

# THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 21 ISSUE 6

JUNE 2012

## June Services

### June 3

Desmond Tutu's Understanding of God and Humanity – *Rev. Betty Kornitzer*

The Nobel Laureate and Archbishop Emeritus of South Africa has a unique view of human nature. We will explore this view and how it relates to our Unitarian Universalist principles.

*The Service will include the Bridging Ceremony.*

**THE UUCSC ANNUAL MEETING TAKES PLACE AFTER THE SERVICE**

### June 10

Appreciation Sunday – *Rev. Betty Kornitzer*

How much appreciation resides in your heart? That's an important question. Appreciation and gratitude form the foundation of a healthy working community.

They are the wellspring that nourishes community activity and refreshes the spirit. Today we express appreciation for our Music and Religious Education programs and for all that all of you do here.

### June 17

Changing Seasons and Important Connections

– *Rev. Betty Kornitzer*

**The Annual Flower Communion Service**

Please remember to bring a flower to this intergenerational service to continue this beautiful Unitarian Universalist tradition.

### June 24

Worship with Song – *The UUCSC Music Committee*

This will be the last worship service of the season— or should we say the first service of the summer? Join us for some wonderful folk and traditional music, with a little pop thrown in for good measure, as we honor the work that everybody in the UUCSC community has done throughout the church year.



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

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## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

[www.uusouthcountyri.org](http://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](mailto: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**, Administrator

### **Board of Directors**

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Nancy Rose, Vice President

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*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.

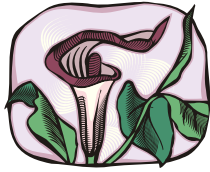
E-mail (very effective) – [bkornitzer@aol.com](mailto:bkornitzer@aol.com)

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.”

### **SUMMER SCHEDULE**

June 1 – 17 and June 25 – 30: Regular schedule. July 1 – 23: Vacation.

July 24 – Aug. 19: Ministerial Study leave. Aug. 20-31: Regular schedule.



# *The Minister's Message*

By Rev. Betty Kornitzer

## Mystery

These days UUCSC is embarking on its own Magical Mystery Tour. On May 2, I wrote to members and friends about my plans to retire from parish ministry next year, in June 2013. Later in May, Miss Debby announced her plan to resign as Director of Religious Education at the end of this church year.

There is a lot of mystery about what the future will look like at UUCSC and I have been asked several questions. Here are some things we *do* know:

- I will be here for 13 more months, until the end of June 2013.
- My retirement has been planned for several months; it has nothing to do with my bicycling accident (while wearing a helmet) and the resulting concussion. By the way, I am feeling much better and continue to take good care of myself.
- Debby and I made our decisions to move on completely independently.
- Most importantly, one thing is certain— the future at UUCSC is bright and strong. This community has heart and intelligence and resilience and love. And, while the future is bright, we don't know what it will look like. It is simply an unknown.

Uncertainty about the future often makes us uncomfortable. We want to know what the future holds, we want to make plans and get all our ducks in a row. And then life happens and the ducks scatter. There really is no way to know or direct the future, no matter how hard we try, and we sometimes try very, very hard. But there is help.

Many spiritual disciples teach us ways to be peaceful in the midst of scattering ducks.

The Buddhists have a teaching called “Don't Know Mind.” We recognize and accept that we do not know what anything is for, or what the future will bring. This allows every situation to be new and fresh to us . . . how wonderful! With “Don't Know Mind,” we are open to wonder and feel a happy anticipation about the endless possibilities. In this state of openness, unexpected wonders can come our way. Some would call these miracles.

My prescription for concerns about our UUCSC Magical Mystery Tour is this: May we stay in the present moment, the *now*, allowing “Don't Know Mind” to bring us peace. May we remain open to the wonder of Miracles.

In closing, I offer you these words by the poet Mary Oliver:

### *Mysteries, Yes*

*Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous  
to be understood.*

*How grass can be nourishing in the  
mouths of the lambs.*

*How rivers and stones are forever  
in allegiance with gravity  
while we ourselves dream of rising.*

*How two hands touch and the bonds  
will never be broken.*

*How people come, from delight or the  
scars of damage,*

*to the comfort of a poem.*

*Let me keep my distance, always, from those  
who think they have the answers.*

*Let me keep company always with those who say  
"Look!" and laugh in astonishment,  
and bow their heads.*

Blessings, Peace & Love

*Betty*

# Welcome, new members!

The Membership Committee would like to introduce you to eight new members who joined our congregation on May 6: Christine Phoenix-Green, Marilyn Morris, Kourtnie F. Aileru, Tom Nerney, Jean N. Bowen, Gene Jolie, Joan Cameron Ray, and Randi Jane Marten. Here are their photos (except for Gene's) and some of the words they wrote explaining why they chose to become members.

