

UUCRV NEWS

Published by and for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley
P.O. Box 256, Rockton, IL, 61072 Phone number: 1-815-624-4094
Visit us at www.uucrv.org



April 2018

Monthly Schedule

April 1 – “More than Bunnies and Eggs, but How?” Allen Harden

April 8 – Misha Sanders

April 13 – 6:30- 8:00 p.m / UU Chat Hosted by Allen Harden

April 11 – 10:30 – 11:30 Mindful Eating, Susan Busker

April 15 – “Understanding the Other Side” Allen Harden

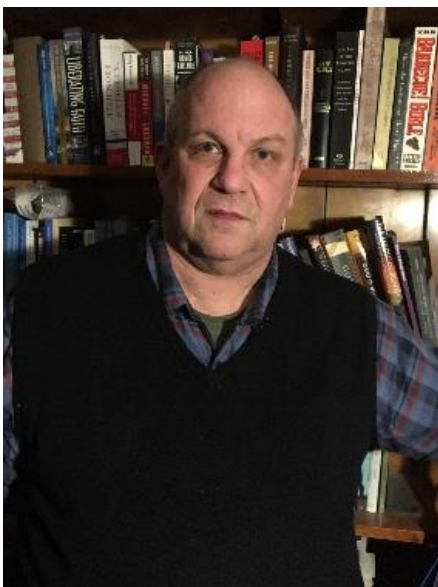
April 18 – 10:00 – 11:30 Small Group Discussion “Transformation”

April 20 – Concert by Jim Scott**

April 22 – “Celebrating Poetry Month” – Connie Matusiak

April 29 - “To Sing in a Vanished Tongue, Encounter with the Genus Loci” – Guest speaker Ed Collins

3:00 – Interfaith Rally for Peace & Justice



From the Minister

I am inspired this week by new youth activism in America, exemplified by the recent March for Our Lives. The groundswell of public interest and civic engagement that flared up among American youth after the Parkland school shooting is impressive. I really don't think there has been anything similar since the anti-war demonstrations of my own youth. I find true hope for the future when the new generation can so eloquently respond to the politics of power and money, and insist that they are heard. Until a month ago, the NRA was untouchable. Today, they and their congressional supporters are being challenged, for the first time since they became a powerful and conservative gun lobby.

I was at the rally in Chicago. The weather was cool, the energy explosive. The entire show was led by a group of students who pulled themselves together in grassroots fashion. I think it was pretty much like this all around the country. I know some of you attended the Rockford rally. I find hope because this new wave of youth is choosing to care. I find hope because this new wave of youth is planning to vote, and expecting to hold their representatives accountable. We need to support them in any way we can.

I am also excited by the energy I feel at UUCRV. We are happening, folks. Our calendar is filling with events, and we are engaging on many levels. So much good is being done by UUCRV congregants – some of it

together, as us – some of it privately as individuals. I can only ask that we all carry our “flag” high when we go out and engage in the world. Not that we have a flag, but we can actively claim and share our UU identity as we go forth, and try to pull others into our very supportive and comfortable church home.

I have one personal request for each of you. When I was hired to this Ministry, I was charged to lead worship twice a month, and also to help build our presence and identity. I know much of this work must be directed outward, but I also see an importance in working inward, with individual congregants and groups. I don't think you have had much recent experience with a Minister where pastoral presence and engagement were given priority. With me, they do. So, I continue to encourage you to engage me in your personal lives – hopes and beliefs, challenges and fears, life issues, or whatever feels important to you. And please, help me stay informed when other congregants experience issues – I can feel very far away from UUCRV when I am in Chicago, and I have to trust all of you to help me stay close.

Committee Information

Worship: Allen Harden's messages for April

April 1 Easter Sunday: More than Bunnies and Eggs, but how?

