



NEWSLETTER



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the
South Jersey Shore

Volume 22, Issue 3

March 2020

March Services

Theme: Wisdom

We meet at our UU Center, Pomona Rd and Liebig Street, Galloway NJ (near the north entrance to Richard Stockton College).
Services are at 10:00 am unless otherwise noted.

March 1	Wisdom, Wisdom Everywhere! <i>Rev. Dawn Fortune and Jessica Dunn-Safonof</i> ALL AGES SERVICE: In this all-ages, interactive workshop worship, we will explore the Six Sources from which Unitarian Universalism draws its wisdom. Those sources include: The direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder, the words and deeds of prophetic people, wisdom from the world's religions, Jewish and Christian teachings, Humanist teachings, and the spiritual teachings of Earth-centered religious traditions.
March 8	All, Here and Now <i>Guest minister Rev. Eric Dobson</i> As Director of Community Engagement for Fair Share Housing Center, Rev. Eric Dobson's mission is to end discriminatory or exclusionary housing patterns which have deprived the poor, particularly those presently living in inner cities, of the opportunity to reside in an environment which offers safe, decent, and sanitary housing near employment and educational opportunities.
March 15	Stewards of Many Things <i>Rev. Dawn Fortune</i> As UUs, we are called to be good stewards of the planet and the interdependent web of which we are a part. We are also called to be stewards of truth, and reason, and freedom. As members of this religious community, we are called to support and nurture it as a beacon of those values in our area. Join us as we talk about the many ways we are able to do this.
March 22	Examining Wisdom <i>Rev. Dawn Fortune</i> We know lots of things, but where does that knowledge come from? Who told us the narrative that we know to be true? Let's explore some of the things we know and how we know them; and consider what deeper truths might have been omitted from the larger story.
March 29	Relevance in Our Age <i>Rev. Dawn Fortune</i> With the turmoil occurring each day in our world, how is it that a liberal religious community remains relevant? When it seems that the world is on fire, what is our role in taming the conflagration? Join us as we explore how one congregation seeks to remain relevant in the 21st century.

2020-2021 Stewardship begins March 15
Fellowship Dinner is Saturday, April 18

President's Corner

March Greetings, Everyone!

February has been a great month for our congregation. I had so much fun helping to organize (and then enjoy) our congregation's 20th Anniversary Celebration! It was so great to see members and friends both old and new join in on the fun. Kudos to Colby Tippins and Betsy Erbaugh for making the special sashes and flowers for our charter members. Thanks to everyone who brought food dishes to share. Extra thanks to Richard Schurig and the kitchen staff for all the set up and clean up help. Helen Utts made sure there was a beautiful cake. And of course thanks to our intrepid photographer, Mike Hannisian, for taking our group photo (see below).

I appreciate everyone who showed up for Pat Infante's workshop on re-visiting our covenant. We are working on having a more permanent display of this somewhere in the sanctuary.

The Board has been busy as we prepare for the upcoming Stewardship season, Reverend Dawn's annual review, and end of church year preparations. At our February 2020 monthly meeting the Board reviewed the Ad Hoc Committee on Signs policy proposal. The policy was approved by unanimous vote with only minor suggested revisions, specifically about adding language for cost issues. We will distribute the updated policy to the congregation soon.

We are also proceeding with plans to upgrade our AV system. Thanks to Jack Miller for countless hours of research in this area. The plans include updating our microphones and sound system as well as adding TV monitors and making improvements for hearing accessibility. Jack could use some extra help in his work, so please see him if you are interested in lending a hand.

I am also excited about the fact that multiple congregants are planning to attend General Assembly in June. We should be receiving information soon about assigning delegates from our congregation, and housing options are starting to open up now.

Spring is coming!

~ Melissa Hutchison

About our guest speaker...



Reverend Eric Dobson is the Director of Community Engagement for Fair Share Housing Center.

Eric has received numerous awards such as the NAACP Drum Major award, the Camden County Board of Chosen Freeholds Community Service award, Champion of Diversity Award from the Courier-Post South Jersey, and the T. Thomas Fortune Social Justice award, to name a few.

He co-founded Open Communities LLC (a racial integration consultant firm) that works to resolve simple and complex conflicts of race, ethnicity and socio-economics. He also founded a non-profit focused on youth development and education called Planting Seeds of Hope – and in 2008 he joined the Organizing for America staff to serve as the Pennsylvania Black Clergy Outreach Director for the Obama Campaign.

