

► This past summer has been an important one for us. For one thing, as several congregants have volunteered to give talks, it has given us an opportunity to sample the depth of knowledge and life experience that we have in our congregation. We have ended up knowing one another a little better. Also, this has been the summer that we literally did the groundwork for our new Congregational Home. I know that several of you make trips past our lot on Mount Homer Road and David Walker Drive to watch the progress. So far it has been mostly clearing and earth moving. The most exciting part, the actual construction, is just starting and many of our snowbirds will be here to witness it. Ruth Gray dared to dream big and I believe that we have the courage and the talent to carry on.

Now we start our new fall-winter-spring season. The WRAP committee and the Board is working diligently to create a spiritually fulfilling and communally rich experience for all who share the Sunday space with us - something rich enough to give us personal motivation for living a UU life.

It is a challenge, especially since we have lost our part-time minister, Rev Susan. We have established a center of focus for the year. Insofar as possible, we will center a portion of our Sunday messages on the theme "Creating a Beloved Community – Healing a Broken World." The theme works both on many levels.

On the one hand, it applies to our local congregation where we are always learning what it means to create a beloved community. Our kick-off message will be on that topic by the minister of our sister church in Marion County, Janet Onnie. Titling her talk "Blest be the Tie That Binds," Rev Janet will talk about how building a Unitarian Universalist Beloved Community is based on the concept of Covenant. She will look at that concept as this congregation moves into the dual promise of a new year and new building.

On September 25th, Rev Roger will be unable to speak to us as he usually does. Instead, you will have a chance to sample a little bit of 2016's General Assembly (GA) - the most important assemblage of UUs in the world. In a special service we will take a look at least a part of the Ware Lecture given at this year's GA by radio talk show host and winner of The National Humanities medal, Krista Tippett. I know that some of you have tuned in to her radio program on PBS called "On Being." In this talk, she speaks about the tools we need for having a civil conversation - choice of word, deep listening (an act of love), and generous and non-combative questioning. These are the skills we need for creating Beloved Community.

"Beloved Community" extends far out from the local congregation to other UU communities and, of course, as far as the broader community of humankind. To enrich our conception of that, I reprint here a Sunday message given at a UU Church in London by UU Minister, Andy Pakula. I am reprinting it with his permission. I invited him to visit us and it may happen sometime, but not right away. Andy is in the pulpit 46 times a year. Here is his sermon along with the attendant readings:

Amid darkness and cold, we come to find light and warmth
We have come for the bright gleam of hope
We have come for the warm glow of relationship
We have come to find a way together toward a more benevolent and just world
We have come to bring light
to the gloom of this season;
to the shadowed places in our own lives;
and to a world clouded by conflict
There is a bright light that shines when we come together
May it drive shadows from the earth. ►

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► Readings

Martin Luther King Jr., from a speech in 1956

The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption;
the end is the creation of the Beloved Community.

It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends.

It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age.

It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.

From the Tao Te Ching, attributed to Lao Tzu

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.

Message, by Andy Pakula

Over the past week, although I was comfortably in London, my thoughts were very often drawn to a tiny Greek island called Leros.

Leros is one of the places where refugees from dangerous, war-torn nations like Syria and Afghanistan have landed in their dangerous struggle to find safety. Just seven miles off the coast of Turkey with a population of only about 7,000 people - Leros has been at the front line of this enormous humanitarian crisis as thousands of refugees have flowed in.

All this week, two of our brave, courageous, caring friends - Kirby Costa-Campos and Sophie Yau - have been in Leros. We have had the opportunity to be with them in a way through their public posts on social media - all of which are available through our [Facebook group](#).

Through Kirby and Sophie, the somewhat abstract images of a refugee crisis became more real and very immediate to me and to many of you.

We saw hundreds of desperate people crammed in a motorised rubber boat arrive in the middle of the night. Many of them are children. They are freezing cold - wearing the water-soaked clothes they had on when they swam to shore a few days earlier. They are weak with hunger - having spent three days without any provisions or shelter on a Greek military island.

