



THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2011



December Services



December 4

Occupy Our Faith: Economic Justice – Rev. Betty Kornitzer

What does it mean for us to Stand on the Side of Love for economic justice in America?

The service will include a New Member Welcoming Ceremony

December 11

Building Community Through Music – Sarah Dan Jones, President, U.U. Musicians' Network

Sarah Dan is a UU troubadour whose mission is to spread the gospel of Unitarian Universalism by encouraging congregational singing. A recent transplant to New England from the South, she served as Music Director at both the Dahlonge and the Northwest Atlanta UU congregations in Georgia and was music coordinator for the UUA General Assembly in 2006 and 2007.

December 18

Celebrating the Light – Rev. Betty Kornitzer & Debby Hedison

A holiday family service.

On this day, all families are asked to return their Guest at Your Table boxes.

December 23

The Christmas Eve Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.

We will join together for a traditional service of carols and stories, and rejoice in the special enchantment of the holiday season. Bring your children, bring visiting relatives, bring friends to this wonderful time of shared community spirit.

Please bring baked goods to share at a time of fellowship after the service.

December 25

Christmas Stories and Requests for Christmas Hymns – Rev. Betty Kornitzer & Mike Galib

There will be no religious education this morning. Children are welcome to accompany parents to the service, and the nursery will be open for children with their parents.

January 1

Beginning Anew – Rev. Betty Kornitzer

Healing relationships with the Buddhist practice of Beginning Anew.

Please bring a bell for our beautiful bell ceremony (and bring extra bells if you have them).



OUR HOME IS AT LILY PADS PROFESSIONAL CENTER, 27 NORTH ROAD, PEACE DALE, R.I.



THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

PUBLISHED ELEVEN TIMES A YEAR

KAREN R. ELLSWORTH, EDITOR ♦ VAL FOLLETT & GERRE ALDERWICK, PUBLISHERS

DEADLINE: THE 20TH DAY OF EACH MONTH

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

www.uusouthcountyri.org

OUR HOME IS AT LILY PADS PROFESSIONAL CENTER, 27 NORTH ROAD, PEACE DALE, R. I. 02879

(401) 783-4170 • uucscri@yahoo.com • <http://www.uusouthcountyri.org> • *David Crockett, Webmaster*

Rev. Betty Kornitzer, Minister

Services and Children's Religious Education on Sundays at 10 a.m.

***We welcome all individuals without regard to race, color, physical challenge,
sexual orientation, age, or national origin.***

Staff Members

Debby Hedison, Religious Education Director

Michael Galib, Music Director

Kathleen Carland, Office Administrator

Board of Directors

Charles Donnelly, President

Nancy Rose, Vice President

Will Bender, Treasurer • Ron Creamer, Clerk

Joan Youngken • Lisa McHenry • Susan Farrell

Myrina Cardella-Marengi
Publicity Coordinator

Committee Chairs

Val Follett & Barbara Pagh,

Membership Committee Co-Chairs

John Glasheen, Social Justice Council Coordinator

(open) Religious Education Committee Chair

Carolyn Hurdis, Personnel Committee Chair

Jean Burke, Linda Whyte Burrell & Lindsey

Crowninshield, Committee on Ministry

Aline Couture, Finance Committee Chair

(open) Facilities Committee Chair

Peter Himmel, Adult Religious Education Chair

Susan Moreland, Music Committee Chair

Judi Marcy, Caring Connection Chair

David Floyd, Social Events Committee Chair

Vikki LePree, Gabrielle Torphy, & Melissa Hughes,

Hospitality Committee Chairs

Helene Gersuny, Worship Committee Chair

Contact Information for Rev. Betty Kornitzer

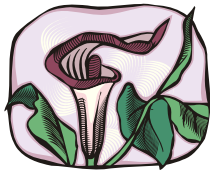
Regular Office Hours – Wednesdays 3 to 6 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays: 9 a.m. to Noon,
and other times, ***all by appointment.*** Days off are Monday, Tuesday & Friday afternoon.

