



NEW OUTLOOK

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY
A spiritual home where religion and reason meet APRIL 2016

Kindred Spirit



Once I became so enchanted by natural beauty, I licked dew from the leaf of a tree I'd never met. I couldn't help it.

I took a morning run early in the spring twenty years ago. As I quietly made my way down a winding rock-covered road, I looked to my right and saw a deep purple vine climbing horizontally along a fence. I stopped to trace it with my fingers and then, returned to a slow pace.



Next, the rocks at the edge of the road caught my attention...so many shades of amber, orange and umber. Pausing, I bent to

hold a few of them in my hand in order to experience their heaviness. Once again, I put one foot in front of the other and found an easy gait. I was prepared to jog for a couple of miles.



However, a half mile or so down the road, I noticed a menagerie of glistening crystals. I stopped a third time. The sun was rising, the air was crisp and the dew was throwing a party. I was surrounded by twinkling lights on the ground around me and in a tree with a low hanging branch.



And there it was - a lovely new light green leaf with a drop of dew just ready to fall into my mouth. For the final time that morning, I stopped running and allowed beauty to overcome me wildly.

Although I wouldn't recommend licking leaves from strange trees, pests and such might not taste so good, I do hope you'll stop for an encounter with beauty.

Dear Ones



Over the past months we made an epic effort to acquire much needed space. We chose to focus on what appeared to be the most economically feasible option of five, well-studied plans. We attempted to purchase an existing church, the former Peace Lutheran. After months of demanding and stressful work, our best faith offer was rejected by the property's owners. So, at the first meeting of the new Board, a fresh Task Force will be appointed to once again create an ACTION PLAN FOR EXPANSION. We will figure this out!

Following the rejection of our best offer, I felt disappointment and anger. But after a day of strenuous work clearing our overgrown lot, I regained my balance and started thinking about what we had learned and gained through our efforts.

First, attempting to expand has forced us to openly discuss our financial needs and expectations. A new culture of economic frankness and generosity has been established. Our financial assets are growing. As our current operating campaign comes to a close, it is clear we have raised more than ever before. You are responding generously and the programming and staffing needs of our community are being met. It also appears, given your current generosity, that we will be able to afford expansions. Deciding on the pace, form, and location of that growth will continue to consume significant energies over the next year. I am convinced that we are up to the challenge.

The effort to acquire Peace Lutheran also clarified how fortunate UUFCC is to be affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Endowment of Charlotte County. With the support of this growing nest egg, our Fellowship is financially grounded. I am so grateful for the vision and commitments of our dear member, Robert Hansman, and our beloved, recently deceased, friend and visionary, Harold Rapp. In 1991 these two friends founded the Endowment. It started with a \$500 gift and is currently worth over \$350,000. I encourage you to express your gratitude for Harold's life by making a memorial gift to the Endowment.

Another benefit generated by our attempts to acquire the Peace Lutheran is the influx of new lay leadership. I am still overwhelmed when I consider the hours, talents, skills, and expertise that were invested in our attempts to acquire the church on Gibraltar. As a matter of courtesy, I was immediately copied summaries of the Negotiating Team's meetings. I remember impatiently waiting for those emails. Reading their reasoning and decisions was like auditing a graduate course in business and economics. I extend our deepest gratitude to Negotiating Team members Don Liermann, Jack Osborne, MaryHolly Allison, and Chair, Robert Taylor. Thanks also to Doug Kennedy who served on the team through the majority of the deliberations.

Another example of the influx of new leadership is documented by the slates for the Board, the Nominating Committee, and delegates to the national UU General Assembly. Again, deep gratitude is appropriate. Many thanks to the Nominating Committee under the direction of Myrna Charry.

Finally, I hope there isn't a floor led revolution at the **Annual Meeting on Sunday, April 3rd** because I'm really looking forward to serving as the Board's President. Over the last five months the demands of my interim role have enriched my life and expanded my vision. **So, make every effort to attend on the 3rd. Come for the service, pot luck, and meeting. We need your voices, votes, and most of your day!**

In faith and gratitude,
Dennis Shaw,
Interim Board President



MOVING FORWARD

Robert Taylor

As you probably know, our offer to purchase the Peace Lutheran Church property was not successful. It's a good time to remind ourselves that while we made a fair and affordable offer, our purpose was not to purchase PLC but rather to acquire the space we need to serve our growing congregation and better fulfill our mission. That's still our purpose.

