



# Newsletter



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South  
Jersey Shore

Volume 13, Issue 05

May 2011

## May Services

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.

<p><b>May 1</b></p>	<p><b>Deep Ecology for Earth Day</b> <i>Lay speakers Angela Jones, Susan Polk, Barbara Miller</i> Deep Ecology is the creation of community with all beings, life, and the earth itself. Angela Jones, Susan Polk and Barbara Miller will share insights about doing environmental work rooted in spirituality and community (based on Alan Oliver's workshop Foundation Stones of Environmental Consciousness).</p>
<p><b>May 8</b></p>	<p><b>Celebrating Mothers</b> <i>Lay coordinator Barbara Miller</i> Personal reflections, songs, and readings for Mother's Day.</p>
<p><b>May 15</b></p>	<p><b>Felt Intimacy</b> <i>Guest speaker Carlos Martinez, Seminarian</i> John James Audubon described his passion for birds as a felt intimacy "...bordering on frenzy [which] must accompany my steps through life." So often the great undertakings of our life are those which are motivated from a deep wellspring of passion. This force mysteriously animates us and leads us to exceed ourselves. Where does this spirit emanate and how can we tap into it to make it available for all the "steps of our life."</p>
<p><b>May 22</b></p>	<p><b>Flower Communion</b> <i>Guest speaker Joe DeMasi</i> Joe DeMasi returns to UUCSJS for a music service with a Flower Communion.</p>
<p><b>May 29</b></p>	<p><b>Death as a Spiritual Journey</b> <i>Lay speaker Richard Grzywinski</i> Benjamin Franklin said "...in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Now that the tax season is behind us, perhaps it's time to look at that other certainty, death. Why does it consume our culture and, in particular, the world's religions... will we cross the river Styx or be greeted at the pearly gates, or enter into a world of nothingness? Maybe we all harbor a haunting belief that perhaps we haven't lived as well as we should have. Welcome to the world of the macabre.</p>

<p><b>June 5</b> <b>Annual Congregational Meeting</b></p> <p>All Staff and Committees please submit your Annual report to Karen Zindell by May 1 or as soon as possible</p>	<p><b>Native Plant Swap and Sale</b> <b>Saturday, May 7, 2011 from 9:30 am - 2:30 pm</b></p> <p>We will host our Third Annual Native Plant Swap &amp; Sale, along with the Second Annual Sale of Heirloom Vegetables. Drop off your plants for the swap on Friday May 6, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm or Saturday between 8:30-9:30 am.</p> <p>For further sale details, and other info on growing natives, go to: <a href="http://www.uucsjs.org/social_action.html">www.uucsjs.org/social_action.html</a> or contact Jesse Connor.</p>
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## Our speakers this month

**Carlos Martinez** is a second career UU seminarian at Union Theological Seminary in NYC. Recently, he was the seminarian-in-residence at The Unitarian Church in Summit and its summer student minister, where he preached, led worship services and organized courses on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism. Carlos is presently completing his Divinity studies by undertaking an externship at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Central Nassau (Garden City, NY). He comes to ministry from a career in high-tech software marketing and sales. He possesses an A.B. from Cornell University and an M.B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley. He will receive his M.Div. degree in May 2011. He is the father of three children, one of whom is in their Freshman year at Colgate University. Carlos hopes to be undertaking an internship to meet the UUA credentialing requirements for ministry in the coming year.

**Joseph DeMasi** is a well-known singer/songwriter and fellow UU who has been delighting audiences with his music for over 25 years now. He last visited UUCSJS in March 2008 while we were meeting in the Lions Center. He got his start in the folk clubs of New York City where he was born and raised. He currently travels the country and performs at many UU churches throughout the US. His music is always delightful, insightful and very humorous as he takes on subjects that are near and dear to UU hearts, from gay marriage to SUV extinction. He currently lives in Valley City, North Dakota with his wife Michelle and says, "if you are going to move to someplace cold, do it for love!"

### Staff Evaluations are conducted annually during the month of May

If you have any feedback on any of the Staff, please share your comments with a Board member. There will also be forms and a comment box available in the vestibule. Our staff includes:

Barbara Miller	Music Director, Sunday Services Coordinator
Heidi Jansch	Director of Religious Education, Operations Manager
Kathleen Hartnett	Bookkeeper

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The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime. - *Babe Ruth*

A professional is someone who can do his best work when he doesn't feel like it. - *Alistair Cooke*

### Memorial/Meditation Garden Committee Forming

Some of you have expressed an interest in helping to figure out how the diverse desires of our community can be best met in a Memorial/Meditation Garden. If you are interested in meeting several times to help develop a plan, please sign up at the table in the back of the sanctuary. If you have an idea you would like to share, but are unable to commit to several meetings (perfectly understandable!), please feel free to email me with your thoughts, which will be shared with the group.

