

The Pulse

January 2021

VIRTUAL SUNDAY SERVICES ON ZOOM, 10:00 AM

The Meeting ID# 819 313 1486 Password: uuchurch

Jan. 3 – Patricia Concannon – *The Color of Law*

A discussion of the book “The Color of Law” and how it illustrates our forgotten history.

Jan. 10 – Rev. Larry Smith - *Human/Nature*

It seems that there's nothing new in "the theology of the liberal church," as it was called in theological school. But there is something that has always been there and is still something new at the same time, reasonable and mystical.

Jan. 17 – Joan Spengler – *Bean Soup and Pancakes*

It is said that traditions help with cultural continuity. But when do traditions become questionable, and when should they be considered dangerous? And what is a tradition anyway?

Jan. 24 – Roger Long – *The Inauguration - New Year, New Regime*

Let Us Be Hopeful. Maybe the most dramatic change for this New Year will be political. But spiritual change can't be far behind, and let's think of that miserable month of January as that most spiritual of months, for, like its namesake Janus, we will be looking back and forward at the same time, better for our past joys and sorrows.

Jan. 31 – Angel Mossucco – *Don't Act Your Age*

Acting your age as per social norms is not always appropriate. What are the criteria for acting 'outside your age'? Who are some that have done it well?

DDUUC NEWS BRIEF

Cathy Ann Vandegrift's husband, Peter Holsberg, passed away on December 18, 2020. Our heartfelt condolences go out from DDUUC to Cathy Ann and her family. Cards and notes can be sent to Cathy Ann at 26 Harrington Drive, Columbus, NJ 08022.

SOCIAL ACTION

Motel meals were supposed to be delivered on Thursday, Dec 17 but we decided to cancel it due to the weather/snow storm. We did it on Monday, the 21st instead. We fed 68 people, which included 13 children and 1 toddler. We were able to provide fried chicken again this month because of our fabulous donors, Betsy Young and The Hustis family. We also provided hats and mittens for all. And gave out wrapped presents to the kids living in the motels (Tess's idea).

Shout out to Dan DeRose for helping on his day off and Andy Maskell for helping us deliver the meals. Also, Marian Hoffman, Christine Wright, Raquel Parker and everybody else who helped and donated to made this month's motel meals possible.

The kids were so excited to get the presents! Sadly, there were a couple kids who were actually more excited to get the food than the presents. We had a few extra meals, gloves/hats and presents so I dropped them off to a couple of local families in need. We still have a few hats and gloves left over, that I will give to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen.

Kara DeRose

List of DDUUC Officers 2019-2020

President – Christina Sturgis
Vice President – Mary Watterson
Secretary – Jennifer Steffee
Treasurer – John DeMasi
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.



Tess Wrapping Gifts for Motel Kids

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.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We met on Dec 13th for RE at Sandy Creek Farms in Columbus so we could have our mitten tree ceremony there. We took a video of the kids decorating the tree and singing “Oh Mitten Tree.” We also gave the kids small gifts for the holidays. Here’s the link to the mitten tree video:

<https://www.facebook.com/patricia.concannon/videos/10159558338121800/>

Thanks to Trish Concannon!

