

BELL STREET COLUMNS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF BELL STREET CHAPEL



WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

SERVICES BEGIN AT 10 A.M.

TODDLER CARE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AVAILABLE

1 | FEB

WHAT I LEARNED FROM SPORTS

Rev. José Ballester

On this Super Bowl Sunday many people will be watching “The Game”; some for the commercials others for the athletic contest. However many more people will ignore this yearly ritual and perhaps miss some of the most basic truths of life.

8 | FEB

I'M NOT A CHRISTIAN, BUT I LOVE JESUS

Rev. José Ballester

In this country at this time we either have an informed opinion on Jesus or we run the risk of being culturally illiterate. This service was scheduled for Jan. 11, but was snowed out.

15 | FEB

PARKER AND PARKER

Rev. José Ballester

Theodore Parker was a difficult Unitarian Minister who afflicted the comfortable. Rebecca Parker is the president of a UU seminary who comforts the afflicted. In the synergy of their theology the moral arch of the universe does bend toward justice.

22 | FEB.

FAITH AND OUR STORIES

Raymond Perreault

Thomas Potter and James Eddy each built a house of worship without a congregation, with faith that they would come. What can these stories tell us today about the role of faith in Unitarian Universalism.

ON THE ROAD TO PROVIDENCE — CRUELTY

As a youth I worked in my family's delicatessen and since we had a mixed clientele I was instructed in Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut). Later in life I discovered there were good reasons why certain foods are kosher; some because they have been prepared in a clean and merciful manner or the animal was free of disease or defect. Sometimes the food is to fulfill some religious ritual recalling an event in Jewish history. Some food is forbidden because in Biblical times such food could not be properly harvested or prepared and thus would endanger the consumer.

However the one overarching rule I found fascinating was the prohibition for consuming meat and dairy products together. This was to prevent cooking or preparing an animal in that which would nourish and sustain it; the milk of its mother (Ex. 23.19: Ex34.16: Dt.14.21). To avoid even accidentally doing this cruel act, food is marked as meat (fleishik); dairy (milchik) or neither meat nor milk (parve).

While I am impressed that Rabbinic Laws strives to avoid cruelty in this manner, I am disheartened that secular practice in Rhode Island goes the opposite way and tries to inflict as much cruelty as possible. The Donald W. Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls might qualify as cruelty in Rabbinic Law; it certainly is cruelty in my opinion. In a city of mostly immigrants, this detention center sits at the edge of town, beside the public ball fields. From behind its walls and barbed wire fences, fathers can look out and see their children playing baseball. They can look out across a struggling mill town where they tried

to support their families until they were incarcerated as a consequence of this nation's crackdown on undocumented immigrants. The Wyatt Detention Center is part of the new growth industry in poor neighborhoods: immigration detention.

Instead of providing jobs and federal funds to help pay for police and fire services, Central Falls began to lose the very people that were trying to improve Central Falls. Their crime was seeking to improve their lives, the lives of their families and their community; the same as wave after wave of others have been doing since the first European set foot on this continent and began displacing the native tribes. Immigrant detention in maximum-security facilities is a growth industry that enhances the revenue of the facility owners and slowly kills the surrounding neighborhood. Often the government officials in the community are blithely unaware of the cruelty they have welcomed.

Citing fears of “Arab terrorists,” they enforce racism and classism and never see the Latino communities – the backbone of their service industry – are being destroyed by their cruelty. They turn a blind eye to a system that dehumanizes and inflicts punishment without regard to the individual.

As Unitarian Universalists, we must raise our voices and condemn the cruelty in Central Falls and elsewhere in this country. As Unitarian Universalists, we must help the people of Central Falls, because they are our sisters and brothers.

~Rev. José Ballester

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ORIGINAL DESIGN BY TERRY BARBOUNIS

LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

As part of the process of growing the Bell Street community, both in terms of size and depth, it is increasingly important to be able to articulate who we are, what we stand for, how we are different (and similar) to other churches and what we hope to achieve in the future.