- Jesse Connor

### "Once an Eagle, Always an Eagle"

Congratulations to **Justin S. Gray**, grandson of Sharon Gray, for achieving the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America: Eagle Scout.

Justin's Eagle project was preparing and laying the groundwork for the UUCSJS Meditation/Memorial Garden behind our building. With the help of Troop 254 from Mays Landing, friends and family, the area was cleared and leveled, underlayment placed, and tons of stone delivered and spread over the area.

A Court of Honor will be conducted the morning of Saturday, May 28, 2011 at the UU Center. Scouts, friends, Community Dignitaries will attend.

### Spring Auction Events Available

Get out into nature and enjoy spring with one or more of these auction events:

#### Personal Tour of Historic Barnegat Light and Museum, and Lunch.

Hosts Bill and Peg Felix  
Saturday, May 21, 10 am, \$20, 4 spaces left

#### Birding #101, spend a morning at the refuge or perhaps another spot and learn some birds by sight and sound.

Hosts John and Betsy Searight  
Saturday, May 28, 7:30 am, \$20, 2 spaces left

#### Explore the Pine Barrens across the street at Stockton College after a Sunday service.

Hosts Jack and Jesse Connor  
Sunday, June 12, 11:30 am, \$15, children \$5, 6 spaces left

Signup sheets are on the bulletin board over the name tag shelf. To sign up, add your name, take an envelope, and put your money or a check to UUCSJS in an envelope from the display. Add the sticker that identifies the event. See Betsy Searight for questions.

## More Biblical Amnesia

At the April 17 service, "The Last Week," Margaret Rea presented some ideas about Jesus's "movement" as a challenge to the dominant power structure. Time constraints forced her to condense the reading she intended to share. Margaret now gives us a more complete set of excerpts.

Gustafson writes in his book *Biblical Amnesia*:

**Ethical** resistance requires the courage to reject the moral pronouncements of the dominator system. (Jesus) abandoned morality. He never answered a moral question. Doing so would have drawn a line between the good ones and the bad ones. Ranking could not begin with Jesus' words on moral subjects because Jesus does not provide such word. Jesus knew that people were more important than rules. Jesus identified with people on the "wrong side" of the moral divide.

Resistance to the dominator system requires an **intellectual** revolution that rejects absolute claims for truth. ...truth always has a context. Truth does not exist without a context. [Jesus taught in parables.] Upon hearing such a parable one person would turn to another and ask, "What does that mean?"... Because the parable [was] ambiguous, a community was created to discuss the parable... Could it be that the point of the parable is the community it gathers rather than some absolute truth that it was meant to convey?

[The third modality of resistance is **spiritual**.] There are two types of religion. There are religions that serve the dominator system and there are religions influenced by partnership way. *Christianity as always been used by the dominator system; yet Jesus' entire ministry was in opposition to the dominator system.* In cleansing the Temple Jesus was not opposing capitalism or free enterprise. He was opposing the ...cult [that believed] that they had fulfilled their obligations to God... without worrying [about their obligations to the community.] *One of the most important features of the movement from religions of the dominator system to religions of partnership is the rejection of self-justification. An explanation... states the reason for an action or a belief. It does not try to make these reasons into a virtue. A justification always attempts to make the reasons for a particular belief or practice into a virtue. A justification always tries to claim the high moral ground.*

*Partnership religions abandon justification and blame for explanation and confession. [Religions and spiritualities that support partnership ways] use confession to fight evil. Evil is a seemingly autonomous force in opposition to life. It originates in the refusal or inability to acknowledge and confess one's ... misdeeds or mistakes. Confession is a way to regain control of evil. Confession... tries to understand one's own contribution to the difficulties. A truthful confession is not easy. Confession is...a spiritual tool that resists the dominator system. Confession refuses to locate all evil in the enemy... [it] helps us see some of [the self] in the enemy... to learn from our enemy... [to ensure that] the humanity of the enemy is not denied.*

[The final mode of resistance is **communal**.] *The success or failure of resistance to the dominator system seems to depend on the existence of supportive and informed communities*

*Alternative communities support... resistance to the dominator system in three important ways. First they create a safe haven for the intellectual task of discerning the character of resistance. Second [they] allow people to practice resistance in everyday life. The risks inherent in resistance would be eased considerable by participation in such a community. Alternative communities refuse to employ the sort of power that the dominator system uses.*

We have forgotten about this struggle because we are so engrained in the dominator system that we cannot see alternatives even when these alternatives occur right in front of our eyes. Our amnesia is intentional, but it is intended by the dominator system itself.