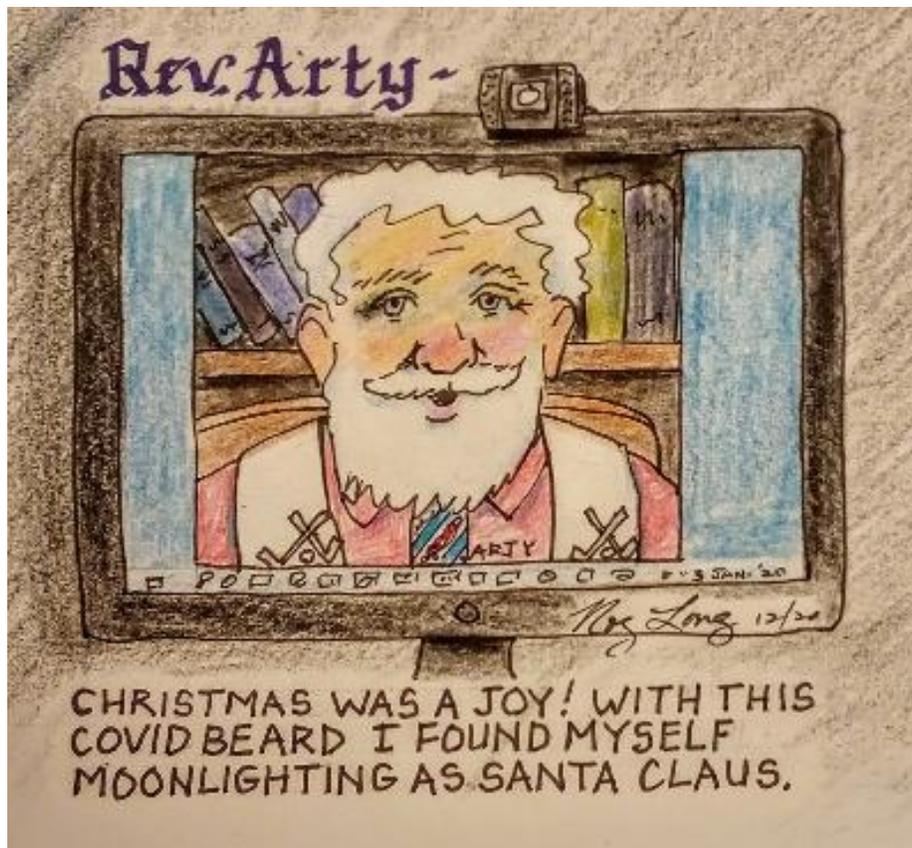
Kara



RE Kids Decorating Mitten Tree

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

The Book Group will be discussing "Where the Crawdads Sing" on Thursday, January 14 at 7:00 PM on Zoom. Please let Kelly Hansen know if you would like to join the discussion. (kellyhansen444@gmail.com)



I Am Missing the DDUUC Drum Circles

As the old year passes, I am reminded of all the things that had to be canceled due to the coronavirus Covid-19. We could not have our solstice celebration up close and personal in our sanctuary. I really miss the drum circle that went with it.

Our drum circles were as free and fun as kindergarten chorus. All we had to do was show up and start beating on something. Drums were provided and shared, but a coffee can with a lid was good enough to be allowed into the circle. Drummers across the circle could engage in “challenges” or “conversations” as the primal ancient beats circulated among us.

All of this came to mind because I watched the film, “The Visitor” with Richard Jenkins as a sad, old college professor who is going through the motions of his life following the death of his wife, a concert pianist. He attempts to reconnect with the best part of her by taking piano lessons only to have an experience that is not free or fun at all.

Circumstances force him to meet a young couple, a woman from Senegal (Zainab) and a man (Tarek) from Syria, who plays the African drum, the djembe. The movie came out in 2007, in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, so it is important to the plot that they are Muslim. We see the closed-off old academician spying the drum with curiosity in sidelong glances. He walks into his apartment and startles the Syrian who is practicing.

The Syrian is an open-hearted man who teaches the old poop to play the drum, while his girlfriend looks on warily. Turns out she has spent time in detention because she is an undocumented immigrant, and she has reason to be wary of their new American friend. Her boyfriend Tarek is undocumented as well, but of a more carefree nature.

Tarek take the professor, Walter Vale, to a drum circle in Central Park and invites him to join in on a borrowed djembe. Walter tentatively loosens up, plays the drum, and rejoins the living. Tarek is arrested and Walter visits him in a detention center. As the men visit separated by plate glass and talking on telephones, Tarek asks Walter to drum on the table to confirm he has been practicing.

“Man, I need some music!” Tarek says, when Walter declines. Tarek sets up a beat by tapping on his chest and Walter taps quietly on the table to please his young mentor.

Tom McCarthy, who wrote and directed the film, said in the commentary he was inspired by the book “The Prophet of Zongo Street,” by Mohammed Naseehu Ali, a Ghanaian writer. He found Ali living in Brooklyn and took djembe lessons from him for a year. In the film, Tarek gives Walter a compact disc for inspiration. It is a recording by Fela Kuti, a Nigerian pioneer in the Afrobeat genre, who married 27 women on a single day in 1978.

Djembes are available on Amazon starting at \$69. Here is a link to the Keur Djembe African Drum Shop in Brooklyn: <http://keurdjembe.com>
Here is a link to the trailer for “The Visitor”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY0FEt3mBog>



So many people were anxiously awaiting the New Year. Like a switch would be flipped and everything would be all better. It doesn't work like that. Time has a way of marching to its own beat. And we are the ones who feel that it is dragging its feet or speeding away from us.