Of all Christian holidays, Easter is the most challenging for a Unitarian Universalist. The story of Crucifixion and Resurrection from the Gospels engage many elements of Christianity that were abandoned fairly early in our UU traditions – ideas such as inherent original sin, Jesus as son of God, salvation gained through the suffering and death of Jesus, Resurrection, the Second Coming, and others. At the same time, the celebration of Easter contains deep emotional and spiritual meaning for many from Christian traditions, and the ideals of redemption, salvation, and atonement with God are powerful and moving images. Deep beauty and abject horror are entangled in this tale of sacrifice – Jesus as the Lamb of God and Savior of persons.

I will consider aspects of the sacred Easter story that we can still hold as inspirational and redemptive, even through a UU view of the world; and I will point to elements of the story that I fear harmful and that continue to trouble me.

April 15 Understanding the Other Side

Many of us have troubles comprehending the current political climate in America, and find no ground for empathy with the many on the opposite political pole. A similar problem bothered the writer Arlie Russell Hochschild, who asked why so many people acted and voted in ways that, to her, appeared contrary to their own best interest. Russell, an liberal academic, could see that Tea Party members, libertarians, and many other conservatives did not view the world as she did – so she decided to learn what was going on in their heads and hearts.

She spent five years meeting people in the bayou country of Louisiana, focusing on those who were affected by environmental catastrophes caused by industry. On the whole, the public resisted attempts to regulate or punish polluters. She chose this as a “keyhole” issue for learning about what drives personal understanding in these communities. Her work ended just prior to our last presidential election, and was described in the book, “Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right”.

I will describe her experiences and examine her finding that a shared “life narrative” informs the worldview and politics of these people. She sees much internal logic and observed truth in this view, and suggests that we should not succumb to dismissing it as delusional or evil. At the same time, she realizes that we on the liberal left have similar, though vastly different, life narratives guiding our own worldview and values. These are issues we all need to contemplate and try to understand. For some of us, the discomfort of political polarization is as close as our own families.

April 29 – *“To Sing In a Vanished Tongue, Encounter with Genus Loci”* Guest Speaker Ed Collins writes: “Earth Day asks of us to think globally and act locally encouraging individuals to consider the health of the planet in everyday decisions and to take action in one’s own community and region.

The Earth asks of us something more poignant, more spiritual, and more profoundly personal. She asks us to awaken from the Great Forgetting, the time of amnesia and estrangement and isolation from the sacredness of place...

... [We will] learn how to celebrate the Genus Loci waiting patiently in the shadows for us to remember the lyrics of a very ancient melody.”

Wish List

Are you planning to update your furniture? Or perhaps you are downsizing? If you have living room furniture that needs a new home, please consider donating it to UUCRC. In an effort to make the minister’s office more appealing and professional looking, we are looking for a loveseat or upholstered comfy chairs and 2 end tables.

If you would like to donate something, speak with any board member or the Minister.

Birthdays

23 – Pete Busker

24 – Vesta Ferguson

Building Your Own Theology (5 Saturdays, 10:30-noon)

P

Allen Harden will lead a five-session exploration of our own personal beliefs, worldview, and values. We will meet at church on the Saturday mornings he is in residence this Spring (April 14, May 5 and 19, June 2 and 16). Each session will last from 10:30 – noon. Some reading and “homework” will be involved, but never very challenging or burdensome.

We will grapple with many topics that engage religious ideas, such as higher powers, sin, salvation, good, evil, suffering, fulfillment, death, community, and spirituality. The premise, fundamental to UU culture, is that each of us must address these and other questions for ourselves; and each of us should work to find sources of meaning, define our purpose, and derive well-understood life values.

Participants are expected to attend all sessions (as life allows), because this is a group journey and the process that builds from session to session. If you are interested, please check in with Allen, either in person, by phone (773-288-2394), or by email at uucrvminister@gmail.com.

Interfaith Rally for Peace and Justice

UUCRV has planned an interfaith Rally on **April 29th at 3:30 pm** on our grounds.

This march was started last year in Columbus, Ohio and this year is taking place simultaneously in 14 cities across the United States, including here in Rockton, Illinois as well as in 5 additional cities in Africa and Asia.

