

BELL STREET COLUMNS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF BELL STREET CHAPEL



WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

SUNDAY SERVICES BEGIN AT 10 AM
TODDLER CARE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AVAILABLE

1 | JANUARY

WINTER POETRY

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee will present its almost annual service of winter poetry. After a long night of partying, it's the perfect way to start a new year! We will also celebrate our annual fire communion.

8 | JANUARY

ENVIRONMENTAL WITNESS

Worship Committee

In 1917, the Universalist Church of America declared, "We would mobilize the forces of our church ...and summon all our strength to the establishment of justice, education and social righteousness." We continue that call today to reflect on environmental justice. What is environmental justice? Come this Sunday to find out.

15 | JANUARY

HERE AND NOW

Rev. CJ McGregor

Ultimately the work we do to realize our hopes and dreams for our congregation will reap reward in our future. But what about the here and now? What are the consequences on our physical, emotional and spiritual selves of this work in the present?

22 | JANUARY

GRASPING WAR

Rev. CJ McGregor

Rev. What do most of us know about war? Can we truly understand war as experienced by troops that are returning home?

29 | JANUARY

INSIDE THE DOOR

Worship Committee

How can we be good neighbors to all our neighbors? How can we best be strong allies to end homelessness in RI? Come hear reflections and thoughts for the year ahead.

FROM THE MINISTER

The Romans dedicated New Year's Day to Janus, the god of gates, doors and beginnings. The month of January was named after Janus, who had two faces, one looking forward and the other looking backward. I am fond of this idea as I choose reinterpretation over making resolutions this time of year. It's useful to look backwards and reinterpret our past. The new year offers us the perfect opportunity.

Why don't we revisit and reinterpret our past more often? Maybe a better question is why would we do this? Why not let bygones be bygones? Why don't we just keep moving forward not wasting time dredging up the past? "Stop living in the past," my grandfather would say. Why are we determined to release ourselves from our past by putting it and keeping it behind us? In his book, "The Responsible Self," H. Richard Niehbur describes the method of reinterpreting and calls it "useful or fitting to us humans who have, like it or not, a remembered past which we cannot forget or leave behind." Reinterpreting recalls, accepts, reorganizes and understands the past instead of abandoning it. To move toward freedom, toward freshness, toward something new and adventurous in our present we need to reinterpret or reconstruct our past.

In his book, *The Book of Secrets*, Deepak Chopra describes how ancient cultures answered the question, "How do you set your mind free?" He tells us "they tried to understand how the mind traps itself" and that "the ancient Indian sages devised the key concept of samskara. A samskara is a groove in the mind that makes thoughts flow in the same direction. Buddhist psychology makes sophisticated use of the concept by speaking of samskaras as imprints in the mind that have a life of their own. Your personal samskaras, built up memories from the past, force you to react in the same limited way, robbing you of free choice." Chopra writes "unable to escape their toxic memories, people adapt to them, adding one layer after another of impressions. The samskaras rule the psyche through a jumble of old, outworn experiences." We end up living the experience over and over and unfortunately getting the same old results.

Reinterpreting offers us a chance to experience freedom and to claim the opportunity to successfully move into and through the future and salvage that which has meaning and truth from our past. We can understand and produce the meaning of our lives from the stories that are available to us from our personal histories. Reinterpreting allows us to discover possibilities, hope and previously unrecognized meaning. Reinterpreting goes both ways. When we engage in this practice we may discover or realize pain that we have previously missed, ignored or stowed away to be forgotten. Either way freedom will ultimately result and bring new understanding. I've heard reinterpreting described as the "Liquid-PlumR for the soul." This description assumes that the path to deeper truth and meaning is clogged and that we shouldn't be surprised when we can't move emotionally and spiritually. Several caps full of reinterpreting and time clears the way to growth and wisdom. You are freeing your soul, your mind and your spirit to experience peace and stillness.

Author Steven Levine asks the questions, "If the future rapidly becomes the present, and the present condenses into the past, how do we fully stay alive each day? How do we live a full and rich life in the present?" To be alive in the present we shouldn't mute the music and sounds

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REV. BEN HALL

COMMUNITY MINISTER

CHURCH STAFF

HEIDI GILKENSON, OFFICE MANAGER
 Office Hours:
 Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon

IRINA TCHANTCEVA, MUSIC DIRECTOR
 NED FOSTER, SEXTON
 IRENE ZABEK, CHILDCARE MANAGER

GOVERNING BOARD

KATE GILLIS, PRESIDENT
 STEVE BARRETO, PRESIDENT-ELECT
 MICHAEL DURETTE, TREASURER
 RAY PERREAULT, AT-LARGE
 PEG BOYLE, AT-LARGE
 AUDREY GREENE, AT-LARGE
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 MEMBERSHIP/CARING, MEREDYTH WATERMAN
 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, SHELAGH GOULIS
 PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, CLARA HARDY
 AND CAROL WISEMAN
 WORSHIP, AUDREY GREENE