Undaunted, the Board of Trustees is already considering other options. At the March meeting, the Board appointed a committee to pursue the possible purchase of land adjacent to our present site. The Board also suggested that after the Annual Meeting elections on April 3rd, the new Board pursue several growth initiatives:

- Update our Vision statement
- Survey the congregation on issues of growth
- Re-examine what we need to do to our present site to tide us over until expanded space is available.
- Study how we might expand on our present site.

I'm compelled to add a personal note. Yes, I was disappointed that the PLC deal didn't go through. But I am heartened by the overwhelming sense that our congregation is united in our desire to move forward. At the close of a recent Town Hall Meeting, where members and friends were invited to ask questions and express their concerns, I was approached by a new member who said, "It is so nice that we can disagree without being disagreeable." A couple of days later, after I had a chance to digest what had been said at the meeting, I realized that everyone spoke from their heart. Everyone said, in one way or another, "I really love this place."

It has been very rewarding to serve as your Treasurer these last few years. Thank you for the opportunity.

Many Paths...

Sundays

9:15 a.m. Conversation Among Friends

9:30 a.m. – Choir Practice

10:30 a.m. – Worship Service

Coffee Hour following Worship

Potluck Lunch on first Sunday

Meditation and Buddhist Discussion Group

Thursday nights, 5 - 6:15 pm

Each evening, we begin with a discussion and end with a period of meditation. This session's book title is *Living Beautifully* by Pema Chodron. Books may be purchased from Copperfish Book Store in Punta Gorda or through Amazon. All are welcome to attend.

April 3 - Joy as a Faith Calling - Rev. Amy Kindred

In one episode of the television series, *The Simpsons*, Lisa looks over an array of ice cream flavors and says their names aloud, “Blessed Virgin Berry, Commandmint, Bible Gum...” Rev. Lovejoy, who is standing behind the counter at the ice cream shop, says, “Or, if you prefer, we also have Unitarian ice cream!” The woman hands an empty bowl to Lisa and Lisa whines, “Hey, there is nothing there.” Rev. Lovejoy responds with, “Exactly.” Obviously, Rev. Lovejoy has never tasted what we love. Our “bowl” runneth over with joy.

April 10 - Keeping Beauty in our Relationships - Rev. Amy Kindred

Respecting the worth and dignity of each individual means understanding how our words and actions can affect others. For example, there are at least a dozen phrases that expose the class divide in our Unitarian Universalist communities. Are we ready for change?

April 17 - All Trees Considered: Honoring Earth Day - Rev. Amy Kindred

“The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Trees show up in countless stories and poems. This morning we will explore our love for nature’s towering representations of strength and endurance.

April, 24 - The Church Where People Laugh – Rev. Dick Fewkes, retired minister from Norwell, MA

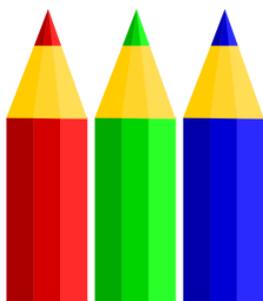
Guest Minister: A warm welcome to our Pulpit Guest the Rev. Richard M. Fewkes, a retired Unitarian Universalist minister who has served three churches in the Ballou Channing District in Massachusetts: First UU Society in Middleboro (1964-1969), Minister Emeritus of the First Parish in Norwell (1969-2000), and as Interim Minister at the First Parish UU Church, Bridgewater (2000-2002). He resides with his partner Connie Johnson in Sagamore Beach (about a mile from the Sagamore Bridge to Cape Cod), is a grandparent to eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren, and is a member of the UU Meeting House in Chatham, Mass.

Calling All Poets for a Special Service of Poetry on Sunday, May 1st

Do you have a poem that you have written that you would like to read as part of a Sunday Service? Contact MaryHolly Allison (mhallison2@aol.com) or Joani Mountain (joanimountain@gmail.com) **by Sunday, April 24th** and submit your poem that you would like to share. We will need time to prepare the Order of Service. We know there are poets out there.

REFlections

A huge thank you to all who helped make our Easter Egg Hunt a success. We so appreciate all of your help.



There are clipboards with activities for children available at the back of the sanctuary, in a basket on the table near the Book of Life, along with pencil cases containing colored pencils. We hope this will help our young members of the congregation stay quietly engaged during the service. Please return the materials to the table as you leave the sanctuary.



We wish Ayla a happy birthday on April 17.