The march is co-sponsored by

- The Unitarian Universalist Peace Ministry Network
- Peace Catalyst
- North Columbus Friends Meeting
- Unitarian Universalist Justice of Ohio
- Safe Alliance of Interfaith Leaders
- Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community



The organizers say “It is our intention to affirm the freedom of religion (guaranteed by the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution) and to condemn all acts of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or violence directed at people because of their religion, race or place of origin.”

We at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley want to reach out to people of all religions in our area and work together to support peace and justice in ways that we might not be able to do alone.

We understand that this march is only one small step toward the work that needs to be done in our area for peace and justice, but it is one opportunity for us to come *together*, to get to know each other, so that *together* we can work toward those goals.

The Guiding Principles of the Interfaith March for Peace and Justice which we agreed to when we joined this march are:

1. We believe that all people should be free to practice their faith without fear of discrimination, intimidation, or reprisal.
2. We believe that multiple religions can coexist peacefully and contribute to the common good.
3. We believe that equal justice and equal protection under the law are rights to which all people are entitled regardless of race.
4. We believe that the government of every state and of our great nation should protect those who are most vulnerable and never fail to seek justice for acts of violence perpetrated against minorities by those who claim superiority or dominance

Wendy Edgington & Susan Busker



3 Speakers at the Peace & Justice Rally

Christopher D. Sims is a poet, spoken word performer, and a human rights activist. Also a lay minister, Christopher speaks at churches about the Black Lives Matter movement, his experience in Charlottesville during the White nationalist protests, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's work.

Mr. Sims writes justice and peace poems hoping to inform, encourage, and resist the war loving mindset across the United States and beyond.

Ms. Judy Moe is a lifelong Baha'i and has served on the administrative body for over 40 years in Rockford. She has been involved with several interfaith activities and organizations for most of those years. Ms. Moe has been promoting the oneness of humanity and working to promote peace in the world all her life. Judy spent much of her professional life teaching English as a Second Language to children and adults from all over the world.

Sometimes called “The only paid peace activist in Rockford Illinois,” **Mr. Stanley Campbell** was hired in 1985 as director of Rockford Urban Ministries, an outreach of 23 congregations (mainly United Methodist, with two UU congregations). He is happy that he gets paid to do what he loves: peace work.



Mr. Campbell founded the Rockford Interfaith Council after an attack on the local Lao Buddhist Temple. “I feel that an attack on one faith center is an attack on all” says Mr. Campbell.

A member of Veterans for Peace he says “as a Vietnam veteran, I learned to hate war. I found healing by helping others in the city,” says Mr. Campbell.

A long-time Rockford resident, he established a food pantry after graduating from Rock Valley Community College in 1976, and founded Rockford Peace & Justice Action Committee in 1983.

UU Chat, hosted by Allen (Friday, April 13 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.)

This event is just an informal discussion session that I expect will begin with a focus on what Unitarian/Universalism is all about. This is definitely a good opportunity for those of you who are newer to our faith tradition, but all are welcome. There is no special agenda (this is not a class), and people are welcome to come and go as they wish. If one or two of us bring treats, so much the better. Please feel free to bring guests.

“Friction and fighting can be avoided, managed or resolved...” (Burt & Roper in Raising Small Church Esteem, p. 53)

How do we want to handle conflict in our small congregation?

I follow a group on Facebook, New England’s Small & Mighty UU Congregations, and recently saw a post by a retiring minister who was giving away books on small congregations. I got in touch with her and am now the proud owner of five “new” used books (for the cost of \$3.68 in postage) to support my learning quest regarding the unique strengths *and* unique challenges of small congregations.