Eric is an Ordained Minister and holds a BA in Religion from Temple University. He is an avid biker, music-lover and chef. Eric's partner in marriage and ministry is April Dobson which they parent four children Amber, Deion, Jazman and Jordan.



**20th Anniversary of Charter Sunday (February 13, 2000)
Celebrated on Sunday, February 23, 2020**

Photo by Mike Hannisian

Rev. Dawn Fortune **609.289.5782**

In like a lion?

Welcome to March, dear people. It is the season of springtime, crocuses, presidential primaries, and stewardship.

Corona Virus

It is also the season of the corona virus, which is spreading around the globe. Originating in China, the virus is transmitted through the water droplets caused by coughing (see UUCSJS President Melissa Hutchison's note in this newsletter) and is fairly contagious. Scientists and health experts are studying the virus and its path as they also work to develop a vaccine to prevent it, but that is still a year off, according to the most hopeful of estimates.

In the meantime, we at the UUCSJS are taking reasonable precautions that are sound practices during the winter flu season in general. We have placed antibacterial soap in the restrooms and in the kitchen, there are bottles of hand sanitizer near the welcoming table and in the sanctuary on the table where the orders of service are kept. Feel free to avail yourselves of these things.

Other tips for preventing the spread of disease in general:

- Frequent hand washing, especially after using the restroom.
- Don't touch your face – hand contact with your eyes, nose, and mouth is one of the most common way to spread germs
- Cover your cough and sneeze (ideally with your elbow, not your hands.)
- Refrain from physical contact like shaking hands or hugging/kissing when greeting someone.
- Wash your hands. Again.

At this point there does not seem to be any imminent danger to our part of New Jersey, but be assured that I and congregational leaders are keeping an eye on the virus' spread and will have contingency plans for worship, meetings, and other congregational activities, developed in time, should they be warranted, and will communicate those to everyone when the time comes.

Stewardship

Stewardship season kicks off in a couple weeks on March 15. It will be a little shorter this year than last year, wrapping up with the fellowship Dinner on Saturday, April 19 and worship on April 20. Information about the proposed 2020-2021 annual budget and our pledge goal for this year will be forthcoming. The UUCSJS was awarded a Chalice Lighter's Grant from the



Central East Region this year to help cover the cost of the congregation's move toward full-time ministry.

Elections

As the presidential primary season churns along, I ask that you keep in mind a couple things:

1. **PARTICIPATE** – make sure you are registered to vote, do your research, figure out which candidate you support, and cast your ballot in New Jersey's primary election on June 2.
2. **Downballot choices matter** – local and regional elections are the nursery through which (most) political leaders are nurtured and learn their skills. Pay attention to municipal and county races, as well as the primary races for state offices and US Congress.
3. **DON'T FIGHT** – support your candidate and your causes, but please don't be nasty and use personal attacks against other candidates. Focus on the issues that matter to you and articulate your reasons for supporting your favorite pol.
4. **PAY ATTENTION** – be a savvy consumer of news media. Look at sources and websites and learn which ones are reliable and which are not. **SNOPE** (<https://www.snopes.com/>) is a good source for debunking urban legends, myths, and claims that seem outrageous and either too good or too bad to be true. Ask yourself when you read an article "who benefits from this story? Who suffers? Whose voice is being heard, and who is being left out of the conversation? And why might that be?"
5. **UNIFY** – it goes without saying that our liberal religious values are supported by one group of candidates and not the other. When the dust settles and the candidates are determined through the primary process, let us unify behind the ones selected by the democratic process and cease with the sniping amongst ourselves. Foreign powers are seeking to disrupt the US election process, and the most effective way to do that is to sow conflict and discord among the parties, as well as between them.

And above all else, keep breathing. We can be discouraged, but we don't get to give up. It is our responsibility to be good neighbors, good citizens, and to dismantle the systems of power and oppression that privilege one group of people over another. This is who we are. It is our identity as a liberal religious community and movement. It is our mission. We must not fail.