I am looking for a couple of substitute teachers for the younger RE class and for Child Care. These individuals will only need to serve very occasionally, and may need to be available at the last minute. Let me know if you might be able to help.

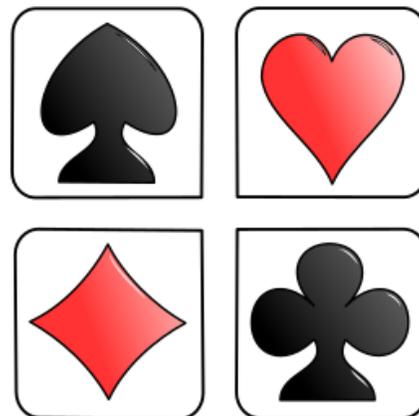
Faithfully,
Marty Wilmer

Lifespan Development Announcements

Plans for our first summer day camp, **ANT Camp (Art, Nature, Theater)** are underway. We would love volunteers for Camp Buddies, who will assist with drop off, pick up, lunches, etc. Shifts are 9 - 12:30 and 12 - 3:30. We could use a few more people to teach classes. Check the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall for the latest news. Registration forms will be available later in April. Spread the word!

We are starting groups for Bridge and Adult Coloring. Bridge will probably start the first week in April. Watch the Updates for the latest news.

I would like to have a few volunteers to work with me occasionally on planning more inter-generational activities. We had so much fun as a group on Halloween. Picnics? Bike rides? Let's see what other fun events we can organize. Contact Marty Wilmer, if you are interested.



HOMELESS COALITION HAPPENINGS

via Social Justice Committee

We can sit around and talk, or we can do something.

The Social Justice Committee of UUFCC does not just sit around and talk. We do good stuff. And here is your invitation, open to all who attend UUFCC, to participate in our relationship with The Homeless Coalition of Charlotte County (www.cchomelesscoalition.org).

Sure, we give them money in the **Hunger Prevention Basket** every Sunday, located near the munchies we so enjoy. And believe me, it is needed and much appreciated so that others may eat.

But the Coalition needs of our time as well. **UUFCC has volunteered to prep and serve lunches for the Vets who are housed at the Coalition. You come in at 10:30 on the designated mornings, and you are out by 1:00 p.m.** They show you what to do and how to do it. No surprises, and you leave feeling really good about helping out. It is a learning experience.

Additionally, we help out in dinner service on designated days, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. This is for the entire population housed at the Coalition, which can number **120 men, women and children**. The residents come in, we pick up their empty trays at their seats, and bring it back loaded with their meal. Children first, then adults. They clean up after themselves. Sometimes they ask for seconds. If they are available, they get them. Then we come around with the dessert trays. It is a sincere attempt to create a restaurant atmosphere for those who rarely if ever go to a restaurant.

All whom we deal with are unfailingly polite, and grateful for what we do. And we are given a few moments to realize that with just a few sour turns in our lives, we could be on the receiving end too. **And so we help those who need it today, never knowing what tomorrow may bring.**

We are also getting ready for training to be offered to function as case workers, which involves one-on-one dealings with residents to assist with resume preparation, job searches, development of relationships with other social agencies, and numerous other situations the homeless may encounter.

So, this is an appeal to you all. UUFCC needs volunteers to help out with food service day and evening. When? Check the Sign-up Board in the entryway. Sheets are there with dates highlighted.

Important points!

1. The Charlotte County Homeless Coalition is located at 14676 Kenesaw St., Port Charlotte. Very close to the intersection of Cochran and Collingswood.
2. In order to be able to volunteer, you must fill out a **Volunteer Information Form, which you must bring with you on your first volunteer date.** These forms are available in the entryway at UUFCC, or you can find it at the Coalition website, www.cchomelesscoaliton.org. (Click on Volunteers.) It is somewhat onerous, but you only have to do it once, and it lets you do good works.
3. If you have a UUFCC t-shirt, wear it with pride when you go to volunteer.
4. **Everyone at UUFCC should help to practice Social Justice. It's that simple. Is this your moment?**
5. Questions? E-mail me at engsp1@gmail.com. Or call me at 941-286-7939. Herb Levin

Art on the Wall

Snowbirds - Please leave a piece of your artwork for UUFCC's Summer Member & Friend Art Show - see Trudy Gerhardt



The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Gallery will host Lisette Otero-Lewis's stunning photographs from April 1- April 28. Otero-Lewis lived in Canton, Mississippi where, as a Latina, she was able to bridge the racial divide that separated the wealthy Victorian section of town from the extremely poor and mostly African American neighborhood.

