

UUSIS News & Views

**SUMMER
2011**

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY IN STAMFORD

20 Forest Street, Stamford, CT 06901

Phone: 203-348-0708 / Fax: 203-358-0029

Email: admin@uuisis.org

Web: www.uuisis.org

Facebook: "Unitarian Universalist Society in Stamford"



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Worship Services

Sundays at 10:00AM

June 26:

Pride: Janis Stahlhut, "Who's Coming Out Now?"

July 3:

Rolf Maurer, "The Fourth of July in Myth and Reality"

July 10:

Poem Alley, "The Labyrinthine Ways"

July 17:

Bob Nixon, "Culture wars and 9/11"

July 24:

Leslie Weinberg, "Justice Sunday"

July 31:

Maureen Ferrara-Higle, "Singing...the Living Tradition and the Journey"

August 7:

Sacred Circle Pagans, "Lammas - A Pagan Celebration of the Harvest"

August 14:

Joe Gonzalez, "The Flying Spaghetti Monster and Freedom of Religion"

August 21:

Debbie Schmidel, "Things Happen for a Reason: Memoirs"

August 28:

Norris Wakefield, "What is Spirituality? Part 2"

Sept. 4:

Julie Punishill, "Meditation as a Spiritual Practice"

Dawn's Message

Annual Meeting Sets Course for Second Interim Year Spirits Rise, Challenges/Opportunities Great

The congregation knew they had to make some difficult decisions during last Sunday's annual meeting. UUSIS is facing a large deficit—a big gap between what it costs to keep the building going and to support the programs and services you want to offer and the revenues available to pay for them. The Board proposed a 2011-2012 budget that closed the gap by making cuts in staff and programs and taking additional funds from the congregation's endowment. The members at the meeting were unwilling to make the cuts, and in the end you voted to use more endowment funds to close the gap.

Drawing down the endowment fund is not a sustainable solution to your financial challenges. If the congregation continues to take money from the endowment to balance the budget, you will come to the end of those funds in just a few more years.

Strong voices spoke up at the annual meeting for taking a risk now so that the congregation can continue working with the staff at their current levels during this transition time. You have voted against cutting the interim minister to three-quarter time and against searching for a three-quarter time settled minister. Your survey shows that you want to have a full-time minister, a minister who is in the pulpit almost every Sunday.

The speeches were passionate, the conviction was inspiring, and these sentiments carried the day: we want to have full-time ministry; we want the congregation to have the benefit of new programs and full-time interim ministerial support during the transition; we want to grow. We don't want to give up. I could feel the energy and spirits rising as the meeting moved toward these brave and risky choices.

Now the fun begins. This congregational decision has consequences for every member. Each of you will need to make a new commitment to UUSIS and to help answer the question: Who are we? What identity can we embrace that will show us the way to move forward together? Are you an urban church? Are you the church that honors all faith traditions? Are you the church of universal love? If you were those things, what would you be doing?

Your financial challenge requires practical action on a number of different fronts: people to find new sources of revenue, people to work on creative fundraising, more people willing to pledge more. Preserving as much of the endowment as possible will be a year-long effort, and everyone is needed in this campaign. Share your ideas and your willingness to help with your leaders.

You want to increase membership. I believe the congregation will grow when you are providing the best possible programs and opportunities for spiritual growth for the people who are here now. Newcomers will feel the excitement and spirit that comes from nourishing the present membership. And I encourage you to reach out to other congregations who have been successful in growing their numbers and learn from them.

You have chosen to come together as a community of faith, empowered by your conviction that this congregation is so precious that you will not let it go. There are difficult times and struggles ahead. The spirit in the sanctuary at the end of the annual meeting said you are ready to face these struggles together. When you lose your way—and you will—remind each other of that spirit. It will carry you on.

I am honored to be walking with you through the coming year. I was very proud of the congregation on Sunday. Light! More light!
Blessings.



The Rev. Dawn Sangrey, Interim Minister

President's Thoughts

Dear friends,

It is the 10th of June, as I write this (I'm leaving for vacation this afternoon) and the Annual Meeting isn't until the 12th, so there are a couple of unknowns ahead. Will the slate be approved? What decisions will the congregation make about the budget? I want to thank Joe Gonzalez for inviting me to the recent Board meeting when the difficult cuts were discussed. It will help me in the coming months understand the issues and implement the congregation's decisions.

As a congregation, we face a number of challenges in the coming year. In addition to the budget, we will be calling a new minister and dealing with the transition from Metcalf House to No Vet Left Behind. And I'm sure there will be never be a lack of challenges/opportunities!

My vision for our future includes (but certainly is not limited to!) Sunday services and programs that fill our spiritual needs, along with social outreach and other activities that build community and attract new members (especially those with families), and a building that serves many constituents – profitably! In the coming months, I will be listening to your concerns and ideas for making UUSIS a better place for all of us.

I'm looking forward to working with those Board members who are continuing their service and welcoming the new Board members who will be joining us.

And so the journey begins.