Blessings,

Rev. Dawn



**Rev. Dawn's Twitter handle
is @queerpreacher
You can tweet about
UUCSJS**

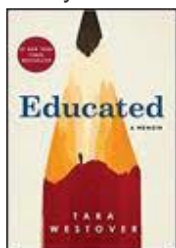
Looking to the Future: Annual Stewardship Campaign 2020-2021

March 15 to April 19, 2020

The programs and services we are able to provide each year are made possible through the generous financial support of our members and friends. So each year we have a season of stewardship. The goal of the Stewardship campaign is to receive pledges of support from every member to help us to plan our programming budget in advance (planning for July 2020 to June 2021).

Our stewardship campaign this year will run from **March 15 to April 19**. On **Saturday April 18**, we will hold a **Fellowship dinner** at the UU Center. This shared meal is a fun community event to celebrate the completion of our annual Stewardship campaign. The collective generosity from everyone is what creates an impact, so please plan to join us in these events as we look forward to the year ahead at UUCSJS. Watch your mail and the announcements for additional information about how to make your pledge. ~ Karen York, Treasurer UUCSJS

BOOK CLUB will meet March 20 at 7 pm in the UU library. Our selection for March is EDUCATED by Tara Westover.



Born in Idaho to a father opposed to public education, Tara never attended school. She spent her days working in her father's junkyard or stewing herbs for her mother, a self-taught herbalist and midwife. She was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom, and after that first taste, pursued learning

for the next decade. She received a BA from Brigham Young University in 2008, and as recipient of a Gates Cambridge Scholarship earned a PhD in history in 2014 at Cambridge. "... a beautiful testament to the power of education to open eyes and change minds." (Amy Chua). Judy Pereira will be leading the discussion and all are welcome to attend.

MARGARET CIRCLE will meet on Thursday, March 5, at 1 pm in the UU Center Library. We will begin with joys and concerns, followed by light refreshments. MaryLou DeMarie Berhang will be leading a program on "Women Supporting Women." This will be a conversation about female friendships and how they affect our lives. Bring or tell us about a cherished item you received from a friend. MaryLou will share her "Girls Night Out" jar of chocolate. Kim Trotto will be providing the refreshments.

After the program ends at 3 pm, our member Ellie Gibson, will conduct a light exercise program, either chair yoga or something similar. A five dollar donation for her is expected from participants.



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

There have been a lot of conflicting reports coming out about the Coronavirus, so it can be confusing. At this time, there should be no cause for alarm in South Jersey, but it is reasonable to at least be thinking about some of the ways to reduce risk for infection. The best way to prevent spread of any infection is to wash your hands frequently.

30 seconds is best (sing "Happy Birthday" to make sure you have gone long enough). Always cover your cough. The best way to do this is by coughing into your upper arm, vampire style. Ask any of the RE kids for a demonstration. If you are sick, **STAY HOME!**



Viruses spread when people are in close contact, so it is best to avoid crowds if you are sick. One of the ways that states and countries are preparing for the possibility of a pandemic is to start having people think of ways that they may be able to do "telework". If in the future we do have a higher intensity outbreak of Coronavirus in South Jersey, UUCSJS will do its part to contain the spread of disease. Our congregation already utilizes "ZOOM" for remote access to meetings, and Rev Dawn's sermons are already being filmed, so I imagine we will continue to make use of these technologies. More importantly, we will all need to continue to take care of each other. If anyone has questions about this, please feel free to reach out to me.

Stay Healthy!,

~ Melissa Hutchison

Latest Version of Strategic Plan

UUCSJS continues to improve the new strategic plan, even as it guides our operations. Unless some new information becomes available, we will submit the current document to the next Congregational Meeting. An up-to-date edition is at <http://members.uucsjs.org/grantslong-range-plan/> (Revised as of February 25, 2020).

To allow more congregational input, we held strategic planning talk-back discussions at 11:30 am on the first Sunday of each month. The next talk-back session is on Sunday, March 1.

Even if you cannot attend these sessions to share your vision of how UUCSJS should be and become, review the document online and provide feedback where you think it could be improved.

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our Multigenerational Worship Experiment

This year Rev. Fortune and I embarked on an experiment. We wondered how to include children and families in worship and make that worship both engaging and meaningful for everyone who comes on Sunday morning. You see, multigenerational ministry is so very important. Our congregations are one of the only places in today's society where people of all ages can gather together. We are a community in which everyone can be a teacher and everyone a learner. But here's the thing: if we want to learn from each other, grow our faith, and build a strong community, we won't do that by being segregated to "age-appropriate areas." Relationships grow through interaction and since worship is at the heart of what we do, we felt worship should also be at the heart of multigenerational relationship building.