Welcome one and all. We are honored to have you join us. – Val Follett for the Membership Committee



Christine Phoenix-Green

*I am excited to become a member of such a loving community, free of any one particular dogma and so open to diversity and the beauty of the world's finest spiritual and cultural traditions that can enrich our lives.*

*I come in appreciation of the open-ness to new ideas, the elegant vision of the Unitarian Universalist ideals and principles, the supportive and loving community, the spirit of inquiry, the beautiful music and inspiring teachings . . . and most especially the welcoming smiles and hugs that are a part of what feels like "home" to me. Thank you so much!*

– Christine Phoenix-Green

*When I came to UUCSC I noticed that Rev. Betty was wearing a stole with an embroidered rainbow heart and knew I found a liberal faith community. The worship and music validated my initial impression. In a time when women, poor and gay folks are used as pawns in a political chess match in a country that has become "weirdly at peace with perpetual war," finding refuge in a caring, peaceful, faith community is good on many levels.*

– Gene Jolie



Jean Bowen

*I am joining this congregation to walk with others as truth seekers in pursuit of spiritual reflection and knowledge. In community I look forward to your friendship.*

– Jean N. Bowen

*I want to join the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County because it is the first community that has welcomed and accepted me unconditionally; as well as supported me during this point of transition and exploration in my life.*

*Moreover, it is the first time in my life where the ethics, morals and beliefs of a religious, philosophical, or spiritual congregation align well with my own.*

– Kourtnie Aileru



Kourtnie Aileru



Marilyn Morris

*Your beliefs are also mine. I am so humbled that my spiritual journey in life has led me to your doorstep. May my increasing your membership numbers demonstrate and serve as an affirmation that you are needed in this world more than ever before. Activate, engage the world, make a difference.*

– Marilyn Morris



Joan Ray

*To be a member of UUCSC means participating in a loving, inclusive, ethical community where I can feel at peace.*

– Joan Ray



Randi Marten

*I was looking for a place where I could be part of a loving, welcoming, spiritual community. In UUCSC I have found that and more— a place that shares my values, that is open to all, and a place I can call home.*

– Randi Jane Marten

*I am joining the congregation to give more voice and stand with those who value those discarded by this society, hope to work for a world based on democracy and equality, and believe that the true mission of evolution would be measured by the increased kindness we show each other.*

– Tom Nerney



Tom Nerney

## Membership increases in Rhode Island U.U. congregations

Membership in Rhode Island's eight Unitarian Universalist churches increased more than 14% during the past decade, while the number of Rhode Islanders who are "adherents of religious bodies" dropped by more than 12%, according to the 2010 Religious Census, a national study of religious congregations.

The study, done by the Association of Statisticians of Religious Bodies, counted members of 236 groups, including Muslims, Hindus, and more than a hundred small religious groups.

Participation in Rhode Island's mainstream religious

groups, including Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, American Baptists, United Methodists, and Jews, declined.

The groups that increased membership, besides UUs, include Mormons (up 67%), Churches of God (Cleveland), Assemblies of God, and Seventh Day Adventists.

The study also found that Rhode Island continues to have the highest percentage of Episcopalians in the country, beating Connecticut by 0.1%.

– Providence Journal, May 2, 2012





## MONEY MATTERS

The monthly column from the Finance Committee

Another fiscal year is coming to an end and there are many things to be grateful for. Please do read the Annual Finance Committee report that has been printed and is available in the Community Room. It is part of a packet that includes other Committee reports. Many of you may have gotten a copy at the Annual Meeting. Happy reading!

In this column article, I would like to highlight our incoming Finance Committee chairperson, Marcia Boyd. Marcia has been a member of our committee this year and has been a vital part of the business decisions that we face each month. Her thoughtful questions and suggestions have been invaluable.

A few years ago, Marcia moved to Rhode Island from Rochester, N.Y., where she raised her family and worked as a lawyer in the areas of elder law, probate and trusts. She has begun her own practice here in South County and is delighted to be back in Rhode Island, where she grew up.

