

The COMMON

Commit2Respond

Climate change moves to the top



In September 2014 some 400,000 persons marched down the avenues of New York to demand an effective response to the existential threat to the planet. Out of this unprecedented demonstration

grew Commit2Respond, a UU-led movement of people of faith and conscience.

What's next? Climate Justice Month began March 22 and extends to Earth Day, April 22. *Check it out on page 2*

PULPIT CALENDAR

April 5
Rev. Charles Stephens

April 12
Sanford Warren

April 19
Rev. Richard Snyder
Pot Luck Sunday

April 26
Rev. Charles Stephens

Board meeting:
April 16, 8:30 am

PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE WANTS YOU!

Our over-achieving Partner Church Committee needs more members if we are to maintain and build on our accomplishments. In the Philippines, 31 children from first grade through high school depend on our financial support and the fledgling UU

KENT PRICE

congregation in the small village of Aquino counts on our help to maintain its outpost of liberal religion in a heavily Catholic country. Filipino suppers, returnable bottles, "parent" sponsors, and you. Want to be a part of this successful venture? Let me know at



kapricorn75@gmail.com

COMMIT 2 RESPOND



March marked the start of [Climate Justice Month](#), when we began to think about changing *everything*.

Our current crisis requires transformation. It's less about changing a few individual behaviors and more about imagining radical new ways of living.

Our current paradigm assumes the expendability of some people and species in service to the dominant culture. In it, we willingly forgo human health and even human and non-human life on this planet as long as we can live in comfort and convenience today. In this paradigm, we willingly sacrifice those on the margins of society—generally people of color, immigrants, and people who live with great financial instability—to maintain the industrial growth economy. This economic system assumes ecosystems, communities, cultures, and non-human beings are all externalities that are expendable in the pursuit of maximizing profit.

Today, Unitarian Universalists and other people of faith and conscience begin to think deeply together about altering social norms and creating climate justice. Climate justice is a global fight to dismantle the paradigm that disadvantages marginalized people and approaches Earth as supply source and sewer rather than a system of interdependent life, a single, beloved community. Climate justice pays deep attention to those most affected by climate change to find transformative solutions grounded in profound connections with Earth and each other.

Now we begin to shift the way we understand and approach the world.

CHOIR NETS A PRO

Many choral groups require auditions and, regardless, expect their members to have more than a casual relationship with vocal music. Not true here, you might have discerned. Indeed, before our choir, I never had sung in public. But occasionally we are gifted with someone of professional quality. It's a delight to introduce Rodney Flora, the newest member of our choir. The following text was lifted shamelessly from the Maine Public Broadcasting Network. *Editor*

Lovers of classical music on MPBN are a discerning lot, and they can instantly tell whether an announcer knows his or her stuff. That's why MPBN feels blessed to have someone with Rodney Flora's knowledge and experience at the microphone when regular classical music host Robin Rilette is away from the station.

Before coming to MPBN in the spring of 2008, Rodney spent nearly 30 years at WCRB-FM, a classical music station in Boston, serving for the last 12 of those years as the station's music director. When not at MPBN, Rodney works as a classical music broadcasting consultant and does programming for the World Classical Network run by Cape Cod Broadcasting in Hyannis, Mass.



A native New Englander and former French horn player who at one time sang with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, Rodney Flora and Jill Schoof, a faculty member at Maine Maritime Academy, live on Wilson Point Road in Castine.

CHARLES' COGITATION

Rev. Charles J. Stephens



Lynn Parsons referred to Climate Change as the “Next Big Thing,” and so it is.

There have been many “Big Things” or major transitions in the story of life. Science informs us that ever since the Big Bang, things have been changing. Life ever so slowly evolved on our planet earth. During prehistoric times, species developed and changed. The climate of the earth changed as well, slowly making our earthly home suitable for living cells. These living cells depended on the unique conditions of the earth. Living things evolved over long periods of time from the tiniest of lifeforms to huge bodies of water teeming with life and forests and eventually animals that grew and diversified.

