



Unitarian Universalist  
Meeting House  
11 Orange Street - P. O. Box 1023  
Nantucket, MA 02554  
(508) 228-5466

## Nantucket Unitarian Universalist Newsletter - September 2016

### COMMON PATHWAYS \*

By Reverend Linda Simmons and Gary Langley

### Labor of Love

On May 25th of this past year, many of us loaded up Paul Stewart's van and took a number of household items to Ascentria in Worcester to aid Syrian refugee families in their resettlement in the United States. Ascentria's mission is: To break the cycle of poverty, and build thriving communities where everyone has the chance to achieve their full potential, regardless of background or disadvantage. They not only help refugee families resettle through their New Americans' Program, they also have an Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URM)

Ascentria is the only program in New England that exclusively assists refugee and migrating youth. The program is responsible for refugee, asylee and trafficked young people under the age of 18 who are in the U.S. with no parent or guardian. They have placed more than 400 unaccompanied minors with foster families in Massachusetts.

This year the Worcester Ascentria program has a total of 68 high school students, 64 returning and 4 entering from junior high. These youth receive not only foster care placement, but educational support, MA Health, a quarterly clothing stipend, holiday and birthday stipends, case management which includes legal and mental health services, and much else that they need to thrive, perhaps most importantly compassion.

The young people in this program have come to the United States unaccompanied by any adult or guardian, arriving primarily from refugee camps in Asia and Africa and/or the city streets of Central America and Mexico. They have experienced interruptions in their education as a result of displacement caused by war, persecution, famine, poverty, civil strife, abandonment or neglect. Some had never attended school prior to their arrival to the United States. Despite this, more than 81% of the more than 600 minors who have been in the program have earned their high school diploma or GED. This is above the national average. The majority of these young people go on to study at community colleges or universities. In Massachusetts alone, there were 30 high school graduates and 28 went to a community college or university.

We at The Meeting House on Nantucket have agreed to participate in helping these youth in their return and continuation in high school by donating the needed items listed below. Three of the youth specifically that Ascentria asked we offer our support and prayers to are: Juan from Honduras, Kuya from Eritrea and Vishnu from Nepal.

On October 12th, we will bring what we collect to Ascentria in Worcester and meet with our partners there, leaving on the 7:45 Hyline Ferry and returning on the 5pm Steamship fast ferry.

Please join us in this 7th Principle Project Action as we continue our work to make a difference in our own lives and the lives of others. Items needed:

Backpacks or book bags	Pens/pencils/erasers
Notebooks	Binders/ loose leaf notebook paper
Pencil cases (or plastic zip bags that are 3-hole punched for insertion into a binder)	Calculators
Rulers	Pocket Folders
Pocket dictionaries	

\*Nantucket is full of common pathways, some known by many, others known only by a few. Our Meeting House brings us together, traveling over many pathways, some common, some not, as we learn to walk with each other even when the ways are unfamiliar and unmarked.



JOIN US AT 10:45 A.M.  
EVERY SUNDAY  
IN THE HISTORIC  
SANCTUARY

**Sunday, Sept. 4**  
**"Labor of Love"**  
Rev. Linda Simmons

**Sunday, Sept. 11**  
**"The Long Haul"**  
Rev. Linda Simmons

**Sunday, Sept. 18**  
**"God of Dirt"**  
Rev. Linda Simmons

**Sunday, Sept. 25**  
**"Our Founding  
Values, the Body  
Politic, the Common  
Good, and Personal  
Politics"**  
**Lay Led Service**  
Guest Speaker Peter  
Panchy

**Families Welcome!**  
**Religious Education  
for Children Every  
Sunday**

## **Re-Energizing Our Commitment to RE**

by Linda Spery

One of the goals currently under discussion by our church community is “to make a firm commitment to Lifelong Religious Exploration (RE).” Some background about the RE program might be beneficial to review, given the number of friends and members relatively new to the congregation.

