

# North Fork Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Jamesport, Long Island



## Newsletter

Spring, 2025



*Love radically, serve gratefully, wonder daily.*



## Spring Greetings From Ben...

We frequently hear that religion and politics should not mix. Religious leaders and believers should confine themselves to “spiritual” concerns; they should leave political issues to those involved with government.

It’s true that a bedrock and cherished principle of our democracy is the separation of church and state. That is due to an astute understanding by the founders of our great country that the government should not be permitted to persecute citizens on account of religious beliefs. At the same time, no religious institution should engage in undue interference with government, making policy for all residents of the country based on particular set of religious doctrines, whether those governed subscribe to that religious outlook or not.

Christian nationalism, for example, would be a clear violation of church state separation.

This principle, however, has also been misconstrued to mean something that others argue as well....that religious leaders should never speak out about social and ethical issues, which often become political issues.

Recently, for example, when the pope wrote a letter decrying mistreatment of immigrants, including people often fleeing for their lives from persecution, Tom Holman, the current Border Czar in this country in charge of mass deportations, rebuked the pope, saying, “He ought to ... concentrate on his work and leave border enforcement to us.” To which one friend of mine, a Catholic priest, quipped, “Actually the pope was doing his work!”

For many religious leaders and other adherents, decrying needless human suffering is a centerpiece of religion's "work." For many guided by their faith, speaking out against injustice and inhumanity is not just a right; it's a responsibility, and at the heart and soul of what religion should be. For the most part, religious communities and leaders did not dissent against slavery or the Holocaust. That led to the phrase, "the crime of silence."

This ethical imperative to speak up and speak out against injustice and inhumanity has been basic to religion since antiquity. It was never more clearly understood or eloquently expressed than by certain Biblical prophets. Amos, the shepherd of the 8th Century BCE, inveighed against the unfairness of people consigned to abject poverty, as others basked in extreme wealth. Isaiah, from the same time period, thundered against the tragedy of war, calling us to beat our swords into plowshares.

And in the second book of Samuel 12:7, Nathan goes to King David and tells him metaphorically about someone who kills his neighbor, in order to marry that neighbor's wife. King David, full of righteous anger, claims that such a man, treating a neighbor that way deserves to die. Nathan then says, "Thou art the man."

The prophets' messages were not necessarily popular with people in high places or others. And the messages were decidedly "political."

Which leads me to the present state of things in this country. We've been treated to a blitzkrieg, this past two months (that's how brief it's been?!) that includes 100,000 firings of public servants, despite excellent job performances, despite many of them being veterans, having already risked life and limb for this country, despite many of these people having children to support and mortgages or rent to pay.

With those mass dismissals have come the loss of myriad vital services - from food and medication safety inspections, to cancer and Alzheimer research, to protection of air safety, to monitoring of tax cheating on the part of wealthy Americans, to assistance to disabled and developmentally challenged children, to availability of our national parks. And Social Security, on which millions of adults and children with deceased parents depend, may be on the chopping block also; it has been labelled by Elon Musk as a Ponzi scheme.

And how are we to respond? My first answer is built into the question... we should respond! We should follow in the footsteps of Amos, Isaiah, Nathan, and Micah...let our elected officials know of our reactions. We should remind them and ourselves that we still have a government that exists with the consent of the governed.

It is as important that people whose actions we deem admirable hear from us, as it is those with whom we disagree.

In addition to self care - which is extremely important - was impressed with what a person told me recently about something else we can do. She said she tries to engage in at least one act of kindness every day. To me, as a Fellowship, we are already doing so, addressing local hunger with the non-perishable foods we bring, and sending food and other vital supplies to people living in war-battered Ukraine.

I was very moved to hear at our service, March 9th, about some of the many projects of the organization Zonta, that Betsy, Annika, Liala, and Diane Greenberg described...from “backpacks” of food for children during the weekend, to money for women in India, sparing them from dangerous work collecting at garbage dumps in oppressive heat.

Acts of kindness are redemptive.

As a great man from India, Mahatma Gandhi once said...all around me is darkness. But if I light a candle, I have enough light to make a single step.

With you fine people, I am confident our candles will be lit!

**Shalom, Happy Easter, Passover, Ramadan, and Spring  
and Be Well.**

## ***WORDS OF ...***

### ***REVEREND REBECCA ANN PARKER***

**“The choice to bless the world is more than an  
act of will**

**A moving forward into the world with the  
intention to do good.**

**It is an act of recognition,**

**A confession of surprise,**

**A grateful acknowledgement**

**That in the midst of a broken world  
unspeakable beauty, grace and mystery abide....**

**None of us alone can save the world.**

**Together--that is another possibility, waiting.”**



Getting To Know...

# Desiree Passantino

## **Tell us a little about yourself.**

I'm married 37 years to my childhood friend. We met out here in 1971 when we were 11 and 12 years old. Louis and I live in Wading River, where we raised our three children: Christopher, Marc, and daughter Devan.

I worked at the Riverhead Free Library for 13 years and retired once the pandemic began.

## **What brought you to Unitarian Universalism?**

I spent the summer of 1977 in California. While there, I visited different churches each week, exploring religions that were unfamiliar to my Eastern European Christian and Roman Catholic upbringing. I found a UU congregation outside of San Francisco and connected right away. The minister spoke about Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and Friends. He brought us from laughter to tears, and back again to laughter. The message was about love and friendship and I was hooked. It was difficult to find a UU congregation back in NY so I drifted back into my old routine, never forgetting that great UU service. It wasn't until 1996 when I saw an ad in a local paper for NFUUF, that I physically reconnected with a congregation. I raised my children in this UU fellowship, and I consider NFUUF my home and family.

