

The Common

Melissa!

Who are we?



Indeed, just who are we Unitarian Universalists? The multiply talented Melissa Harris-Perry has composed a response that says it all in an economy of words. The UUA's Ware Lecturer in 2009, she is a lifelong

UU and an effervescent spokesperson for our faith. Read her remarks on page 2: you are all but guaranteed to put down *The Common* with a refreshed appreciation of the faith we share. *go to p 2*

CALENDAR

Pulpit

Sept. 7

Rev. Charles J. Stephens

Sept. 14

Rev. Charles J. Stephens

Sept 21

Rev. Charles J. Stephens

Sept 28

James Fisher

Events

September 3

Trio Cleonice concert

September 21

CROP Walk

September 19-21

Common Ground Fair

September 26

Filipino Turkey Supper

FROM THE BOARD

DELACROIX DAVIS III, PRESIDENT

Summer is winding down and soon we will be bidding *adieu* to our seasonal members and friends. Especially with the Ministerial Search Committee in high gear, it has been a busy and productive time.

Many of you have completed and returned the congregational survey forms



to the Search Committee. If you haven't, please do so as soon as possible so the Search Committee can begin compiling and understanding the responses.

continues on p 3

WHO ARE WE?

Melissa Harris-Perry

The author, host of the eponymous Melissa Harris-Perry Show on MSNBC, is a professor, author, popular speaker, and contributor of the foreword in the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide. In the fall, she will move from Tulane University to join the faculty at Wake Forest University. Enjoy. Editor

We are Unitarian Universalists. We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We are believers in what is good, what is right, and what is just. We are diverse in faith, ethnicity, history, and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to practice our faith and beliefs in tangible ways. We foster a respectful community hallmarked by action, love, and acceptance of all people.

We have radical roots and a history as self-motivated spiritual people; we think for ourselves and actively object to what we believe is wrong. We have a track record of standing on the side of people, love, justice, and peace. Our faith has always been motivated by a desire to contribute to the greater good. We are a house without walls, a congregation without spiritual boundaries, and a movement toward a more action-oriented faith in ourselves, our God(s), and our beliefs. Simply put, we are a guide-path toward a better us, and a better world.

We are the certain and the seeking, the lifers and the newcomers, the beloved and the broken hearted, the insiders and the rejected, all of whom have found a home in the extraordinary, yet intimate, communities of Unitarian Universalism.



BEYOND CATEGORICAL THINKING

Kent Price

Who are we? asks Melissa Harris-Perry in the column next door. Are we who we think we are or perhaps as others see us? Something of all perceptions, internal and external?

On August 17, as reported by Anne Parsons on page 8 of this newsletter, UUA facilitator Donna Dolham was a guest in our pulpit. She delivered a profound message as we conduct our search for a settled minister. That is, that we need to see a whole, real person in our candidates, not some superficial figment of our imagination. We need to think beyond the straight white male ministerial paradigm.



"So what is categorical thinking?" asked Donna. Essentially, it's the prejudged images of persons other than those of our own close association. Is she or he like me, or is he something "other?" Have you an already formed assessment of who another person is or represents? Indeed, what do we bring to the table? Donna advised us to perceive our own internalized messages that we've learned throughout our lives, images that become weaved into what we notice and feel about others as well as how we identify and feel about ourselves.

Importantly, Donna said, "Our Unitarian Universalist principles offer us opportunities to live our faith in ways that lead us to reach out to others. As well, the principles provide us a sanctuary of Beloved Community in which we can reflect on how all the years of accumulated life culminates in what we believe and how we behave."

continues on pg 9



Del Davis, President

From the Board, continued from pg 1

Several church functions currently need volunteers. The Music, Buildings and Grounds, and Religious Education Committees are all looking for additional members to accomplish their missions. And while congregation members and friends—both seasonal and year-round—have done great work ushering and hosting coffee hour during the summer, the sign up sheets are currently quite bare. For anyone interested in committee service, please contact either a current committee member or a board member and let them know. Anyone willing to usher or host (or co-host) coffee hour need only so note on the sign-up sheets affixed to the bulletin board near the copier in the Parish House or call Pam Person on 469-6770.



Earlier *From the Board* columns this year have addressed the issue of limited space in the Parish House and the problems this presents regarding the minister's office space and having adequate room for different religious education efforts, just to name two. An *ad hoc* task force met and considered several options. Among them were adding a second level to the Parish House, either by creating a lower level or adding a second story on top of the existing building. Consideration also was given to acquiring another property in Castine, preferably close to the Common. At its August meeting, the Board determined that with all the other issues facing the congregation at this time, it is not prudent to proceed with an expensive construction or real estate project now.

