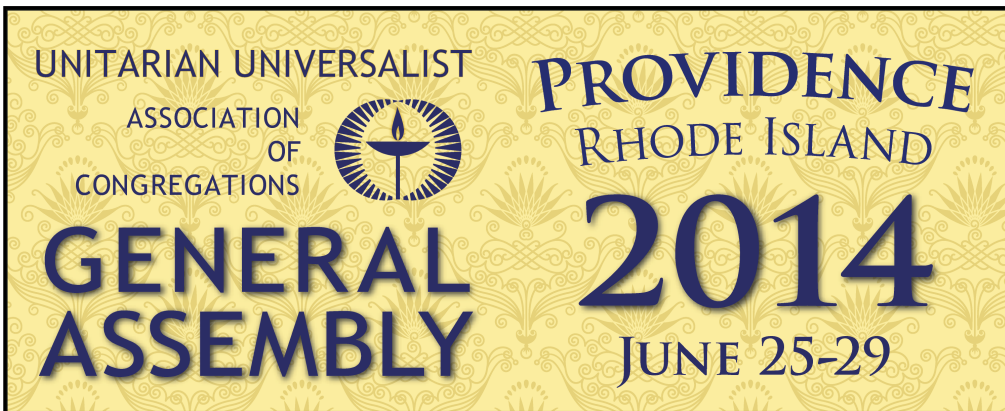


# The COMMON

## GA in Providence in June

*Thousands of UU's expected at annual convention.*



The 2014 edition of the UUA General Assembly will be held June 25 - 29 in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to the charged atmosphere generated by some 5,000 Unitarian Universalists gathered together, and the sight of our banner in the opening parade, participants can take advantage of dozens of

educational workshops, worship services, and networking opportunities galore. If you'd like to see what UUism looks like beyond the Blue Hill Peninsula, this is your big chance.

Curious? See page 6 of *The Common* or go on the Web and click on [uua.org](http://uua.org).

### CALENDAR

#### February Pulpit

2, Rev. Al Boyce

9, Rev. Charles Stephens

"Lincoln's Spiritual Influence"

16, Rev. Charles Stephens

"Standing on the Side of Love"

23 . Robert Shetterly, invited

#### Events

2, Hungry Sunday

9, Congregational meeting with UUA's Rev. Olav

Nieuwejaar

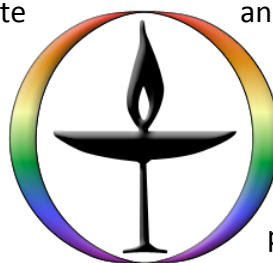
16, Pot Luck Lunch

20, Board meeting

### FROM THE BOARD

DELACROIX DAVIS III, PRESIDENT

After a break for the holidays, the website task force again is focusing on final details. At a January 28 meeting with the web designer, we will put the finishing touches in place and receive training for UUC members to learn how to post changes to the site. Once the new site is up and running, comments



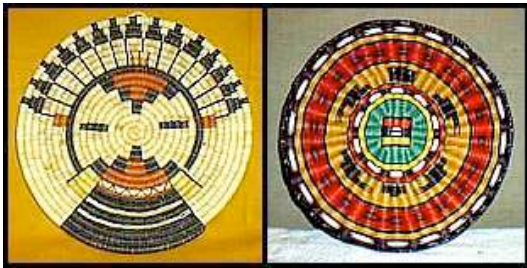
and criticism are encouraged.

We view this as work in progress that can be changed and improved over time. Thanks to all who have helped with the process so far. *continues on p 9*

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Kay Hansen  
Religious Educator

January has involved us in the Hopi traditions of kachinas, the spirits of Hopi ancestors. The Hopi do not worship the kachinas but work with the spirits to bring about what is needed--especially rain--to make their crops grow. The kachinas join the people for special ceremonies and dances like the "The Bean Planting Festival" held near the end of February. We made kachina masks and prayer sticks for a "bean planting ceremony," (for the end of January).