Excerpts selected from the seventh chapter of Scott W Gustafson's 2004 book *Biblical Amnesia: A Forgotten Story of Redemption, Resistance, and Renewal.*

## Reaching Within, Reaching Out Annual Stewardship Campaign

### March 27- May 2

Our annual pledge drive is underway when we ask our members and friends to help support the programs and activities of the Congregation. This effort raises the majority of our budget (80%) to fund our ongoing programs. The pledges provide a anticipated income that allows us to budget accordingly. We are proposing a budget of \$170,000 for next year to support a half-time Minister, our Religious Education programs, continued high quality Sunday services and music offerings, denominational connections, and the operations and maintenance of our UU Center. To make that proposed budget we have set a campaign goal of \$136,500 in pledges.

We began the campaign with a leadership dinner that included the Board, staff and an invited group of lead contributors. That has been followed by a general canvass which involves setting up one-on-one visits between members and friends and a stewardship visitor (ambassador). In total, there are over ninety households to contact and visit. Our team of sixteen stewardship visitors is busy with the task and you should be contacted by one of them. These conversations are an important opportunity to obtain feedback from our members about our congregation's programs and activities, and to speak to each member about our collective hopes and dreams for our future. The amount pledged is private (sealed in envelope) and is available only to the Treasurer. It is the combination of all the gifts that makes our programming possible.

As of last Sunday, the Treasurer had received pledge cards totaling \$108,155 or 79.2% of our goal from 46 households (of the over 90 we are trying to reach). UUCSJS is a bustling community with lots of activities going on, but make time to meet with your stewardship visitor to keep those pledges coming in, so we can keep the programs growing and continue to make an impact on our larger community. We hope to wrap up the campaign in May so we can finalize the budget planning in anticipation of the annual meeting, Sunday June 5.

Karen York

## UUCSJS Women's Association Meetings

### Margaret Fuller Circle - Thursday, May 5, 1 pm

The next meeting of Margaret circle will be on May 5, at 1 pm, in the Library at the UU Center. After a time of personal sharing and a brief meeting we will break for fellowship and refreshments. Our program will begin at 2 pm. We will be discussing an article titled Natural Rapture by Kimberly French, which appeared in the Winter 2010 issue of the UU World. It would be helpful if the women planning to attend would read the article prior to the meeting; it is very interesting.

All women of the congregation are invited to join us and guests are always welcome. If you have any questions about this group, please contact Arlene Yacka, Circle leader.

### Olympia Brown Circle – Thursday, May 12, 6 pm

The next meeting of the Olympia Circle will meet on May 12 at 6 pm at the Capri Pizzeria at the Shore Mall. It has been recommended as an inexpensive restaurant that serves very good food. Bring a couple jokes to tell -- we'll be having a contest for the best joke teller; a prize will be awarded.

Olympia Circle would like to begin a project that all members and friends of the Congregation can participate in. We have been meeting at locally owned restaurants for two months now in an effort to support local small business owners. **We would like to highlight one or two local businesses each month and ask the congregation to support that business sometime during the month.** We will continue to meet at those restaurants on the second Thursday of each month, but would like to see others support the featured restaurant at their convenience during the month. **Please submit locally owned businesses for us to select from.** If you have any questions about this project please contact Marsha Hannah, Circle leader.

### Women's Spirituality Circle - Sunday May 15, 11:30

The Woman's Spirituality circle will meet after services at 11:30 on the third Sunday of the month, May 15. Our study group will be starting the last part of Elizabeth Lesser's *A Seeker's Guide*. Since last month's meeting had to be cancelled, we will be reading and discussing Chapter 14 - Soulfulness, pages 321 - 337. This is one of the most interesting parts of the book; those attending should make an effort to read it to prepare for discussion. But you do not need a copy of the book to enjoy our discussions. We have a time of sharing before the discussion and newcomers often share very interesting comments that lead to open discussion. If you are interested in attending this group talk to Kathryn Kelley, Circle leader, she will be very happy to answer any questions.

