

## Justice

*Truth never damages a cause that is just.*  
—Mohandas K. Gandhi

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**GLBT Benefit  
Celebration for  
Bishop  
Mark Kiyimba**

**See page 4  
calendar for  
details!**

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### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

#### *Does Justice Exist?*

...not like a table exists, not like you exist, but does justice exist? Is it real? Or is it simply a word we use to describe how *we want* the world to look and feel?

Plato the great Greek philosopher explored the nature of justice. His text, *The Republic*, presents diverse characters who offer their perspectives in the form of arguments. Thrasymachus, a character memorable for his unabashed, reckless defense of injustice, presents an argument that "justice is (simply) the advantage of the stronger."

Is it?

A Unitarian, Ugandan bishop named Mark Kiyimba has dedicated his ministry to a fight he understands as a fight for justice. In Uganda, a bill may be passed that sentences to death anyone who is convicted of being gay. If he wished, Bishop Kiyimba could pick up Thrasymachus' argument: the Ugandan Parliament in many respects decides what is just and what is unjust. Their strength and their power may eventually decide if one man or one

woman's life is worthy simply because of their gender of sexual affiliation.

Bishop Kiyimba doesn't get mired in the philosophy, though. He acts. He reaches out to everyone who has been disenfranchised by the prejudice rampant in his nation, and he joins with them to propose a new face of justice. He understands that the parliament has power, but sees all bigotry as the fruit of injustice. He stands with the great mass of humanity and proposes that all people, regardless of gender or sexual affiliation, are worthy of life and of the pursuit of love.

Bishop Kiyimba knows injustice, even if it hides under the mask of power. I hope you will join us on January 13th at 7pm to hear his stories and feel the justice that lives in his convictions and actions. The proceeds from this event will go to sustain Bishop Kiyimba's ministry in Uganda. Read more and purchase tickets at <http://uusterling.org/content/view/512/1/>

In Faith and the pursuit of Justice,  
Rev. Anya



Rev. Anya  
Sammler-Michael

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *An Example of Justice*



*Dorine Colabella Scher,  
Board President*

As UUs, we are encouraged to promote justice from our seven principles. After all, the word shows up twice in seven sentences. It's an important part of who we are and what we do as a faith and as a local congregation.

You may have noticed recently that our sanctuary is beautifully full on Sunday mornings. There are so many new faces! I love to experience this, especially when I see the children. This makes me happy because as a faith and as a congregation, we put our sense of justice—both locally and globally—into action so well. It is something UUs do well in general, but is an especially strong part of what UUUCS is.

I especially love seeing the children among us because children learn their sense of justice from how they are treated and how they observe others treat one another. As a congregation, we provide a strong example of what it means to act justly, treat one another fairly, respect other's beliefs, and fight for all beings to have their needs met. I think of what we are doing out in our world and feel so proud to be part of UUUCS, but I am even more proud that we are providing a fine example of personal justice for the children and giving them opportunities to express that in the world. We are raising a generation that will live in a more-just world and will be armed to take on injustices they experience.

What is your favorite justice work that we do? I urge you to consider the many blessings that come from doing this work and get involved with an initiative that calls to you. Most importantly, though, share what we are up to with your world. Let them know there is a faith community that is actively working on making the world a better place.

## RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION MESSAGE

### *What is Lifespan Faith Development?*



*Linda Weaver,  
Director of Religious  
Exploration*

Unitarian Universalists believe that faith development is the lifelong journey of ethical and spiritual growth that each of us takes. A lifespan faith development program is made up of all of the classes, groups, and activities that are intentionally created for the purpose of helping people move further in this journey.

At the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling (UUUCS), this includes children's religious exploration, the high school youth group, adult religious education, and multigenerational programs. It provides people of all ages with opportunities to connect with their peers and with people both younger and older than themselves. It creates a safe space to consider beliefs and values with others, recognizing this as the best way to expand understanding. It also provides experiences in connecting with the world and effecting change, awakening the lives of individuals to things greater than themselves.

The goal of UU lifespan faith development is to help every participant become a justice-making person, one who treats others with dignity and respect and who makes positive contributions throughout his or her life. Within the program at UUUCS, we practice justice and goodness as we interact with each other. We learn to work and play together in ways that are peaceful and inclusive, and we learn to communicate our own truths respectfully, despite differences. By sharing our stories and our ideas, we support each other in living out these UU values in the larger world outside of the congregation.

We also work together on projects that help other people and the world. So far in the 2011–12 church year, children in kindergarten through fourth grade have collected food for a food pantry and conducted an energy audit. They have also learned about respecting the inherent worth and dignity of all people, which is the first of seven UU principles, and about being more welcoming toward families and individuals who are different from themselves.

