

First Universalist Church of Southold
PO Box 221 Main Road
Southold, NY 11971

The Free Spirit

Pastor Kimberley Debus, Minister

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Office Hours Mon. – Fri., 9:00-12:00

Church Web Page – <http://FirstUniversalistSouthold.org/>, e-mail address: SoutholdUU@optonline.net

April 1, 2016

Services

April 3, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

“Most Likely to be a Girl Scout”

In high school, the yearbook editors jokingly gave our guest speaker, Beth Peterson, that title, and there was nothing cool about that. Now, 30+ years later as a leader, Beth sees Girl Scouts doing pretty much the same things, yet somehow her neighbor is sending her emails with links to diatribes about how Girl Scouts are radical feminists.

Beth Peterson, lay speaker

April 10, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

“Waste Not, Want Not – We Are Our Brother’s Keeper”

We waste enough food to feed the hungry of the world.

Ceil Loucka, lay speaker

April 17, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

As we approach Earth Day, we will wrestle with some of the hard news and look faithfully to where there is hope for our planet.

Pastor Kimberley Debus

April 24, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

“Holey, Holy, Wholly”

What does it mean to be whole? How can we achieve wholeness? And what do we do in our brokenness?

Pastor Kimberley Debus

Coming Attractions !!!

April 5th – Covenant Group. Southold Library, 4:00 p.m. Topic: “Forgiveness”

April 16th – Board Meeting. Office trailer on church grounds, 10:00 a.m.

May 22nd – Annual Meeting. Location TBA, 12:15 p.m.

Do you have a news item, announcement, or picture for the *Free Spirit*? You may send it to Susan Pond at suepond@optonline.net, or mail it to the church post office box.

The deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month. Thank you.

Grace Notes

One of the questions that I didn't get to during the Question Box sermon was, "What propels evangelicals to believe their myths and strange convictions?" It's a question that contains several other questions, about the basis of fundamental Christian theology, facing contradictions in sacred texts, and the one I am led to answer today, the rigors of what Stephanie Drury calls "Christian Culture."

Drury, a journalist and blogger, grew up as an evangelical preacher's kid, and having left that religion and that culture, looks back at some of the more intriguing (and sometimes funny) elements, while holding a community that has been harmed by some damaging theologies and behaviors with love and support.

In her blog, "Stuff Christian Culture Likes," Drury outlines some of these things in great detail; some of it's rather fun to look at from the outside, like the propensity of men to call their wives "smokin' hot" as though that's the only public compliment allowed, to the expected persona of the youth pastor. But much of what she writes about points to the very thing Unitarian Universalists can't abide: the need for certainty.

It hit me while reading Drury's post on "Things that Edify:"

Edification is mentioned several times in the New Testament, basically saying we should do stuff that edifies ourselves and each other. It's a lovely concept and Christians want to take it seriously. But the Bible doesn't give a whole lot of specifics as to what is edifying and what isn't. Christian culture wants to know exactly what that means, so they have filled in the blanks.

Over and over again, whether talking about social issues, church organizations, or family, she points to the need for certainty. They fill in the blanks so there is no unsurety, and all subsequent issues get measured against that created doctrine. Whether it's blasphemy, homosexuality, money, or movies, there is such a need for certainty that certainty often overtakes reason.

And that is why we as Unitarian Universalists often have such a hard time. We value reason – some suggest it is our deity – but at the very least, we cherish our doubt, honor our ability to see many points of view, celebrate our plurality and variety, both in matters spiritual and cultural (although we're more dogmatic than we'd like to admit in regards to our culture – but that's a topic for another day). The point is, we are so strongly attuned to questioning, reasoning, debating, that we don't know how to handle certainty – particularly when it goes against all reason.

I bring this up, because it is a failing on our part to not understand this mindset.

We know, as Kevin Smith wrote in his film *Dogma*, "You can change an idea; changing a belief is trickier," but we have a hard time recognizing that what we think are ideas are beliefs for others. We are so tied into following ideas to a logical conclusion, we can't understand how people simply take things on faith. We dwell so easily in a sea of uncertainty, we can't understand how some people drown in it.

In a presentation at General Assembly a few years ago, Ellen Cooper-Davis encouraged us to learn more about the cultures we find ourselves in, and learn how to speak to others about our own faith in the context of their faith. At a St. Lawrence District Assembly, Fred Helio Garcia reminded us that we must be literate in both ideas and language – "Words matter," he said, because "those who control the words control the world."

We must get better at approaching those who are swimming in the pool of certainty, not by chastising their lack of logic, but by showing them love beyond the pool – showing them the beautiful shores, glistening with hope and openness, showing them the gentle waves of compassion, showing them the rich waters of love and faith. We can't do it by shoving them off the pier. We have to do it by meeting them where they are.