Office Telephone (non-urgent calls) – 284-3321 Cell Phone (urgent calls) – 932-1515.

E-mail (very effective) – bkornitzer@aol.com

Please be sure to call before dropping by the church during office hours. Sometimes Betty is called
away on business away from her office, even during office hours.

Betty will be on sabbatical during the month of January



The Minister's Message

By Rev. Betty Kornitzer

Crossing Borders

Again I commend to you a careful (and enjoyable) reading of the latest edition of *UU World* magazine. In the winter issue, UUA president Peter Morales writes of “border crossings” as a spiritual practice. “The religious journey,” he writes, “as described in all the great religious traditions, is a journey of moving beyond the prison of the self.” Morales believes that for our faith to flourish, as individuals and as congregations, we must get outside ourselves and connect with others personally, locally and globally. I believe this connectivity is how we live into the essence of our being, which I call oneness. I hope that many of you will read Morales’s one-page letter on the topic and engage in personal reflection on which borders you have crossed and which you might cross in the future. We might also reflect upon what UUCSC might do to reach beyond our four walls.

General Assembly 2012 in Phoenix, Arizona will be a special “Justice GA.” In Phoenix, the UUA plans to stand in solidarity with the local immigrant population as a response to SB 1070, the state’s oppressive immigration law. UUCSC hopes to send a strong delegation to cross that border and Stand on the Side of Love with those persecuted by the law.

So let us be on our spiritual journey and cross borders. May we reflect on our oneness and connectivity as we read this poem by Unitarian Universalist Lynn Ungar.

Blessings, Peace and Love,

Betty

Boundaries

The universe does not
revolve around you. The stars and planets
spinning
through the ballroom of space
dance with one another
quite outside of your small life.
You cannot hold gravity
or seasons; even air and water
inevitably evade your grasp.
Why not, then, let go?

You could move through time
like a shark through water,
neither restless or ceasing,
absorbed in and absorbing
the native element.

Why pretend you can do otherwise?
The world comes in at every pore,
mixes in your blood before
breath releases you into
the world again. Did you think
the fragile boundary of your skin
could build a wall?

Listen. Every molecule is humming
its particular pitch.
Of course you are a symphony.
Whose tune do you think
the planets are singing
as they dance?

– Lynn Ungar

When the weather is frightful . . .

The safety of our congregants is our first priority. Please stay at home on Sunday mornings if travel is unsafe for you. UUCSC President Charlie Donnelly and Rev. Betty will determine if Sunday services should be cancelled due to bad weather. The decision will be made by early Sunday morning. Cancellation will be publicized in three ways: A message will be sent out on the church e-mail list, a notice will be posted on the UUCSC website, and a message will be broadcast on TV channels 12 and 64 and on radio stations WHJJ (920 AM), WWBB (101FM), WHJY (94.1 FM) and WSNE (93.3FM).



If the service is cancelled, enjoy a “virtual worship service.”

Sunday morning worship is an important part of our experience of Beloved Community, even in the midst of storms. If Sunday morning worship is cancelled due to bad weather, Betty will send out a “virtual worship service” to those on the UUCSC e-mail list. The idea is that at 10 a.m. on Sunday morning, all who wish may read the service and participate, knowing we all together in spirit. If you have Joys and Concerns to share, send them to Betty at bkornitzer@aol.com by 9 a.m. Sunday morning, and they will be included in the “virtual worship service.”

The President's Letter

The UUCSC recently has lost two great women.

Elsa Gambarini was a woman of many talents. She taught Spanish at Yale University and was a mental health counselor in South County. Her humility and grace is something I will always remember. She was the wife of Alberto. The Gambarinis are long time members of the UUCSC and are originally from Argentina.

Joan Patterson was one of our two founding mothers. Joan, along with her husband Tom and Winnie and Pete Bennis, started the UUCSC in their living rooms. Look at where we are today!