This still leaves the issues of replacing the leaking roof and repairing the damaged and rotting northwest corner of the Parish House. The congregation at a special meeting in February approved funds for this work. Efforts will now be made to complete these jobs before winter weather arrives.

Finally, the need to call first responders to the Meeting House last month after the fall of a church member highlighted some deficiencies in our ability to deal with emergency situations. The church has not had adequate equipment for such instances. We now have a folding walker and will soon have a folding wheelchair available. And we are looking into acquiring a defibrillator and the expertise to use one.

Del Davis

CHARLES' COGITATIONS

Rev. Charles J. Stephens



Religious freedom in our country has often faced hostile opposition from those who think their religion is better than others. Because of the warfare in many Muslim countries, there has often been an outcry against our Muslim brothers and sisters. There has been open hostility toward the thousands of children fleeing from Central America into the U.S. because of poverty, gang violence, and general chaos in their home countries. Because of fear and racism there has been unprecedented violence and death in Ferguson, Missouri. There is a shameful pattern displayed in these events.

When criticism comes from outside, we can justifiably claim that other countries are worse, and many are. But is that what we want to claim for the U.S., that "We are not as bad as some other country?" Many of our ancestors came as immigrants to this land to avoid religious and political persecution but also simply to find new economic opportunities open to them and their children. My maternal grandparents and my paternal grandmother were some

of those strange sounding, non-English speaking immigrants.

Our spiritual ancestors faced discrimination here in this country as "heretics," because they believed differently than the majority and openly refused to conform to the established religion of the time. In 1883 the First Parish Church in Gloucester, MA seized articles of value from the Universalists who had the audacity to think they could establish their own church. Rev. John Murray, their minister, had to leave town in 1887 for his own safety when he tried to officiate at a marriage ceremony. Yet he was appointed by George Washington as a military Chaplain against the protests of the more traditional churches. And similar stories could be told of other faiths.

Baptists faced the same opposition in Massachusetts. And I know of a Roman Catholic Priest who was tarred and feathered in Ellsworth, Maine, during the 1800's because he was seen as too foreign and threatening. Today we have named John Bapst High School in his honor, but when he was run out of town on a rail was during the time of the American "Know-Nothing" Party. I fear that some people would like to take us back to that time of intolerance.

Back in 2008, I traveled to Israel and Palestine with a group of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Clergy and I can say without hesitation that I would stand side by side with each one of them against any disrespect directed at their houses of worship, homes, businesses, or schools. They became my brothers and sisters in faith.

continues on pg 5

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Kay Hansen, Religious Educator

It's hard to believe that summer is over and a new school year is beginning. Here at church, we begin a new program year as well. Throughout the summer, we have been working on some changes in the use of our space. What has been the religious education room is now the minister's office during the week and a room for young children on Sundays. Children using this space will range in ages approximately one year to four years old. This is an effort to provide the "childcare" that many churches provide so parents can attend church without their young children. Depending on the age and number of children on a given Sunday, some planned activities may be provided, such as a story and craft activity. This is in the experimental stages, and changes will be made as we work through this transition.

In the corner, where the piano had been, the older children will meet and work on creating a space with which they can identify. During September, this group will work on some activities to get to know more about each other and our church. The group will start to plan for a spring get-together with youth from the Ellsworth UU Church, and they will be taking a look at some service projects they might be involved in throughout the year. For a September project, we will explore how we might help with Castine's Crop Walk on September 21.

We are happy to welcome Emma Larson as our new Religious Education Aide. Emma is a student at George Stevens Academy and lives in Penobscot. She is no stranger to UUC; she was a participant in the religious education program when I started working at the church about 5 years ago and she regularly helps out with the Partner Church Committee's benefit suppers. Emma's role may vary from Sunday to Sunday, but the plan right now is that she will be available for the younger children.



Kay Hansen

Please let me know if you have any suggestions or would be willing to help build our religious education program by serving as a member of the RE Committee. You can email me at hansen85@myfairpoint.net.

Kay

* * * * *

Charles' Cogitations, from p 4

In Israel and Palestine we met people who were working and continue to be working against great opposition for the possibility of peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths and different ethnic backgrounds.