As has been the case with congregations of all denominations both on and off island, our RE (or Sunday School, as it's called in some churches) program has had its peaks and valleys. During Rev. Ted Anderson's tenure as minister the overall church membership numbers were at their highest and, not surprisingly, enrollment in the RE program for children was also significant. As ministerial transitions have occurred, the congregation has aged and attitudes about regular Sunday church service attendance have changed, so has the RE program at the Meeting House.

Over the past 15 years or so the program has expanded to encompass adult educational offerings that take place at times other than Sunday morning when the traditional children's RE program occurs. The adult program received special emphasis during the ministries of Jennifer Brooks and interim David Horst. Our current minister, Rev. Linda Simmons, with her wealth of experience in education and training, has taken us to an even higher plane with adult programs that have attracted not only members and friends within the congregation but also many from the community-at-large.

As we consider the goal of making a firm commitment to RE, it's important for us to realize that five years ago we as a congregation faced the reality that we were not being as financially prudent and responsible as we needed to be for a membership our size. We were spending down our endowment at an alarming rate and our expenditures were far out on sync with our income. Difficult decisions had to be made with drastic spending cuts in the annual budget, including our RE program. Though painful, the budget reduction was necessary for us to protect our endowment for future generations and also in order for us to be able to fund a full-time minister rather than a part-time position. The cuts meant that we had to move to more of a volunteer RE program involving qualified members for the children's program. Though well meaning, that approach was not sustainable with our limited pool of teachers and their other competing volunteer commitments within the church. Fortunately, we were blessed with Jen Dunbar joining us as a paid children's RE teacher. During her tenure, she was a valuable member of our staff and much loved by the children and families within our congregation. We are grateful for her contributions to the program.

Now we begin a new chapter in our RE program as we consider a firm commitment to this important aspect of ministry to all ages within our congregation. How will this renewed commitment be funded? How will it be structured to build a sustainable program for children, youth and adults? What expectations do families and RE participants of all ages have of our RE program moving forward? These and other questions need YOUR input.

(continued in next column)

## **Board of Trustees Monthly Report**

The Board of Trustees met on July 19, 2016. The Board did not meet in August.

The Board has been busy this summer. After several weeks of work we presented the draft of the Congregational goals: Principles into Action at the July mid-year congregational meeting. We followed up with a discussion about the goals on August 14th. Further discussion will be offered in September on the 18th and the 27th, and finally on October 23rd.

Summer Board activities also included: participation in our annual goods and service auction and a Board sponsored summer members gathering on the Parsonage back lawn.

The next meeting of the Board will be September 20, 2016. Agenda items will include stewardship, pledging, and a progress report on the AR renovations.

Jan Ellsworth  
President Board of Trustees  
ellsjan@verizon.net



2016 Summer Members' Gathering

## ***Interested in becoming a Member of the UU Meeting House?***

**There will be a New Member Ceremony  
on Sunday, September 18.**

**Contact Rev. Linda at [revlindasimmons@gmail.com](mailto:revlindasimmons@gmail.com) for more information.**

(continued from Energizing our Commitment to RE)

If you have not yet signed up for a town hall style discussion to give the board your opinions, please plan on doing so. Three opportunities remain--Sunday, September 18th and Sunday, October 23rd after coffee hour and Tuesday, September 27th at 6 p.m. The meetings are open to both members and friends of the congregation.

*Linda Spery is a past president of the congregation's board*

## SEPTEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Thursday, September 1, 6:30 p.m.—8 p.m.**

Make It Stop: Ban Semi-Automatic Weapons. No More  
Civilian Sales Meeting—Activities Room

**Thursday, September 8, 11 a.m.—12:30 p.m.**

Food Rescue Meeting—Activities Room

**Sunday, September 18, following service**

Congregational Town Hall Meeting—Activities Room

**Thursday, September 22, 11 a.m.—12:30 p.m.**

Food Rescue Meeting—Activities Room

**Tuesday, September 27, 6 p.m.**

Congregational Town Hall Meeting—Parsonage,  
10 Fair Street

**Thursday, September 29, 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.**

Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War film screening—  
Hendrix Hall