Joan was probably the first person I met in South County. When I was dating my wife Iris, I was living in Fall River. Iris bid on a UUCSC auction item, which was a dinner at Linda and Gene Jackim's house. I happened to be seated next to Joan. The first thing I noticed about Joan was her warmth and sense of humor. At the time, I was studying to be a

librarian, and it just so happened that Joan was a retired school librarian. When I got to know her better, I also realized she was a hugger. Joan was also known for her ham and baked bean dinners. Her baked beans were awesome; I called them Joan's "Ohio" baked beans.



I served with Joan on our board several times over the years. Joan joined the board again last June and as part of her duties as the Past President on the board, she ran the Program Council. We will miss her hugs, humor and wisdom.

Our condolences go out to the Gambarini and Patterson families. Elsa and Joan will be greatly missed.

An ad-hoc committee made up of

board members and finance committee members will be meeting soon with Dan Hotchkiss, a consultant from the Albin Institute. Dan was the consultant who helped us buy Lily Pads. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss church finances with the goal being to make sure that our congregation is on a sound financial footing into the future. A financial plan will developed.

I was fortunate recently to spend an enjoyable weekend with nine members of our senior youth group and three other adult advisors on one of the group's annual retreats. The retreat this year was in North Conway, New Hampshire at the Fall River Ski Club's house. The youth retreats are a great way for everyone to bond and it was a nice mix of hanging around the house and enjoying nature.

The other adults on the trip were Sally Barney, Laura Geoghegan Kellner and Susan Corkran.

— Charlie Donnelly

Will you donate a Christmas gift for a South County foster child?

Can you help us make sure foster children in Washington County receive Christmas gifts? These kids get very little for Christmas and it would be great if you could help.

We are collecting new clothes and toys for boys and girls ranging in age from newborn to 18 years old. The gifts may be delivered—unwrapped, please!—to

Jeannie at Guys & Gals Hair Salon, 343 Main St. in downtown Wakefield (next door to Fat Belly's Irish Pub & Grille). Jeannie has been involved with the Foster Care Program for three years. I am also placing a

box in the vestibule at church. You can leave gifts there and I will deliver them to Guys & Gals.

Thank you for helping! — Paulette Chamberas



Our annual holiday potluck lunch & sing-along

Please join us at the annual Holiday Potluck and Sing-along on Sunday, December 11, after coffee hour, for food, fellowship and music. Bring a dish to share and, if you are so inclined, a musical instrument or two. We like to sing traditional carols and also secular seasonal songs.

This is always a fun, relaxed, informal gathering. We eat at around noon and start singing by 12:30. You know all the tunes, so why not sing along!

There will be no "First Sunday Sociable Singing" this month or January 1. This could be your best chance get some singing in!



— Harry Buffum



The Music Corner

by Mike Galib, Music Director

I'd like to thank everyone who came out to our Autumn Evening of Choral Music on Saturday, November 19th. It was a great musical evening, and your enthusiasm and support made it a wonderful start to what I hope will become a small tradition of "classical" concerts at UUCSC. Many personal thanks, too, to members of the Choir, the Music Committee, David Floyd, and many others in the congregation who helped see the concert through from a little brainstorming idea to the finish!

December brings its own share of musical times,

and most notably at our church the Christmas Eve service on Friday, December 23, which will be a celebration of carols and stories, featuring anthems by the UUCSC Choir, joined by trumpeter Nick Jemo, whom you may remember from last year. A freelancer in New York (he plays with the New York Philharmonic from time to time), Nick is also from Rhode Island and close to me in age, and has so kindly agreed to play with us while home for Christmas break.

May everyone have an enjoyable holiday season!

Todos Somos Arizona

Amigos y Amigas,

On October 17th, I went up to join hundreds of others begin to "Occupy Providence," as a part of the nationwide "Occupy Wall Street" movement. I must say that the energy of that afternoon and evening brought back the memory of the anti-war movement in the 60s. I saw the same people who were with me then, and they are with me now. I came home re-energized and more hopeful than I've been in a long, long time.