Charles Darwin developed the concept of natural selection as a way to explain life’s power to create diversity and a creative means of adapting to change. Of course, about 2.6 million years ago *Homo habilis* appeared. And with them the cultural development known as the Stone Age took place. Then about 1.5 million years ago *Homo erectus* appeared and a great migration started. The period from 2.6 million years ago through 120,000 years ago is identified as the Lower Paleolithic period. Fast forward through many transitions and we come to the Neolithic time (8000-3000 B.C.E.) of villages, horticulture, and the domestication of animals.

Of course, eventually nations developed, complete with revolutionary changes brought

about by agricultural techniques, the Industrial Revolution and an explosion of knowledge and powers gained from human creativity through scientific technologies.

The crisis of Climate Change has come about because we humans have failed to understand how our creative activities in exploiting the natural world disturbed the delicate balance of life. During our own modern time we humans have worked tirelessly to increase our well-being without realizing the consequences for the earth. In our seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, we affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

In such an interconnected web of existence, one part of the universe cannot be diminished and abused without damaging the condition of the whole. We as humans have great and creative powers to manipulate the earth. And yet, given that power, we cannot survive if it is at the expense of everything else. Our wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of our planet earth. We cannot subjugate other humans and animals without having a negative impact upon ourselves.

The earth with its atmosphere and soil and water allows living forms, ourselves included, to thrive and survive. Earth Day was created 45 years ago because some people saw that our human culture needed to be reminded that we need a healthy ocean, thriving rain forests, and a life-sustaining atmosphere. It is up to us to accept that we are a part of an earthly interdependent web of all existence. Once we do that, we need to use our creative power to protect the wellbeing of that web. After all, we are very much a part of the whole.

It is up to us to be co-creators of and sustaining members of the interdependent web of life.

With Love and Warmth,
Charles

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Kay Hansen
Religious Educator

Last month we celebrated the spring equinox by planting seeds. This month, we will continue to plant, with hopes of seeing some bare ground and buds on the trees----maybe even some crocuses popping out of the snow. In April, the older religious education group will continue to hear the stories of people who exemplify our principles. This month we celebrate Earth Day, and so we will take a look at the seventh principle----taking care of our earth. Our model for this principle is from Surry, Maine, and she has visited our church and spoken from our pulpit. Just this month, Florence Reed was honored as a recipient of the Maryann Hartman Award at the University of Maine. She was recognized for creating Sustainable Harvest International, an organization that teaches people in Central America how to conserve their land and use it for a sustainable living.

We also will be thinking of a special project for Earth Day, and we will again help out with the monthly potluck lunch. The younger children will hear stories and do activities focused on taking care of our earth.



Faith Formation/Religious Education and "The Times They Are A-changing"

On Saturday, March 21, Charles Stephens, Becky St. John and I traveled to Rockland for a workshop focused on religious education and adapting programs to the "changing times." We took a look at the changes that we have seen since we, as adults, were participants in religious education classes. Some of the more obvious changes included: technology and how it has drastically changed the way we communicate, changes in family structure, the loss of church as a center of family life and the "very busy," sometimes over-extended lives of children and working parents. Individuals and families are attending church (any church) less, and it is predicted that this trend will continue. It has been 50 years since Bob Dylan recorded, "The Times They Are A-Changing," and though the changes are different, the theme applies today.

So how can we reach out to people? On Saturday we looked at ways we might adapt our religious education programs--to look at the needs of our families and community and provide what is needed. For example, the Rockland UU Church recognized the needs of their community and offered childcare for snow days that need to be made up.

What can we do here in Castine to adapt to the needs of our families and community--to reach out? We started formulating some ideas on Saturday and would like to continue this discussion with a group of people from the church. Several people have volunteered to be a part of this discussion. Would you like to join us some Sunday in April? You can let me know by emailing: hansen85@myfairpoint.net.

