

The Pulse

September 2020

VIRTUAL SUNDAY SERVICES, 10:00 AM on ZOOM

The Meeting ID# 819 313 1486 Password: uuchurch

September 6 – No service

September 13 – Rev. Larry Smith – *TBD*

Our Community Minister Larry Smith is scheduled to preach on every second Sunday of the church year.

September 20 – Joan Spengler – *Autumnal Equinox*

September 27 – Gail Costanza – *Financial Update*

As requested, Gail Costanza will tell us how much in additional pledges was received, and decisions about spending for the upcoming year.

List of DDUUC Officers 2019-2020

President – Christina Sturgis
Vice President – Mary Watterson
Secretary – Mary Ann Keiffer
Treasurer – Jen Chaiken
Religious Education – Trish Concannon
Social Action – Kara DeRose
Sunday Service – Joan Spengler

**The Pulse is the newsletter of
Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist
Community.**

It is published monthly, September through June. Articles are solicited from members and friends. The Pulse is edited by Pete Costanza.

DDUUC has services every Sunday at 10:00 AM from the Sunday after Labor Day through the end of June. Informal Sunday services are held on selected Sundays during July and August. Sunday services are provided by guest ministers, outside speakers, or members and friends of the congregation. DDUUC has an ongoing religious education program for children. We have many activities in which to participate, and are also involved with the Greater Bordentown area through our sponsorship of an Interfaith Dialogue and many social action tasks.

DDUUC NEWS BRIEFS

It was with great sadness that DDUUC learned of the passing of Ron Trautz, charter member and significant contributor to our community since its inception.

At the August 23rd DDUUC ZOOM congregational meeting, Luis Caban signed up (virtually) to be a member. Welcome, Luis!

SOCIAL ACTION. For social action, we prepared 50 meals (that includes 7 children, and 2 toddlers). We also provided backpacks filled with school supplies to the children living in the motels.

We are still doing the factory sealed\ non perishable microwavable meals due to exposure/COVID-19.

Thank you to all who donated! We have also received so many donations from the community that I didn't have to buy anything this month. Special thanks to Cathy Vandergrift for donating \$ to help pay for the school supplies. And a big thank you to Angel, Luis, Trish and Katie for helping me prep the meals and backpacks

Kara DeRose

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. Here is news from Soaring Eagle, the assisted living center for northern Cheyenne Elders near Billings, MT. Elders Clinton Birdhat and Pastor Paul Beartrack remember DDUUC in their daily prayers. So far COVID-19 has not reached the center but is "creeping closer". The Elders are grateful for any good thoughts we send their way.

Betsy Young

How We Can Live the 7th UU Principle One Tomato at a Time

Michael Skelly Sr.

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience. The Seventh Principle calls for “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

We are facing some difficult times and are looking for ways that will allow us to take tangible action, which might significantly help improve things. One of the concerns that we are facing is how to reduce and even reverse climate change and improve social justice. It is possible for us to make an immediate difference through our own actions combined with actions by many, many others.

70 percent of the United States economy is driven by consumer retail purchases. For all the talk about big government, industry, and all the other so-called “big” players, the combination of lots of little purchases by lots of little purchasers is actually “king”. Not only that, we can multiply the social impact of our purchasing patterns.

It’s fairly simple to do. It may not be easy to stop once you start playing this game. Let’s take the humble tomato as an example. We cannot only choose whether or not we are going to buy a tomato (or something else), but also decide where we buy it from. Will it be in the grocery section of a multinational corporation store whose headquarters is not even located in our home state? Or will it be a tomato purchased at the local farmer’s market from a local farmer’s field?

Will you select a tomato based on nutrition, flavor, or how it can withstand travel bouncing up and down across the continent in a truck or even from an entirely different continent across the ocean? Will that tomato, and thousands of others like it, have been coated with artificial colors, chemical fertilizers, or pesticides that end up in the tomato and running off into streams, rivers, and ocean waters? Is the land where it is grown becoming more fertile and uplifting the local ecological systems, or less?

Is the grower, packer, food processor, broker, and seller active members of the community and supporting the kind of community you want to live in? Will that tomato have been grown using fair labor receiving a living wage (or better), while getting adequate healthcare insurance, and other job benefits?

Every purchase, or refusal to purchase, can send a loud and clear signal throughout the economy and society as to our Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

(Editor's Note – Kelly read this at her mother's memorial service)

My mother was a force to be reckoned with. (She would be upset that I finished that sentence with a preposition). Oh well! She was almost 102 and she still made her own decisions and as we joked she still "ruled the roost" When she had just turned 101 I said "Mom, whatever you're doing, keep doing it" and she said "You know what I do, I do what I want!" And that was the truth.

She had an amazing life. She graduated high school at 15 and college at 18. She met my father at Lake George where she worked as a waitress to pay her way through college. She wanted to be a lawyer, but became a teacher, which seemed to be her true vocation. Everyone in Wynantskill of a certain age remembered her. I only wish students today had the same education about the Constitution and Checks and Balances that we had, thanks to Mom.