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

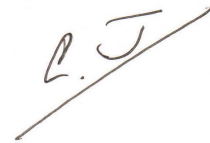
EDITOR, MEREDYTH WATERMAN
 COPY EDITOR, ELLEN SMITH
 ORIGINAL DESIGN BY TERRY BARBOUNIS

CONT. FROM PAGE 1

of voices, erase names and memories of our past. Be mindful of days gone by and recognize the wisdom and visible marks indicating the places where we've lived in laughter, sorrow, friendship and in spirit. Reinterpreting is the stringing together of these experiences that will allow us to reshape and rethink our today.

May we use the opportunity before us to reinterpret and ready ourselves for new and fresh beginnings with a deeper understanding and clarity of where we've been.

Peace and blessings for the new year.



SECURITY CODE CHANGE

I will be changing the security codes on Sunday Feb. 5. If you have a key to the church or the Parish House, you will need to get a new security code from me before Feb.5.

~Kate Gillis,
 President

DEATH AND LOSS READING GROUP

The Death and Loss Reading Group will meet on Jan. 19 at 6:30 p.m. Our book for January is "The Story of Edgar Sawtelle" by David Wroblewski.

We have enjoy good snacks and even better conversations. Please join us. For information, please contact Audrey Greene at audreyjgreene@gmail.com.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Heidi Gilkenson, our office manager, works 8 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday. The office is open for parish business 9 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday. Please be mindful of this schedule if you need assistance from Heidi. She may be contacted at (401) 273-5678 or contact@bellstreetchapel.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you would like to have your announcement included in the weekly e-mailed schedule of events or printed in the order of service, the information must be sent to Heidi Gilkenson at contact@bellstreetchapel.org by Wednesday evening. Please note your announcement may be edited due to limited space.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the next issue of *Bell Street Chapel Columns* is Jan. 15 at 8 p.m. Please submit your articles as a regular Word attachment (.doc, not .docx, please) to Meredyth Waterman at MeredythW@aol.com.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Share the Plate for January:

A group of social-minded volunteers from Westminster Unitarian Church were inspired to create a non-food pantry, the Sharing Locker, to provide essentials to families and individuals living in East Greenwich. The Sharing Locker's primary goals are to assist people in meeting their basic needs for living, to increase their quality of life, and to fill the gap for those who are struggling. Items include:

- Body Lotion
- Deodorant (men/women)
- Shampoo (16 oz or less)
- Razors
- Liquid Dish Detergent (16 oz or less)
- SOS pads
- Tissue
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Dry Pet Food (dog/cat)

Most of these items are not covered by SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), and the Sharing Locker is dedicated to honoring the integrity and worth of all individuals and we do not discriminate based on people's needs.

Books Through Bars: Thanks to Bristol RI lawyer Elizabeth Tanner, Books Through Bars completed our 501(c)3 application to the IRS (all 40 pages!) to become a non-profit organization. Currently the waiting period is approximately 6 months, so we should be hearing by April. Book packing will end by Christmas when, again, we will be out of funds for postage.

Thanks to our volunteer Raymond, however, we have started up a set of speaking engagements to both inform the community and raise funds for this important literacy program. Our first program will be at a South County Rotary Club this month.

~Carol Wiseman

Peace and Social Justice Co-Chairperson

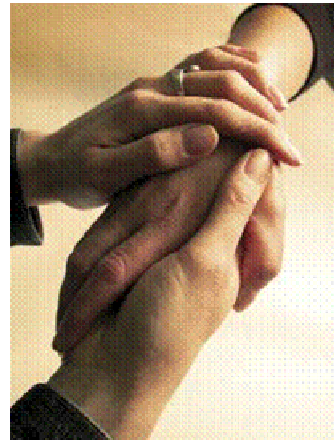
FROM THE BOARD

The Governing Board recently took a few moments to reflect on how we are currently feeling about Bell Street. CJ has been our minister now for over 100 days and board members are feeling the steady sense of presence he offers us. They enjoy having him share and offer help with dealing with all the situations that happen. They feel that there is a good energy at Bell Street now. It feels like we are functioning well as a church and we feel a deep home-like connection.

These feelings put us in a good position to welcome 2012. We can look forward to more wonderful worship experiences and the nurturing presence that Bell Street offers us.