Before leaving our exploration of Native Americans, we will spend much of February exploring the spirituality of the Passamaquoddy natives of Maine. Unlike the Hopi, who have maintained many of their traditional ways of life and spiritual rituals on the mesas of Arizona, the Passamaquoddy have struggled, first, to keep their land that once covered two-thirds of Maine, and secondly, to maintain their language and way of life. Fishing has always been important to the Passamaquoddy, whose name is derived from its native tribe name and refers to a traditional way of catching pollock by using a spear. The Passamaquoddy live on two reservations, Pleasant Point and Indian Township, and they are a part of a larger confederacy that includes other tribes in northeastern United States and bordering provinces of Canada. The people of the Wabanaki Confederacy are "people of the dawn:" they see the sun rise before anyone else in the United States.

Known for storytelling, the Passamaquoddy tell legends that reveal the beliefs and values of the people. We will hear several of these legends. We will learn about the sacred eagle, the use of fire and burning sweetgrass, the meanings of certain colors, the Peace Pipe Ceremony, and some traditional games the children play. Also this month, Nancy Sayre will substitute for me and engage the children in a discussion of the "sacred place" they created this past summer and what their religion might look like.

### Daybreak Song

All night the gods were with us,  
Now night is gone;

Silence the rattle,  
Sing the daybreak song,

For in the dawn Bluebird calls,  
And out from his blankets of tumbled gray  
The Sun comes, combing his hair for the day.

Native American poem  
Author Unknown

*Crafts: at left, Hopi Market Basket plaques.  
Below: Passamaquoddy basket, contemporary, by  
Peter Neptune.*



## CHARLES' COGITATIONS



*Rev. Charles Stephens*

On January 5 my sermon consisted of responses to: "Questions You Always Wanted to Ask the Minister." I have done this sort of sermon on an annual basis and have always found the questions stimulating and a good source for sermons during the remainder of the year.

I was impressed with the questions you asked me. I received a fantastic list of deeply thoughtful questions. Several people suggested that I include them in *The Common*, so here they are, with a close version of what I said in response to three of them (I will respond to a few others in future months). The three questions I am giving my response to here all seem to be related in my mind.

Q: How do you define "worship?"

A: Normally people think of worship as the bowing down to a god or gods and paying homage with deep respect and subservience to such a divinity. The word worship actually originates from the Old English *weorthscipe*. My understanding of what worship means to me is the activity of holding up that which is worthy. For many that means holding up or paying homage to a divinity. In our Unitarian Universalist context it means holding up a variety of things that are of great worth to us and showing our respect and honor. For

me, worship includes holding up compassion, justice, equity, our Unitarian Universalist Principles and so many things that are of great or supreme worth to us or deserve to be held up because they have great worth to us.

Q: When we talk about "Truth" what are we really talking about? One person's truth is not "Truth" to another. Scientific "Truth" is continuously changing. "Truth" seems ephemeral.

***Do UUs even have a theology?  
(do we need one?)***

One of the things that attracted me to Unitarian Universalism was the approach used to evaluate what is true. Our tradition has tried to use reason and eventually the scientific method to say whether something is true or not. In addition to reason we have tried to be open to the inspiration from all available wisdom literature, be it ancient stories, religious scriptures, ancient or modern poetry or contemporary research. Then our tradition includes how our own personal experience or perspective helps us understand the various wisdom traditions. And then we include the importance of the beloved community with the checks and balances we receive from others who help us from going off the deep end. So yes "Truth" is continuously changing or evolving as we strive to make sense of what we understand to be true.

Q: How can I answer when someone asks if UUs even have a theology? (do we need one?)

A: Those who ask us if UUs even have a theology are defining this word literally, as the study of god. But theology also includes the study of religious faith, practice, and experience. *con't on p 4*

## COGITATIONS, CONT. FROM P 3

For those of us who define god in a larger sense than the more traditional anthropomorphic way, theology is the study of that which we see as ultimately important--our religious ethics and how we approach that which we consider the ground of our being, the spark of life or the energy that we sense when we feel connected to the natural world, another person or the essence of the universe, and the way people strive to live moral lives and wrestle with great concepts like love and justice. We as UUs do have a theology, because we are constantly responding to the great questions of humanity that continue to be asked.