Mission and vision statement development are a critical part of planning and growth for any type of organization. Bell Street Chapel's mission statement should describe where we are today, while our vision statement should describe what we want to be in the future. Mission and vision statements are both useful reminders of the "big picture" and can be used as benchmarks to assess new ideas and proposed programs to determine whether they are in line with long-term goals.

While we have a mission statement at Bell Street, we do not have a vision statement.

The Governing Board has recruited a Mission and Vision Workgroup to work on this project and given them the following charge:

To evaluate Bell Street Chapel's existing mission statement to determine whether it properly defines the purpose of Bell Street Chapel today and to develop a vision statement that captures the congregation's hopes for Bell Street Chapel in the next five to eight years.

In doing that work, the workgroup shall draw on previous research and evaluation conducted by chapel bodies including the most recent ministerial search committee, as well as new evaluation tools such as small group meetings, surveys and interviews with members, leaders, ministers or staff. The group will also take advantage of Unitarian Universalist Association and district resources, and create statements that reflect our association with Unitarian Universalism and its seven principles.

The workgroup will issue proposals for a vision statement and any changes to the mission statement it recommends to the congregation for discussion and approval by majority congregational vote. The workgroup is to issue a preliminary report to the congregation at the annual meeting in 2009 and present its proposals for the mission and vision statements at the midyear meeting in 2010.

Thank you to Kate Gillis, Dan Greco, Brian Kovacs, Ray Perreault and Phil Smith for volunteering to serve on the Mission and Vision Workgroup.

If you have any questions about this process or are interested in participating in this group, please contact Don Laliberte (dlaliberte@gmail.com) or Rev. Jose Ballester (joseballester@mac.com).

*~In Peace,
Jen Shimkus
Governing Board member at large*

Definitions:

A **mission statement** "clarifies the essence of an organization's existence. It describes the needs an organization was created to fill and answers the basic question of why it exists." (Board Source)

A **vision statement** is defined as "an inspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action. (BusinessDictionary.com)

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



ETHICAL EATING

— THE UUA STUDY/ACTION ISSUE FOR 2008-2012

STUDY: Family-owned, sustainable, small-scale farms survive despite great odds: competition from huge, profit-driven factory farms; lack of government support, which goes instead to industrial agriculture; pressure to sell their property to developers; and the need for a second income to make ends meet. They survive despite these formidable obstacles because of the values of most small farmers – respect for the environment and for their animals; concern for the welfare of their employees, whom they know personally, and for the health of those who consume the food they produce; a deep appreciation for the cycle of life and the cycle of the seasons and a desire to witness those cycles. They make an investment in the future of the land they cultivate by using sustainable farming methods. They make personal sacrifices in order to live out their principles. These values are consistent with our own Unitarian Universalist principles.

There are about 600 farms in Rhode Island, most of them family-owned and operated and smaller than 100 acres. They produce eggs, meat, dairy products, and fruits and vegetables. Most are farmed sustainably, many organically and without antibiotics, growth hormones, or genetically modified seeds. Local farmers deserve our support!

ACTION: Visit the Wintertime Farmers' Market at the beautiful, renovated mill, Hope Artiste Village (1005 Main St., Pawtucket). It runs every Saturday from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.. You can get locally grown winter vegetables (onions, garlic, turnips, potatoes, winter squash, etc.); apples, cider, and other orchard products; locally roasted fair-trade coffee; eggs from free-range chickens; meat, poultry, and seafood; cheese; maple syrup; bakery goods – all produced right here in Little Rhody. There is always live music and a happy, festive atmosphere. Learn more at www.farmfreshri.org.

~Carol Crowley (ccrowley8@cox.net)

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the March edition of *Bell Street Columns* is Sunday, Feb. 15, at 8 p.m. Since February is such a short month, it's going to seem to pop up early. Please be ready! No submissions will be accepted after the deadline. Please e-mail your submissions as a Word attachment to Meredyth Waterman at

MeredythW@aol.com. Thanks!