**All women of the congregation are welcome at these meetings. It's a good way to get to know other women in our congregation better and gives us a chance to get to know you. Please consider attending.**

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A case of contradictories, both of them true.  
There is a God. There is no God.  
Where is the problem?  
I am quite sure that there is a God  
in the sense that I am sure  
my love is no illusion.  
I am quite sure there is no God,  
in the sense that I am sure there is nothing  
which resembles what I can conceive  
when I say that word.

Simone Weil, 1909-1943, a French philosopher, Christian mystic, and social activist, in *Waiting for God*

## Book Club to Contemplate Humanity's Impact on the Planet by Imagining Us Gone

In *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman offers an original approach to questions of humanity's impact on the planet: he asks us to envision our Earth, without us. What might happen if humans vanished? Join us on Friday evening, May 20 at 7 pm in the UU Center Library to engage in this fascinating thought experiment. Marsha Hannah will lead the discussion.

"I've found that theoretically wiping humans off the face of the earth intrigues rather than frightens people," says Weisman. "For a long time I've sought some fresh, non-threatening approach to disarm readers' apprehensions about environmental destruction long enough that they might consider the impacts of unbridled human activity on the rest of nature - and on our own fate."

A bestseller translated into 30 languages, *The World Without Us* was named Best Nonfiction Book of 2007 by *Time Magazine*, #1 Nonfiction Audiobook of 2007 by *iTunes*, and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Nonfiction, among other honors. "This is one of the grandest thought experiments of our time," says author and environmentalist Bill McKibben; "a tremendous feat of imaginative reporting."

Doing "field research" for the book, Weisman traveled to abandoned spots like the Korean Demilitarized Zone, the last relic of primeval European forest, coral reefs in Micronesia, Chernobyl, and many other ancient and modern sites. "His tone is conversational and his affection for both Earth and humanity transparent," according to author Barry Lopez (*Arctic Dreams*).

Everyone is welcome. If you would like to join other book lovers for lively talk and light refreshments, plan to attend. If you would like to receive email reminders and other literary-related notices, contact Judy Pereira.

Variouly described as "endlessly surprising," "riveting," and "sheer fun," in June we will discuss *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, led by Debbi Dagavarian.

*Important reminder:* We will also be choosing next year's ten book selections at the June meeting, so be ready with your thoughts!

## Oakleaf lettuce, mesclun, arugula: try some new salad greens this month!

Buy **Gift Cards** any Sunday for **Acme & Shoprite**.

Using these gift cards for groceries nets the congregation 5%.

*We also have Fair Trade coffee, tea, and chocolate!*



## 2nd Annual Heirloom Vegetable Plant Sale

This year, Missie April is growing the vegetable plants for our Social Justice Committee's 2nd Annual Heirloom Vegetable Sale. The sale runs in conjunction with our Native Plant Swap and Sale for Backyard Habitat (Saturday, May 7, 9:30-2:30).

The 4" pots will be hardened off and ready for planting and are priced at \$4 each. We expect to sell out on Saturday, so if you are already contemplating the gourmet meals you will be making with these delicious varieties of veggies; please be mark your calendar now - or make arrangements with another Uer to purchase your favorites on Saturday, May 7.

Check out the list below for the unusual and delicious varieties of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants we'll be offering:

Eggplant Ukranian \* Eggplant Rosa Bianca \* Pepper Purple Beauty \* Pepper Fish \* Pepper Golden California Wonder \* Pepper Orange Sun \* Pepper Jimmy Nardello \* Pepper Quadrato d'Asti \* Tomato Reisenstraupe \* Tomato Snowberry \* Tomato Golden Sunray \* Tomato Pink Brandywine \* Tomato Amish Paste \* Tomato Green Zebra \* Tomato Mortgage Lifter \* Tomato Cherokee Purple

## 2011 Birding B&B

*How can you help?* We are looking for many people who are willing to do a small part. Please see Marsha Hannah and Melissa Hutchison after service this Sunday to volunteer to help with refreshments and accommodations for our birding guests.

## Great trees of life

By W. Frederick Wooden, uuWorld

We need old people to be our trees. To be like them, to do for us as a society what a grove of redwoods or a splendid live oak or a stand of sugar maples can do for me personally. Becoming trees is the spiritual task the old – and the rest of us – need to undertake.