## Congregational Town Hall Meetings

At the last board retreat in the spring, thinking of how to put our principles into action, the board put together 4 goals. There will be 3 more town hall style meetings for you to offer your feedback about these goals. Please join us at one of them. We want to know what your vision for our congregation is, what you see as most important for us to live into now, what shape you see our principles needing to take at this time. We need your participation to be the best of who we are. You do not need to be a member to contribute, just someone who cares about our future as a congregation! And then on October 29th at the Board Retreat, the board will take all of the feedback received from the congregation, revise the goals accordingly, and put together a plan for the year. It takes a village, and we are all the village! **The meeting dates are after service during coffee hour on 9/18, 10/23 and Tuesday 9/27 at 6:00pm at the parsonage.** Please join us as we practice living into our principles!

***Now accepting donations  
of the following items  
to be delivered  
during our trip to Ascentria in  
Worcester on October 12:***

Backpacks or book bags	Pencil cases
Pens, pencils, erasers	Rulers
Notebooks	Calculators
Pocket dictionaries	Pocket folders
Binders and loose leaf notebook paper	

*We will be collecting these items all month—deposit them in the box in the lobby. On October 12, we will go to Worcester to meet with Ascentria and deliver the items, leaving on the 7:45 a.m. Hyline and returning on the 5 p.m. Steamship fast ferry.*

## DEFYING THE NAZIS: THE SHARPS' WAR

FILM SCREENING  
AT HENDRIX  
HALL

Martha and Rev.  
Waitstill Sharp,  
WWII Unitarians  
who secretly worked  
in Nazi-occupied

Europe to rescue Jews, dissidents, and refugee children, are the subject of a 2016 PBS documentary Defying the Nazis, the Sharps' War by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky, narrated by Tom Hanks. It is set to air on September 22nd and **we will be showing it in Hendrix Hall on September 29th at 6:30 p.m.**



Please join us to see this important film about two heroes that remind us that we can all make a difference. This will be an inter-faith event. Discussion to follow.





## **Sermons for September**

### **September 4: "Labor of Love" - Rev. Linda Simmons**

Why do we engage in social justice work? The wounds of the world are so many and our efforts are so small. This sermon will consider the changes that social justice work brings to us and the world and why it matters to continue to engage in justice making activities.

### **September 11: "The Long Haul" - Rev. Linda Simmons**

Long distance runners talk about what it takes to run a race, to make it to the end, what matters, what has to be let go of and held on to. How might this be translated into living together in a congregation here on our small island in this Meeting House? What might we need to hold closer and to let go of to thrive?

### **September 18: "God of Dirt" - Rev. Linda Simmons**

The poetry of Mary Oliver has intrigued and inspired so many of us. What is it about her words that lifts us up, bring us back to ourselves, and remind us so deeply of who and what we are? What is her spiritual genius made up of?

### **September 25: "Our Founding Values, the Body Politic, the Common Good, and Personal Politics" - Lay Led Service with Guest Speaker Peter Panchy**

In this unusually volatile election season, we welcome to the Meeting House pulpit long-time Nantucket High School history teacher Peter Panchy as he explores how our values and politics intersect.

*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:*

*~ The inherent worth and dignity of every person.*

*~ Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.*

*~ Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.*

*~ A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.*

*~ The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.*

*~ The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.*

*~ Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

## **Second Congregational Society Unitarian Universalist**

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On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Nantucket-Unitarian-Universalists-75824801619/](https://www.facebook.com/Nantucket-Unitarian-Universalists-75824801619/)

### **Church Staff**

**Rev. Linda Simmons, Minister ~ Edward B. Anderson, Minister Emeritus**

**Diane T. Lehman, Music Director ~ Lucretia Voigt, Office Manager**

**Ed Sullivan, Sexton ~ Chuck Gieg, Bookkeeper**

### **Board of Trustees**

**Jan Ellsworth (President), Val Hall (Vice President), Paul Stewart (Treasurer), Steve Estabrooks (Clerk)**

**Cynthia Csabay, Joanna Greenfield, Christine Sanford, Clay Twombly, Lora Stewart**

**Church Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - noon**

**Minister's Office Hours: Tuesday, 10 a.m. - noon and by appointment**