

UUCRV NEWS

Published by and for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley
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March 2018

Monthly Schedule

- 3/ 4** – Allen Harden *“Reconciliation”*
- 3/11** – Misha Sanders *“For Such a Time as This...Maybe”¹*
- 3/14** – *Meditation, Mindfulness & Mirth Coloring Mandalas*
- 3/16** – *Chili/Soup Cookoff*
- 3/18** – Allen Harden *“Wonder, Awe and Reverence”*
- 3/25** – Ray Herzer *“The Road Not Taken”²*



From the Minister

I stepped into my back yard this morning and saw (just a few) new green shoots poking from the soil. These intrepid plants (daffodils and crocuses, maybe?) dare to present themselves to the air and elements while the calendar still says February. It is a hopeful sign for those of us awaiting longer days and warmer temperatures. Last Sunday, Lynda Johnson encouraged us all to get outside and listen for the migrating birds. She is right -- we should all notice and be mindful of the miraculous nature of our world.

The seasons cycle, whether we appreciate the natural processes or not. We can see reawakening and rebirth as natural, and hopefully, eternal conditions. Maybe soon we might consider how they relate in human cycles.

But what moves me this month is another kind of rebirth that I feel may be nascent and growing within our nation – a rebirth of conscience and caring. I see this starting in topical places, such as the explosion of the #METOO movement. This was spurred almost instantaneously by the toppling of one Hollywood mogul. Years of pent-up response to a climate of repression, exploitation, inequality, shaming and fear exploded when a single event suddenly gave permission for truth telling and sharing. The situations were not new, awareness was not new, feminism was not new – but suddenly a newer and bigger genie was allowed to come out of the bottle.

I am also surprised and grateful that response to mass shootings and gun violence is suddenly firming into real public reaction. The recent attack on a high school in Florida fit the narrative of senseless violence and tragedy we have observed too many times before, that we have grieved too many times before, that we collectively moved on from too many times before. Yet something about Parkland sparked a tangible response, a palpable change in the public climate. I have no idea why -- whether it was just the proverbial “last straw”, whether the change was spurred by immediate action and moral leadership by surviving students, or if it was something else -- but this particular event hit an action nerve across America. For once, the gun lobby has been damaged, and politicians, corporations, and retailers are taking notice.

In the current political climate, it is tempting to slip into despondence about civic affairs and the values that seem to be honored and aspired to by our leaders and electorate. But maybe we are learning. Maybe we just

have to see our “worst” to realize that it is not what we want. Maybe we will get to see a new Phoenix “rise from the ashes” of greed and compromised governance. We must try to make this true, and recent events have provided glimmers of hope alongside the customary bad news. A rebirth of caring and concern can only come about if we demand it, live it, and teach it. So be it. Allen

Committee Information

Worship Committee: (Wendy Edgington – Chairperson) The Committee is working closely with our minister, Allen Harden, to present meaningful worship services. Please take note of the Sunday Message titles.

¹**Misha Sanders’** message this month is **“For Such a Time as This...Maybe”** A low-pressure call to whatever action your heart is guiding you to take to make the world just a little bit better. Or maybe to save your whole nation, who knows? Let’s explore the Hebrew scriptural story of Esther and see if we find ourselves anywhere in it.

²**Ray Herzer** will present March’s Lay Led service - **“The Road Not Traveled”** An exploration of how one’s journey through life may be altered by conscious intent, chance occurrence or fate (the hand of God).

“On **April 22nd**, **Connie [Matusiak]** will have a service for National Poetry Month. The service will have three parts-poems that inspire, poems that comfort, and poems that entertain. Would you like to be a part of the service? Do you have a poem to recite or read? Would you like to read one that Connie chooses? Let her know.” submitted by Connie Matusiak

Green Corner

Good news! Spring will be about three weeks early this year. How can that be? We simply ignore the astronomical method of determining the start of the seasons and use the meteorological method of determining the start of the seasons.

In the meteorological method we ignore those confusing solstices and equinoxes with their changing dates and instead rely on average monthly temperatures to determine the four seasons. This makes it easier to come up with statistical information for whole months instead of partial months. The agricultural community greatly prefers this.

So what happens with all the celebrations centered on the astronomical start of the season? Will this put an end to those pagan rituals? Will it put an end to our UU winter solstice celebration? Not hardly. We will continue with both systems - after all, everyone likes a party!