Many summers we would see Mom on the front porch tutoring older children who didn't know how to read. They would come back as adults and thank her for how she changed their lives. She wanted my sister Mickey and me to become teachers because it was such a wonderful profession. We rebelled, but as it turned out I spent my last 20 years before retirement running an Adult Education Program helping people learn to read and get their high school diplomas. Mom would tutor for me whenever she came to Trenton. Her favorite students were an African American man recently released from prison who she said, "was such a gentleman" and a Muslim woman who had put six children through college as a Home Health Aide.

I was probably the odd child out in the family. When I was young, I would sit on her bed at night and regale her with all my exploits of the day. I would also talk to her of my doubts. She told me a priest in Granville had told her there were many doorways to Heaven. When I decided to take a different religious path than the rest of the family she was worried, but when she came to tutor she said she felt better because I was doing Christ's work. This meant so much to me. This is what a good mother does. She looks for the goodness in her children.

I could go on and on but I think that is enough food for thought. Love you Mom! Everyone loved and respected you!

I Can't Breathe

Song by The Microphone Prince – aka Luis Caban

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ykn1JutZBc&feature=share

(Editor's note: Prophetically, Luis wrote this song four years ago!)

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Please officer don't shoot, I've got my hands up,
Don't choke me down to the ground I wanna stand up

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Typical Bronx tale, I can't leave,
I've got seven cops on top of me
I can't breathe

Technically, if you can't breathe,
you can't talk.
And without a leg to stand on
you can't walk
But they do every time,
(be)cause the prosecution,
Has the game "pimped out"
like prostitution
What kind of time are they talkin,
For "strong arming" a blunt?*What do they want for jay walkin?
I only resist (be)cause they stalkin
Satan must have a spell on you like screamin Jay Hawkins!

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Eric Garner, Mike Brown, John Farrel, Oscar Grant, Wayne Scott, Philip Parnell

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
41 hollows, Amadou Diallo,
How many more black lives have to follow?

Tell me Lord where do I hide
from this danger?
Doing magic tricks in this *****
like Chris Angel
Houdini was white, not black,
how I shoot myself on the chest
with hands cuffed behind my back?
Lootin my hood**
Don't make a smidgeon of sense
But neither does ten shots
for resisting arrest
Why am I the only one
that you stop and frisk
When cops get *****,
Why (am) I paying the consequence?

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Eleanor bumpers watch Tamir rice
Victims of those who CHOSE to steal life

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Remember Damien Perkins
and Derek Williams,
both on a long list of dead civilians

My Hulk Hogan strength,
(is) too much for the cops (?)
I'm a demon who bulks up
and runs through the shots (?)
Is this really a realistic, palpable threat?
Do I need to speak my mind
on the Capitol steps?

When black skin earns us
the worst possible rep
Isn't a gun shot the next logical step?
Mayor Deblasio never killed a man
Those officers blood is on
DARRYL WILSON'S HANDS!

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
John Crawford, Sean Bell, Anthony Baez
Names carved in stone,
souls (that) can't be divided
Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Rest in peace Victor Steen
and Gus Rugley,
The evil in the hearts of men is just ugly

I'm no Reverend Al Sharpton activist
We just talk racism, y'all practice it
When Black people (are) racists,
we (are) "cracker bashers"
When white people (are) racist
they hang our *****
When Black people (are) racist
we "bang" in blogs
When white people (are) racist
we can't get jobs
All we can get is "popped"
with those 14 shots
Do all things stop
if we don't support THESE cops?

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
What the **** else you gonna do

When your fear for (of) them ghetto boys
(has) got your mind playing tricks on you
Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
You ever notice?

Whites curse at police
they're rants get "post(ed) up"
When I'm stopped by police
It's "yes sir, no sir"

It's 400 years of incarceration
Plantation place-ism lacerations
Alligator babies and castigation
So anything I DO is retaliation!

The year the first penitentiary was made
Was around the same time
Lincoln freed the "slaves"
But he ain't give a rat's ***,
that's a myth
Some would say he ACTUALLY
freed us by ACCIDENT!

The south was getting too strong
off of that FREE labor
A financial decision HAPPENED to save us
They built all the jails just to bang us up
Then started the KKK to hang us up
They immediately passed
racist laws for vagrants
Underhanded ways
to embrace enslavement
The system ain't broken it's OK!
It just/ was never set up/
to protect us/ in the FIRST place

Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Please don't shoot officer
I got my hands up
Don't choke me down to the ground,
I wanna stand up
Help me get, get the keys to the kingdom
Typical Bronx tale, I can't leave
I got seven cops on top of me,
I can't breathe!

*cigar

**neighborhood

PAGAN PERSPECTIVE

Joan Spengler

It has been a strange summer. There has been fear and denial, pain and joy. I do not know anyone who has been affected physically by the plague, but we all have been affected by this situation.

Our church is meeting via ZOOM. I am glad that we can do that. I like seeing everyone and sharing our Joys and Concerns. And there is always the phone for those members and friends who cannot ZOOM. Keeping in touch is so vital now.

