dr. Edward Frost

On the last day of a conference, I attended a workshop that sounded harmless enough. It had to do with what one person could do to help create a sustainable environment. To my horror, the leaders started right in by asking us to hold hands with the people beside us. I usually manage to avoid this sort of thing—the handholding, hugging, foot massage sort of thing. But it was too late. The woman beside me was clearly a workshop pro and quickly had my hand in a firm grip.

We were instructed to tell each other a story about the first time, in our memories, in which we had taken an independent action that had made a difference. I'd gone to hear a good talk, maybe get inspired—who knows, maybe get an idea for a sermon, and here I was trapped, hand-held, and we were going to share. "You go first," I said. Off she went with barely a breath.

Part of my brain was registering her story—while another part was frantically trying to come up with something to say when my turn came. I had nothing. A bell rang. My partner stopped talking. I was on. I had nothing. For an awful moment, my mind stayed blank.

And then out it came: the story of an experience I had not merely forgotten but actually didn't even know I knew. I

was seven years old, maybe eight, being raised in England. It was the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. We lived in a large city, across from a park. In winter, when it snowed, we kids took our sleds to the long hill in the center of the park.

That winter, we discovered that the hill had been adopted by the Italians—Italian prisoners of war. The war had long been over for them. They were held in minimum security while governments made the deals that would send them back home. Confined to camps during the night, they were free to roam the city during the daylight hours.

They had discovered the park and the iced-over hill. They had no skis but their big hob-nailed boots served well enough in a sport second nature to them. Knees bent, arms outspread, they flew down the hill laughing, shouting in their wonderful, so un-English language, thrilling in the familiar bite of the cold wind. They had survived. They were alive. And, soon, they would be going home.

We found each other, the children and the Italians. The first brave boy—it was not I—allowed himself to be picked up, slung up and over and onto the shoulders of an Alpine skier sans skis, and borne laughing and screeching down the hill. The adventure went on for days. We rushed to the hill after school and early in the frosty



MARK IT DOWN

- ◆ HUUB Committee, Tuesday, 1 Sept, 7 PM, Sonen Room
- ◆ 125th Anniversary Planning Team, 5 Sept, 10 AM, Hart Residence
- ◆ Board of Trustees, Tuesday, 29 Sept, 7 PM, Sonen Room

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	<i>Friendship</i>	[INGATHERING SUNDAY]	Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe	Musician - Bill Stafford, Usher - Wayne Eastman
11 Oct	<i>Nature</i>		Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman
08 Nov	<i>Gratitude</i>		Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman
13 Dec	<i>Solace</i>		Coordinators & Hosts — Darcy Hall & Greg Giacobe	Musician - TBA, Usher - Wayne Eastman

Spiritually Speaking con't

weekend mornings. Friends were made. Friendship and trust. "Hey, Harry, look! No hands!"

One evening, I came into the house flushed and breathless. "What on earth have you been doing?" "Playing with the Italians!" I said with joy. My father was furious. The Italians were the enemy.

"But the war is over. They don't have any guns. They weren't bombing us. They didn't even want to fight us." But I was up against the official view. We'd spent the nights of two years or more in a damp and stinking air-raid shelter. Much of the city was still in ruins. Great Aunt Rose had died in the London blitz. And I was playing with the enemy. Loud and clear. Stay away from the Italians.

I was a good boy. Obedient. Happy. My dad's pal. But something was wrong with being forbidden such joy and friendship because of something called "the en-

emy"—a concept that didn't fit my experience of these loving and life-loving men. I disobeyed.

It had been a long afternoon of sliding, walking, playing soccer—even, I remember as I write, games of cowboys and Indians. I must have been late getting home because, as I was leaving the park, my father was crossing the street toward the entrance. "What have you been doing?" he shouted, getting right to it.

Tears fought back. Tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. Not grown enough yet for that British stiff upper lip. But I came out with it. "I was playing with the Italians."