## **What is something you like to do outside of UU?**

I'm on the board of directors of an anti-domestic violence non-profit called Hope and Resilience Long Island (HARLI). We provide emergency services, advocacy in court cases, as well as provide necessary items such as diapers, formula, and anything else a person in an emergency situation may need.

My family and I fostered a dog last year, but its owner never returned, so we are the proud parents of a sweet, untrained dog. I work trying to teach him manners... it's a daily effort.

Also in my free time, my granddaughter, who lives two doors down, likes to come by after school to do puzzles and create castles out of magnetic tiles. She, and her older sister are bright lights in my life!

## **What is something about you that most people would not guess?**

One thing people may not know about me is I spent several years in a samba band! I played the rocar which is an instrument with many small cymbals. It was great fun and great exercise!

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# ***NEWS FROM UUA***

In the following press release of February 11, 2025, the Unitarian Universalist Association joined a multifaith lawsuit asserting that the ICE Policy violates the First Amendment:

“The UUA is proud to announce we are a plaintiff in the sensitive locations policy lawsuit. We join a multifaith coalition to challenge the ending of ICE’s policy, and oppose any interpretation of law which would allow immigration raids in houses of worship and religious ceremonies. “

In response , the U.S. District Judge Chuang, issued a ruling that temporarily blocks ICE from conducting immigration enforcement actions at certain houses of worship. ICE cannot conduct warrantless enforcement actions there while the lawsuit continues in federal court.

# Sunday Service News

On March 8 we celebrated Women's History Month with a wonderful selection of songs and a presentation by Liala, Annika and Betsy who are members of Peconic Bay Zonta. They were joined by Diane Greenberg, President of the Chapter. This international organization which is associated with the United Nations is dedicated to the wellbeing of women and girls. The local chapter raises funds to help support the needs of our local community as well as sending funds to causes worldwide.



On March 23 we enjoyed hearing about Jon Hansen's lifelong journey as a Buddhist Unitarian Universalist. Thank you for sharing your experiences and wisdom.

***Just a reminder that our services take place on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Our next Service is on April 13.***

# caring corner

Many thanks to Desiree Passantino who is now chairing the Caring Committee. If there is any caring wish you want to share, you can contact Desiree at: [www.desiree.passantino@gmail.com](mailto:www.desiree.passantino@gmail.com)

🌸 Sending get well wishes to Ann DeJesus, and to say how much we miss seeing you.

🌸 Also want to give a wave to Donna Demian who is a gifted pianist who played for many of our services. Hoping you will visit us soon so we can thank you in person for the wonderful musical experiences you have given us.

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## Community Outreach

Thank you to Elizabeth and Desiree who deliver our donated food pantry items and items for the Ukrainian Church. Please continue to bring those items to the Sunday service as the need is great.

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**JOURNEYS FROM THERE TO HERE** by Susan J Cohen  
with Steve Taylor recommended by Rev Ben

**AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH** by Neil Postman  
recommended by Marty Levinson

## CONTRIBUTE ONLINE

VENMO: Search--North Fork UU Fellowship

ZELLE: Enter this email--nfuuf22@gmail.com into your bank's "Send Money By Zelle" selection to call up 'North Fork Unitarian Universalist'

## Fellowship Pledges

### *Committee News*

*Helping to make our community thrive*

**Flowers for Service:** Annika and Liala

**New Membership:** Bob and Annika

**Hospitality:** Jim, Carol and Kathy

**Communications:** Elizabeth, Tom and Betsy

**Finance:** Tom and Elizabeth

**Caring:** Desiree

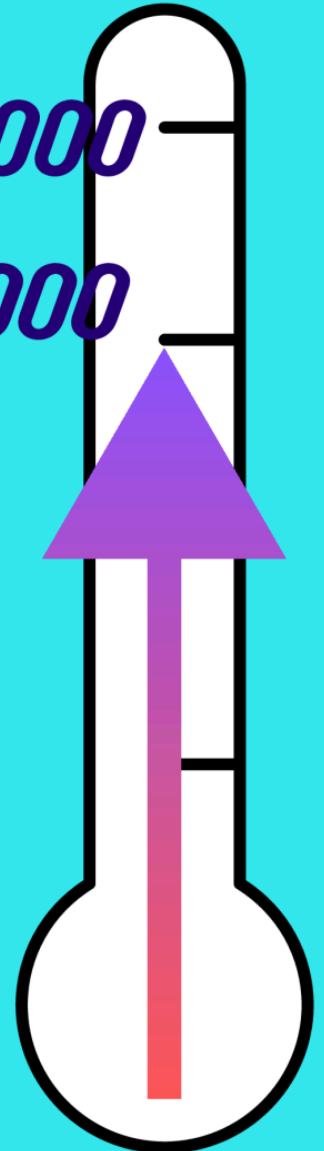
**Outreach:** Desiree and Elizabeth

**Technology:** Tom and Bob

**Worship:** Mary Ellen, Elizabeth, Annika, Betsy

**\$12000**

**\$8000**



NFUUF is an open-minded, open-hearted spiritual community. We are ever grateful for the guidance of our Reverend Ben Bortin. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month a 10:30 a.m. Jamesport Meeting House, 1590 Main Road, Jamesport, NY [www.nfuuf.org](http://www.nfuuf.org)

Editor Betsy Kaplan