Bonnie Currie

Gratitude, from Rev. Dawn

This has been a challenging year at UUSIS, a year of changes, getting used to a new interim minister, dealing with broken furnaces and backed-up sewer lines, facing up to financial difficulties and making difficult decisions.

I want to express my gratitude to each and every one of you who has brought food for coffee hour, taught a Religious Education class, helped to greet on Sunday morning, washed dishes after our First Friday suppers, spoken kind words of greeting and comfort, sang in the choir, visited the sick, signed a petition, reached out to a newcomer, brought flowers to brighten the sanctuary, attended a committee meeting. UUSIS works because so many of you are involved in what we do here.

Special thanks are due to those in leadership and staff positions, who have been faithful to the many demands of their roles:

Departing President: Joe Gonzalez

Departing Board Members: Ellie de Ridder and Amy Good

Continuing Vice-President: Linda King

Continuing Treasurer: Bob Sanders

Continuing Clerk: Diane Montgomery

Continuing Board Members: Henry Brenner and Neil Danilowicz

2010-2011 Committee Chairs: Neil Danilowicz (Building and Grounds), Julie Punishill (Pastoral Care Lay Ministry Team), Shelly Chase (Fellowship), Don Ehleben (Finance), Bonnie Currie (Membership), Lynne Lane (Religious Education), Bob Nixon and Rolf Maurer (Religious Services), Robin Gans (Social Action), Jeff King (Publicity), Carole Ehleben (Nominating), Daniel Beltran (Search Committee), Tony Allam (Transition Team)

Staff: Maureen Ferrara-Higle, Music Consultant

Tara Fleck, Administrator

Juliet Ess, Cleaning Crew

Bill Van Ness, Grounds

Congratulations!

Thank you to all those who have served on Committees and volunteered their time to UUSIS in 2010-2011! If you should need anything or would like to join a committee for 2011-2012, please see:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Officers: *President–Bonnie Currie (2011–2013), Vice President–Linda King (2010–2012), *Treasurer–Bob Sanders (2011–2013), Clerk–Diane Montgomery (2010–2012)

Trustees: Neil Danilowicz (2010–2012), Henry Brenner (2010–2012), *Bob Hawley (2011–2012), *Dot Sonn (2011–2013), *Gaby Pareja (2011–2013)

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Building and Grounds: Neil Danilowicz	(2010 – 2012)
Committee on Ministry: Committee is suspended until a new Minister is found.	
Finance: Don Ehleben	(2010 – 2012)
*Membership: Jay Fountain	(2011 – 2013)
*Religious Education: Ellen Garcia	(2011 – 2013)

ELECTED COMMITTEES:

*Nominating: Ann Preston, Alfa Drent, Meilen Wong, Helene Devin, Open Position	
Ministerial Search Committee: Daniel Beltran, Tara Fleck, Nancy Furnas, Maisie Kohnstamm, Bob Nixon, Julie Punishill, Norris Wakefield	

Thank You to the Religious Education Children

Thank you to Billy and Timmy Neschis, Ethan Fleck, Nicole, Kimberly, and Jaime Versanti, for your wonderful food at the Coffee Hour on June 12. It helped all of us in the adult congregation a lot. Volunteers from the adult congregation have provided snacks and set up coffee hour for all but that Sunday. You did it for all of us (you, your parents, and the rest of the congregation) at a time when many adults in the congregation could not because of the Annual Meeting. Again, thank you very much for what you provided: sandwiches, bagels and cream cheese, a fruit platter, and donuts.

Diane Rogers Montgomery

First Sunday Food Collection

For June, UUSIS donated 7 lbs. of food to The Food Bank!

Food collections are held on the 1st Sunday of each month and will continue throughout the summer. For your convenience, we keep a basket in the kitchen for those who bring food on other days.

Food donation is quick and easy, but it makes a huge impact on our community for those who need it most. In Connecticut, one out of every five children is hungry or at risk of hunger. School holidays and vacations are an additional strain, as these children do not receive the Federal Free Breakfast and Lunch while not in school—and school summer vacation is from June 24 to September 1!

The Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County, Inc. is the **only** food bank that services this area. The Food Bank provides food to about 100 non-profit agencies and programs that serve low income people in the six town service area through bags of groceries and congregate meals. This includes soup kitchens, food pantries, child care programs, homeless shelters, senior centers, domestic violence safe houses, and rehabilitation programs. In lower Fairfield County, the need for emergency food has doubled in volume in just the past two years.

Please consider picking up non-perishable items for food donation. Your help is greatly appreciated. Any questions, please contact Tara Fleck.

Care Team

We are a community committed to helping each other. The Care Team is made up of interested members and friends trained in the basics of pastoral care like hospital visitation, issues surrounding grief and loss, all while maintaining confidentiality. If you know of someone who might need our services, please contact the Care Team member on call for that month.

June - Maisie Kohnstamm, (203) 972-5811

July - Julie Punishill, cell 617-851-9773 or jpunishill@mac.com

August - TBD

September - Leslie Weinberg, Home: (203) 322-3094, Cell: (203) 517-8496

Rev. Dawn is attending General Assembly: June 20 - June 26. Working at home (914-666-6398) June 28.