As a UU who has become re-energized, it makes sense to me to attend UUA General Assembly in Phoenix this coming June. This GA will be pro-active. I will have the opportunity to work and worship with my fellow UUs. The intent is for UUs to witness the ways that show our commitment to social justice and to work with community partners in Phoenix. I go to GA with the second line of our Covenant, "and Service is its prayer," as my mantra. I am ready to be a witness for justice with a most compassionate heart.

Members of the Social Justice Committee are working to make it as easy as possible for our members and friends to join us in Phoenix. We will be presenting our information and more on December 15th. See you then.

- Tu amiga, Gerre Alderwick

Changes in publicity

As of January, Myrina Cardella-Marengi will assume the duties of publicity chair.

Thanks go to Elizabeth Donovan and Myron Waldman for their dedication and skill in publicizing congregation events. Because of their efforts, the surrounding community is aware of how dynamic our little corner of Peace Dale has become.

David Floyd, chair of the Social Events Committee, said, "Myron Waldman coined the name 'Music at Lily Pads.' He was supportive and offered sage advice. We only hope the series in its present form does justice to what Myron envisioned."



We hope to broaden our offerings to include Sunday afternoon dance and drama events, author readings, lectures, films, and other events. Anyone have a suggestion?

As has always been our policy, ticket prices for musical evenings will be moderate and for some weekend afternoon events there will be no admission charge. Previous attendance has exceeded expectations and we would like this to continue as our repertoire grows.

- Myrina Cardella-Marengi

Our Meditation Group meets in the sanctuary every Wednesday from 10 to 11 a.m. We practice sitting and walking meditation and share a reading and time of discussion. All are welcome; no meditation experience is necessary.



MONEY MATTERS

The monthly column from the Finance Committee

Important tax information:

Just a reminder that any donations or pledge payments you are planning on for tax deductions in this year's tax reporting, must be received by December 31st. If the donation or pledge payment is from an IRA account, it usually takes the fund manager a few days to process your request . . . and it must be received by UUCSC by December 31st.

Thanks to all of you who continue to generously support us with you time, skill, energy and money. Together we create this wonderful community.

Fundraising Update

As of November 6th, we have raised \$4,589 from various events during this year. This amount is from the following:

Bake Sale - \$166

Book Sale - \$975

D 4 \$, Oct. - \$2,365

Plant Sale - \$338

Other (late payments for previous events) - \$745

Our budget shows us raising \$15,000 for the year. We still have eight months to accomplish this goal . . . and knowing our Congregation, we will achieve our goal. To quote Rev. Betty, "May it be so!"

Respectfully submitted,
Aline Couture, Finance Chair

Save the date!

"Books & Bagels"

Saturday, January 7 at 10:30 a.m.

Join us for our third annual "Books & Bagels" as we share our favorite books read in 2011 while enjoying bagels and cream cheese, muffins, fruit, tea and coffee. Please bring up to 3 books and tell us why you chose them.



You may also read a short selection from each book (optional). Our facilitator will be Nancy



Rose. Sponsored by Adult RE. – Iris Donnelly

A note from our Administrator

Imagine— I arrived in the warmth of late summer and now the last leaves are beginning to fall. As the winter and the holidays approach I am wonderfully aware of the newness that comes with each season.

Accurately reflecting the new and ongoing activities on the monthly calendar is a priority for me. Beginning in December, only the Small Groups in Small Group Ministry that meet at church will be listed on the calendar. Home meetings are arranged among the group members. Please let me know if you do see something listed inaccurately.