Some of you may have met Marcia if you attended the three-part series at UUCSC on End of Life, which Marcia helped organize and in which she participated.

Our Committee is thrilled to have Marcia as our chairperson, and we look forward to working with her. I will be staying on the committee and will assist Marcia in any way I can. It is a wonderful group of people and I am happy to continue as a member.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Aline Couture, Finance Chair*

### From the Administrator

How quickly this year has passed! My ten-month work year ends on June 22nd and will resume again the last week of August. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of you and have felt so warmly welcomed.

Together we have set in motion a few systems which will continue to support the extraordinary work of this community. Wishing you all the best during our beautiful South County Summer!

Best, Kathy Carland

**THE LUNCH BUNCH** will meet at noon on Monday, June 18 to discuss *The Mighty and the Almighty* by Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State during Clinton's presidency. She writes about the history of church and state from the time of our Founders. A most timely topic! Copies are at local libraries. Questions? Call Helene Gersuny.



## 54 safe after alien first contact at UUCSC

Thirty-nine Huts, Borgs, Cylons and others invaded UUCSC for 37 hours last month! They and 17 advisors to the 9 youth groups attending the first Youth Conference ("CON") held at our church survived the onslaught of hugs, music and laughter.

Sixteen members of our Senior Youth Group hosted a very successful CON from 7 p.m. on Friday, May 11 through 8 a.m. on Sunday, May 13. Activities including workshops, a coffeehouse, games, meals and worship were fun and enriching. The Saturday night worship was especially powerful and included a Bridging ceremony for high school seniors who are graduating out of Youth Group. Workshops ranged from Capture the Flag to creation of a banner for the Gay Pride Parade. Seven Touch Groups (think Small Group Ministry) offered time for meaningful connections in an intimate setting, candy, and time to plan skits. Each Touch Group performed a hilarious skit at the coffeehouse. These were followed by talent performances in many forms.

Congregations represented at the CON were Westminster in East Greenwich, Bell Street Chapel and First Unitarian in Providence, and Massachusetts churches in Brewster, Hingham (Old Ship), Rockland, Scituate and Sharon. The Youth of UUCSC promise a bright and capable future for Unitarian Universalism in the leadership and organizational skills they displayed to pull off a very positive event full of beneficial entertainment, shared responsibility and spiritually empowering content.

The final element of the weekend was generous back-up by the chaperones, advisors and wonderful parents of our youth—folks who pitched in in any number of ways from e-mailing to burger bun runs at the last minute. You know who you are! We know who you are! All who received the goodness of your hearts, thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!

— Linda Whyte Burrell  
and the Senior Youth Group



## Religious Education News and Events

By Debby Hedison, Director of Religious Education

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

*The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart.*  
— Elizabeth Foley

I want to reproduce for you here the letter I sent last month to each of the children and youth in the Religious Education program. Along with this, I also wrote each of them a personal note. I cannot do the same for the entire adult community, so I wish to use this column as my personal note to each of you.

Thank you for being a good friend to me all these years. Thank you for growing with me, laughing with me, crying with me, learning with me and holding my hand along the way.

Keep it beautiful, holy and fun! That is what I tried to do!

My Love and Friendship,  
*Debby*

### "Rafiki Means Friend!"

Rafiki is my favorite character from "The Lion King" and it really is the African word for "friend."

When Simba is scared to become the King, Rafiki tells him, "It is time!"

It is time for me to go and do something different, too. I will not be your Director of Religious Education next year, but I will always be your friend!

Thank you for all the fun, learning and sacred time we have spent together!

Hakuna Matata!

### A note about Betty's summer schedule and how to contact her

Friends, my Letter of Agreement with UUCSC offers me one month vacation and one month Ministerial Study leave each year. Study leave is devoted to planning for the coming year, studying, and writing. I usually take the bulk of these leaves during the summer. Here's my schedule for this summer:

In June, I will follow my regular church year schedule. However, from June 18 to June 24 I will be in Phoenix, Arizona, attending the UU Ministers' Association Annual Conference and General Assembly.

In July, I will be on vacation from July 1 through July 22 and I will be on Ministerial Study leave from July 23 through July 31. I will be present at the Board meeting.

In August, I will be on Ministerial Study leave from August 1 through August 19, and I will follow my regular work schedule from August 20 through August 31. On September 1, I will resume my regular church year schedule.