He slapped my face. That was terrible, the most terrible moment of my life. Terrible more in the shock of it than the pain. My father had never hit me. Never did again. And—here's the moment remembered that started the story flowing—I remember looking full into his anger and saying, "Alright. But

THE CELEBRATION SPACE

This year, we continue the course of change and transformation while still remaining an active and committed liberal religious community in Orange. With the start of this year, we bid a fond farewell and good luck to Rev. Gordon Bailey as he and his family begin new lives and careers with his position as minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Verdugo Hills, in La Crescenta, CA. Last year, the congregation decided to continue worship services on a monthly basis, at a new time, for the 2015-16 church year while deciding if parish ministry was viable. At the same time, we will explore the viability of setting up a non-profit organization to handle and develop urban ministry projects, as well as take over the administration of the church buildings and grounds.

In the latter regard, a start-up committee has been formed consisting of members from both the Orange and Montclair congregations. They have been meeting over the summer and will present their plans to the Board in the fall. It is likely that a special congregational meeting will be called to review these plans before any further development can proceed.

As for worship, Celebrations has decided that the format of services needed a complete overhaul with simplification, spiritual meaning and community as guiding principles. Some elements, like the chalice and candle lightings, will remain. Gone, due to necessity, is a formal sermon. In its place we will have readings and songs

based on a pre-determined theme for each month. Due to the new time, we discussed the idea of doing this in conjunction with offering a communal meal. While appealing, we found that presenting a meal while maintaining a spiritual atmosphere was difficult for those involved, and may distract more than edify. In the end we decided to keep it simple, even with the food. Please see the announcement under the Worship Schedule about our new "Sunday Sunset Services" to read what we have planned and how you can help out.

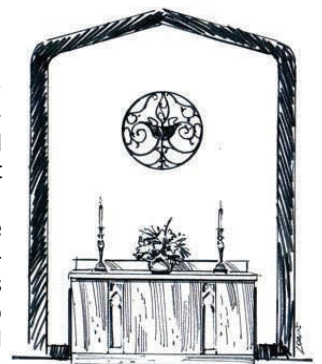
In many ways, this is an experiment. One of things we want to find out is whether there is still enough interest, even among our own members, to continue holding services at all. If we believe we have a critical mass, we will continue. If we gather enough of our own members back, we can consider resuming a more formal service format. And, if we grow, we may even look at the possibility of looking for a new minister.

Another thing we need to know is where to focus our (very) limited energies. Currently, the focus of the Board will be on the HUUB and urban ministry. If that gets off the ground, it is unknown how that will affect other programming at the church. It is hoped that the outcome will be positive overall, but whether that means growth of us as a spiritual community here in Orange, or a site where others come in to perform deeds is still not completely in focus. We'll have to wait and see.

Continued on Page 6

Happenings @ Montclair

- **Senior Lunch Bunch — Wednesdays, 9 & 23 September, 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.
- **Solo UU's — Friday, 11 September, 7 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.
- **Men's Group — Saturday, 12 September, 8:30 AM (Rotunda).** 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.
- **Water Communion & Homecoming Sunday: ReUUnion Rev. Dr. Justin Osterman & Rev. Judy Tomlinson — Sunday, 13 September, 9 & 11 AM (Sanctuary).** Attendees are invited to bring back a small amount of water from places they have visited during the summer or from a meaningful source. This water will be added to the congregational bowl during the Water Communion ceremony. Following services will be **UUCM Family ReUUnion** from **10 AM to 1 PM in Fletcher Hall.**



September 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 HUUB Committee Sonen Room 7 PM	2	3	4	5 125th Anniversary Planning Team Hart Residence 10 AM
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 SUNSET SERVICE: [INGATHERING] <i>Friendship</i> 6 PM	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 Board of Trustees Sonen Room 7 PM	30			

Share-The-Plate Fall 2015 Update

As First UU proceeds with internal changes affecting its ministry, we have had to reduce our services to once a month. This impacted on our Sunday collections and therefore on Share-The-Plate. Total Sunday collections for 2014/15 it was \$1624 while for 2013/14 it was \$2045. With only 10 formal services planned for this church year, Social Action has decided to suspend Share-The-Plate indefinitely. If the church decides to continue a worship program beyond this year, Social Action may reconsider and revive Share-The-Plate at a future time. We give much thanks to all those members and friends who have contributed to this endeavor, and helped all these worthy causes in our community.

The recipient for Spring 2015 was First Friends, a non-profit organization that upholds the inherent humanity and dignity of all immigrants, providing visitors' support and non-legal assistance for immigrants held in detention while working to improve conditions. They also advocate for the end of arbitrary, mass detention, believing it to be morally wrong, legally suspect and wasteful of taxpayer funds. The collection period ran from 25 January to 7 June 2015 and raised a total of \$217.50.