The new updated Directory is almost complete. One of the special qualities of this congregation is the desire to connect with one another as well as the larger community. The Directory makes this work so well! I recently sent congregation members and friends an electronic draft for review. Thank you to everyone who sent in new or updated information. It is not too late if you did not receive it and would like to be listed in the Directory. Please send your information to me by December 12th through e-mail at uucscri-@yahoo.com, or see Val Follett (Membership) on Sunday for a form to complete. New or frequent visitors may complete a yellow Welcome card available on Sundays and check off Directory. Congregation e-mail is another great way to keep informed on a regular basis. If you do not receive these notifications, and would like to, please let me know. Once again, I can be reached Tuesday through Thursday between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. and Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. by phone at 783-4170 or e-mail at uucscri-@yahoo.com.

The office will be closed the week between December 25 and January 1, 2012.

– Kathy Carland



Religious Education News and Events

By Debby Hedison, Director of Religious Education

"....go with Wisdom, go with Wonder...."

Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.
 Life is beauty, admire it.
 Life is a dream, realize it.
 Life is a challenge, meet it.
 Life is a duty, complete it.
 Life is a game, play it.
 Life is a promise, fulfill it.
 Life is sorrow, overcome it.
 Life is a song, sing it.
 Life is a struggle, accept it.
 Life is a tragedy, confront it.
 Life is an adventure, dare it.
 Life is luck, make it.
 Life is too precious, do not destroy it.
 Life is life, fight for it.

— Anonymous

In this, the last newsletter of the year, I feel bittersweet. We are all missing several beloved friends who have passed on this year. And the moment I feel sad I can instantly recall a memory of them to make me smile. I can also look around me on a Sunday morning to see babies who have begun to walk, a child showing me the gap where a tooth used to be or a group of teenagers making music together, and I am awestruck at the legacy that has been left for all of us. Life is a miracle.

We all move on, whether we are at the beginning of the journey or the physical end. We are always moving, creating a miracle. May the New Year shine miracles upon you and may you see and experience each and every one of them!

Lots of Love,
Debby

Religious Education Notes:

We still can use your help in the classroom! Several openings still remain in the K-2nd grade classroom. Don't miss out on your opportunity to learn, grow and see, in person, the gaps where the child's tooth used to be! A miracle is in store for you.

Registrations are due! If you would like your child or youth to participate in the RE program it is vital that he or she is registered. Forms are available in the classrooms and near the RE bulletin board in the community room.

There will be no Sunday School or Youth Group meeting on Sunday, December 25. The service will be for all ages. On January 1st, Debby will lead an all-ages worship. The children start downstairs for this. We will open up last year's time capsule and the to refill it with fun facts for next year!



Linden Littlejohn Gray & Steven Michael John Wicklund
invite members and friends of the congregation
to join them for their wedding ceremony

Monday, January 2nd, 2012
at 2:30 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County
27 North Road, Peace Dale

An informal reception in the community room
will follow the ceremony



Special Collection on Christmas Eve Eve

Since 2004, the Agape Fund has provided confidential assistance to members and friends of the congregation who need help in critical areas of sustenance such as food, housing and heating.



A special collection for the Agape Fund will be taken at the Christmas Eve Eve service on December 23. Please call Betty at her study (284-3321) if you'd like to talk about receiving assistance from the Agape Fund. It is there to serve you.

Thanks for your generosity

Richard Parker joins Tracy Hart and Iris Donnelly in thanking UUCSC members, friends, and everyone in the community who attended the tribute to the late artist Stephanie Parker on November 12. The sale of her beautiful pastels brought in \$1,850 for our congregation. We appreciate your generosity!

Because of Stephanie's love of plants and art, this money will be used to add

perennials, bulbs, bushes and trees to the church landscape, and to purchase art supplies for the religious education program.

— Iris Donnelly and Tracy Hart

Time to return that box!

I thank everyone who took home a Guest at Your Table box at the Intergenerational Service on November 20th, and everyone who got one later.

I plan to keep Miss Debby's Stories of Hope with its Prayers of Gratitude on my table long after the box is turned in. The Graces and Chalice Lighting Words have become a tradition with me.