Kay Hansen
Religious Educator

REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

In early January, the UUA Transitions Office informed us that there were forty-seven congregations and eighty-six ministerial applicants using the on-line settlement system and that each applicant had expressed interest in an average of just under seven congregations.

The UUCC Search Committee received and reviewed six on-line applications and information packets. After this initial review, we narrowed the field to five who appeared to have the potential to match the needs and attributes described in the profile of our congregation. We invited those applicants to participate in a Skype interview (voice and video via the Internet) with the full committee to help us further focus on those who were the best matches for the UUCC. One of the five declined the invitation, having already accepted another position.

On January 31st, we interviewed the remaining four. We used the desired attributes described by our congregation during our cottage meetings and in our survey responses to assess how well each applicant would be a fit for us. At this stage, we narrowed the pool to three. Two of the applicants, upon further consideration of the timing for their families, felt they could not move to Maine at this time and withdrew their names.

Having only one applicant left in our pool, we consulted with the Transitions Office and were encouraged to follow through with the process as scheduled. We held the planned pre-candidating weekend and met with the applicant in Castine and at a neutral site.

UUA Transitions Office resource material says that in the event that a search does not produce a candidate, it should not be considered a failure. "The only failure -- the *only* failure -- lies in

calling a minister who is a poor match for the congregation."

Our goal throughout the entire ten-month search process has been to find a ministerial candidate that we could confidently recommend to the congregation as a good fit for us. After careful consideration at our March 11th meeting, we reached the conclusion that the UUCC needs to continue its search for a settled minister.



On March 18th, we consulted with our UUA Ministerial Representative, who concurred with our decision and assured us that the continuance of a search beyond two years was not unusual. Five of the originally appointed Search Committee are willing to remain members. The UUA recommends against adding new members to an already functioning committee.

The five continuing members are Peter Fairbank, Anne Parsons, Anne Price, Emma Sweet, and Brooke Tenney. Elaine Gerard-Climo regrettably declined to continue, citing increased and competing demands on her time. On March 19th, the Board voted to continue with the five members as the duly constituted Search Committee and will seek approval from the Congregation at a meeting later in April.

MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Olav Nieuwejaar

Dear Members and Board of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine,

Your Search Committee for a new minister has worked extremely hard over the past year gathering all the information, conducting cottage meetings, creating a Congregational Profile and a Congregational Packet, and finally reading through many Ministerial Records as part of their awesome task. I am writing because I would imagine that many of you are disappointed that all this work did not conclude with a new minister coming to Castine this August. I am also writing because I want to recognize your Search Committee for the quality of its work and the seriousness with which they took on this very important commitment.



First, I want to assure you that not finding a minister in the usual time period is not in the least unusual. In a typical year as many as 10% of searches need to go through a second year of work. In fact, this year, of the four churches I am working with, two of them did not find a minister last year. We who do this work as Ministerial Settlement Representatives do not think of these as “failed” searches, but rather as incomplete searches. A failed

search would be the result of a job poorly done, mismanaged, or otherwise outside the process we use in our association of congregations.



So, here are a few things I hope you will take to heart. The search that your committee conducted was not even close to being a failure. The committee conducted this search extremely well, and even after its number reduced to six from seven, it still did its work and did it responsibly. As someone who is committed to helping churches find ministers, I am very grateful to the committee members for all they have done on your behalf. I trust that you are, too.

While you might think it is dispiriting to go into a second year, I want you to know that the two congregations that went into a second year of search both opted for a third year of interim ministry. And both search committees were able to say in their Congregational Profiles how grateful they were that these circumstances allowed them that extra interim year. Indeed, one committee described it as “a bonus.” Because of the extra year they were able to uncover issues that actually made the churches stronger and more attractive to ministers seeking new positions. I suspect that would happen in Castine, as well. *continues on page 7*