~Meredyth Waterman
Columns Editor

BEING A MEMBER OF BELL STREET CHAPEL

At our last meeting, the Membership and Caring Committee decided to write a series of newsletter articles about what it means to each of us to be a member of Bell Street Chapel. I am happy to be writing the first one.

As many of you know, Don and I had our second date at Bell Street. He brought me here for a performance of the Rhode Island Feminist Chorus and had me selling soda at intermission while he convinced a member to assume the chair of the Religious Education Committee. While this may not seem like an ideal second date to some, it was perfect to me for two reasons. First, Don was willing to share with me something so valuable to him, Bell Street Chapel, and second, Bell Street Chapel was truly an amazing place!

Shortly before Don and I had met, Don emceed Bell Street Chapel's talent/no talent show. He spoke with enthusiasm about this and told me all the things Bell Street was involved in; feeding the hungry, speaking out about child and sweatshop labor, and hosting groups such as the Feminist Chorus. As president of the congregation, he was clearly proud of the work they were doing. As I was unfamiliar with Unitarian Universalism, Bell Street Chapel sounded unbelievable. This was a group of people working together to achieve a better society AND nearly half of the members were gay or lesbian. This was a place I was eager to check out.

And so, a couple of days after we met, Don took me to Bell Street for our second date. I remember walking through the front doors and immediately feeling welcomed. But for me, it was more than that, it felt like coming home. Not only was it welcoming, but it was comfortable and felt familiar. I was anxious to learn more. As time progressed, and Don and I got to know each other better, I began to attend services on Sunday morning. Those initial feelings continued to resonate and strengthen.

Eventually I made the decision to become a member. Being a member of Bell Street has given me the opportunity to do things I never thought I would or could do. I have protested what I perceive as an unjust war, testified on behalf of the congregation in support of equal marriage rights, and led several services on Sunday morning. Thanks to my membership, I am a different person than I was when I first walked through the doors nine years ago and for that I am grateful.

~Richard Corso
Membership Chairman

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

AMONG US

*"Who loves the rain
And loves his home,
And looks on life with quiet eyes,
Him will I follow through the storm,
And at his hearth-fire keep me warm."*

~Frances Shaw

In this column we celebrate milestones and other life events, request healing thoughts for those in need, and remember departed loved ones. If you have information you would like to share in this column, or if you know of anyone in need of assistance, please contact Carol Crowley (ccrowley8@cox.net).

Happy Birthday to Bell Streeters born during the month of February: John Tarrats (Feb. 6), Richard Muto (Feb. 7), Clara Hardy (Feb. 13), and Cindy Palmieri (Feb. 17). Have a wonderful birthday and a healthy, peaceful year.

Carl Freese continues to recuperate well from his recent heart transplant and is growing stronger every day. He continues to get good news from his doctors about the function of his transplanted heart and shows few signs of rejection. We hope he is soon able to return to church services and events.

Our thoughts are with Ellen Smith who had surgery again in January and faces another long period of physical therapy and rehabilita-

tion. Ellen and her husband, Stu, demonstrate an inspiring balance of acceptance and hope. We look forward to their return to church.

We also wish a rapid recovery to Mykl Friend, who had surgery in January.

Love to Aerial Arthur and Beverly Hart.

Our sympathy goes to Richard Muto, who lost his mother recently.

On a very sad note, the Membership Committee recently learned that Susan Alkana, who was a member of our congregation for several years until early last year, passed away in September after a long illness. We remember Susan fondly, and our thoughts are with her family.

The Membership and Caring Committee members are aware of the difficult economic times we are all facing. Please make us aware of any special needs among our members and friends. Let us all hope for better times in the near future.

*~From the Membership and
Caring Committee*

MOVING DAY AND PAINTING

Our process of rearranging the Parish House is continuing on Feb. 1. Everything will be removed from the back, left office on the first floor and moving José's office into it. We also have a few other things to move. We will need a number of hands with this project, so if you are able-bodied and can give an hour or so to help after coffee hour, we'd really appreciate it.