If you would like to see me during my working weeks this summer, please let me know by leaving a message at my study telephone number (284-3321) or by e-mail (BKornitzer@aol.com). In case of emergencies, I can be reached on my cell phone at (401) 932-1515. Work week days off will remain Monday and Tuesday.

You can reach the Caring Connection by contacting Judi Marcy.

# UUCSC Policy on Alcohol Use

*Effective February 16, 2012*

## Statement of Purpose

This policy is guided by the UUCSC Mission Statement in both word and spirit.

### UUCSC MISSION STATEMENT

*The UUCSC is a welcoming, loving spiritual community practicing Unitarian Universalist principles. We offer a safe, respectful environment for personal and spiritual growth for children and adults. The UUCSC serves as a resource for social and environmental action and peace.*

The policy also seeks to protect the congregation and its resources from potential liability in the event of misuse of alcoholic beverages at any event hosted, sponsored, or in any way associated with the UUCSC.

On any occasion that alcohol is served off-site in connection with any congregation event, it is essential that steps be taken to ensure that a range of non-alcoholic beverages are available, no one is ever pressured to consume alcohol, no person under the legal age is permitted to consume alcohol, and alternatives are available to transport persons home who may have become impaired.

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## Policy

### ***Prohibited***

Alcoholic beverages will not be served at congregation related or sponsored events on the UUCSC premises.

Alcohol may not be served whenever there is an AA meeting on UUCSC premises.

### ***Permitted***

Alcohol may be served as part of an established religious ritual (for instance, Seder or Communion).

Consumption should follow the established procedure for the ritual. The following conditions apply:

- There are adequate nonalcoholic beverage choices available
- There is no pressure placed upon anyone to consume alcoholic beverages.
- There is adequate supervision to prevent consumption by minors.
- The event organizer has an alternate transport option for persons who may become impaired.

Alcohol may be part of a basket auctioned for fund raising purposes (for example, at a silent auction) but the bottle may not be opened on-site.

### ***Events on the Premises***

Groups making use of the premises for weddings, civil unions, ceremonies of commitment, and similar rites where it is traditional to have a toast, may serve alcohol under the following conditions:

- Each participant in the toast shall be limited to one serving of alcohol.
- There is advance disclosure that alcoholic beverages may be served.
- There are adequate nonalcoholic beverage choices available.
- There is no pressure placed upon anyone to consume alcoholic beverages.
- There is adequate supervision to prevent consumption by minors.
- The host has an alternate transport option for persons who may become impaired.

If a group renting the premises serves food, and alcohol consumption may exceed a single toast, the group must employ a certified and insured bartender to dispense alcoholic beverages.

### ***Off-site Events***

Alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited by adults, and by young adults who are of drinking age, at any UUCSC youth group event on or off the premises.

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Alcohol may be served at UUCSC social events held off site (for example, a Dining for Dollars dinner or a potluck) provided that:

- There are adequate nonalcoholic beverage choices available.
- There is no pressure placed upon anyone to consume alcoholic beverages.
- There is adequate supervision to prevent consumption by minors.
- The event organizer has an alternate transport option for persons who may become impaired.

Alcohol may be served as part of a meal or celebration (for example, a Christmas party or the conclusion of a capital campaign) at an off-site location where church business is being conducted (for example, a committee meeting or Board retreat). Before any alcohol is consumed, all business, including voting, must be completed and the following conditions must be met:

- There is advance notice that alcoholic beverages will be available (or for sale).
- The service of alcohol complies with all local and state laws and regulations relating to the sale or serving of alcoholic beverages, and appropriate permits and/or licenses are obtained.
- If there is a cash bar, it must be staffed by certified\* and insured bartenders (if not at the home of a UUCSC member).
- There are adequate nonalcoholic beverage choices available.
- There is no pressure placed upon anyone to consume alcoholic beverages.
- There is adequate supervision to prevent consumption by minors.

#### ***Auctions, galas, and major fundraisers***

Alcohol may be ***sold*** at off-site fundraisers provided that:

- The event and related serving of alcohol is approved by the Board of Directors.
- There is advance notice that alcoholic beverages will be available for sale.
- The service of alcohol complies with all local and state laws and regulations relating to the sale or serving of alcoholic beverages, and appropriate permits and/or licenses are obtained.
- If there is a cash bar, it must be staffed by certified\* and insured bartenders.
- There are adequate nonalcoholic beverage choices available.
- There is no pressure placed upon anyone to consume alcoholic beverages.
- There is adequate supervision to prevent consumption by minors.