One book immediately caught my attention, Raising Small Church Esteem by Steven E. Burt and Hazel A. Roper (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 1992), and the chapter that drew me in was titled “Friction and Fighting: How Can We Stay Healthy?” The authors say “In the small church, differences of opinion concerning budgets, proposals, or methods can lead to vicious confrontations. With all this potential strife, how can we stay healthy?...Conflicts in our world are managed by strong wills, tough policy, and cruelty. But how is conflict managed in other areas of life, particularly in church settings?”(p. 45)

Do we have conflict in our church? Of course! Burt and Roper describe it this way: “...the church consists of people whose feet are made of clay; all are subject to the human condition. That means that conflict in the church is to be expected.” (p. 45) In fact, in a webinar provided for church leaders by the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, the staff indicated that the number one area in which they are called to assist is church conflict.

It is okay to...	It is not okay to...
confront – “I find it difficult when you...”	condemn – “You have absolutely no business...”
contend – set forth your opinion clearly	contrive – line up political support for one’s positions

disagree – “I see it rather differently from that.”	discredit – “This is a stupid idea that will never work.”
accentuate – “This is a major concern for me.”	exaggerate – “This is the worst I can imagine.”
indicate – “I can live with (this), but not with (that).”	dictate – “You either (this) or I will (that).
express concern – state facts that document the existence of a problem	place blame – to make generalizations that implicitly or explicitly indict another
request – “May I ask that in the future you...”	demand – “I’m telling you that from now on you had better...”
confess injury – relate an event or remarks that caused pain	inflict guilt – induce shame on another for his or her conduct or words

So how do we stay healthy when in conflict? Burt and Roper say that

“Communication is the key...” (p. 47) They suggest the following ground rules when addressing conflict (pp. 51-52):

When thinking about how to handle conflict in our church, let us consider how we communicate with each other to help us resolve conflict in a healthy way. *Susan Busker, UUCRV President*



During the month of April, UUCRV will be supporting the Caritas Pantry at Merrill School through the donation of toothbrushes (for both children and adults), toothpaste and floss. Please place donated items in the box under the table in the entry hallway. Thank you for your generosity in sharing with our neighbors!



Congratulations, Grant!

On February 18, Grant, one of our youth, was presented with the “Religion in Life” pin. Religion in Life is “A Program of Study, Reflection, and Action in Religious Living.” The purposes of the program are to:

1. To help Unitarian Universalist young people learn about our faith: our beliefs, our history, our denominational structure, and how we live in the world.
2. To support Unitarian Universalist youth as they live their faith.
3. To provide a program for Unitarian Universalists that can lead to the awarding of the Religion in Life emblem for Boy Scouts.
4. To recognize the achievements of youth in Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Some of the tasks that Grant completed in meeting the requirements of this program were:

- Meeting with his UUCRV mentors – **Thanks to Margaret Curttright, Judy Petree and Penny Shaw for providing this mentorship!**
- Attending worship services and Religious Education classes



- Interviewing UUCRV members and leaders
- Reading and learning about UU history, including creating a display of UUs from history who have appeared on postage stamps
- Preparing and presenting to the congregation a service on UUs in history, including a very enlightening interview with Thomas Jefferson (portrayed by his father).



Grant clearly had the support of his parents, Brock and Melonie, in the completion of this program – your encouragement of Grant on this journey was evident! We congratulate Grant on this accomplishment – we are proud of what you have done and who you are! *(I apologize for not including this article in March's newsletter. WE)*

****Jim Scott – Composer and Musical Activist in Concert at UUCRV April 20, 2018**

For more than three decades, Jim Scott has made it his business to create and perform music that celebrates the earth. His songs and poetry have inspired and educated audiences around the world. He has developed presentations for every age group and crafted songs that sensitize his listeners to the beauty of the earth, teaching principles of ecology in memorable verses.

“The Earth and Spirit Songbook” is an anthology of 110 songs of earth and peace, arranged and edited by Jim, including songs by many contemporary songwriters with some of his own. From his work with the Paul Winter Consort where he co-wrote the celebrated Missa Gaia – Earth Mass and many other pieces, including his “A Song for the Earth,” recorded live at the United Nations on the album Concert for the Earth, Jim has gone on to create an extensive body of work. His recordings “Earth, Sky, Love and Dreams” and “Sailing with the Moon” include many of his eco-anthems.