Her images portray the faces of persons -- beyond age, beyond color, beyond clothes. Magically, she is able to connect with each person's humanity -- their dreams, hopes and realities.

Also exhibiting is "wood turner" Robert Moran and jeweler Bill Howat. For most of his life, Moran worked as a boilermaker and used his hands to rig and weld. In retirement he is now using his hands to fashion wood creations that come alive and reveal hidden messages.

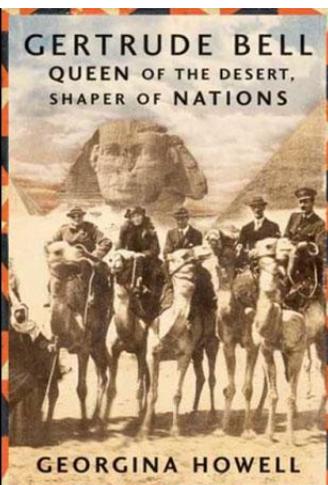


Bill Howat, who is certified by Florida Gold Coast Gem and Mineral Society, combines gemstones with sterling silver (and sometimes fossils) to make unusual, delicately elaborate pendants, rings, and earrings.

A free and public opening reception will be held on Friday, April 8, 4-6 PM.

Book Club Thrives on Variety

We meet at 1:30pm on the last Wednesday of each month to discuss a book chosen by the group members. During our almost seven years of existence, we have read and discussed a wide variety of books: classics and contemporary best sellers; many genres of fiction; and biography, history, autobiography, and true adventure among our non-fiction selections.



The biography we will discuss on Wednesday, April 27 is "**Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations**" by **Georgina Howell**. Never heard of Gertrude Bell? Evidently she was an amazing and remarkably influential woman (at least as important a force in shaping the Middle East of modern times as Lawrence of Arabia). Two of our members have read this biography and suggest it is worthy of its fascinating subject. One of them thought that, no matter what your successes in life, you will almost certainly be humbled by her accomplishments.

For more information, please contact Mary Wolff at hmwoff9@hotmail.com or 941-629-0669.



Earth Day at UUFCC

This year, Earth Day, April 22nd, falls on a Friday. It just happens to coincide with our Climate Action Team's monthly vegetarian meal. So in honor of Mother Earth, please join us for our potluck gathering!

Following our meal, please stay for two 20 minute presentations followed by discussions. The first is Al Gore's latest inspirational TED talk about the state of the environment in the wake of the Paris Climate conference, and where we go from here. Coty Keller will then present a short description of Citizens Climate Lobby's Carbon Fee and Dividend Plan, and the progress that CCL is seeing regarding this in Washington, D.C.

The potluck gathering begins Friday April 22 at 5:30 pm sharp! We'll hope to start the program at 6:45pm. Invite your friends and family! Hope to see you there!

Happy Earth Day!
Jack Harkins

UU Endowment of Charlotte County (UUE)

The Endowment is a separate fund closely affiliated with UUFCC that lives on in perpetuity. It promotes the ongoing living of our UU values and supports our Fellowship and the growth of Unitarian Universalism.

The Endowment serves as a memorial fund as well. You are invited to make contributions in memory of members and loved ones who have passed on and no amount is too small.

The following gifts have been received this past month:

- In memory of Gordon Ramage (Chris McCoy's grandfather) - \$25.00
- In Memory of Harold Rapp - \$150.00, \$50
- In Memory of Mary Ann Reynoso - \$50.00

From the UU Southern Region Newsletter:

Differences That Make a Difference

May 21, 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM, UU Church of Ft. Myers, FL

As Unitarian Universalists we have a history of being inclusive. We have a pluralistic faith that makes room for all kinds of god/gods or none at all. Many of us came from other faiths where we felt different, out of place, not really seen or counted. We know that differences matter. So as people who have a tradition of "giving them hope not hell," how do we live in today's world where differences divide us so often? Let's explore together how we can be in relationships that matter. [Learn more and register](#) at the UU Southern Region website.

Ubuntu Sacred Song Gathering

Sing uplifting songs from all around the world in glorious harmony. No experience is necessary; just a desire to sing. All are welcome. Come, sing, be joyful, and experience the sacred through song. There's usually a lot of laughter, too. Suggested donation: \$5

The final Ubuntu gathering for this season will be on April 2 at 2:30.