Please bring the boxes in on Christmas Day— yes, it's a Sunday this year! If you have other plans, you may bring the box with you the next time you come to a service. I hope to have the final count in time for the February issue of the South County UU. — Gerre Alderwick

Welcome House

On the second Wednesday of each month, UUCSC is responsible for the evening meal at Welcome

House, the homeless shelter in Peace Dale. This month, the date is December 14th. If you would like to volunteer, please sign up on the sheet in the Community Room. Should you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Gerre Alderwick.

— Gerre Alderwick



Can you host a friend for Christmas dinner?

Sometimes members and friends of our UUCSC family have no plans for Christmas dinner. If your household has an extra place or two at your holiday table, and you'd like to host a UUCSC member or friend, please let Rev. Betty know. "Table hospitality" is a wonderful way to remember our faith family during the holidays. This is what is truly means to be community. — Rev. Betty

Was Samuel Gorton the first Unitarian Universalist in Rhode Island?

Even in a colony filled with heretics, nonconformists and troublemakers, Samuel Gorton distinguished himself as a heretic, nonconformist and troublemaker. But could Samuel Gorton (1594-1677) also have been Rhode Island's first Unitarian Universalist?

"No man has suffered more in reputation from the calumny of his enemies, or been made to feel more severely the penalty of nonconformity, or the trials of an independent spirit, than Samuel Gorton, the founder of Warwick," U.S. Sen. Samuel G. Arnold wrote in his 1859 history of the state. "A most prodigious minter of exorbitant novelties,' 'a proud and pestilent seducer,' 'a beast,' 'miscreant,' and 'arch heretic' are some of the epithets with which he has been branded by the malevolence of his age . . . The same power that had driven Williams into exile and had disarmed the followers of Mrs. Hutchinson was ready to vindicate its superiority upon the sturdy spirit of Gorton."

Although not trained as a minister, Gorton held strong and individual religious views. He rejected the Puritan doctrine of predestination, the belief that God has chosen only some people for salvation. He believed that heaven and hell existed only in the mind. He rejected belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as separate entities. He believed women should have the right to teach religion, and he opposed slavery.

And, perhaps more important for explaining his apparent bad attitude toward authority, he believed in the authority of God, the King as God's

deputy, and the individual. "Between these he recognized no medium of interposition," in the words of historian Thomas Bicknell. He did not believe that a colonial government not sanctioned by the crown had any authority over him.



A 19th Century view of early colonists

Like Roger Williams, Gorton believed that governmental leaders should be forbidden to "intermeddle between God and the consciences of men; in this way only is the preservation and honor of all States in their several ways of rule and government." And like Roger Williams, he believed the Quakers' theology to be in error, but he defended their rights and welcomed them into his settlement.

"One does not find in his published works any detailed system of faith; he did not attempt to build up a sect or claim anything new in revelation or Scripture interpretation," his descendant Adelos Gorton wrote in a 1907 biography. "His religious opinions, if peculiar then, are no more so now than exist in any congregation." He quotes theologian Lewis G. Janes as saying that when

Gorton's writings are examined, "the surprising thing . . . is the remarkable modernness of many of [his] ideas."

Janes, a late 19th century president of the Brooklyn Ethical Association, made a thorough study of Gorton's religious beliefs. He wrote:

The scripture references to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit he interprets as spiritual distinctions in the nature of Christ. They are not separate persons of a godhead, but distinctions of the divine activity, having a unity not found elsewhere, but only in Christ. With Channing, Gorton also taught the essential divinity of human nature—the equal nearness of the divine spirit to the sinner and to the saint. He recognized the divine spark in every human soul, and to this he made his appeal. The doctrine of imputed sin and imputed righteousness he denounces as unworthy of the divine character. God was in Christ reconciling men unto himself, not imputing their sins. . . there is no arbitrary penalty inflicted at the close of man's earthly career, or at some future day of judgment; it is the intrinsic and natural result of evil action.

All virtue, he taught, even the goodness of God, consists wholly in the service of others. The goodness of God's nature is such that it cannot subsist or be without communicating itself with another; otherwise

continued on page 10

his goodness should be useless, which cannot be admitted for one moment of time, for there is an impossibility thereof.