When we returned we organized opportunities for interfaith dialogue between the members of our respective congregations. One of our UU Principles is that we affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. We should remember that the founders of our great nation--especially our earliest U.S. Presidents--spoke out against establishing any narrow religious tests for officeholders or, for that matter, advocating the superiority of one religion over another. We should question the motive and the honesty of any leader who would identify with and use wedge issues based on religious or racial differences to win an election or gain popularity.

TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF CREATION SPIRITUALITY

Honoring all of creation as Original Blessing, Creation Spirituality integrates the wisdom of Eastern and Western spirituality and global indigenous cultures, with the emerging scientific understanding of the universe, and the passion of creativity. The first 5 Principles were set forth in the August edition of The Common.

6) Every one of us is a mystic.

We can enter the mystical as much through beauty as through contemplation and suffering. We are born full of wonder and can recover it at any age.

7) Every one of us is an artist.

Whatever the expression of our creativity, it is our prayer and praise.

8) Every one of us is a prophet.

Our prophetic work is to interfere with all forms of injustice and that which interrupts authentic life.

9) Diversity is the nature of the Universe.

We rejoice in and courageously honor the rich diversity within the Cosmos and expressed among individuals and across multiple cultures, religions, and ancestral traditions.

10) The basic work of God is compassion and we, who are all original blessings and sons and daughters of the Divine, are called to compassion.

We acknowledge our shared interdependence; we rejoice at one another's joys and grieve at another's sorrows and labor to heal the causes of those sorrows.

11) There are many wells of faith and knowledge drawing from one underground river of Divine wisdom. The practice of honoring, learning, and celebrating the wisdom collected from these wells is Deep Ecumenism.

We respect and embrace the wisdom and oneness that arises from the diverse wells of all the sacred traditions of the world.

12) Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth.

Ecology is the local expression of cosmology and so we commit to live in light of this value: to pass on the beauty and health of Creation to future generations.



TRIO CLEONICE

One more chance this year to hear one of America's finest young chamber ensembles--Trio Cleonice, founded right here in Blue Hill. The Trio's August 12 concert in our Meeting House was a smash success. Now, having fit in a mini-tour of China, they will return on September 3 to entertain and inspire us all over again. Wait till you hear their interpretations of Beethoven and Dvorak! Wednesday, September 3, 7 pm, in the Meeting House. Suggested donation:\$10.

CHOIR RESUMES

Sing? Our choir returns for the fall/winter season, and we'd love to have you join us. First rehearsal is at 1 pm on Thursday, October 4, in the Parish House. All sections open, and attitude is more valued than talent or experience.

MEMBERSHIP ?

Have you been thinking about joining the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine?

If you have thought about becoming a member of our church or even wondered about what is involved in being a member, please make an appointment with me. Asking for information about UUCC and about membership in our congregation is a good place to start. I would love to sit down and talk with you.

Charles Stephens

PULPIT PREVIEW

September 7. "Seeking Spiritual Direction"

There is a great yearning for deeper meaning and understanding of life and our relationship to others and to the larger universe. We UUs aren't normally attracted to a spirituality that flees this world but rather one that embraces it.

September 14. "Looking at Great Luminaries of Compassion"

Second in my sermon series based on Karen Armstrong's *"Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life."* Many inspiring religious leaders have spoken about the importance of compassion. What do their teachings and their life have in common?

September 21. "Overcoming Poverty: Charity or Justice?"

Castine's CROP Walk starts at 1 pm today. Can walking together help alleviate hunger? Why do so many people live in constant hunger while others have food aplenty?

September 28. I will be on vacation
September 22-28. Jim Fisher will be in the pulpit on September 28.

Charles Stephens



CASTINE AREA CROP WALK

The Castine area CROP walk (Citizens Responding to Overcome Poverty) will take place on Sunday, September 21, at 1 pm. It is sponsored nationally by Church World Service (CWS), an interfaith organization, of which the national UUA is a member. In the past, the UUCC has joined with other religious congregations, along with the Castine Men's Club, the Castine Women's Club, and other groups, in promoting this fundraiser. Proceeds from the Walk are sent to CWS to fight poverty abroad, but 25 percent is returned to each community to use as it wishes. Recently our funds have been donated to the Hancock County Habitat for Humanity.

The walk begins at 1 pm on Castine's Town Common, passes all four churches, and ends at the Roman Catholic chapel on Perkins Street. It takes about 45 minutes. In the past, refreshments have been provided.