In total, as of 2 July 2015, Share-The-Plate has collected and distributed \$8131.50 since its inception. This is all due to our church's giving spirit. Thank you very much.

PAST SHARE-THE-PLATE RECIPIENTS	AMOUNTS
Feed The Needy (St. John the Evangelist RC Church, Orange NJ)	\$695.50
Haitian Pastors Association, East Orange, NJ	\$1379.00
UUA/UUSC Pakistan Flood Relief Fund, Boston, MA	\$539.25
Anthony O'Brien (UNNOH), New York, NY	\$550.00
Gale Center – Planned Parenthood of Metro NJ	\$1493.50
Interfaith Food Pantry of the Oranges	\$622.75
ORNG INK	\$2039.50
Montclair Emergency Services for the Homeless (MESH)	\$594.50
First Friends	\$217.50
Share-The-Plate – Cumulative Total (as of 2 July 2015):	\$8131.50



Spiritually Speaking con't

I'm going back." It's odd, but I don't remember anything of what happened next. No doubt there were threats about what further disobedience would bring. But my parents must have given it up. Because I did, in fact, go back to play with the Italians until, one day, they were gone.

That was the end of the story I told my workshop companion. But it's not the end of this story. When the exercise was over the leaders asked if anyone wanted to share with the whole group what they had said to their partners. I couldn't believe myself. What on earth was I doing? My hand was up. I was going to "share."

I told the story again and then found myself unfolding what, moment by moment, I was realizing the story meant. It was a story about self-discovery, personal power, and taking a stand that would make a difference. My father's reaction to my playing with the Italians came out of so many hard, sad, and bitter places within him, places he had built for himself out of the stuff a harsh life had handed him. Some of his reaction simply came out of the culture that made him—a culture of colonial pride that the sun never set on the empire's flag in a world of foreigners to be fought, hated, feared, ridiculed.

Spiritually Speaking con't

But in that moment of defiance—in that declaration, “Alright. But I’m going back”—in that moment I was confronting all of that with the reality and the legitimacy of my own experience. I was separating myself out from the tangled mess of ingrained bigotry, fear, and self-serving stereotypes. Those men were not the enemy. They were just men. Fathers. Brothers. Sons. They were friends. They were not evil—and, if that laughter, friendship, joy-sharing was evil then I was going to play with it and know it firsthand.

My father was wrong. And, if that’s how everybody thought, then “everybody” could be wrong and I would forever have to make up my own mind and trust my own inner sense of “rightness.”

That’s what the workshop leaders were helping us to find, of course—some moment in our lives in which rightness, truth, justice were revealed so crystal-clear and unadorned that acting upon it was a matter of course. After all, the story I recovered was not about courage. The point is not that I had the nerve to defy my father so that I could go back and have fun with my friends. What came to me so clearly as I recounted the story was that I was determined to go back to my friends quite simply because it was the right thing to do.

I was not defying my father so much as I was responding to something no less than a revelation. My experience of the men I played with was the pure experience of relationship with people—not as Italians, not as foreigners, certainly not as “the enemy.”

The poet Wordsworth wrote that we come to earth “trailing clouds of glory.” He was expressing a popular Romantic notion that the newborn are embodiments of pure spirits, that we are born with all the inherent power we need to fulfill our possibilities. That power to fulfill our possibilities is what some have called the “true self.”

The Unitarian theologian Henry Nelson Wieman referred to that “true self” as our “original experience,” “every experience we can have when we do not conceal it or overlay it with conventional experience.” Original experience, he said, “is the true self, in contrast to the uniformities adopted by everyone in society to facilitate the routine adjustments of everyday life.” Sadly, among “the routine adjustments of everyday life” are the adjustments to myths of inferiority, prejudices and bigotries, the division of humankind into “them and us.”

From birth, then, our true self, our “original experience,” begins to be suppressed by the social demand to conform to conventional experience. Originality, unique individuality, begins to fall under the require-

ments of the herd. This is the empowerment of the mass and the disempowerment of the individual.

The leaders of the workshop I attended knew that each of us has given up much of our power along the way, “to facilitate the routine adjustments of everyday life.”