In songs, choral music, instrumental soundtracks for several documentaries and the PBS series “Body and Soul”, Jim continues to make music with a depth of artistry and craft that separates his music from that of many other singer songwriters. Jim has also ventured into musical theater. His musical “The Tree and Me” has been given full cast productions in Jamestown, New York, and Albion, Michigan, and its songs have become anthems for activists and educators. “The Rainforest Song”, written in a workshop with elementary students, has been published by Hal Leonard Publishers. “Plant More Than You Harvest” was included in a Sony Kids CD “Put On Your Green Shoes”.

As Co-Chair of the Unitarian Universalist Seventh Principle Project, Jim helped to create the “Green Sanctuary” program and accompanying handbook for building an ecological/spiritual awareness in church congregations. He performs many benefit concerts and often appears at events, supporting environmental causes with his music. (for more information on Jim go to www.jimscottmusic.com)

Growing Leaders at UUCRV!



Most of us don't aspire to leadership and many of us have had no formal training in leadership, but when sharing with Sara Goodman that I had never looked to be a leader her response was “I know, but somehow it always finds you!”

Sara was right - leadership found me in the form of the Presidency here at UUCRV. Knowing that I lacked leadership training, I reached out to the UUA for support and found that support in the form of books from the UUA Book Store, online courses from the UU Leadership Institute, and webinars from the MidAmerica Region of the UUA.

This spring Wendy Edgington and I have signed up for an online course from the UU Leadership Institute titled “Centered Leadership, Part I.” We watch it separately on our own time at home (though you can gather a group to watch together) and then talk at a later time about what we learned.

The first session was “Being in a Covenantal Community.” It validated the work we have been doing to write a covenant for our congregation. The course is composed of readings and videos (and a brief quiz – felt like I was back in school!), followed by discussion questions to apply what was learned to our own congregation, e.g. “Have you encountered covenant in your congregational experience? If you have, what was it like? If you have not, how might it make a difference?”

In one of the readings we did, Victoria E. Safford says “A covenant is not a contract...a static artifact, and it is not a sworn oath...A covenant is a living, breathing aspiration, made new each day. It can't be enforced by consequences, but it may be reinforced by forgiveness and by grace, when we stumble, when we forget, when we mess up.” (UU World, Summer 2013)

*Come, come, whoever you are,
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving,
Ours is not a caravan of despair
Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times.
Come, yet again, come, come.
- Rumi*

How might you grow in your leadership skills to serve this Beloved Community?

Susan Busker

Love Reaches Out

On February 24th, ten of us from UUCRV participated in a workshop titled “Love Reaches Out” with Rev. Phil Lund, from the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, serving as facilitator: Allen Harden, Susan Busker, Wendy

Edgington, Marla Wallace, Nina Herzer, Paulette Lucas, Denny Broderick, Tricia Graham, Linda Brefeld, and Laurel Burke. We were joined by ten others from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rock County in Janesville and the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lakes in Elkhorn.



One of the things addressed in this workshop was the changing face of America's religious landscape. A statistic shared was that for every one person who joins a religion, four others have become unaffiliated with their religion. Currently 23% of

people state that they have no religious affiliation (up from 9% in the late 1990s).

What does the UU landscape look like? Membership in UU congregations increased steadily from 2005 to 2009 and then steadily decreased from 2009 until today where it is slightly below (↓1%) where it started 14 years ago. UUCRV has seen a similar pattern of increasing from 35 in 2003 to 44 in 2010 and this year decreasing to 36.



One response to this downward trend that is being taken by the UUA has to do with what is called "branding," for instance using the UUA chalice logo on all publications and offering a website template that will include the UUA "brand" so that people recognize a congregation as belonging to the greater Unitarian Universalist Association.