Here's to continued opportunities to celebrate our loving community, offer and receive caring support, enjoy deep spiritual growth, and experience satisfying work for peace and social justice.

*Blessings and best wishes for a Happy New Year,
Kate Gillis,
President*



BELL STREET CHAPEL TRIVIA

Bell Street had a lovely December holiday party with delicious food and good company. We played Bell Street Unitarian Universalist trivia. Here are some of the questions so you can play too. Answers are on Page 4.

1. What year is on the front of Bell Street Chapel?
2. What person connected to Bell Street is buried in Swan Point Cemetery?
3. Who cast the bell in the First Unitarian Church of Providence?
4. What four Unitarian or Universalist churches that were in Providence when Bell Street was built are still in existence in some form?

SAVE THE DATE

The date of the mid-year congregational meeting has been moved to Feb. 6 at 11:30 a.m.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

BELL STREET TRIVIA—ANSWERS FROM PAGE 3

1. 1875 which is when James Eddy had the church built using architect William Russell Walker
2. Anna Garlin Spencer, our first minister who lived from April 17, 1851 – Feb. 12, 1931



3. Paul Revere
4. (Pictured left to right, below) First Unitarian Church, First Universalist Church, Westminster Unitarian Church (can still see the back on Mathewson Street, although the congregation is now in East Greenwich), Church of the Mediator (was the 2nd Universalist Church in 1840, had a building built on Cranston Street in 1869 that burned down in 1971, now on Rounds St)



GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Guest at Your Table boxes and materials were distributed in November and are still available in the Shell Room. The box features people that the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has worked with recently. These people are your “guests,” and you are asked to share your blessings with them by putting money in the box. As you give to your guests, you can learn about them by reading the [“Stories of Hope”](#) booklet.

A final collection of the boxes will occur during service on Jan. 15, Martin Luther King Sunday. Please make checks out to Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Membership gifts of \$100 or more are eligible to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y.

Here is more information from <http://www.uusc.org/>: The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonsectarian organization that advances human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. We envision a world free from oppression and injustice, where all can realize their full human rights. Through a combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, UUSC promotes [economic rights](#), advances [environmental justice](#), defends [civil liberties](#), and preserves the rights of people in times of [humanitarian crisis](#).

~Kate Gillis, President



JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PH=PARISH HOUSE | S=SANTUARY | EH=EDDY HALL | MPL=MEET IN PARKING LOT | OS=OFFSITE | RE=RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ROOM

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
NEW YEAR'S DAY 1 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee hour (EH) 11:30 am Cross-roads	2	3 6:30 pm Worship (PH)	4 7 pm Outside group (PH)	5	6	7 8 am Meditation (EH)
8 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee hour (EH)	9 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6:30 pm Governing Board (PH)	10	11 6 pm Order of Service deadline	12 7 pm Membership Committee (PH)	13	14 8 am Meditation (EH) 1 pm Cooke Birthday Party (EH)
15 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee hour (EH) 8 pm newsletter deadline	DR. MARTIN LUHER KING JR. DAY 16 6 pm Empire Review (S)	17 7:15 pm House Committee (PH)	18 6 pm Order of Service deadline	19 6:30 pm Death and Loss reading group (PH)	20 7 pm Drum Circle (EH)	21 8 am Meditation (EH)
22 9 am choir 10 am Service (S) 11 am Committee Fair at Coffee hour (EH) 11:30 RE Committee (RE)	23 6 pm Empire Review (S)	24 6:30 pm Peace and Social Justice Committee (PH)	25 6 pm Order of Service deadline	26	27 7 p.m. Youth CON at UU Sharon (OS)	28 8 am Meditation (EH)
29 9 am Choir (S) 9 am newsletter folding (EH) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee hour (EH)	30 6 pm Empire Review (S)	31 6 pm Peace & Social Justice (PH)				

COMMITTEE FAIR SUNDAY, JAN. 22, COFFEE HOUR

Have you made a new year's resolution to learn more about how Bell Street works?

- Did you ever want to know how those fantastic lay-led services get crafted?
- How about how the church budget is made?
- Do you want to know how that fresh paint appears and the gardens get planted?
- How about the planning for those wonderful social events like the Thanksgiving Dinner and Service Auction?
- Who makes sure the next generation knows about Unitarian Universalism?
- Who organizes all those great social action projects we do like collecting gifts and making sandwiches?
- How about who organizes those informative UU classes to let newcomers learn about our church?
- Who helps people find just the right niche at Bell Street to use their talents?

Come to the committee fair after church on Jan. 22. Ask questions. Find out what keeps Bell Street going.



The Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel

5 Bell Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02909
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**“Love is the spirit of our church
and service is its law.**

**This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.”**