With Theodore Parker, he taught that the entire creative energy was expressed in the divine nature, to conceive which as purely masculine was inadequate, anthropomorphic, and irrational; and in one of the most striking passages in his Commentary on the Lord's Prayer he argues for the equal recognition of women in the church, as teachers of religion.

Gorton would be driven out of Plymouth, Portsmouth, Providence, and Pawtuxet. To have a place to live, he had to start his own settlement. Who was this unusual man, and how did he make so many people angry?

“His religious opinions, if peculiar then, are no more so now than exist in any congregation.”

Samuel Gorton was born in Manchester, England into a wealthy family and received a classical education from private tutors. He married Mary Mayplet, whose father and grandfather were clergymen and whose brother later became physician to King Charles II. She was described as “a lady of education and refinement” who was probably not prepared for the primitive living conditions of early colonial New England.

In 1637 he emigrated with his family and his brother Thomas to Massachusetts. He later wrote, “I left my native country to enjoy lib-

erty of conscience in respect to faith toward God and for no other end.” What he found in Massachusetts was a church-state bureaucracy as intent on punishing nonconformists as the one he had left behind.

Gorton first settled in Plymouth Colony, but trouble soon began. He had theological differences with his landlord, a retired minister. When one of his servants was charged with smiling during church services, he went to court in her place to defend her and was himself charged with “carrying himself mutinously and seditiously.” On Dec. 4, 1638, he was found guilty and ordered to leave Plymouth within 14 days. His crime had been to point out to the court that a judge should not also serve as a prosecutor.



19th Century depiction
of Gorton on trial in Portsmouth

Gorton moved to the nearest settlement, Portsmouth, where John Clarke, Anne Hutchinson, and fellow-believers had established themselves. Things went smoothly until the merger of Portsmouth and Newport. A servant of Gorton's was accused of assault and Gorton went to court in her place. When Gorton pointed out that the proceeding was not only unfair but illegal, Gov.

Coddington ordered the bailiffs to take him to jail. Gorton responded that it was Coddington who should be jailed. For his insolence he was indicted on 14 counts. His alleged crimes included calling the magistrates ‘Just Asses,’ and calling a free-man in open court ‘saucy boy’ and ‘Jack-an-Apes’ (a pretentious fool). He was sentenced to be whipped.

Gorton and several friends from Portsmouth moved to Providence, with predictable results. A few months after Gorton's arrival, Roger Williams wrote to Massachusetts Bay Governor John Winthrop, “Master Gorton having abused high and low at Aquidnick, is now bewitching and bemaddening poor Providence, both with his uncleane and foul censures of all ministers in this country (for which myself have in Christ's name withstood him) and also denying all visible and externall ordinances . . .”. Williams remarked that he might be forced to move to Patience Island until Gorton left town.

“With Channing, Gorton also taught the essential divinity of human nature—the equal nearness of the divine spirit to the sinner and to the saint.”

Eventually Providence residents forced Gorton and his friends, by now known as “Gortonists” or “Gortonians,” to leave. This time they went to Pawtuxet, five miles to the south, a settlement begun in 1636 by the Arnold, Carpenter and Cole families. To get help in dealing with the Gortonians, the residents of Pawtuxet placed themselves under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In January of 1643, Samuel

continued on page 11

Gorton, Randall Holden, and eight others bought Shawomet, a large tract in what is now Warwick, from Narragansett chief sachem Miantonomi for the equivalent of 72 pounds sterling. Two sub-sachems complained to the Massachusetts Bay Colony that they had not been fairly dealt with in the purchase—a pretext for the Massachusetts Bay authorities to summon Gorton and the others to Boston.

“He did indeed clothe his
thoughts at times in clouds,
but then it was because they
were too large for any
other garment.”