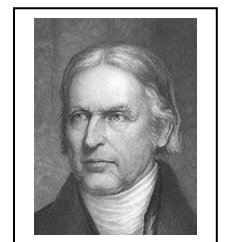


Another focus in this workshop was on creating "Entry Points" – events, programs and other opportunities – for people to come into the church and learn more about who we are, what we do and why we do it. The Board is considering a variety of possible Entry Points that we might offer in the future and will share those at a later time.

The UUA Leadership Institute offers this workshop as an online course as well, titled Love Reaches Out: Outreach and Growth in a Time of Change, for the low cost of \$15. www.uuinstitute.org Susan Busker

Unitarian Universalists in History - Hosea Ballou

In a recent service, Allen mentioned the name Hosea Ballou. I had heard this name before, but, once again, as someone new to Unitarian Universalism, I really didn't know much about this Universalist preacher from our history, considered one of the leaders of American Universalism.



Hosea was born on April 30, 1771 into a family of 11 children. His father was a farmer and a preacher in a Calvinist Baptist church. When in his teens, Hosea heard the message of universal salvation preached in his area and he is said to have been utterly convinced of the words of St. Paul: "Therefore as by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans, 5:18).

Though he had little formal education, being taught at home by his father and attending for a short time a school formed by the Friends, in 1791 Ballou began teaching. In addition, he was an itinerant preacher in Massachusetts and Vermont.

Ballou's ministry was heavily influenced by the thinking of Ethan Allen, who published in 1784 an attack on orthodox Christianity titled "Reason the Only Oracle of Man" in which he argued that the Scriptures must be

read using the light of reason. Applying reason, Ballou rejected the doctrine of the trinity and as early as 1795 “preached Universalism on a unitarian basis.” (uudb.org), convincing his fellow Universalists to adopt a universalism theology. It is said that Ballou wrote in a down-to-earth style and with humor, for instance, in rejecting the trinity he compared it to believing in “infinity, multiplied by three.” (uudb.org)

In 1805, Ballou wrote a book, *Treatise on Atonement*. “As finite creatures, he argued, human beings are incapable of offending an infinite God. Therefore, he rejected the orthodox argument that the death of Jesus Christ was designed to appease an angry God, and replaced it with the idea that God is a being of eternal love who seeks the happiness of his human children. It is not God who must be reconciled to human beings, but human beings who must be reconciled to God. Ballou was convinced that once people realized this, they would take pleasure in living a moral life and doing good works.” (uudb.org)

In 1817, Ballou accepted a call to Second Universalist Society which was founded especially to bring him to Boston. In 1820 in Massachusetts, Unitarian churches benefitted from a religious tax. An attempt at a constitutional convention to separate church and state was opposed successfully. While William Ellery Channing defended this tax, Ballou responded that it was not possible to make people religious by law. Tax money supporting Unitarian churches continued until 1834.

In Ballou’s fifth and final reworking of *A Treatise on Atonement* in 1832 he shared his belief that Jesus had been fully human, chosen by God to preach his love for humanity. Hosea Ballou died in Boston in 1852 at the aged of 81.

Sources:

- The biography of Hosea Ballou written by Ernest Cassara in the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography, an on-line resource of the Unitarian Universalist History & Heritage Society uudb.org
- The Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism, Volume One, From the Beginning to 1899, Ed. Dan McKanan (Boston, MA: UUA, 2017)
- Wikipedia.org

(Editor’s Note: This article was submitted by Susan Busker.)

What talent we have here at UUCRV!



Kara signing (in American Sign Language) the words to one of our favorite hymns, “Spirit of Life” while Wendy leads us in singing!

Thank you for sharing your gifts with our Beloved Community!



March for Our Lives - Rockford



UUCRV was present at the **March for Our Lives** in Rockford. The young speakers were moving and articulate and did a marvelous job of organizing it.

2017-18 Officers

President	Susan Busker	815-624-2833
Vice-President	Wendy Edgington	815-865-5364
Secretary	Denny Broderick	608-751-0630
Treasurer	Nina Herzer	815-624-2283





Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley
329 School Street
Rockton, IL
61072

815-624-4094
uucrockvalley@gmail.com

www.uucrv.org