Of course, people are not trees, but the traits we revere in trees are not limited to them. Let me then enumerate what trees have that we need:

First, trees have been around. They're old. They have a larger vantage on reality. We sense this physically by their height, but we know they take years to get that tall. Both trees and old people have seen more of life. They know how much changes and how much stays the same. They have perspective.

A world without large trees or old people would be myopic, small, confined. I climbed up a pine tree as a child and saw a different world; when the old share their world we climb on their shoulders and see things from a new vantage. We get new eyes.

Second, trees are social things, living mostly in forests. They recall to us the safety and strength of living in society. They also remind us that the brevity of individual life is compensated by the durability of communities, and that all of us ultimately need to question individuality as an end in itself.

To read more about how old people are our trees, visit <http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/175433.shtml>

## Explore... Discover... Relax... Reflect... Share... Play

## Murray Grove Annual Gathering

### Two Nights!! June 17- 18

Each year members of our congregation get together for a cookout and gathering at the Murray Grove historical site and retreat center located in Lanoka Harbor, NJ (Exit 74, Garden State Parkway). This year's gathering will be Friday June 17 to Sunday June 18 – Two Nights. Murray Grove is an important historical site in our Universalism heritage with a history dating back to the 1700's. We are fortunate to be located so close to this special place and this gathering is an opportunity to relax, get to know one another better, and explore our Universalist roots.

Friday night there will be cookout/potluck dinner and campfire. Saturday we often have a nature/bird walk, and some intergenerational games. Sunday will include a visit to the Thomas Potter Memorial chapel. There is also a labyrinth to enjoy and swimming is usually available (pool is undergoing repairs). Everyone is invited and kids especially enjoy the event.

Overnight accommodations are dormitory style housing with two twin beds per room and shared bathrooms. We have 22 beds available if you want to stay overnight. The congregation will purchase food for breakfast and lunch. To offset expenses, we are requesting a donation of \$20 for adults or \$10 for kids per night, or \$40 per adult for the weekend. A donation of any amount will be gratefully accepted, and please do not let the cost keep you at home. If you can't join us for the full weekend, please consider coming up on Friday for the cookout or Saturday for a portion of the day.

During the gathering we will need help with the cookout, campfire, and with organizing activities and intergenerational games. If you have a hobby or activity to share with folks (meditation, astronomy, arts & crafts, folksongs, folk dancing), this is a great time to share it with other members of the congregation. If you are interested in attending or participating, look for more information and sign-up sheets on Sunday or contact Heidi Jannsch.

## Public Hearing on revisions to NJ's Energy Master Plan

**On Wednesday, May 25, the Board of Public Utilities will be conducting one of a series of three Public Hearing to accept public input on proposed revisions to thNew Jersey's Energy Master Plan right in our own backyard – at Richard Stockton College.**

Governor Christie tasked the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities with revisiting the 2008 Energy Master Plan in light of current economic conditions to ensure a balance between increasing challenges in meeting current and future energy demands in NJ.

To accomplish its goal of ensuring that New Jersey continues to have reliable energy at reasonable rates, the Board will soon release draft revisions to the 2008 Energy Master Plan ("EMP") via the BPU website and EMP listserv. The Board is committed to providing information to the public and to making sure that the public has the opportunity to provide input during this process. Throughout the process of evaluating the 2008 EMP and the data assumptions upon which it was based, the Board conducted a series of Stakeholder forums to gain valuable input from all stakeholders last year. As part of the process of finalizing the EMP revisions, the Board will hold public hearings concerning the 2011 New Jersey Energy Master Plan in May 2011.

Transcripts of previous Hearings (conducted in August and September, 2010) can be found at <http://nj.gov/emp/docs/>

## Children's Religious Education

### Children's RE – Here and Abroad

While visiting England in April, I was able to attend a Unitarian Sunday service at the beautiful Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead. This gothic style chapel with vaulted ceilings, stone arches, and stained glass windows was a work of art in itself. The original chapel (now the church hall) was built in 1692, while the current chapel dates from 1862. The atmosphere was quite an experience; with light shining through ornate stained glass windows and the choir's voices resounding from the stone walls and ceilings, in a space that serves as a monument to the congregation's long history.