CROSSING THE BRIDGE FOR PEACE, JUSTICE and COMMUNITY UNITY

Saturday, April 16, 2016

Second Annual Walk across the Peace River

The walk across the Peace River Bridge begins at 9 am. A program at Lashley Park begins at 10 am.

In 2015, the Charlotte County Community Task Force, organized by NAACP Br. 5093, the Charlotte County Sheriff, the Punta Gorda Chief of Police, the Superintendent of Public Schools, city and county government officials, area clergy, community leaders and organizations, and other dedicated citizens, decided to symbolically walk across the Peace River bridge from Port Charlotte to Lashley Park in Punta Gorda to commemorate our best traditions and highest aspirations for peace, justice and community unity. In 2016, we wish to reaffirm our commitment and call upon all the citizens of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County to join in our rededication to peace, justice and community unity.

Racial Justice

The Racial Justice Committee has been meeting each month.

At the February meeting, we had an animated discussion about ways to eliminate racism. The concept of "White Privilege" was discussed. All agreed it was an existing factor in American life but some argued that such a label, even once acknowledged, did not advance the fight to end racism. Further discussion will continue.

Jerome Evans Platt's situation was recounted. He is in Suwannee Correctional Institution where he manages to supplement his diet by purchasing food from the commissary, which is private and expensive, and preparing food he can tolerate. He speaks to Angie at least once a day, writes letters to many, and is awaiting the outcome of two appeals (Medical Release, Appeal based on lawyer incompetence). Letters to the editor about Jerome Evans Platt's situation were suggested and one has already been submitted to the Sun. Contact with the reporter who first wrote about Jerome's case has also been accomplished.

Another Library film series was suggested - partnering again with the Blanchard House Museum. Currently, this project is being developed and seems very interesting. Gathering a list of UUA organizations and allies was suggested (that list has been secured). Contact will be made to do joint activities.

Training for "The Listening Project" will continue at the next meeting - some will go into the community and engage neighbors to offer their opinions.

WEEKLY EVENTS

Wed. April 6, 13, 20, (Mon. 27) – Choir Practice 6:00 pm

Thurs. April 7, 14, 21, 28 – Meditation 5:15 pm

Sat. April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 – Recorder Group 2 pm

Apr 2 Being a UU: What Do You Believe?
9 am

3 Annual Meeting 12:15 pm

5 NAMI Group 6 pm

6 Gulf Coast Acoustic Guitar Society 7 pm

8 Art on the Wall Reception 4 pm
(see p. 7)

9 Chalice Circles 2 pm

17 Mystical Experiences 12 pm
R.E. Teachers' Meeting 12 pm

19 Sierra Club 7 pm

22 Peer Writing Group 1:30 pm

23 Chalice Circles 2 pm

26 Shared Stories: For All Who Have Lost
a Loved One 6:30 pm

Apr 27 Book Group 1:30 pm
Healing Oasis 6 pm

28 Art on the Wall Takedown

SECOND ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP CAMPING WEEKEND

WHEN: April 29, 30, May 1

WHERE: Tentatively set for Oscar Scherer State
Park group campsite (location may change
pending reservation availability)

WHO: All families and fellowship invited

Activities: Stay for the weekend or come out to
play for the day! A potluck supper will be held on
Friday night with a bonfire and is being
coordinated by Regina Renner. If we camp at
Oscar Scherer Park, we can attend the Drum
Circle Saturday night at Nokomis Beach. We can
take a bike ride Sunday on the Legacy trail which
is connected to Oscar Scherer State Park. There
are also some beautiful hiking and birding
opportunities! We hope to see you there!

CONTACT US - OFFICE HOURS Monday through Thursday 8 am – 2 pm

1532 Forrest Nelson Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33952

941.627.4303

www.uufcc.org, www.facebook.com/uufcc

Rev. Amy Kindred, minister@uufcc.org 941.916.0957

Minister's hours: Tues. morning and Thurs, afternoon. It's best to call for an appointment.

Chris McCoy, Office Administrator, office@uufcc.org

Dennis Shaw, Board President, President@uufcc.org

Joani Mountain, Membership Coordinator, joanimountain@gmail.com

Marty Wilmer, Lifespan Development Coordinator, marty.wilmer@gmail.com

Ginger Abraham, Newsletter Editor, newsletter@uufcc.org **Article Deadline:** 20th of the month

Myrna Charry, Communications Chair, mcharry@earthlink.net