

The Quest

JANUARY 2024
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Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
of Sussex County

PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR JANUARY



Sunday services are both in-person and online, and they start at 10:30. (Religious education classes are in-person only.) Google Meet codes/phone numbers and PINs, which are the same every week, are online at meet.google.com/kww-ugyh-spj or by phone at 413-679-2794, PIN 139 523 137#.

Jan 7. And The Beat Goes On. Rev. Doak will consider the “hype” of optimism, new beginnings, a new year, life changes, and opportunities. Even tragedies. Time is an arbitrary system that brackets existence. The year changing is a good occasion to take stock, do a bit of inventory. Led by Rev. Doak Mansfield.

Jan 14. The Shiksa and the King: Interfaith Marriage in the Old Testament. You may remember that in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye declares that his daughter, who marries a gentile, is as good as dead to him. Jerry will lead a discussion of one or two Old Testament stories involving the marriage of gentile women to Hebrew men. Perhaps the program will lead to a greater understanding of why—even today—there exists in the Jewish community a bias against interfaith marriage. Led by Jerry Sattin.

Jan 21. Dr. King’s Dream. Rev. Doak says of this topic, “As a southern male and someone who is a history geek, I want to share my thoughts, observations, and feelings about race and power, race and cultural bias, and racism’s implications for our individual and shared lives.” Led by Rev. Doak Mansfield.

Jan 28. Mortality. It’s the main thing that everyone and everything in the interconnected web of life all have in common. It’s what separates us from the gods. Bob Dylan, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, sang, “He not busy being born is busy dying.” Let’s get busy. Led by Richard Goffman.

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.*

The Quest is the monthly newsletter of the UUFSC. For the most up-to-date information, go to our website, www.uunewtonnj.org. Our phone number is 973-579-7210.

MINISTER'S MUSINGS



There it stands...down the road...2024. A leaping 366 new days overflowing into the old-fashioned annual package. All the varied gifts await our encounter—love, neglect, indifference, affirmation, support, loss. Chances are we'll encounter a bit of everything. Given the political environment, there's a good chance we'll be exposed to some mean, toxic gales of bad air. I'll be hoping and working for our passage through to better, healthier days for our society and our national life. I hope you will join me in the hoping and the working to make it happen.

A curved array of religious/spiritual groups, taken as points on the arc of history, together form a bow, more powerful than Orion's, bent across the firmament of the story of humankind and its relationship to the gods they have created to soothe their minds and God, to whom they consign their souls. They range from arch-conservative teachings and authoritarian doctrines to sad modern incarnations of ancient magical thinking. Which one is the sweet spot? I sometimes envy those folk, wishing I could join them. But my critical faculties block my acceptance.

For half a century, I've been working on a spiritual understanding of life as a dynamic in which what history has labeled God is the energy that moves, renews, and guides life. God is a verb. God is the unfolding of process. We have the opportunity and obligation to lend to its health and equity. Life is sacred. It's a living organic/spiritual oneness, truly interdependent. Our salvation, wholeness (meaning!) is characterized as a willful participation in the good we can choose to be and do. Good means caring, justice-making, and creative generosity/sharing.

Happy 2024. Claim the blessing. Remember, be in touch.

Love,

Rev Doak

***Mission Statement of the
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sussex County***

**We seek to nourish the spirit;
to foster peace, justice, diversity and understanding
in our community and the world;
and to cherish and sustain the earth and the web of life.**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

It's a new year—and a national election year. This one may be the most important in our lives, measured by the degree of threat to UUFSC principles.

Charitable organizations like ours are not permitted to endorse, boost, or work against specific, named political candidates. So I won't.

But we certainly can talk about our religious principles and how political events may put them at risk.

We say that no person is inherently “illegal.” But by now, you've heard the sharpening rhetoric from some quarters. Some say all immigrants to the U.S. are criminals or are mentally ill. Some say their presence will defile the nation's “blood”—just as the Nazis characterized Jews and Roma.

In Germany, these out-loud denunciations of people by race, ethnicity, or religion, about 90 years ago, were followed by murders in the millions.

Could it happen here? I don't know. But I do know we should stand against racial and ethnic hate, and we should make that stance public.