*continued on next page*

## CALL TO ACTION: A SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL JOURNAL

### *Notes From the Social Justice Council*

To honor the January liturgical theme of Justice, the UUCS Social Justice Council (SJC) selected the Ayuda office in Sterling, VA, as the recipient of our loose plate offering collections for Sundays in January. Ayuda's mission is to protect the rights of low-income immigrants in the DC metropolitan area. The organization is the region's leading provider of multilingual legal and social services for immigrants in the areas of immigration, human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

Thanks to your generous contributions during the month of November, we sent \$323.69 to Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light (<http://gwipl.org>), which helps congregations go green, save energy, and respond to climate change.



Shelley Tamres

Members of the SJC are helping to sell tickets to the Benefit Celebration of GLBT Rights in Uganda that UUCS is hosting on Friday, January 13. Please find one of us during the fellowship hour after services to purchase tickets.

A family volunteer opportunity is coming up in Fairfax County on MLK Day (Monday, January 16). The Volunteer Fairfax "Give Together 2012" will have one of their three events close by at the Herndon Senior Center. You can learn more about this opportunity for a child-friendly service project at [www.volunteerfairfax.org](http://www.volunteerfairfax.org).

Don't forget to check out the Margaret Fuller Social Justice Nook at the back of the UUCS building (behind the fellowship area and the nursery) periodically. We added signs above the recycling and food bank collection containers so you know what is—and what is not—accepted for those collections. There are lots of interesting articles posted, and we have a lending library of books and DVDs.

The SJC normally meets the first Sunday of each month after the service at 12:15pm in the RE space. Because the first Sunday in January is New Year's Day, the January meeting will be held the second Sunday, January 8. Please join us.

*RE continued from page 2*

The fifth through eighth graders chose Foster Care to Success, along with its Red Scarf Project, for their long-term social justice project. The organization's Director of Partnership Development visited the fifth through eighth grade group in December to help them begin this endeavor.

The high school youth group has just completed its annual mitten tree collection, with the mittens and scarves going to clients of Ayuda, a local organization that provides legal and social services for low-income immigrants.

Religious Exploration groups are looking forward to even more opportunities to help the local community in 2012. We hope your life's journey will include UUCS this month as we learn, grow in spirit, and build a community and a world that embraces justice.

The Children's Religious Exploration Calendar and a list of programs and events for children and families is at the end of the RE column on the UUS website at [www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org).

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## LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

### *A Note from the Treasurer*

It's an honor to serve as treasurer of UUCS. Here are a few notes that may interest you.

Although we've voted to change our name to UUCS, our legal name is still the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling. Checks for the church should still be made out to UUS.

Would you like a receipt for cash donations you put in the offering basket? We are working to put offering envelopes in our sanctuary soon, allowing you to identify your cash donations.

Do you wonder what UUCS does with your pledge? Half our budget this year goes toward our beautiful church space and the utilities, insurance, and cleaning costs required to keep it functioning. We spend close to \$10,000 every month on rent alone. Thank you for your generosity!

To share your comments or questions, find me at church or email me at [board-treasurer@uusterling.org](mailto:board-treasurer@uusterling.org).

Michelle James

## CALENDAR

### *Stay Up to Date With UUS Events*

#### ***Sunday, January 1st, 10:30am – Worship Service: “Fire Ceremony”***

An all-ages worship service for the new year led by Worship Associate Rosalie Clavez.

#### ***Friday, January 6th***

No First Friday event this month. Come to next week's GLBT Benefit Celebration.

#### ***Sunday, January 8th, 10:30am – Worship Service: “Justice Beholden to Power”***

Rev. Anya explores the Washington-based religious contingent of legislators sworn to use their power to promote Christian ends, The Family. Justice has always been beholden to power but this group threatens civil and human liberties in ways previously unimagined.

#### ***Sunday, January 8th, 12:00pm – Inquirer's Class:***

Rev. Anya's office

#### ***Sunday, January 8th, 12:15pm***

Social Justice Council monthly meeting in the Jordan room (RE space)

#### ***Friday, January 13th, 7:00pm – GLBT Benefit Celebration for Ugandan Unitarian Bishop Mark Kiyimba***

Bishop Mark rises daily to struggle for equal rights in a nation that has proposed a bill to make being gay punishable by death. Our celebration of his congregation's ministry will include music by world-beat percussionist Tom Teasley and our UUCS choir. \$10.00 individual and \$20.00 family tickets are available at the door or at [www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org) (click on GLBT Benefit Celebration).