As the Bible and the song say, "To everything, there is a season...". And now is the season of cold and inner work. The days are getting longer but it's not really noticeable yet. But soon we will notice the change. For now, we can stay warm and dream. And I dream of a better time yet to come.

It's not enough that we return to "*normal*." Normal was not working for so many people. We need to remember our time of aloneness and think about what was the one thing that we missed the most. And then we need to figure out a way to ensure that we never have to miss it again.

I really miss gathering. I didn't realize how important it was to me. Zoom church is an amazing accomplishment but it's not the same. That is also true of the pagan events I've attended online. I miss just being in the same place as others. And the grocery store does not count. I just miss people.

If more people would realize that we *need* other people in their lives, maybe, just maybe, hate would decrease. I know this is a very simplistic view of helping the world to heal. But as I have always said "world peace begins with a smile." If we could just be happy to be with others, who knows what will come out of it.

So dream in this cold time, and start to plan how you are going to help the world to heal. I know I will be spreading smiles, as soon as it is safe.



Warning note: *Since almost everything this year was politicized—truth, facts, morality, ethics, religion—I feel justified in making this column political.*
p.s. I won't make a habit of it. Rog

THE SKEPTIC'S CORNER

Roger Long

On hope: *“Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it and to work for it and to fight for it.”*
Barak Obama

Quite often we find ourselves hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. Work your tail off and hope for the best. Millions of Americans did not just hope to remove the tyrant-in-chief from office; they worked hard for that to happen. They did whatever they could. They campaigned, they donated, they rallied, they protested, they argued with friends and relatives, they volunteered at the voting booths. And they are still working to ensure that the Georgia runoff election has a hopeful outcome. And after that it may take some work to ensure a peaceful transference of power to the Democrats. There is a history of unpopular heads of state, like Vladimir Putin, refusing to relinquish their absolute power, regardless of how the people may suffer. I personally have hope that the new administration will be the antidote to what this country needs—an empathetic, capable and caring leadership that recognizes science and scientists, that acknowledges global warming, and that will take steps to conquer the coronavirus pandemic (which is being done, despite a total lack of cooperation from the POTUS.) Yes, I have hope now in a president and vice-president that will not demand loyalty above competence. I have hope in an administration that will not build another foot of wall between our good neighbors and us. I have hope in an administration that will ensure a fair and equitable distribution of the vaccine. But mainly the hope that when the COVID-19 threat is over, that we will be better prepared for a future viral threat.

I hope we can learn from the winter solstice—that the darkest and shortest day is over and, as the days get longer and brighter, so will our lives. But, we will have to work for it.

And, if necessary, fight for it.

Happy New Year!

“A Supreme Being”

At one time, to be granted conscientious objector (CO) status in the military, you had to answer “yes” to the question: Do you believe in a Supreme Being? The reasoning was that to disobey the Commander in Chief of the United States, you had to be answering to a higher power in refusing to kill in a war. “A Supreme Being” is somewhat undefined, but it avoids the many shadings of using the word “God.” The trouble was that certain objectors in good conscience answered “no” and were denied CO status, a perceived injustice. These included not only humanists and atheists, but also Buddhists, Quakers and other members of mystically oriented religions, who do not believe in a single separate Supreme Being. Generally, these people believe in their oneness with Supreme Being (Being Itself, not “a” Supreme Being, separate from themselves).

Buddhists believe in an ineffable Suchness, a Void or Nothingness from which all things spring. This is not a Supreme Being that demands that one shall not do something evil, such as killing. Desire not to kill is inspired by compassion, and the understanding of the interconnectedness of all people.

Quakers believe in a inner light that guides you. It is your deepest self. It is not an outside authoritarian entity. Quakers spring from the Christian mystics, such as Meister Eckhart, that held sway mainly in Germany around 1300 A.D. The movement migrated to England, where the Quakers formed. Another sect originating in this way were the Anabaptists, who rejected baptism, claiming that a few words and a water ritual were not enough to save an individual. A deeper belief in union with God was necessary.

Humanists and atheists may claim conscientious objection based on their belief in the highest value of all, that of human life.

Once this unjust requirement was discovered, it was deleted.

Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community 39 Park Street, Bordentown, NJ 08505 609-444-9349 www.dduuc.org email address: dduuc@yahoo.com
--