Europe was torn apart by military aggression, fueled in part by hatred. Hitler united a country by creating a “straw man,” the “other,” and blaming that other for all the nation's ills. It was nonsense. Yet, it happened.

We need to call out hate for what it is, and we need to express our position—all people are worthy. Migrants almost always are people fleeing places of terrible poverty or violence.

Certainly, there can be rules for immigration. But such rules must be governed by understanding and a desire to help those who need help.

Let's come up with a method this year to make publicly known our repudiation of hate.

Stu

THIS MONTH IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Hello Friends,

We hope everyone had a peaceful break, and we look forward to being together again January 7th!

The children and teachers will begin the new year by reflecting on the moral lessons we learned last year. We'll add new words to our moral tales poster to help the children visualize the concept of directions we can choose to go that lead us to acting for goodness and justice.

Our Mitten Tree will stay up in our sanctuary until January 7th. This will be the last day we'll be collecting for Project Self-Sufficiency. Please consider bringing new or gently-used items for those in need. Thank you to all who have donated so far. The tree looks beautiful covered in mittens, hats, scarves, etc.!

Happy New Year!

Wishing you many blessings in 2024,

Sharon and Pin

Below is our RE calendar for January.

Jan 7. Do unto Others. We'll begin by taking some time to review all the lessons we've learned in 2023 and adding the new directions to our moral compass poster. Today's moral tale takes a suggestion from scripture to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The children will role-play the parable of the Good Samaritan with props.

Jan 14. Do unto Others (continued). Following in the example of the Good Samaritan, we'll ask the children to express how they would like to be treated by others and offer scenarios for them to brainstorm ways to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Afterward, we'll play a game of Help Your Neighbor, in which we try to balance an item on our head and help unfreeze our "neighbors" who lose their balance.

Jan 21. Footprints: Treading Softly on Earth. This week's tale is a true story from the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia. It is about how sometimes people try to solve problems even though the solution may hurt living beings and how often this ends up hurting more than we ever imagined or intended. If time permits, we'll try a challenging and cooperative activity called the Lap-Sit Balance to illustrate the interdependent web of life. of which we're all a part.

Jan 28. Footprints: Treading Softly on Earth (continued). Last week, we shared an unbelievable, but true, story called Parachuting Cats to the Rescue, from Southeast Asia. Healthy cats were sent to Borneo to fix a problem that humans had created—spraying DDT to prevent malaria in people. This ended up killing insects, which killed the rodents who ate them and the cats who ate the rodents. Now, humans were at risk of plague or other diseases carried by the rodents because there weren't enough cats to eat them. What a harmful cycle created by one careless choice! To reinforce the concept of "treading lightly," we'll play a movement game called Help or Harm the Earth?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Discussion Group

The topic for the January 2024 discussion is "What are the pros and cons of banning books?" Discussion topics are proposed and selected by the group in an effort to be interesting, timely, and thought-provoking. Do you have a topic of interest to you? Make a suggestion to ufdiscussion@gmail.com.

We meet at the Fellowship at 10:00 am for an hour or so on the third Friday of each month, and we hope you'll join us on January 19th. Bring a friend!

Anyone who wants to join the UUFSC Discussion Group is welcome to just show up at a meeting or to email ufdiscussion@gmail.com for more info. Not all members are UU, and we encourage people of the community to join.

New Members

We had the pleasure of welcoming five new members to our Fellowship on December 10. They are, in order of appearance below, Ned Hamilton, Mary Jones-Schaming, Andi Randall, Kandice Krommenohl, and Sharon Tominac (along with various children). And Doak, of course.



UUFSC SUPERMARKET GIFT CARD PROGRAM

Please call or email Hal Cohen for your \$100 supermarket gift cards each month. Help the Fellowship earn 5% of each card purchased directly from the store, at no cost to you. Thanks!



RaiseRight™

Formerly ShopWithScrip

ShopWithScrip is now called RaiseRight and continues to offer the Fellowship a wonderful way to raise needed funds as you shop. UUFSC gets rebates of up to 14% on gift cards that you purchase from among more than 750 well-known merchants. You can buy gift cards by going to www.raiseright.com. Please contact Sue Weiner or Hal Cohen if you have any questions about this program.



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
OF SUSSEX COUNTY**

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