There have been multigenerational services at UUCSJS for many years. We have celebrated Flower Communion and the Water Ceremony together and held other multigenerational services sprinkled throughout the program year. Most of those multigenerational services, however, were just "service as usual" with kids in the sanctuary coloring and using busy bags. Did they hear some of the message? Maybe. But what did they learn about being in worship? They learned it was boring. When our family began attending UUCSJS my children were 2, 4, and 10 years old. For a long time, we did not attend multigenerational services after that first one. It was a lot of work for me to get three children to sit still and quietly for an hour and not disturb the people sitting around us. It was hard to hear that for them, church was boring. How was I ever going to convince them that it wasn't? That it was meaningful and important? Maybe that would change when they were grown but at this rate, they were never going to step foot in a church once Mom stopped making them. Sure they liked their RE classes and the friends they were making but that would come to an end once they grew up. This is not what Rev. Fortune and I wanted when we started discussing all-ages worship services.

Our vision was one where people of all ages would be able to create meaning in worship together. Multigenerational services need to speak across generations and learning styles, because even adults sometimes struggle with our heavy emphasis on the spoken word in worship. If you have attended any of the three multigenerational "workshop worship services" we have held this year, then you have been a part of our experiment and have helped to shape our vision of what multigenerational worship can look like. I am not a risk-taker and I don't particularly like change. What I do like is the word *experiment*. An experiment is temporary. An experiment allows us to try different things, see what works and what doesn't. An experiment allows for success or failure as long as learning takes place. With an experiment, we can apply what we learn to make things better.

I hope you enjoyed the interactive multigenerational services this year. I hope they have enabled you to begin looking at the relationships you are building at UUCSJS and thinking about your responsibility in growing our next generation of Unitarian Universalists. I hope you were able to engage and make meaning from these experiences. Rev. Fortune and I will be working together to plan more multigenerational experiences for next year's calendar using the insight we gained from our experiments this year. If you participated in any of the workshop worship services and would like to give us your feedback, we would love that and it would be greatly appreciated! You can complete a survey at <https://forms.gle/nrjgd5yi3ubC1XQA> or see me on Sunday morning for a paper copy. Thank you for helping us broaden our understanding of what worship can be and thank you for experimenting with us in spiritual growth.

In Fellowship,

Jessica Dunn Safonof
Director of Religious Education



3rd Circle Dinner - March 28

Sign up between March 1 and March 15

Circle dinners are an important way that we build community. New folks in our congregation and those who have been around for years are able to get to know each other in the relaxed setting of a shared meal. We meet in groups of eight. One couple or person who is able to offer their home for the occasion is appointed as the host. They provide the appetizer, and all others are assigned a course to bring. The format is so simple, and it works well in providing an interesting and fun social occasion.

For the first two dinners this year, we have had three groups of 8 or 9 people at three different homes. Marie Taylor sets these dinners up, and it is her goal to mix people so that all get to visit with different people at each meal. Food assignments are also rotated as much as possible. There is a handout at the sign up table which explains more fully how these dinners work.

If you are not able to sign up on March 1, 8, or 15, you may sign up by contacting Marie Taylor. If you do this, be sure to include your name, email, address, and phone number. Also, indicate if you can host.

There will be one more circle dinner this season – May 16. April is passed over because we have our all congregation Fellowship Dinner on April 18.

**Do yourself a favor and come to this ↑
most enjoyable event.**

Jubilee Anti-Racism Training helps participants understand what is involved in nurturing a multicultural community and working against racism in all of its forms. The workshop requires a weekend commitment; and it is worth every minute of that commitment. Details: <https://www.uua.org/central-east/events/region/jubilee-anti-racism-workshop-pa-320>

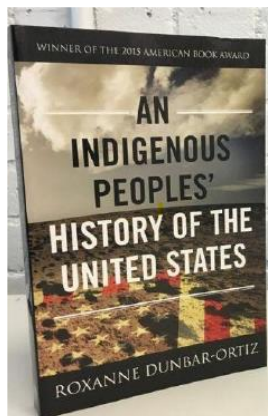
March 27-29, 2020, UUs of Delaware County, Media, PA

WhaleCoast Alaska 2020

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, WhaleCoast Alaska 2020 is for you! 4 Alaska UU congregations invite you to experience our unique environmental/ cultural/spiritual program this summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, sea lions, etc. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships -- our program is truly the best way to visit Alaska! Tours led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime. For complete info go to: www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org or call 907-322-4966. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

2020 UUA Common Read

**March 22, 2020 at 11:30 following the service,
childcare available**



Join members and friends of UUCSJS as we meet to discuss the 2020 UUA Common Read, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

The discussions will be led by Jessica Dunn Safonof, Director of Religious Education. All are welcome, whether you have finished the book or not. Youth included!