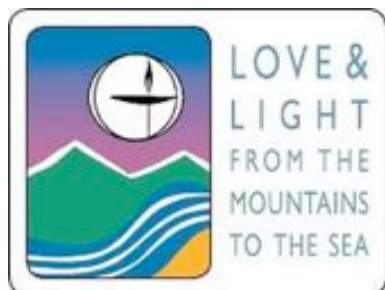
MINISTERIAL REP,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE

So, I hope that you will thank your Search Committee for all the time, expertise, energy, and commitment they have given representing you all. I hope that you will accept the offer of five of their number to continue -- and trust that they will continue in that same spirit. (By the way, I do not recommend finding others to bring the committee number back to seven. The workload will be greatly reduced because so much has already been done and will not need to be repeated, and two new faces would very likely disturb the dynamic or *esprit de corps* that the committee has developed over the past twelve months.)

As your Settlement Representative, I will continue to coach, advise, and support your committee until the search is completed. We have a good working relationship and I am confident that it will continue, as I am also confident that the work of the committee will continue to be excellent.

Olav

Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar
Ministerial Settlement Representative
Northern New England District
Unitarian Universalist Association



KEEP OR TOSS?

Lynn Parsons
President of the Board

Several months ago the Governing Board endorsed the idea of attacking the accumulation of church records that has built up over the past several decades and now lies, for the most part, in the alcove above the northeast entrance of the Meeting House. Much of it, in my opinion, can be safely thrown out (UUA documents more than ten years old, deposit slips going back thirty years, blank checks, etc.) Then there is correspondence from and to members of the congregation, reports, account books, etc., that probably should be preserved.

After some preliminary winnowing, the plan is to transfer the remainder to the Historical Society for further analysis and storage. I am working with Paige Lilly, Curator of the Castine Historical Society, in making preliminary decisions as to what should be kept and what should be thrown out. Our goal is by April 6 to have as much of the material either tossed out or transferred to the Historical Society.

We could use some help. There is a lot to be learned by sifting through this material. Anyone who is interested in learning, or re-learning, the recent history of our congregation would be most welcome. Feel free to contact me for the details.

* * * * *

General Assembly

As reported earlier in *The Common* and via email, the UUA's annual General Assembly this year will be held June 24 - 28 in Portland, Oregon. Our congregation will be represented by Rev. Charles Stephens and by lay delegates Becky St. John, a GA newcomer, and Kent Price, a veteran of these conventions.

LHP

PULPIT PREVIEW

Rev. Charles J. Stephens

March 29: "A Maple Syrup Communion"

I developed this ritual in the 1980s and it's still being used in several congregations. I look forward to sharing it here: come and celebrate the natural resurrection taking place all around us.

April 5: Easter Sunday, "The Resurrection Stories as Myths of Meaningfulness"

When I look at the story of the resurrection as a metaphor, it is about a renewal, a renaissance, and a resurgence of the life of an individual, a group, or even a nation. How might you experience a renewal of life?

April 12: "The Ethics of a Plant-Based Diet," by guest leader Sanford Warren. I will be on vacation to take part in the installation of the new minister at my former congregation in Titusville NJ.

April 19: "The Plumb Line," by guest minister Rev. Richard Snyder.

April 26: "The Stakes are Too High to Go On with Business as Usual"

Earth Day turns middle-aged, 45 this year, and global weirding has gotten out of hand. It is not about saving polar bears or "protecting the environment;" it's about everything being interconnected.



MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Lynn Parsons, President
Gil Tenney, Vice President
Diana Bernard, Treasurer
Anne Romans, Clerk
Tom Mason
Leslie Fairbank
Colin Powell, Alternate

The Governing Board meets in the Parish House at 8:30 am on the third Thursday of each month. Observers always are 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. Deadline is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

CONTACT US

The Rev. Charles J. Stephens
minister@uucastine.org
326-9083 (Meeting House)
609-947-5564 (home)

Lynn Parsons, President
lparkers989@roadrunner.com
326-9790

Kay Hansen, Rel. Education
hansen85@myfairpoint.net
667-9421

Becky St. John, Office Administrator
office@uucastine.org
326-9083