There is the young girl who lost her glasses in the waters and is trapped in a world of blurs and fear. There is the broken family who fled Afghanistan when the father was murdered by the Taliban. There is the woman who collapsed and stopped breathing. There is the family whose life savings lie at the bottom of the sea because smugglers deemed them too heavy to bring along. Happily, these people and more were helped by Kirby and Sophie - thanks to several thousand pounds of donations from you and others around the world.

Many more have not been helped. Many more have been left to the cruelty of smugglers and Greek officials. Too many have not made it through this leg of their epic journey toward freedom - left drowned in the waters ►



▶ of the Aegean sea. The refugees who made it to Leros seem to receive no help whatsoever from Greek or European governments. No help from NGOs. It is down to just a few volunteers to cope with a flood of human suffering and need.

These stories are just a few of the thousands from Leros - and just a tiny sample of the lives that form part of what we call "the refugee crisis."

This is part of our world. As much as our relief at the progress in the Paris climate talks, as much as our revulsion at the hateful words coming from people like Donald Trump, as much as our worries about housing costs, as much as our own struggles and joys at this festive season - Leros is a part of our world.

It is at times like this - when the realities of the world are thrust upon us - that we think once again of what kind of world we live in and what it might be. We wonder what part we are and should be playing in this world.

Perhaps we vacillate between trying to hide from the reality and knowing we need to confront it.

We may be torn between hope and despair as we sense that our great dreams for the future are being consumed by the fires of fear and hatred or by neglect from those who cannot accept our common humanity.

And we may feel an essential conflict between two great objectives: creating life-sustaining and nurturing relationships where we are and joining in the struggle and the battle for greater justice.

I have watched this latter conflict play out in my own heart. I have heard in the words of people I admire. Some speak in glowing and poetic terms of the communities they long for and are creating. They speak of love for others and an interdependence that manifests in a real and day-to-day way. Their dreams are of a community that builds us up, helps us find joy, strengthens us, and nurtures our growth.

And others speak with outrage at the injustices of the world. They point to those who harm others and those who perpetuate oppression. They may feel that the desire for community is too self-serving a goal for a world such as ours - a world with too much pain.

Today, I want to speak for a third way - a way that rejects the polarization of these voices as false and unhelpful.

Martin Luther King spoke of the dream of the Beloved Community. The Beloved Community is not heaven - it is not other-worldly. He meant it to be a real and achievable state of society. King spoke of love as a power for justice. He did not mean romantic love. He did not mean the weak greeting-card version of love, but a powerful love that is based in our human interdependence and mutuality. It is a love that, in King's own words, "is a willingness to go to any length to restore community. It doesn't stop at the first mile, but goes the second mile to restore community..."

The Taoist writing we heard earlier tells us that peace in the world is dependent on a peace that lives more locally - in our hearts and our communities. A heart at war cannot participate in peace.

The Taoists were not alone in understanding that peace begins with a personal transformation.

In the Qur'an, it is said "Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."

Great Buddhist teachers have long recognised that cultivating loving kindness within ourselves is a necessary foundation of a more just society.

Martin Luther King did not tell his followers to take their very justified anger to the streets. He did not organise angry protests or encourage others to attack their oppressors.

His approach began with inner transformation - with creating an understanding and a belief in the power of love and of human interdependence. He taught that injustice is a blight on the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Therefore securing justice is a loving act achieved through the application of love.

Love is not separate from the struggle for peace and justice. Love is at the very heart of that struggle.

We do not learn to love on our own. It is not automatic.

As feminist theologian Carter Heyward reminds us, ▶

▶ “...loving involves commitment. We are not automatic lovers of self, others, world, or God. Love does not just happen. We are not love machines, puppets on the strings of a deity called 'love.' Love is a choice -- not simply, or necessarily, a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile. Love is a conversion to humanity -- a willingness to participate with others in the healing of a broken world and broken lives. Love is the choice to experience life as a member of the human family, a partner in the dance of life...”

We do not learn to love those we find difficult and troublesome from a book or a TED talk or a YouTube video or even by contemplation, meditation, or prayer.