**The additional questions were:**

How do you manage to reach all the different theologies and philosophies of such a diverse group as a UU congregation? Spiritual, social justice, Christian, agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, etc....?

Is there a place for deep spiritual inquiry and exploration in Unitarian Universalism?

In practice, which UU Principle does UUCC model most effectively and which least effectively?

Don't UU's need to spend less time discussing what they don't believe in?

Can you explain why Garrison Keillor uses UUism as a comic foil?

Your thoughts – How “to bring us back into covenant gently when we stray”?

Isn't it true that many Jews do not believe in heaven? Yet many references to heaven are attributed to Jesus. What do you make of this?

When did the notion that Jesus was both god and man get started? Was it the Council of Nicaea?

***How do we age gracefully when solitude is so prevalent in aged populations?***

What does marriage mean in the life of a Unitarian Universalist? What is marriage?

How does one become a UU Minister?

What do all the great religions share?

How have humans collectively/jointly defined God, oneness, love, hate, and the soul?

What messages from our culture do we receive regularly that get in the way of spiritual strength or oneness with humanity?

Get out your crystal ball.. What is the future of the Church (institution)? (And UUCC specifically?)



What is God?

Have you experienced a situation that, more than any other, challenged your calling to ministry?

Is the financial package offered to a successful candidate minister flexible? Can we offer less to somebody right out of school or more to a “proven”, minister who has had one or more successful congregations?

How do we age gracefully when solitude is so prevalent in aged populations?

How would you help a friend who is fearful of all things that life is – sickness, self-fulfillment, death, etc.?

## NOT LIKE EUROPE!

Lynn Parsons

New York Republican Congressman Peter King is worried that an extension of federal unemployment insurance might get the nation into financial difficulties, and that we would “end up like Europe.”



That, indeed, should give us the opportunity to pause and reflect. Consider what might happen if we did in fact “end up like Europe.”

- 1) Most of us would live longer. Life expectancy in Western Europe exceeds that of the United States.
- 2) Infant mortality would drop. According to the CIA, the U.S. lags behind all of Western Europe as well as the European Union.
- 3) Violent crime would diminish (and with it the need for more taxes to pay for more prisons to house more criminals).
- 4) Unstable folks with mental problems would be prevented from buying firearms.
- 5) Young people would be able get a university education without incurring oppressive debt.

Centuries ago, the ancestors of millions of present-day Americans fled Europe, seeking greater economic, political, and religious freedom. Many still do. But they arrive to find a nation much more like the Europe of yesteryear: an economy controlled by an aristocracy, a society dominated by a political elite, and a culture infected by religious extremism.

Today’s Europe is not without its problems. But hostility or indifference to social justice, fairness, and equality of educational opportunity are not among them.

*The above was published as a Letter to the Editor in the January 14 Bangor Daily News.*

## Happy Kids in the Philippines

Your Partner Church Committee enabled the folks in the Philippines to buy books as Christmas gifts for “our” children in the little village of Aquino. High School and Elementary students got dictionaries and Kindergarten and Pre-Schoolers received reading books and coloring books. The children were called up one by one to receive their gifts, and all were delighted!





Religious life in America is changing dramatically and rapidly. Fewer people are identifying with specific denominations and most mainline religions are losing members in droves. People now find many outlets and places of engagement for their spiritual lives. Current studies of faith in America reveal a movement toward a liberal, fluid kind of faith that doesn't fit with traditional denominational identity and structure. We already know that for every adult member of Unitarian Universalist congregations, there are at least three non-members who also consider themselves to be Unitarian Universalist.

A core purpose of our faith is to help people grow in spirit and in service. We believe that our faith provides a path for each of us to unlock our transformational capacity to serve the world with love. We want to expand our faith not just to grow, but also to better achieve this transformational purpose. Therefore, the General Assembly Planning Committee, the UUA Board of Trustees and the Administration want the General Assembly in 2014 help our association live into a future where our "Love Reaches Out" to share our faith both within and beyond our walls.