The sermon (focused on Growth of Unitarianism) was given by a member, but paled in comparison to the choir's performance, a professional sounding presentation of Pergolesi's *Magnificat*. During coffee hour I found the congregants very similar to our own; friendly, welcoming with a side of angst ("Please join us for coffee, but please don't drink your coffee over the new carpet!"), and joyful because of their recent accomplishments (they had just held a congregational meeting the Sunday before to elect a new minister after an unsuccessful interim minister).

Although the people and challenges were pretty similar here and at Rosslyn Hill, the biggest difference I saw was the involvement of the congregation in Children's Religious Education. As the largest congregation in London (an urban congregation with only 150 members – see why they were hearing a sermon on growth?), there were only about ten children in attendance. The RE Coordinator was the teacher with only the help of her twelve year old daughter.

Seeing this made me feel immense pride and gratitude for our congregation's dedication to our children's religious education programming. We are blessed to have the commitment from our members and families, the financial support from the congregation and our Grant for Growth from First UU Wilmington. All of these gifts enable us to make our children's RE program truly a part of our congregation's mission of "supporting the individual search for truth, meaning and spiritual growth."

How exciting it is to think of what these efforts will show by the time *our* congregation is 300 years old!

-- Heidi Jansch, Director of Religious Education

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Do not confine your children to your own learning,  
for they were born in another time.

- Chinese Proverb

Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.

- Garrison Keillor

## ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### "Discover Your Ministry" begins Wednesday, May 18, 7 - 9 pm

Discover Your Ministry is a 4 week course that allows people to explore their unique gifts and talents. The course is meant to help the participants identify their call to make a difference and put expression to that calling.

The course creator, Karen Lindley describes the course as follows:

"The course includes discussion, personal discernment and reflection. Participants are encouraged to understand themselves as uniquely gifted with skills and talents that can be used on behalf of what they care most about. Process includes identification of skills and talents, values and passions for a better world plus planning how to combine all these into action."

If there are enough people interested, we will also hold a session on Sunday afternoons beginning May 22, 2011.

Signup sheets are on the signup table in the back of the sanctuary.

Theresa McReynolds conducted a successful workshop "12 Stages of Healing" on Saturday April 9, 2011. Reviews from workshop participants were extremely positive.

Future courses coming this fall include:

"Building Your Own Theology" and "Articulating Your UU Faith". Look for more information on them in July or August.

Marsha Hannah

### Can we govern our congregations "greenly"?

Meredith Higgins – Director for Adjunct Staff Program, JPD

First, in governing we want to put the leaders' energies toward the activities which will **sustain** the congregation over time. The decision areas are familiar to us all: finance – raising the necessary funds, developing and then monitoring procedures to assure the funds are managed well; delegation – assigning responsibilities to lay members, especially when the congregation is small, or to ministers and staff; imagining and planning for the future. In addition to these tasks, the leaders' goal is to make the processes sustainable so that the congregation continues and is vibrant.

The second green term applicable here is **renewable**. We have all seen leaders, staff or minister sometimes choose to move on or move away because their experience of working on behalf of the congregation has been too tiring, unrewarding and anxiety producing. Don't we want the overall experience of being associated with our congregation to be validating and energizing? When it is validating and energizing, the work we do provides renewable energy. After we finish a project, we take a little rest and then want to do something else to keep our congregation wonderful. Therefore, are in a renewable energy environment.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Several things have occurred over the past few months which have changed my perspective of Environmental Social Action from something that was based on outcome and results to that which is founded upon strong personal feeling and spiritual motivation.

The first was reading the book *Last Child in the Woods*, which is what author Richard Louv calls the 'nature-deficit disorder' prevalent among most young people today. Rather than playing outdoors experiencing nature firsthand, kids are parked in front of tv screens and computer monitors. Not only does this lead to a 'deficit' in their natural development, but it also raises the question of who will protect the environment in the future? Why would someone protect something they have no attachment to? This book has encouraged me to explore why I care so much for the environment and am willing to sacrifice my time and energy into actions that will protect it.

Another spiritual experience that I had recently was attending the Foundation Stones of Environmental Consciousness workshop led by Alan Oliver this past month. One of the takeaways from this comprehensive workshop was the fact that many of our social actions are just that -- actions. Often they are not based on *feeling* or *emotion*. Nor do our works often take into account how our actions may affect feelings and emotions in others, and how those feelings and emotions may or may not be helpful to our cause.