We learn in the powerful and transformative environment of relationship in community. It is in community that we are held close to one another. It is through the challenge of relationship - not despite that challenge - that we learn what it is to understand another person. It is there that we come to grow as loving beings - not in the abstract - but in the real, tested, true, and trying relationships with which we are presented each day.

There is no option to choose between love and justice - to focus on the local community as an alternative to the world community. They are inextricable and one strengthens the other.

So let us be one with each other - offering a love that recognises our interdependence, our mutuality, and our shared humanity. And let us be one with the world - seeking to change it not at a distance - not as something that is other - but recognising all as kin and beloved.

Here and everywhere, let us work to build the beloved community.

May it be so.

Let love grow in our hearts
Let love grow in the relationships between us
Let love grow in this community
Let love grow in the cities and in the nations
Let a love that creates justice be among us all.

September Programs

Please Note: Our winter schedule begins September 18, as follows:

Discussion Group at 9:30 am

September 18 – Dr Janeane Reagan - "How Understanding Developmental Trauma Helps Explain Antisocial Behaviors"

September 25 – Prof. Thad A. Polk, Univ. of Michigan: The Aging Brain – Lecture 1: The Aging Mind: What Changes?

Worship Service at 11:00 am

September 18 - Rev. Janet Onnie of The Marion County UU Fellowship - "Blest Be The Tie That Binds"

September 25 - The Ware Lecture from General Assembly. A DVD of Krista Tippett on Deep Listening and Generous Questioning.

September Birthdays

Phyllis Gillette, Sept. 9

Building News Brief

Building construction is progressing on schedule.

The foundations have been excavated and the concrete column bases have been poured.

The utility lines that go under the slab are being installed. Arrangements have been made with the utility companies for the installation of the electric transformer, the water meters, and the gas line connection, all of which will be done in September. The sanitary sewer line has been connected to the City manhole and some of the storm drainage lines have been installed. All of the roads and parking areas have been graded and stabilized and the water retention area has been excavated. The steel framing system for the building has been ordered and factory fabrication of the members will begin this month.

Materials and colors have been selected for the interior finishes – walls floors, etc., as well as for the roof, and for the stone trim on the outside of the building.

We are fortunate to have chosen a contractor who is working very professionally and efficiently. If past work on the project is an indication of future performance, the building should be finished on schedule about the end of March next year.

On the financial side, the congregation, at a special meeting on Aug. 28th, voted to give the Board of Trustees the authorization to explore the sale of some of the unused property, and to obtain a “line of credit” loan to cover the final payment on the project.



...Carl Skiles

A Summary of the Special Congregation Meeting

Following the Sunday Service August 28, 2016, a special meeting of the Congregation was held to obtain authorization for the Board of Trustees to act on behalf of the congregation to sell land to cover the building project cash shortage or to secure a line of credit and to borrow funds, in the event that property sale is not timely. President Chris Higgins began the meeting by welcoming all to remain for the meeting, indicating that friends and visitors were welcome to participate in all aspects of the meeting, but that only members were eligible to vote. She went on to review quorum and voting requirements of our bylaws. In summary: we currently have 66 voting members, so that the quorum requirement of 40% of membership would be 29 ►

► members. The number of voting members present at the meeting was only 27 but there were 9 absentee ballots; the quorum requirement was satisfied. Chris went on to advise those present that the bylaws require a two-thirds (2/3) vote to decide questions related to property sale. Therefore, a vote of 24 (36 x 2/3) or more would decide the question before the congregation.

Chris then read a “short version” of the question before the congregation:

Do you “authorize the Board of Trustees to negotiate the terms and to enter into a contract for the sale of real property or to secure a line of credit using a portion of the remaining 19 acres of church property on the corner of Mount Homer Road and David Walker Drive in Eustis as collateral”.

She then opened the floor for discussion prior to a vote.