Please contact Jess for more information or for assistance in obtaining a copy of the book.

**Rooted, Inspired,
& Ready!**



General Assembly 2020 will take place June 24-28, 2020 in Providence, RI. This year's theme is **Rooted, Inspired, Ready!**

GA will delve into our theological and historical roots, bringing those threads into the present day and acting in solidarity with Indigenous communities. Attendees will be inspired and trained to engage in electoral work as people of faith, living out our values in service of all our intersecting justice commitments. Please join us for this 5-day immersive experience where we participate in inspirational worship services and informative workshops, reconvene with friends and colleagues, and explore our bustling exhibit hall.

Here are important dates to know:

- Early Registration ends March 15 - rates go up the 16th
- Housing opens on March 2 and goes fast! Dorm housing and home hospitality are options this year in addition to hotels.
- There are 2 childcare options. Deadline is April 30, space is limited!

You can attend GA on a budget - please see [our blog post](#) on this topic as well as the [UUA's webpage on this topic](#).

Finally, if you can't attend in person, attend virtually! [Off-site registration is open](#). Off-site delegates can vote on issues and attend mini-assemblies. All plenaries and some evening events are live-streamed through the UUA website to the general public.



100 years ago today, the League of Women Voters was founded by suffragists who believed in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

A century later, the League remains a vital force in ensuring every person in our country is empowered to play a critical role in shaping our democracy. The suffragists who founded the League of Women Voters could not have predicted the exact threats facing our democracy today, just as our current League leaders cannot predict what challenges our democracy might face tomorrow.

However, one fact always holds true - whether the year is 1920, 2020, or 2120 - the best defense to any attack on democracy is an informed and engaged electorate. Our activists are hard at work fighting for a more equitable and just political system and we want you by our side as we enter our next century of empowering voters.

Please [give a gift today in honor of our 100th anniversary](#) to keep us strong as we chart our future. And, if you aren't already a member, [join us now](#). **Our grassroots-powered movement to shape a more inclusive electorate relies on you.** The League is open to everyone and has a number of membership options available.

As I write this, our members are participating in a national Day of Action. Over 350 events are taking place around our country to build the next generation of diverse women leaders and voting rights activists. We invite all people, regardless of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, or race, to join us as we build a stronger, more inclusive democracy. **Together, we can show the world what democracy looks like.**

**Thank you for your activism and support.
Cheers to the next 100 years!**

Nancy Hedinger, President

League of Women Voters of New Jersey

[Take Action!](#)

CALLING ALL ANIMAL ADVOCATES!

Are you interested in being part of a chapter of the [Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry](#) (UUAM) at UUCSJS? Our aims would include:

- Advocating for shelter and sanctuary animals, both wild and domestic;
- Advancing understanding of the significant negative climate impact of factory farming;
- Promoting a climate-friendly (and healthier) ethically sourced and plant-based diet;
- Discouraging exploitation of animals for entertainment, and most importantly;
- Extending our compassion to humans and non-humans alike as it applies to our 7th principle: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

If interested, contact Cynthia Grzywinski or Ronda Cluff.



Do you care about animals and the more-than-human world? Does your spirituality connect to the more-than-human world? Are you into wildlife, dogs, cats, humans, horses, pigs, leafy seadragons, Meatless Mondays, training service animals, rescuing raptors, trying vegetarianism, volunteering at shelters, saving endangered species, or protecting ecosystems? You've found a group of kindred spirits here, and you will want to learn about Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry (UUAM).



Weather Warning

In case of inclement weather, call the UU Center office (609-965-9400) after 8 am on Sunday morning. There will be a recording if the Sunday service has been cancelled.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore

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Visit us on the Web: www.uucsjs.org

March 2020

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