In the office (203-348-0758) June 29 and June 30. On vacation July 1 - August 12.

August Summer Hours: TBD.

During the interim minister's vacation, another UU minister will be on call for pastoral emergencies.

Contact the President or a member of the Care Team if you need ministerial help.

Ministerial Search Committee

The committee has come to the end of our first years work, and we want to take this time to thank everyone in the congregation who participated in making our work that much more valuable to the congregational search for a settled minister. As you know, we spent this year attempting to take the "pulse" of the congregation; getting a clear sense of "who we are." That was the purpose of the survey and of the cottage meetings. We know will spend the summer (NO we won't be off!) creating our Congregational Record. It will serve as our "resume" if you will, and will largely be based on your responses on the survey and the cottage meetings. It will be posted online for any minister interested in a congregation to look at.

In the early Fall, we will be scheduling the "Beyond Categorical Thinking" workshop. We *strongly* encourage **everyone** who attends UUSIS to participate in that workshop! Someone from UUA will be here to conduct the workshop, and it will be helpful to all of us in this process.

We hope to have a candidate to present to the entire congregation by the end of next Spring. Remember that 95% of the congregation **MUST** approve that candidate. If not, we begin the process for another year.

This is a difficult, arduous process, but we are committed to find the right minister for UUSIS. Please, participate with us every step of the way! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact anyone of us: Daniel A. Beltran (Chair), Tara Fleck, Julie Punishill, Nancy Furnas, Norris Wakefield, Maisie Kohnstamm, and Bob Nixon.

Dani Beltran

Happy Summer From Fellowship

I wanted to thank everyone again for helping me out with this year's First Friday dinners. People gave me rides to the Society and rides home. They made the coffee and lit the stove (two things I can't do). They helped with clean-up and set-up. I have mentioned most of the names of people who helped out in previous articles.

However, there is one special person that I forgot to thank and that is Ethan Fleck. He faithfully helped with clean up, folding and moving the tables and chairs. He also sometimes helped remove the tablecloths and helped with vacuuming. His efforts are greatly appreciated and I think maybe he should be considered for a plaque along with the other volunteers.

See you in the fall,

Shelly Chase

A Final Thought...

“The only way on earth to multiply happiness is to divide it.”
-Paul Scherer

UUSIS Information

PERSONNEL:

Interim Minister – The Rev. Dawn Sangrey
Minister Emeritus – The Rev. Stan Aronson
Music Consultant – Maureen Ferrara Higle
Office Administrator/Newsletter Editor – Tara Fleck
Cleaning Crew – Juliet Ess

UUSIS BOARD OFFICERS and TRUSTEES:

President – Bonnie Currie
Vice President – Linda King
Treasurer – Robert Sanders
Clerk – Diane Montgomery
Neil Danilowicz, Henry Brenner, Bob Hawley, Dot Sonn,
and Gaby Pareja

UUSIS COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Buildings and Grounds – Neil Danilowicz
Finance – Don Ehleben
Membership – Jay Fountain
Religious Education – Ellen Garcia
Ministerial Search Committee – Daniel Beltran

Denominational Affairs – Open Position
Fellowship – Michelle Chase
Pastoral Care Lay Ministry Team – Open Position
Publicity – Jeff King
Religious Services – Robert Nixon & Rolf Maurer
Social Action – Open Position
Transition Team – Tony Allam

Historian – Dorothy Sonn
Librarian – Karen Versanti
Photographer – Open Position
Rental Coordinator – Open Position

INTERIM MINISTER’S SUMMER

SCHEDULE:

Attending General Assembly: June 20 - June 26.
Working at home (914-666-6398) June 28.
In the office (203-348-0758) June 29 and June 30.
On vacation July 1 - August 12.
August Summer Hours: TBD.

If you have a pastoral emergency during our interim minister's vacation, please call Bonnie Currie, our President, and she will refer you to the UU minister on call.

Homecoming Sunday is September 11, 2011.

OFFICE HOURS:

until June 17 and reopens August 16
Tue., Thurs., & Fri.: 9:30am–2:30pm
E-mail: admin@uuis.org

LOST AND FOUND:

Contact the office if you are missing anything.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

If you would like to submit an article to News & Views, please call 203-348-0708 or e-mail admin@uuis.org.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am •First Sunday Food Collection, Sanctuary or Kitchen	4	5	6	7	8	9
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Recurring: Mon. - Fri.: Alcoholics Anonymous, Social Room, 7:30-8:30AM Thurs.: AIAnon (Spanish speaking), Conference Room, 7:00PM Sat.: Alcoholics Anonymous, Social Room, 9:00-10:00AM</p> </div>						
10 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	August 1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am •First Sunday Food Collection, Sanctuary or Kitchen	8	9	10	11	12	13
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>NOTE: This calendar has all events as listed by the time of publication. Please check with the Administrator at 203-348-0708 or admin@uuis.org if you wish to schedule an event.</p> </div>						
14 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	15	16 UUISIS Office Reopens at 9:30am	17	18	19	20
21 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 Worship, Sanctuary, 10am	29	30	31	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Homecoming Sunday: September 11, 2011</p> </div>		