Egor Emery expressed concern that now is not a good time for us to consider selling a portion of the property. He is concerned that we will lose control regarding future neighbors/businesses, believes that the value of the property will be significantly higher in the future, and that we may be sacrificing future opportunity. He offered an amendment to the motion to remove authorization to sell the property. Julie Champion seconded the motion. The revised motion read:

Do you “authorize the Board of Trustees to negotiate the terms and to enter into a contract to secure a line of credit using a portion of the remaining 19 acres of church property on the corner of Mount Homer Road and David Walker Drive in Eustis as collateral”

After extended discussion regarding concern about property sale, obtaining and retiring a loan, we discussed whether we had a quorum to vote on the amendment. Egor’s 2 absentee ballots specifically cited the amendment that he offered. Therefore, we had a quorum of 29 to vote on the amendment. The vote on the amendment was as follows: YES—8; NO—19; ABSTENTION—2. The amendment failed.

Additional discussion continued until the vote on the original proposal was called. It was as follows (including absentee votes): YES—29; NO—3; ABSTENTION—4. The proposal passed.

The Board of Trustees has been authorized to move forward to negotiate terms and enter into a contract for the sale of property and to secure a line of credit.

...Chris Higgins

In Memoriam



Clarice Journigan Seidner
1925-2016

I gave you this one thought to keep
I am with you still, I do not sleep

I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamonds glints of snow
I am sunlight on the ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain

When you awaken in the morning hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight
I am the soft rain that shines at night

Do not think of me as gone - I am with you
still In each new dawn.

A Native American Prayer

The Golden Lotus Temple! - Saturday, September 10, 2016...

Before going into yet another intestinal operation, I had decided I would treat myself to a weekend in Encinitas, CA. I had been through that little artsy town about 10 years ago, promising myself I would return someday to explore the Golden dome by the ocean. I was told by a shopkeeper that it was part of the Hindu temple.

Really?! I remember thinking how odd to find that there. I bought a small notecard depicting the temple grounds and have kept it ever since. I do not give up Hope easily! Thus, on August 20th., I flew into LAX where my faithful girlfriend Leslie picked me up. We drove the 2 hours south that night to Encinitas and awoke to Aphrodite nearby.

Spending that Sunday in the temple gardens and grounds proved to be one of the most Peaceful feelings of my life. I was able to center my Being into a place of total acceptance for the upcoming surgery. Death is usually hard to face, but life may be even harder for some of us.

I took many photos of the plant life and short videos of the swimming fish of many colors. The combination of two of my favorite things : photography and nature, overwhelmed me with a sense of Joy. Walking by the ocean bordering the garden paths, I knew enough to feel grateful for those rare moments in Time, but also tried to capture the gifts of peace into a memory bank that I could keep locked until special occasions. Now sharing these blessings with you is such a good feeling in expression here.

Anyone interested in the photography of The Golden Lotus Temple, please just ask and I would be most happy to email them to you.



...Shabbat Shalom, Hinda-jonathan (formerly Ramsay)

September 2016

Dear Congregation,

It's hard to believe that it is already September. The summer here in Arizona has been hot but productive. We continue to renovate the guest ranch every day except Sunday.

We are so proud of our sons. They have taken on this daunting task and are proving their commitment by working very hard every day. They have learned many new skills. It makes me feel hopeful about their futures. We are all tired and sore, but now we can see the light at the end at the end of the tunnel. I think we'll be able to move in by the end of the month. Then we'll start work on the rental rooms and the landscaping.

We just finished with the help of a local cowboy fencing off the building compound from the neighbor's cows. This is open range country so the cows have the right of way. One of our next big tasks is to fence off the whole 100 acres. I continue to worry about Peter. He works too hard and has some health issues. We all try to keep him from lifting or straining, but he often finds out too late that he has overdone it.

I've sent a picture of our living room, called "The Lounge". It is the only finished room so far in the "Hacienda" to give you an idea of what it will look like when finished. ►

► I'm not sure how long I will be needed here, but for now every day is full of tasks. I'm now a fulltime construction worker and I have the calluses to prove it. It is rewarding in a whole new way. I am stronger in body if not in spirit.

Miss you and my life and role with you.

You are in my heart and mind.

With Love,

Nameste

Rev. Susan