We can combat the sin of certainty and open minds and hearts to the awesome, expansive, inclusive, healing love that some call God, when we know what we're saying and how it is perceived. Let us be loving and gentle to those whose certainties we are shaking.

Blessings,
Kimberley

Covenant Group

“Forgiveness” will be our topic for Tuesday, April 5, 4-5 p.m. at the Southold Library upstairs.

“A forgiving spirit is by its nature a unifying force. It can remove the barriers of separation between peoples and nations and weld them together in peace and goodwill; something that legislation with the help of armies can never accomplish...”

– Charles R. Loss

In Peace,
Ginny Cornell

Thoughts on Spirit

Here’s a spirit-exercise for us to work on.

Using a **pencil** (important), draw two boxes ... one on the left side of a piece of lined 8.5x11 paper, and one on the right; each box 2-3 inches wide and the length of the page. Label the left box **“bad stuff”** (things / people / circumstances / events I feel strongly negative about. They may be recent or historical.) Label the right, **“good stuff,” etc.** (Use only every other line, so there is a blank line between each item on both sides.)

Most likely, the “stuff” you feel most strongly about in each category will occur to you early on in this exercise, but take your time and add to the boxes over the course of a day or two. Do not include people or things you do not feel strongly about one way or the other. **You should end up with two lists that are strong opposites in terms of your feeling and judgment about them.** Examples: Adolf Hitler, weeds, and indecisive people might be left-box hatreds, while Mother Teresa & flowers are right-side loves.

After you are satisfied that your boxes contain most of the things in life you abhor or adore, go over them one by one, and ask yourself why they are categorized as they are. Where do your strong judgments come from? ... from your own personal experience or from what you’ve learned, read, etc.?? Might other people in the world see them differently?

Dwell on each item in both lists. This is not an easy or quick exercise. After the initial listing, you might work on it occasionally over the course of a week or so, meditating on your feelings.

When you are ready for the hard part of this exercise, erase the lines that separate the left and right boxes. Integrate your lists by sliding items from one side in between items from the other so that you end up with only one list. Erase the labels you wrote for each box and replace it with one label that describes all the items, using your own words, “ -----
-----“

One of the many morals of this exercise: *when it comes to this beautiful, mysterious, wondrous, diverse, ever-changing, always-teaching-us life, never etch anything in stone... or ink!*

Joe Mc Kay
March 2016

RE Coordinator Position Available

We are currently seeking a coordinator for our Religious Exploration program. This individual should have experience working with children, parents and volunteers; possess good organizational and communication skills; have knowledge of child development and teaching strategies; and have the ability to work cooperatively with other church staff, the RE Committee, the minister, and church members. It is anticipated that the position will require approximately 5 hours per week, and three Sunday mornings per month. This is a paid position.

Interested applicants may contact the church for a complete job description, and to submit their resume.

Church Office: 765-3494, SouthholdUU@optonline.net

Giving and Receiving

Seeing one another as Love itself
is the best gift we can give.

Gardening by the Sea

Happy Spring! Isn't it nice to see some color outside!

It is time to feed your flowering bushes. The best food to use is phosphate. It can be found at Southold Agway as well as garden centers to the west. Phosphate promotes blooming, and after blooming, new buds for next spring. If you want to prune your flowering bushes, do not do it now!! Wait until right after they bloom and before they set new buds. If new buds are cut off, there will be no blooms next spring. Do not over-fertilize – you can burn roots and also cause too much growth. If we get a dry summer, this extra growth will require extra watering.

When lawns are fertilized, be stingy!! If too much fertilizer is applied, it can run off into storm drains and from there into wetlands and marshes, which are already overloaded with too much nitrogen.

If you have a landscaper, you need to pass this info on to him/her. They like to be heavy-handed so the grass grows more and has to be mowed more often, translating to higher costs to you. Many of them did not get plant education.

You can start annual seeds now inside for transplanting outdoors in May.

Until next month, happy gardening!

Shalom,
Ceil

UU Happenings

LIAC's Annual Spring Dinner

Saturday, April 9th, UU Congregation of Shelter Rock, 48 Shelter Rock Rd, Manhasset, NY.

Keynote Speaker and workshop facilitator: Rev. Scott Taylor.

FREE afternoon workshop at 2 p.m. focusing on congregations working in partnership with other congregations. Cocktail hour: 5 p.m. Dinner: 6 p.m. Dinner tickets: \$20 in advance / \$25 at door

UU District of Metro NY Central East Region Annual Meeting

May 6-7, Hyatt Headquarters Hotel, Morristown, NJ. Keynote Speaker: Taquiena Boston.

Friday Night Concert: Brother Sun. Details and registration: www.uumetrony.org/am16

Minister's Hours

By appointment:

Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Monday and Wednesday, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.