Gorton wrote to the authorities in Boston that the Gortonians were under the direct jurisdiction of the British crown and expected shortly to receive a charter. Holden wrote separately, addressing his letter to “the great idol General now set up in Massachusetts,” which probably didn’t help. When Massachusetts sent word that the Gortonians would be arrested by force, the women and children in Shawomet fled to other settlements. Four men from Providence, Chad Brown, Thomas Olney, William Wickenden, and William Field, tried to intervene and urged Massachusetts to consider arbitrating the dispute. They were not successful. What followed was torture far beyond anything Roger Williams experienced.

Forty Massachusetts soldiers laid siege to Shawomet, riddling the Gortonians’ English flag with bullet holes. After several days, the Gortonians surrendered to the superior force. After the soldiers confiscated 80 head of cattle and looted the houses in the settlement, they arrested Gorton and the nine other

men who remained and marched them to Boston.

In Boston, Gorton was charged with “being a blasphemous enemy of the true religion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Ordinances, and also of all civil authority among the people of God and particularly in this jurisdiction.” Convicted, he was ordered to be bound in leg irons and sent to the jail in Charlestown “to be kept at work.” If Gorton “broke his confinement or by speech or writing published or maintained any of the blasphemies or abominable heresies wherewith he hath been charged . . . upon conviction thereof by a trial by jury he shall suffer death.” Before being jailed in separate towns, Gorton and six others, wearing shackles, were paraded in front of Rev. John Cotton’s congregation during the Sunday service “as an instructive spectacle.”

Gorton was released from prison in March of 1644. Later, with two others, Randall Holden and John Greene, he sailed to England to seek redress. They obtained an order from the Earl of Warwick, the commissioner of plantations, recognizing their right to live in peace in Shawomet.

When Gorton returned to Shawomet in 1648, he renamed it in honor of the Earl of Warwick. With his settlement recognized by the King, Gorton became a leader in the civic affairs of the colony, which had received a royal charter in 1644. In 1651 Gorton was chosen as president of the colony, and in 1652 served as vice president. A statute enacted during this period emancipating slaves is believed to have been written by Gorton.

During the late 1660s, Gorton represented Warwick in the General Assembly. He retired from public office in 1670, at the age of 78. He

died in Warwick in late 1677, only months after King Philip’s War ended and Warwick residents returned to find their town burnt to the ground. He is buried in the Samuel Gorton Lot (R.I. historical cemetery WK067) off Gorton Avenue, near where the house he lived in once stood.



Gorton’s Warwick home

Adelos Gorton described his ancestor as being “gentle and sympathetic” in private, and beloved by his fellow citizens. Bicknell observes that the ‘crimes’ for which he was punished were his opinions; he was never charged with an immoral act. His greatest legacy may be in the words he wrote to John Clarke while Clarke was in England securing a royal charter for the colony: “Plead our case in such sort as we may not be compelled to exercise any civil power over men’s consciences. We do judge it no less than a point of absolute cruelty.”

Job Durfee, a 19th jurist and historian, said of Gorton, “He did indeed clothe his thoughts at times in clouds, but then it was because they were too large for any other garment.”

The editor, a 12th generation descendant of Samuel Gorton, would like to thank her cousin Paul Jenison, another Gorton descendant and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton, N.J., for suggesting the topic of this article.

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY
27 NORTH ROAD
PEACE DALE, RI 02879

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wakefield, RI
Permit No. 21

“Essentially what I feel is that the public—artist and scientist, too—have lost the ability to communicate with each other. What I’m interested in is how we reestablish communication of ideas.”

– György Kepes (1906-2001)

György Kepes, a Hungarian-born painter, sculptor, photographer, designer, educator and art theorist, founded the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1964. Although his professional goal was to break down the barriers between art and technology, he never learned to drive a car or ride a bicycle, and his Cape Cod summer home didn't have running water.

Kepes and his wife, writer Juliet Kepes, were members of the First Parish (Unitarian Universalist) in Cambridge, Mass. He died ten years ago this month.