Also, we plan to start painting parts of the chapel in later winter or early spring, likely on Saturday late mornings into afternoons. This is another project that will need (preferably detail-oriented) volunteer. If you enjoy painting, please contact Meredyth Waterman at MeredythW@aol.com to sign up.

~Meredyth Waterman

BOARD BITS

In this monthly column we summarize the recent activities and decisions of the Governing Board of Bell Street Chapel. It is our goal to keep you as informed as possible about what we do at our meetings, as we represent and are answerable to you, the congregation. Also, we remind you that all our meetings are open. We would be happy if members of the congregation attended. If you would like to make suggestions for the agenda, speak to the president, Don Laliberte.

At our Jan. 13 meeting, the Board was joined by Nominating Committee Chairperson Peg Boyle, who updated us on openings in leadership for next year. She also brought us a gift, in the form of Ray Perreault who agreed to join the board in the vacant at-large seat. The Board voted to approve his appointment immediately, and we are now complete. Welcome aboard, Ray!

The Board appointed Ray, Philip Smith, Brian Kovacs, Kate Gillis and Dan Greco to the new Mission and Vision Workgroup, and voted on an official charge for the group. Check out Jen Shimkus' column on Page 2 for details.

After a review by the Membership Committee, which sent letters to a number of members who haven't been around, the Board certified 61 members for official Unitarian Universalist Association purposes. That number is lower than the 74 we certified last year, but that's because we made more of an effort to ensure accuracy and contact people in question. Lowering the number also ensures that we don't pay UUA dues for members who aren't really here.

We've had many visitors at recent services, and to better respond to their needs, the Board committed to expanding our monthly post-service question-and-answer session for visitors to a short weekly event hosted by members of the Board and the Membership Committee. A basic guide will be developed to help lead the discussion.

Since our Share the Plate proposal didn't get started the first week of the month, we postponed it until February, lest our first designated charity get less than a full month's worth of its share. The Board approved funding for a number of improved signs for the church grounds to tell visitors where we are from the street and where to park. This money was included in our Plan for Growth, which is being funded by the Board of Trustees.

*~Meredyth Waterman
President Elect*

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



PROVISIONS UNITED DONATION

ProVisions United, an organization founded by Bell Street member John Tarrats to feed the hungry, donated \$2,000 to Bell Street Chapel last month. ProVisions partners with Bell Street by donating fresh fruit for the lunches we pack for Crossroads Rhode Island.

The money was raised by ProVisions United's "Earth, Wind & Desire" masquerade ball and fashion show fund-raiser in October, and was part of \$8,000 the organization raised at the event and donated to a number of charities that feed the hungry both locally and globally. Other recipients were Providence Rescue Mission, Crossroads Rhode Island and Manna Relief.

The event, emceed by ABC 6 news anchor Paul Mueller, included a masquerade ball and costumed fashions, a silent auction and giveaways as well as exciting entertainment, great food and dancing to raise money to support local and global food initiative programs. Fifteen local area restaurants including Citron, Bacaro, Hemenways and Waterman Grille united with models from Rhode Island Modeling Agency along with Party By Design and Park Ave Puppy's to create a spectacular event. Other sponsors that helped to make the event possible were Amica Insurance and the Rhode Island chapter of the International Special Events Society.



In photo: Julie Montalbano (Provisions United), Carol Lombardi (Provisions United), James Verity (Provisions United), Sean Carew (Providence Rescue Mission), John Tarrats (Provisions United), Karen Santilli (Crossroads Rhode Island), Laura Ward (Provisions United).

Established in 2002, ProVisions United unites a coalition of professionals in the hospitality, marketing, special events, entertainment, and tourism industries to organize fund-raising campaigns in support of charitable organizations that help feed all men, women and children at risk.

Headquartered in Providence, ProVisions United provides a vital link between businesses and communities to create, support and maintain programs for providing food care to all people and encourage self-reliance. ProVisions United is a Rhode Island chartered nonprofit organization.