Both of these experiences have changed me deeply and will have a profound impact on how I foresee the Social Justice Committee's activities and atmosphere in the future. Namely, I would much rather see us getting involved in things we care deeply about and hold close to our heart than to take part in activities out of obligation or routineness. Just recently, many members of the congregation have approached me about the Garden State Parkway tree clearing with their feelings of sorrow, outrage, and disappointment. Although they didn't know what to *do* about that situation, they certainly know how they *feel*. Based on what people are feeling, we are considering expressing those feelings in a letter to our political representatives or perhaps by holding a 'ceremony' of sorts for some closure. It is the *feeling* that is giving rise to the *action*.

We will also be installing a raised vegetable bed and a clothesline into a Habitat for Humanity home sometime in the coming weeks. The reason for doing this is not only as an action; to save energy, money and care for the environment, but also for the family to feel and experience growing their own food. Who can deny the thrill of eating a homegrown Jersey tomato picked from their own backyard? Or, bringing in fresh clothes from the clothesline?

During our Social Justice meetings we have also incorporated a time for joys and concerns, moments of silence and reflection, and poetry readings along with the lighting and extinguishing of the chalice. There is a tone of centeredness, groundedness and commitment that is tangible and a sense that

nothing is impossible. This journey continues and we are honored to share it with this beautiful congregation.

The Social Justice Committee has also decided to include here in the newsletter our personal reflections on why environmental action is important to us. Here is my story:

*I grew up with my feet in the mud. Literally. Every chance I had, my shoes were off, and they still are. You see, my parents were divorced when I was about five years old. My mother, then about age twenty-five, was left on her own to raise two children. To say she wasn't ready is an understatement. She certainly wasn't "mother material." I love her deeply now but those childhood days were full of turmoil -- not to mention DYFS visits! My way of finding sanity in an insane situation was to head outdoors. There were no limits to my freedom! I played at "the hills" across the street with friends, climbed trees, walked through the woods, and most memorably walked the bay when the tide was out. Some days I would sink into the clay up to my knees and I loved it! Of course, I always had to bring some snails home as pets (sorry, snails!). In fact, the snails were my closest friends, my cats and dogs were my best friends, and the water, trees, sunsets, rocks, and horseshoe crabs were my companions. With them I could just "be." Even now, when I still need time to just breathe and "be" I recover outdoors. Nature is dependable for solace, reflection, and stillness of mind. Nature literally rescued me from my difficult childhood. It saved me then and still does. This is why I feel is my responsibility and my calling to return the favor and save nature with all of the energy and commitment I can muster. A simple thank you from an appreciative kid.*



Thank you for listening and please remember to support our **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Native Plant Swap and Sale on Saturday, May 7** from 9:30-2:00 pm at the UU Center. In addition, please make every possible effort to attend the NJ Clean Energy Public Hearing at Stockton's Campus Center on Wednesday, May 25 at 1 pm. We will be meeting first at the UU Center then heading over together as a group to express our desire for a clean energy future here in NJ. More information will be provided in future announcements and will be posted on our Facebook page. (For background see page 5).

In faith and love,  
Angela Jones, Social Justice Chair

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on her blog *The Sustainable Soul*, Rebecca Hecking writes:

"If we are the Earth, and we are, *we really are*, then Earth Day can be introspective as well as activist. It can be about recalling the deep memory that rests in our bones, bringing it to our conscious minds, and feeding our souls. This is a necessary complement to all the traditional Earth Day activities. Greening our lifestyle is not enough; we must green our spirits along with our habits if we are to persevere and thrive in a very ecologically uncertain and precarious future."

read about Rebecca Hecking here: [http://rebeccahecking.com/?page\\_id=2](http://rebeccahecking.com/?page_id=2)

# Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore

**Minister**  
vacant

**Music Director &  
Sunday Service Coordinator**  
Barbara Miller  
uucsjsmusic@comcast.net

**Director of Religious Education**  
Heidi Jansch  
sjsdre@gmail.com

**Operations Manager**  
Heidi Jansch  
uucsjsadmin@gmail.com

**Newsletter**  
Mariann Maene  
newsletter@uucsjs.org

**Electronic Communications**  
Sharon Gray  
uucsjs@yahoo.com

**Board of Trustees 2010-11**  
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**P.O. Box 853  
Pomona, NJ 08240  
(609) 965-9400**

**May 2011**

**Visit us on the Web: [www.uucsjs.org](http://www.uucsjs.org)**

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Congregation of the South Jersey Shore  
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Pomona, NJ 08240**