My life has not been overly affected by the lock down. I have still been able to take my morning walks and watch the sun rise. Although I am not a big fan of 'hope', watching the arrival of the dawn is a form of hope that I can handle.

And then I am dragged back into reality by images of people protesting racial injustice. This should have been overcome years ago. And there are the armed protests about wearing a mask. I just do not understand! We send our kids to school where they have live shooter drills and this is okay, but wearing a mask is an affront to our rights? I can feel my blood pressure rising just thinking about it.

So I will leave you with a prayer to the elements that I hope you will find calming:

Energies of the East, of air and communication and wisdom; help us to hear what is true and use our wisdom to make the best choices.

Energies of the South, of fire and passion; may we learn to treat each other and ourselves with kindness and compassion.

Energies of the West, of water and balance; may we find a balance between panic and denial and live our lives with the calm beauty of love.

Energies of the North, of earth and strength; may we stay strong and resilient in this time of trouble.

Energies of Spirit, of what is whole and good; stay with us throughout this time and bring us peace.

Caste and race are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. They can and do coexist in the same culture and serve to reinforce each other. Race, in the United States, is the visible agent of the unseen force of caste. Caste is the bones, race the skin. Isabel Wilkerson

Wow, at the last ZOOM service Joan Spengler opened up the service with the question on what we can do better in the future in 3 years, or post COVID-19, Well, this skeptical mind of mine was flooded with ideas of things we can do better, but also with existential concerns. My concerns are for the Millennial in particular, like the worsening economic disparities, racial disparity, existential problems in the age of COVID-19, such as what teachers will face, and what service providers have to face daily. So I didn't say anything. It's common knowledge anyway.

But what is not exactly common knowledge is our caste system, which is so deeply ingrained in us we are hardly aware of it. When MLK Jr. went to India to study Gandhi and his non-violence movement, he was offended when, as the guest of honor at a conference, he was introduced as a fellow Dalit (untouchable). But it didn't take him long to realize that in America he, indeed, was a member of America's untouchables. Jim Crow laws made that pretty clear. Which brings me to my big concern—what do we do to eliminate the caste system in this country? Just as it has been made clear we are a racist nation (think Andrew Jackson, Confederate statuary, and resistance to Black Lives Matter).

We have to fess up to being part of a caste system that has been going on for a quarter of a millennium, according to Isabel Wilkerson, whose book "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" it thoroughly documents. She's an investigative reporter for the NY Times and a Pulitzer Prize winner for her first book. She is black, and she is female, a member of two of modern history's most denigrated groups. She compares our system with the Indian caste system and the Nazi caste system in the 30's. I could go on, but let me highly recommend the book, and/or the critical review in the New Yorker for Aug. 17, 2020.

And what a moment for this book to come out! Right in the middle of an upcoming presidential election where one question is, according to civil-rights historian Taylor Branch, "If people were given the choice between democracy and whiteness, how many would choose whiteness?" Apparently, the incumbent and those speakers at the RNC are counting on the latter, to include Midwestern suburban housewives.

THE SKEPTIC'S CORNER (continued)

I personally don't want any part of a privileged white caste that systematically and continually finds ways to keep people of color down, immigrants out, and refuses to elect a highly qualified woman to lead our nation. But there is hope. Involved in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations are a good many white men and women, young and old, and black police and black reporters, all with smart phones. Oh yeah, and privileged old white men like myself rooting them on and who can't wait to cast my mail-in ballot.

Remember! Even though we can't pass a basket during ZOOM services, you may mail your checks to the Church or you can contribute via PayPal on our website.

Gods East and West

In comparing the concept of gods between western and eastern religions, there are specific differences.

In the west, Judaism worships Jehovah or Yahweh; Islam worships Allah (Yahweh and Allah are the same god); and Christianity worships the Trinity, which is the union of Yahweh, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In each case, the god in question is the ultimate supreme being that created and is in charge of everything, and is totally other from its creation.

In the east, Hindus worship many gods, who are actually manifestations of various aspects of the Brahman, the ultimate reality, which is more of a principle than something to be worshipped. Brahman is basically inconceivable, beyond concepts; so minor gods are substitutes for personal worship. Buddhists revere Buddha, but not as a god, although there are gods in Buddhism, who are believed to be high beings but are not immortal. They are models for happiness. The ultimate in Buddhism is Sunyata (the Void) also called Tathata (Suchness). These are ineffable principles as such, not persons to be worshipped. Taoists also worship many gods, often revered ancestors whom they believe to be immortal, but these do not create or rule the world. The ultimate in Taoism is the Tao, the underlying principle beyond all things, unknowable, unspeakable, and not worshipped in a personal relationship. In eastern religions, everything is in union with the ultimate, not totally separate.

Perhaps the western religions have not evolved to the point to accept an ineffable, unspeakable, supreme ultimate reality. In which case, Yahweh, Allah, and the Trinity are lesser gods, which are personal and helpful in time of need, but contingent on human thought and belief.

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