Our congregation is allotted two lay delegates and one alternate to General Assembly in addition to the minister. Would you like to be considered? Talk with President Del Davis about your interest. With Providence being so near, many folks may wish to attend, so make your interest known soon. Registration is \$335 before May 1 and \$385 after. The congregational budget includes funds for travel, lodging, and registration expenses for two lay delegates. Also, one can attend GA in whole or in part as a nondelegate.

## BUILD-ing a new Philippines

Dear Lynn Parsons,

"I would like to thank you and the Social Justice Committee of the UU Congregation of Castine for your generous contribution of \$2,500 to the BUILD Philippines Dormitory Project. Your donation will help bring hope to many young women who come to Dumaguete to advance their education and need a safe, nurturing home while they are living there. With the brighter future their education will mean, they are seeking a way out of poverty for themselves and their families.



*Artist's impression of the BUILD dormitory project*

This year BUILD fundraising has benefited from creative new approaches and media being developed by a dedicated and growing circle of Unitarian Universalists. Our first paid staff member, the Rev. Tet Gallardo, is guiding our new efforts and will be in the States during January and February making connections.

Thank you again for the steadfast support your congregation has shown for this important project. In peace and hope,"

Lee Boeke Burke

UU Partner Church Council Networker for the Philippines

## A CLIMATE OF INACTION

(from *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Science and Security Board*) In a comprehensive report in September 2013, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change strengthened its unequivocal and alarming findings about climate change.

**It's documented.** Evidence of warming of the climate system is unequivocal. Since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented, over time periods ranging from decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, sea level has risen, and the amounts of heat-trapping gases have increased.

**It's us.** Human activities have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century.

**It hasn't stopped.** Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850. In the Northern Hemisphere, 1983 to 2012 was probably the warmest 30-year period of the last 1,400 years

**Sea level is rising.** The rate of sea level rise since the mid-1800s has been larger than the average rate during the previous 2,000 years.

**Ice cover is shrinking.** Over the last two decades, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been losing mass, glaciers have continued to retreat almost worldwide, and Arctic sea ice and Northern Hemisphere spring snow cover have continued to decrease in extent.

**The ocean is more acidic.** The ocean has absorbed about 30 percent of the carbon dioxide we have emitted into the atmosphere, making the ocean significantly more acidic and threatening ocean life.

**Carbon dioxide is up.** From analyzing air trapped in ice, we know the amount of

carbon dioxide is 40 percent higher now than in the 1800s, due mainly to fossil fuel burning. The ice record shows that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are now the highest in at least 800,000 years.

**Dramatic emission reductions are needed.** Limiting climate change to tolerable levels will require substantial and sustained global emissions reductions.

**Climate change will be here for centuries.** Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of carbon dioxide are stopped. Adaptation to inevitable climate change will be necessary. Like mitigation, adaptation deserves urgent attention.

This past year saw increased development and use of low-carbon renewable alternatives to fossil fuels. Costs of renewables—particularly solar and wind power—have continued to fall, and governments and private companies have continued significant investment in new renewable power facilities, with an especially strong upward trend in developing countries.



Despite the progress in low-carbon technologies, however, the world has failed to effectively curb emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Domestic politics have stalled efforts to cut emissions in several industrialized countries. This trend includes serious threats to renewable-energy support in the United States, the European Union, and Australia. It is clearly epitomized by Japan, which first withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol and then reneged on promises of voluntary emissions reductions.

## What's Up at MUUSAN?

Rev. Margaret Beckman, Trudy Ferland,  
Kent Price



**MUUSAN members at the State House before the MaineCare expansion hearing.**

**From left to right: Priscilla Jenkins, Trudy Ferland, Rev. Margaret Beckman, Dale McCormick, and Janet Reid.**

**H**ealth care is in the spotlight at the Statehouse and Maine UU State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN) is there. Some 400 persons attended a January 8 rally organized by the Maine People's Alliance to demonstrate support for accepting federal funds to expand MaineCare, the state's Medicaid program. Twelve MUUSANers attended the rally and met with legislators—a strong and visible presence at the Statehouse.