PROVISIONS UNITED'S SKATE FIGURE 8

ProVisions United will host another event in March to raise money for Bell Street Chapel and other organizations that feed the hungry. "Skate Figure 8" will take place March 1 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Bank of America Skating Center in Providence.

Free skating exhibitions, lessons from Johnson & Wales ice hockey team members, a VIP tent and much more will be available until 5 p.m.

The goal of Skate Figure 8 is to raise \$8,000 in a one-day, four-hour event. Proceeds from the event will benefit Crossroads Rhode Island, Bell Street Chapel, Providence Rescue Mission and Manna Relief. General skating prices are \$6 for adults and \$3 for seniors and children under 12. Skate rentals are \$4. VIP tickets are \$35 per person or \$60 for two. VIP entrance includes cost to skate, rentals and admission to the tent with complimentary appetizers and drinks.

General skating tickets and skate rentals can be purchased at the rink on the day of the event. VIP tickets can be purchased online at www.provisionsunited.org or at the rink the day of the event.

For more information about Skate Figure 8 or to donate, please visit www.provisionsunited.org.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



FEBRUARY | CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PH=PARISH HOUSE | S=SANTUARY | EH=EDDY HALL | MPL=MEET IN PARKING LOT | MO=MINISTER'S OFFICE | OS=OFFSITE | L=LIBRARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>10 am Service (S) 11:30 am sandwiches (EH) 11:30 am moving 11:30 am discussion group (PH) 4 pm Books Through Bars</p>	<p>2</p> <p>6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (EH)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>6:30 pm Worship Committee (PH)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream auditions (EH)</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6 pm Daydream auditions (EH)</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8 am Meditation Group (EH)</p>
<p>8</p> <p>10 am Service (S) 11:30 p.m. Cleaning Blitz (S) 12 pm Riverheart concert (S) 4 pm Books Through Bars</p>	<p>9</p> <p>6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (EH) 6:30 pm Finance Committee (PH)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>6:45 pm Governing Board (PH)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>6 pm Order of Service deadline</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7 pm Membership Committee (PH)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>6:30 pm Movie Night (EH)</p>	<p>14</p> <p>8 am Meditation Group (EH)</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 4 pm Books Through Bars 8 pm newsletter deadline</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (EH)</p>	<p>17</p> <p>7:15 pm House Committee (PH)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>6 pm Order of Service deadline</p>	<p>19</p> <p>6:30 Gay Bingo (OS)</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>8 am Meditation Group (EH)</p>
<p>22</p> <p>9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11:30 RE Committee (RE) 11:30 am discussion group (PH) 4 pm Books</p>	<p>23</p> <p>6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (EH)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>6 pm Parish & Social Concerns (EH)</p>	<p>25</p> <p>6 pm Order of Service deadline 7:30 pm G&S rehearsal</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Each week we come together as a congregation for worship to explore religious and spiritual issues and to grow as individuals and as a community. Many members have asked about the possibility of forming small groups in order to deepen in spirit, nurture our souls and contribute to and shape the wider world for the greater good. The Unitarian Universalist Association has numerous resources available for adult religious education groups. These groups can focus on individual spiritual growth, theological questions, social justice issues or world religions. Some of the programs available include:

- Barbara Hamilton-Holway's *Spirit of Life* program seeks to bring meaning, beauty, inclusivity and growth to Unitarian Universalist adults as they deepen their spiritual awareness and connections.
- *Spirit in Practice* was created to help Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines, or practices, of the spirit – practices that help them connect with the sacred ground of their being, however they understand it. *Spirit in Practice* affirms religious diversity while seeking unity in our communal quest for meaning and wholeness.
- *Building Your Own Theology*. This curriculum invites each person to write his or her spiritual odyssey and examines a structure for a liberal theological model, varieties of religious experience, human nature, ultimate reality, history, ethics and religious meaning.
- *Owning Your Religious Past* provides simple tools with which individuals may re-examine and retrieve positive aspects of their past religious experience as part of our continuing religious growth.
- *Paganism 101* is an informative and participatory introduction to the contemporary Neo-Pagan movement.