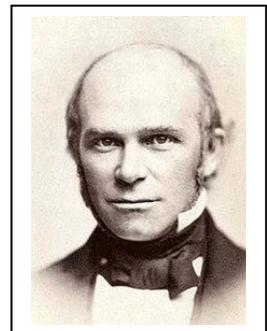
Meteorological spring will begin on March 1st. But don’t start looking for daffodils and crocus quite yet. They’re sticking with the astronomical system. *Ray Herzer*

Unitarian Universalists in History – Theodore Parker

Being relatively new to Unitarian Universalism, I am just learning about the Unitarians, Universalists and Unitarian Universalists who have shaped our faith throughout history. I have come across a number of quotes by Theodore Parker over time and have found them intriguing and inspiring, and wanted to know more.

Theodore Parker was born in 1810 in Lexington, Massachusetts. His early education was at country schools and through personal study. At the age of 19 he walked ten miles to Cambridge to apply to Harvard College. Though he was accepted, he could not afford the tuition, so he continued to study at home and only completed exams at the college. In 1834 he entered the Harvard Divinity School, completing this program in 1836.

He began his first pastorate in West Roxbury. In 1837, Parker heard Ralph Waldo Emerson’s address to the Harvard Divinity School and began attending meetings of the Transcendental Club. He started introducing the Transcendentalist ideals into his sermons.



In 1841, his sermon titled “A Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity” argued a belief that while Jesus’s teachings were permanent, the traditions of Christianity were not. He believed in God, but thought that people should experience God intuitively and personally. Parker said “Looking at the Word of Jesus, at real Christianity, the pure religion he taught, nothing appears more fixed and certain. Its influence widens as light extends; it deepens as the nations grow more wise. But, looking at history of what men call Christianity, nothing seems more uncertain and perishable.” This view was criticized by the Unitarian leadership and he was banned from preaching in most pulpits in Boston though his ideas excited ordinary Unitarians.

In 1846 he was offered a position preaching in the 28th Congregational Society of Boston which included Louisa May Alcott, Julia Ward Howe and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well as free-born blacks and fugitive slaves. He identified his preaching as prophetic Christian social activism. Parker was involved with social reform movements such as temperance, peace, the condition of women, prison discipline, the poor, and the abolition of slavery, for which he took a particularly strong stance. Parker predicted the inevitable success of abolition saying “Look to the facts of the world. You will see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice.”

Parker died in 1860 of tuberculosis, at the age of 49. Shortly before his death he wrote a letter to his congregation in which he said this of his fellow Unitarian ministers “Most powerfully preaching to the Understanding, the Conscience and the Will, the cry was ever, “Duty, Duty! Work, Work! They failed to address with equal power, the Soul, and did not also shout “Joy, Joy! Delight, Delight!”

One of the quotes by Theodore Parker that I recently came across really summarized what this Unitarian Universalist faith means to me:

***Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere;
its temple, all space;
its shrine, the good heart;
its creed, all truth;
its ritual, works of love;
its profession of faith, divine living.***

- Susan Busker

Sources: wikipedia.org; A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism, Volume One From the Beginning to 1899, edited by Dan McKanan (Boston, MA: Skinner House, 2017), pp. 306, 344, 373,

Birthdays

12 – Nina Herzer

19 – Ray Herzer

“Church is not, first of all, about the institution. It is about the people. It’s about their redemption and their finding a home and a people with whom to live faithfully.”

- David R. Ray in The Indispensable Guide for Smaller Churches, p. xv.

Anne Lamott, in her book Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith, writes about a seven-year-old girl who was lost. A policeman stopped to help her and they drove together around the town until she said “You can let me out now. This is my church, and I can always find my way home from here.” Anne goes on to say this about her church: “And that is why I have stayed so close to mine – because no matter how bad I am feeling, how lost or lonely or frightened, when I see the faces of the people at my church, and hear their voices, I can always find my way home.”

Home...an interesting choice of words to describe church. For hundreds of years at the beginning of the Christian faith small house churches were the norm. These churches met in people's homes and were led by members of the church. Some larger churches were formed after the Christian church was sanctioned by the Roman Empire, but typically churches remained small.

At the turn of the 20th century in this country, the majority of churches were considered small with less than 150 members. So when did the large church become the ideal? Apparently this didn't happen until the first part of the 20th century, fairly recent history in the timeline of the Christian church. At the same time there was a movement toward big businesses incorporating smaller businesses, consolidated schools blending smaller schools into one, and government entities merging into larger institutions. While there may have been financial benefits to such changes, I wonder if it might not have been at a cost to quality and human relationships.