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\*A certified bartender is one who has received a permit after completing an Alcohol Server Training course certified by the R.I. Department of Business Regulation liquor control administration.

The Board *recommends* that at off-site church-sponsored activities (for example, Dining for Dollars dinner), adults will be mindful and responsible regarding their alcohol consumption in the presence of children.

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## THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

... publishes one issue during the summer—the July-August issue. The deadline for the July-August issue is Monday, July 9. Regular monthly publication resumes in September. The deadline for the September issue is August 20.

# Joseph Smith, Sr. – The Link between Universalism and Mormonism

*Adapted from a paper delivered by James J. Buckley at the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society History and Heritage Convocation in Waltham, Mass. on October 9, 2010.*

A Universalist fathered the founder of the Mormon Church.

Joseph Smith Sr. of upstate New York, was the father of the controversial founder of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (LSD), Joseph Smith Jr.

But the senior Smith's unique place in this country's annals does not rest solely on his paternal association with the originator of the only worldwide religion to have been created on our soil. A persuasive case can be made that the elder Smith was the most dominant influence during Joseph Smith Jr.'s formative years and thus fostered the creation of Mormonism.

Today, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify anyone as the most dominant person in the life of any given young man or woman. There are just too many competing forces-- Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, text messaging, television-- that daily bombard young personss.

Such was not the case in the early 19th century. The average child was exposed to very few influences. To get an accurate picture of life at that period in our history, we would have to strip away all the influences we have just listed, and eliminate telephones, the telegraph and yes, even a fully functioning post office. The few influential forces to which a young man was exposed then were his family and his family's religion.

You might suggest that surely there were books that could have influenced Joseph. That suggestion presupposes that everyone was able to read and write in those days and that therefore, it was natural for the boy to be exposed to ideas beyond his family's collection of books. In fact, however, in those days relatively few persons possessed books because they had not learned to read

and had not acquired the ability to print or to write cursively. Why?

The prevailing attitude was: There is no need to teach reading and writing to a youngster who was going to be a farmer.



JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

Remember, until post-World War II, people acquired not what they wanted but rather only what they needed. Today, young people have a difficult time understanding the difference between Needing and Wanting, but in early 19th century, virtually everyone knew the difference.

Although young Joseph was taught how to read, he wasn't able to drop by the local Barnes and Noble and purchase any book he pleased. Whatever books he had at his disposal were those meager few his family had acquired.

So we are left with Joseph's family and their religion as the prevailing influences in his life. And the one person who was most important in this regard was his father.

Joseph Smith, Sr. was born on July 12, 1771 in Topsfield Mass. He married Lucy Mack in Tunbridge, Vermont on January 26, 1795. They had eleven children. Not content to be a farmer, Joseph Sr. explored several other career possibilities, including being a shop-keeper. But none proved to be lucrative enough so he moved his family to Palmyra, N.Y. in 1816 and resumed farming there. All the while, he taught his sons such survival skills as how to

hunt, fish, plow, build and farm. But unlike many other farmers of that day, he also taught them how to read and write well. This was because at one point in his adult life, the senior Joseph Smith had also been a teacher, and so was well equipped to teach his own children how to read and write. But Joseph Sr. did so for one reason and one reason only: so that his children could read religious tracts. Consequently, the only printed literature available to young Joseph was what was made available to him by his father and they contained the beliefs his parents had adopted.

What gave the elder Smith the confidence to impart his beliefs to his children? Joseph Sr. had an unusual upbringing that well prepared him to be the secular and religious teacher of his family. His own father was a Universalist minister who had created a household where spiritual matters were an integral part of every day life.

At the time in which John Murray was preaching the precepts of Universalism in Gloucester, Mass. and nurturing that infant religion, Asael Smith, in nearby Topsfield, was assiduously spreading the belief in Universal Salvation.

Born in Topsfield on March 7, 1744, Asael also believed throughout his life that in order for a democracy to survive, everyone must be actively involved in its growth and maintenance. Such a concept is generally accepted today in theory if not in practice. But in the middle of the 18th century the idea that democracy can only survive if everyone participates in its functioning, was radical.