Numerous other programs are also available. There will be a display of various available programs in Eddy Hall during the first few weeks of February. If you are interested in a program, you can sign the sheet that accompanies the program description. Signing up is not a commitment to participate, but it will help us to gauge interest and decide which programs to offer.

We will also need group facilitators. If you are willing to be a facilitator, you can note that on the signature sheet. The programs all include instructions for facilitators, and we can schedule a facilitator training if there is interest.

Exploring religious truth, meaning and experience is central to our Unitarian Universalist faith and these groups give us the opportunity to seek truth and meaning in a safe atmosphere.

~Don Laliberte, President

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It has been wonderful to have so many families participating at Bell Street this fall. The Religious Education program will continue meeting twice a month through May. The program will be the second and fourth weeks January through March and the first and third weeks April through May. The children will continue to participate in the church service until the story for all ages is over. Then they will go downstairs with two teachers. They will share their joys and concerns during a short worship experience and then participate in a reflection of the ideas explored during the story for all ages.

The children are also encouraged to join in helping to make sandwiches for Cross-roads on the first Sunday of each month.

The sessions for January and February will be Jan. 11 and 25 and Feb. 8 and 22. For more information contact Kate Gillis at kgillis@netzero.net.

~Kate Gillis

SHARE THE PLATE PROGRAM

At its December meeting the Board of Trustees passed a proposal that is gaining popularity among many Unitarian Universalist congregations that both increases revenue and spurs involvement in social justice projects: Every week, a portion of the Sunday collection is given to some charitable organization.

Beginning in February, we will take the open offering (non-pledge payments and contributions that aren't designated) and award half of that amount to some charitable organization working in Rhode Island whose mission is consistent with our U.U. principles and practices. Each month a new organization will be selected in consultation with the Parish and Social Concerns Committee, and the entire split of the offering for that month would go to the charitable organization. Selected organizations would be encouraged to provide information or speakers during their designated month.

The selected organizations will be 501 (c) (3) not-for-profits and strong consideration will be given to organizations with volunteer opportunities.

This program will be evaluated after three months.

~Rev. José Ballester

MOVIE NIGHT FRIDAY FEB. 13, 6:30 P.M.

In an effort to live out our commitment as a Unitarian Universalist Association Welcoming Congregation, Bell Street Chapel sponsors a monthly movie night featuring films that examine gender identity issues. Over the past several years, we have seen dramas and documentaries, comedies and heart breakers – all acclaimed and artistically significant films. Thanks go to Genevieve Peri, who seems to have an endless number of ideas for films in this category.

In February, we will recognize Black History Month with a documentary film that is a thoughtful exploration of race as well as gender. Our licensing

agreement does not allow us to identify the film by name in public communications, but anyone who wants to know more may contact Carol Crowley at ccrowley8@cox.net.

As always, we will share a potluck dinner before the showing of the movie and follow it with a short discussion led by Genevieve Peri. So do join us on Friday, Feb. 13, at 6:30 p.m. in Eddy Hall. Bring a nonalcoholic beverage or some food to share – and bring your friends to Bell Street Chapel's Movie Night!

~ Carol Crowley

NOTICE TO FRIENDS OF BELL STREET

Beginning next month, in an effort to save resources, Bell Street Chapel will stop mailing *Bell Street Columns* to friends and acquaintances (not to members) of the church unless you request otherwise.

If you're a friend of Bell Street and want to continue to receiving the newsletter, either by e-mail or snail mail, let us know. Please e-mail Membership Chairman Richard Corso at richardcorso@gmail.com.

If you opt not to subscribe, we hope that you'll check out the newsletter (and other events, etc) on our Web site (www.bellstreetchapel.org) or consider becoming one of our "fans" on Facebook.

~Jennifer Shimkus, Membership Committee



The Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel

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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.”**