Is there a societal prejudice against anything that remains small in a culture of "bigger is better?" David R. Ray thinks so. He writes "Ours remains a prejudiced and discriminating world. When one race or ethnic group sees another as inferior and acts accordingly, we call it 'racism.' If one gender takes a chauvinistic approach to another, we call it 'sexism.' When older people are ridiculed and dismissed, we call it 'ageism.' Over twenty years ago, I called our society's obsession with size... 'sizeism'...Sizeism is very real and very prevalent." ([The Indispensable Guide for Smaller Churches](#), pp. xix-xx)

The term "family-sized church" is used to describe churches with less than 50 members, and often I perceive that the term is applied as a negative. In his article, "Size Really Does Make a Difference!", the Rev. Stefan Jonasson (UUA Director for Large Congregations) says this about family churches: "matriarchs and patriarchs tend to dominate," "the minister is rarely at the center of congregational life", and "the board is generally not much better off than the minister." Is this true of our church? I often hear members refer to UUCRV as your "family", or at least part of your extended family. I can't think of a more loving and relational term than family. But, like any family if we want to maintain and expand our relationship we need to continually consider how we might grow in our mission "to create community, celebrate worship, seek justice and truth and live guided by love" – together I believe we can! *Susan Busker, UUCRV President*



Love Reaches Out



On February 24th, UUCRV Board members and Committee Chairpersons, were invited to participate in a workshop titled "Love Reaches Out" with Rev. Phil Lund, from the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, serving as facilitator.

The purpose of this workshop was to look at ways we can offer events, programs and opportunities to introduce ourselves to our community, and how to use a shared UU "brand identity" in communications to shape how we and Unitarian Universalism are perceived.

Other small UU congregations from our area were also invited to participate, including the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rock County in Janesville, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lakes in Elkhorn and the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Stockton.

This activity supports a couple of our Board Goals this year:

- ✦ **Expand our presence in the community**
- ✦ **Form relationships with other small congregations**

More will be shared when we have had time to process what we have learned!

Susan Busker



Happy Anniversary UUCRV!

On February 16, 2003, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rock Valley was officially installed as a member church in the Unitarian Universalist Association. We thank our founding members for the work they did to make this happen and congratulate everyone who has helped this community grow and thrive for the last 15 years!

The Board would like to have a celebration to honor this anniversary. The idea is to open our church up to the community with activities that will attract people to visit and learn about who we are and what we do. This celebration will take place in the summer to allow us time to plan.

We had many creative and inspiring ideas shared at an informal meeting after church on February 25th, but **it will take all of us to make this celebration a success!** Share your ideas for activities with someone on the Board and let us know how you are willing to help plan and/or carry out this event to welcome our community to visit us. *Susan Busker*

Ministry Committee or Committee on Ministry? What's the difference?

UUCRV has had a Ministry Committee for a number of years now. The purpose of this committee is to "support and strengthen the professional ministry of the congregation."

Responsibilities of this Committee include:

1. Facilitate communication between the minister and the congregation, bringing any issues to the minister's attention and encouraging direct communication.
2. Serve as a sounding board for the minister.
3. Evaluate the minister, in the context of the total ministry of the congregation, once a year.

On February 16th, the Ministry Committee, consisting of Linda Brefeld, Paulette Lucas and Jerry Paulson, met with the President, Susan Busker, and the Minister, Allen Harden, to consider the work of this committee including how it is currently serving UUCRV and how it might serve in the future.

There has been a trend described in the UUA as moving from a Ministry Committee (sometimes called a Ministerial Relations Committee) to a Committee on Ministry. Sounds like it could just be a title change, but in fact the Committee on Ministry is encouraged to take a broader look at all the ministries of the congregation, not just the minister. **"Committees on Ministry are designed to track the heartbeat of ministry within a congregation;** how the members...take care of themselves and each other, how the lay ministerial leadership serves a congregation; and how the called minister serves the congregation. It seeks to understand, assess, support, and advocate for robust ministry throughout the context of congregational life." (Rev. Anne Heller, Churchworks: A Well-Body Book for Congregations, Skinner House, 1999)

The Ministry Committee will meet again in March to continue to discuss how it might best serve this congregation and will keep you informed about what they learn.

As always, you are encouraged to directly communicate with the minister to share your thoughts.

Submitted by Susan Busker



2017-18 Officers

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