My childhood experience, with its illumination of my power to see truths to which my own parents and teachers were blind, that experience did fade from memory. In time the story itself was lost and, perhaps with the lost story was lost something of that awesome, absolute conviction. Like most of us, I had forgotten that I had the power to stand before the world—even before God—declare what I know, and vow to act upon it. Somewhere in us is a story in which we are the hero, fearless before gods and giants, knowing for a certainty that right makes might. Each of you has a story, waiting to be remembered, about the power you had and have still to make a difference. Begin to tell your story to someone—even though you may not know yet that you know it. Just begin by saying, “The first time I realized I could make a difference was. . . .” The story will rush forward to be told.

By the way, as it happened, the story of my story had not ended. There was a hearty round of applause and the program was over. As I was making my way out of the crowded room, a young woman came up to me and said, “My grandfather was an Italian prisoner of war in your city. He often spoke of playing with the boys in the park. Thank you for playing with my grandfather.”

Rev. Dr. Edward Frost is the Senior Minister Emeritus of The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, where he served from 1989 to his retirement in 2005. Following graduation from seminary, Dr. Frost earned degrees from Boston University and the Doctor of Ministry degree from Meadville/Lombard at the University of Chicago. He is the author of "With Purpose and Principle," a history of the development of the Principles and Purposes and "Coming Alive," a book of sermons and short writings.

This sermon was one of three first-prize winners in the 2004 Richard Borden Sermon Award Competition; five award-winning sermons are available on-line at www.uuworld.org.

THE CELEBRATION SPACE

Looking ahead, we have 10 services slated for the coming year, and we invite all to attend and enjoy our community. (Interested in becoming involved? LET US KNOW! Contact the church at office@essexuu.org.)

Thank you all. See you at church.

--Gregory Giacobe
Chair, Celebrations & Music
ggiacobe@optonline.net

FIRST – PEOPLE OF COLOR

UNDOING RACISM & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING WORKSHOP in NJ

Sponsored By – WOMEN of **COLOR** New Jersey

Jointly we will address the many issues that POC face internally, societally, and *in* Family/Workplace/Institutions). The workshop will present an opportunity to communicate with other POC on a deeper level. "Our power is magnified when we join together."

This is the workshop that gives you the tools to have that conversation on Race!



Peoples Institute for Survival & Beyond Founder Ron Chisom
with Trainers Kimberley Richards Ph.D. and

Milta Vega-Cardona. People's Institute For Survival and Beyond, (PISAB), a National, Multicultural, **Anti-Racist Network** dedicated to ending racism and other forms of Institutional Oppressions. **Over the last 30, years The People's institute** has provided **Training, Consultations, and Leadership Development** to more than 300,000 people in organizations nationally and internationally. The Peoples Institute moves **beyond a focus on the symptoms** of racism to an understanding of what it is, where it comes from, how it functions, why it continues, and how it can be **Undone**. The workshop's systemic approach stresses learning from **History**, developing **Leadership**, maintaining **Accountability** to communities; creating **Networks**, Undoing **Internalized Oppression**, and understanding the role of **Organizational Gate-keeping** in perpetuating racism.

PEOPLE of COLOR Undoing Racism Workshop

Dates: September 11, 12, and 13, 2015

Time: Friday 6:30-8:30, Sat 8:30-6:00 Sun 8:30-3:00

Montclair Fire Headquarters

One Pine Street

Montclair, NJ 07042

BUILDING IS HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Registration: <http://www.antiracistalliance.com/ARA-training.htm>

Fee: Professional/Individual: \$350
Agency Registering 3 or more members: \$250 each
Scholarship/Student: \$175 student rate

Coffee/Tea, juice and light breakfast items provided

To Register or for possible scholarship support contact:

Okaikor Aryee-Price: 862-368-1723 okaikor@me.com

Viva White: 862-235-0828 lavivanow@aim.com

Emilia Colón 973.698.9033 ec1msw@aol.com

Donations - Checks Payable to: PISAB

Mail to: E. Colón - PO Box 414 - Montclair, NJ 07042

Concerns or Questions contact: **Dr. Charley Flint: 9083709878 or DrCFlint@aol.com**

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond: www.pisab.org

We are on the web: essexuu.org

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

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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 Society of Newark in 1834.



**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Essex County**

PO Box 998.

Orange NJ 07051-0998

Making the connections