Please join us on the 21st, as the phrase has it, "in body or in spirit," in this community event. It is not necessary for participants to walk in order to contribute. In recognition of the reality that many of our members and friends live some distance from the Common, details will be forthcoming as to how this can be done.

Lynn Parsons
Social Justice Committee Co-Chair

SEARCH COMMITTEE PROGRESS

Anne Parsons

Thank you all! What a great response to the cottage meetings, the survey and the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop! It says a lot about the members and friends of UUCC that so many of you want to be heard and to be a part of the search for our next settled minister.

As reported in last month's *Common* and on the UUCC webpage, the Search Committee members selected by the congregation: Peter Fairbank, Elaine Gerard-Climo, Debby Neve, Anne Parsons, Anne Price, Emma Sweet and Brooke Tenney, launched two initiatives to gather information from the congregation to help us describe ourselves and define the skills and attributes we are looking for in our next minister.

The first initiative was a series of "cottage meetings." A total of forty-nine members and friends gathered in six homes during July and August. Three questions were posed at each meeting: 1) What attributes are you looking for in a new minister? 2) How would you describe our congregation? and 3) What achievement would cause you to say you are glad the new minister is here? The responses produced a surprising divergence of opinion as well as identifying common themes. Some responses were similar and some were exact opposites. We have posted in the Parish House a combined list of the seventy responses to the first question, seventy-five to the second and forty to the third. The Search Committee is now facing the daunting task of distilling this raw material into a clearer picture of who we are.

The second part of our information gathering effort is the survey that one hundred members and friends received either in person at a Sunday service or via US mail. We are heartened by the fact that as of this writing close to half of these



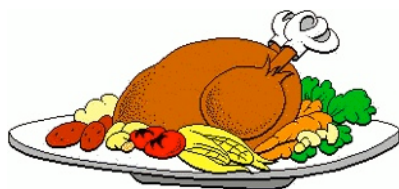
have been returned. And even more exciting for us, more than half of the members have responded. The information will not be compiled until after the August 31 deadline (plus a few days, perhaps) so, if you have your survey almost ready to go, please do take part in this important step.

Your responses will be shared with the congregation as well as being a critical component of our presentations to potential candidates. The information will also be useful as the Negotiating Team, Diana Bernard, Stan Bourne and Peter Fairbank, develop a job description and ministerial agreement.

The Unitarian Universalist Association, under whose guidelines we operate, strongly suggested that we take advantage of a workshop offered to congregations in transition. The Search Committee sponsored a "Beyond Categorical Thinking" weekend August 16 and 17. A UUA-trained facilitator, Donna Dolham, worked with the Search Team on Saturday and delivered the Sunday sermon followed by a lunch and a workshop for the congregation. See the article on those events on pages 2 and 9 in this issue.

Two of our goals that we never lose sight of are eliciting the full participation of our members and friends and being as transparent as possible regarding the search process. There is a Search Committee Bulletin Board in the Parish House with a question box on the table below it. Search Committee members wearing green name tags are available during coffee hour to answer process questions – Just Ask!

TURKEY SUPPER !



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Turkey supper with stuffing, gravy, potatoes, vegetables, rolls and cranberry sauce, plus famous UU desserts. Great food for a great cause-- education for our Filipino children.

Adults, \$15; Children 5-15. \$10; Under 5 Free; Family: \$40.

One sitting only, at 5:30 pm. Reservations encouraged! Tell Elaine at 326-0992 or email her at elaine4347@gmail.com.

* * * * *

Beyond Categorical Thinking

continued from page 2

The August 17 afternoon workshop drew 25 members and friends (the tasty lunch prepared by the Search Committee undoubtedly was a factor) to overview sessions directed by Donna Dolham and to two rounds of small group discussions. What did we talk about?

Interestingly, all of the "problems / opportunities" were drawn from real life. That is, each of them actually happened in a UU ministerial search. Here's an example:

A congregational search committee is afraid to call a minister of Hispanic origin who looks good "on paper." Some fear that someone with an accent might be difficult to understand. The search committee decides not to look at this person, who otherwise seems to be their best match. Some parishioners do have hearing difficulties.

Whose problem is this, and how should it be dealt with?

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Del Davis, President
Gil Tenney, Vice President
Diana Bernard, Treasurer
Anne Romans, Clerk
Nancy Guy
Tom Mason
Leslie Fairbank
Kent Price, 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)

Del Davis, President
chadbourne.davis@roadrunner.com
326-0828

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

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