One week later, on January 15, at the hearing on LD 1578, the expansion bill, MUUSAN worked with Cover ME Now to provide a faith-based perspective. Rev. Carie Johnsen of UU Community Church of Augusta delivered testimony on behalf of MUUSAN, and we also presented letters of support and signatures from several UU congregations.



**Laura Harper, speaker at our January 18 meeting, with Kent Price and David Wilcock, president at UU Ellsworth**

At our January 18 meeting, we heard from Laura Harper, of MooseRidge Associates, a progressive lobbying firm working with Cover ME Now on the MaineCare expansion bill. In light of the very close vote on a similar bill at the close of the last legislative session—the effort to over-ride the Governor's veto failed by as few as 2 or 3 votes—a strong effort is being made to pass LD 1578 with a veto-proof margin.

Because Governor LePage almost certainly will play a pivotal role in the MaineCare expansion drama, a particular focus is on Republican legislators. This is one of those occasions in which every vote counts! If your Senator or Representative is a Republican and has not dug in his or her heels on this issue, get in touch; if you can arrange a meeting, it will be possible to provide you information that will help you make a persuasive case.

Also, consider writing a letter to the editor urging support for accepting federal funds to expand MaineCare. Six MUUSANers already have written such letters, and it's well known that the Letters page is one of the most read in our papers.

**And if your legislators favor LD 1578, thank them for their support!**



## FROM THE BOARD

*continued from p 1*

At its January meeting, the Governing Board tasked WG Sayre to look into the cost of acquiring a generator to operate, at a minimum, the boiler and heating system. We are fortunate the December power outages and extremely low temperatures didn't cause frozen—or burst-- water pipes. We hope to make an informed decision on the type and location of a generator soon.

The Board also voted to proceed with replacing the Parish House roof shingles and repairing the damage caused by carpenter ants and water intrusion at the building's northwest exterior corner. The estimates are \$12,000-\$14,000 for the roof work and \$6,000 for the rotten corner. Because the cost exceeds \$2,500, congregational approval is required before proceeding. On January 26, the congregation approved not more than \$15,000 for the roof and not more than \$12,000 for the Parish House work.

And there will be another congregational meeting on February 9. At this session our Unitarian Universalist appointed Ministerial Settlement Representative, the Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar, will explain the process leading to calling a new minister. He will answer questions, too, so if you are uncertain about any part of the procedure, please come

prepared to pose your inquiry. Our current thinking is that we will migrate to the Parish House after the service and allow everyone time to get a beverage and something to eat before Olav starts. Chairs will be available for those who do not wish to stand the entire time. Olav has indicated these sessions typically take 60-90 minutes.



This harsh winter and extremely cold temperatures have placed great demand on programs designed to assist people with heating costs, including the Castine Ecumenical Fuel Fund and The Heating And Warmth (THAW) Fund. Operating under the auspices of the Washington Hancock Community Agency, THAW helps people with low incomes who are having difficulty paying home energy bills. On February 9, we will take a special offering to help replenish these programs. As was the case with the special offering in response to the Philippines typhoon, the Board will match the amount contributed by members and friends of the congregation. To increase the response and amount raised, we are working with the other Castine churches to make this a community-wide effort.

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Del Davis, President  
 Gil Tenney, Vice President  
 Diana Bernard, Treasurer  
 Anne Romans, Clerk  
 Nancy Guy  
 Tom Mason  
 Leslie Fairbank  
 Deborah Neve, Alternate

The Governing Board meets in the Parish House at 8:30 am on the third Thursday of each month. Observers welcome.

## THE COMMON

*The Common* is published monthly and distributed in both electronic and photocopy forms. All members and friends are invited to submit items for consideration. Send submissions or comments to editor Kent Price at [kapricorn75@gmail.com](mailto:kapricorn75@gmail.com). Deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication.

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