#### ***Sunday, January 15th, 10:30am – Worship Service: “Overcoming Fear on the Way to the Mountaintop”***

Rev. Anya and the Journey Toward Wholeness team at our congregation lead this Martin Luther King Day service. Our choir and band will charm us with a shared performance.

#### ***Sunday, January 22nd, 10:30am – Worship Service: “Gluttony”***

Rev. Anya delivers the fourth sermon in her series on the Seven Deadly Sins. Our choir will sing.

#### ***Sunday, January 29th, 10:30am – Worship Service***

Rev. Russ Savage from the Blue Ridge congregation swaps pulpits with Rev. Anya. Guest Musicians from our congregation will play.

*Please note that the Social Justice Council monthly meeting will be held on the second Sunday of January*

## A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day for a full week, Sunday through Saturday. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

### January: Justice

#### January 1–7 From Elie Wiesel

*This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century—solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.*

#### January 8–14 From Patti Christensen

18 three and four-year olds practiced with chopsticks today.

Poking, prodding, puzzling over the mysterious sticks used by a billion people yet new to these little ones.

Can we build a bridge across the gulfs that divide us with picture books and chopsticks and snacks with strange names, but taste good?

cannot negotiate for peace among nations  
or put a stop to war  
but I can offer children  
the chance to know  
there are oh so many ways to live  
and speak and love  
and eat.

#### January 15–21 From the Unitarian minister Theodore Parker

*Look at the facts of the world. You 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 figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. Things refuse to be mismanaged long.*

#### January 22–29 From Thurgood Marshall

*A child born to a black mother in a state like Mississippi...has the same rights as a white baby born to the wealthiest person in the United States. It's not true, but I challenge anyone to say it is not a goal worth working for.*

#### January 30–February 2 From William Commanda, Mamiwinini, Canada, 1991

*Traditional people of Indian nations have interpreted the two roads that face the light-skinned race as the road to technology and the road to spirituality. We feel that the road to technology...has led modern society to a damaged and seared earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction, and that the road to spirituality represents the slower path that the traditional native people have traveled and are now seeking again? The earth is not scorched*

## SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

### *The Boat, from the teachings of Rabbi Schimon bar Yochai*

A group of people were traveling in a boat. One of them took a drill and began to drill a hole beneath himself.

His companions said to him, "Why are you doing this?"

The man replied, "What concern is it of yours? Am I not drilling under my own place?"

They said to him, "But you will flood the boat for us all!"

### *Family Discussion*

Have you ever done something that seemed like it would harm only you, but actually hurt others? Have you seen anyone else do this? What happened?

How might this understanding change how you act and the choices that you make?

What would you and your family like to do to make your family, neighborhood, school, church, country, or world a place that is safer, fairer, or kinder? Talk about this together and identify one simple goal or step that can be accomplished in a month. It might be as simple as challenging each person to say something nice to at least one person each day.

## LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

### *Why Have A Safe Congregation Policy?*

By Rev. Anya and Linda Weaver

With recent news about charges of sexual abuse by coaches, by teachers, and within religious communities, it seems a good time to review our safety policy. One of the great strengths of a liberal religious community, such as the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling (UUCS), is its ability to provide a place where people feel they can share deeply from their true selves, a safe place.

Our safety policy for children and youth helps create this safe space for children, youth, and the adults who work with them. In each of the next three newsletters, we will explore a different aspect of our safety policy. Here's the first.

A central requirement of most safety policies is having multiple adults in rooms with children and youth. Ours requires:

1. Two adults or one adult and a teen 13 years of age or older in rooms with children.
2. Two adults 21 years of age or older with teens.

These requirements serve our whole community, helping to protect children and youth from abusive and manipulative behavior; to protect adults from the legal consequences of a possible misunderstanding; and to protect the congregation from spiritual, emotional, and financial harm. We invite you to think of UUCS as your religious home and to help keep it a safe place for all ages as we worship, explore, share, and celebrate in community.

If you have any questions about our safe congregation policy, please contact the Director of Religious Exploration, Linda Weaver, at [re-director@uusterling.org](mailto:re-director@uusterling.org) or Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael at [minister@uusterling.org](mailto:minister@uusterling.org).

#### **Want to share something in the February newsletter?**

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the February liturgical theme, *love*.
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in February and the first two weeks of March)
- ✓ Congregational events to put on the calendar
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUS or during UUS events (send an email and attach the image file: don't embed the photo in a document. If you have more than three photos, email us before sending them.)

Please send anything you'd like to include to: [newsletter@uusterling.org](mailto:newsletter@uusterling.org) by January 15th.