*continued on page 11*

When he moved his family to Tunbridge, Vt., Asael practiced both the civic and religious concepts he preached. He assumed a wide variety of civic positions including Selectman, Town Moderator, highway surveyor, and grand juror. But such a commitment to Democracy never diminished his commitment to his beloved ministry. In a letter written to his family that began with the typical salutation, "My Dear Selfs," he wrote, "God is just to all and his tender mercies are over all his works . . . there is no respect of persons with God, who will have all mankind to be saved."

As Asael's third child, Joseph, married and relocated to New York, he shared his Universalist beliefs with his wife, and, in time, with their children. As a result, Joseph Jr., the founder of Mormonism, was thoroughly imbued with the precepts of Universalism from his birth in December 1805 through to his teenage years.

But what about the claim by young Joseph that he had visions? Surely his father did nothing that would encourage the teenager to feel comfortable about proclaiming the existence and content of these visions?

The truth the matter is that his father had indeed made a major contribution to his son's belief in the viability of visions. He was also well acquainted with the firm belief of his parents that they had experienced divine intervention at a crucial period in their married life. At one point when the Smiths were living in Palmyra N.Y., Lucy Smith began to observe that her husband appeared to be losing interest in all religious activities. Because this troubled her, she began to pray that her husband's religious fervor would be reinvigorated. She later wrote that she knew her prayers had been answered when her husband related to her that he had experienced seven divine episodes or

epiphanies which led him back to his Universalist beliefs. Five of these visions were entitled (by Lucy Smith) "the barren field, magic box, and beasts," "the desolate field, broad and narrow ways, delicious white fruit, and spacious building," "the flower garden and bowing wooden images," "Judgment Day and Jesus' name," and "just one more thing."

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**Smith's "break away from all other religions was eased by the fact that his father's (and grandfather's) beliefs were held in opprobrium by many Christians in his day."**

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When Joseph Jr. announced in 1827 that an angel had appeared to him, telling him that sometime before, Jesus had appeared to the indigenous peoples of America, his claims might have been considered the ravings of a demented soul. But instead, they were given credence, certainly among members of his family and subsequently among some who knew his family. Given the fact that his father had previously reported spiritual encounters with the Divine, it appeared that young Joseph was simply reporting the latest divine interaction of that family. In addition, those who were strict Christians were confronted with the fact that the Old Testament is filled with instances of the Lord speaking to a man. If the Lord could speak to the prophets, why couldn't an angel speak to Joseph Smith, Jr.?

After these encounters with angels, Joseph Smith, Jr. rejected all organized religions. Nevertheless, he appears to have used his Universalist background as the basis of his belief in the concept of Universal Sainthood. Indeed he was so convinced of this concept that he incorporated that belief into the title of

his church. After all, if every true believer is going to be saved, then it is logical to assume that they are entitled to sainthood.

The next precept of the founder of Mormonism that appears to have flowed from Universalism was the belief in Universal Priesthood. Again, if all true believers are to be saved, and all are saints, then all are entitled to be considered priests.

Those who may question the validity of this linkage between the two faiths should note that in the past, Mormons have acknowledged their Universalist lineage and continue to do so. In October 2008, in an address at the prestigious Sidney B. Sperry Symposium at Brigham Young University, Casey Paul Griffiths said, "Having Universalism in Joseph Smith's (Jr.) background was an important stepping stone in getting us (Mormons) a person who was malleable and changeable and had a relationship with God by the time he walked into the grove, where he felt like he could ask questions and not be upbraided..."

Griffiths emphasized that Universalists had always been outside the mainstream of established religions. Therefore, Smith's break away from all other religions was eased by the fact that his father's (and grandfather's) beliefs were held in opprobrium by many Christians in his day.

In addition, Griffiths said that Universalists' concept of a Loving God probably helped Joseph Smith Jr. to feel he could advocate Universal Sainthood. And Universalists' rejection of a priestly hierarchy made it easier for Smith to advocate universal priesthood.

Undoubtedly there are some Universalists who currently do not look kindly on Mormonism. But regardless of their opinions, it is prudent to know the existence of this linkage between the two denominations and to be aware that Mormons have acknowledged Joseph Smith Sr.'s role in creating that linkage. ■

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**“History is a vast early warning system.”**

– Norman Cousins (1915 –1990)

Norman Cousins, political journalist, author, professor, world peace advocate, and Unitarian, was born 97 years ago this month.