

**Circle of Fellowship**  
**Monthly Newsletter of the First**  
**Universalist Society of Central**  
**Square, NY**  
**August, 2019**

**Our Mission Statement**

The mission of the First Universalist Society of Central Square is to be a welcoming, diverse congregation which values spiritual growth and service to the local and world community

The First Universalist Society of  
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UU Congregations covenant to affirm and promote justice , equity and compassion in human relations

**Green Minute**  
**Renewable Natural Gas – The Next Big Thing?**

I recently read an interesting article in the online environmental news publication Yale Environment 360 that discusses new initiatives in renewable natural gas. Renewable natural gas (RNG), also referred to as biogas, has been around a long time, mainly in the form of rudimentary systems that either capture methane from landfills and sewage treatment plants and then use it to produce small amounts of electricity, or from aging digesters at dairy operations that might power a local farm and send some surplus power to the grid. What's new is large-scale ventures such as those capturing vast amounts of methane generated by manure from some of the 2,300 hog farms that dot eastern North Carolina, biodigesters designed to turn clusters of large California dairy farms into energy hubs and those states seeking to divert food waste from landfills and transform it into vehicle and heating fuels. According to a 2014 "Biogas Opportunities Roadmap" report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, the U.S. could support at least 13,000 biogas facilities, fed by manure, landfill gas, and biosolids from sewage treatment plants. Those new systems could produce 654 billion cubic feet of biogas per year which is enough renewable energy to power 3 million homes. The World Resources Institute estimates that the 50 million tons of organic waste sent to landfills or incinerated every year in the U.S has the energy content of 6 billion gallons of diesel fuel which is 15 percent of all diesel consumed by heavy-duty trucks and buses.

Closer to home, the Goodrich Family Farm in western Vermont is working with Vanguard Renewables so that they can transform cow manure and locally sourced food waste into RNG which will be sent via pipeline to nearby Middlebury College and other customers willing to pay a more for energy that comes from low-carbon sources. Along with the daily stream of 100 tons of manure from the farm's 900 cows, and 165 tons of food waste, a number of factors have come together to make the project possible. In Middlebury College, they found a large customer eager to slash its carbon footprint. Also a new law is about to take effect in Vermont that will ban food waste from landfills starting in 2020, forcing grocery stores and food processors to find new places to send their waste. The Goodrich Farm will get free heat, monthly lease payments for hosting the system, and bedding for its cows from the leftover digested solids which are all cost savings that can offer a lifeline for dairy farmers in a period of extremely low milk prices.

Renewable natural gas is flourishing in Europe, helped by generous subsidy programs. The U. S. government lacks these comprehensive policies so currently there is a patchwork of regional and state markets, utilities, incentives and policies. I took a quick look at New York State's Green Power program website and saw that less than 1% of NYS energy is from biomass. The National Grid website claims to be launching a pilot project to study the benefits and costs of including RNG in their systems.

The Yale Environment 360 article contains much more information than I have included here. You can read the entire article at <https://e360.yale.edu/features/could-renewable-natural-gas-be-the-next-big-thing-in-green-energy>.

Ellen LaPine  
Social Justice Committee

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**Social Justice Committee**

The church congregation has agreed to assist an ecumenical program helping 130 kids on the north shore of Oneida Lake get ready for school. The program will take place at the United Methodist Church in Cleveland on 8/17. The kids are given new backpacks, school supplies, a new outfit, haircuts, lunch, etc. We will be donating new socks and underwear. This is a significant job, in a short time. I have set up separate donation containers in the community room.

KIDS	BOYS	GIRLS
Kindergarten	5	9
Elementary	48	42
Middle & H.S.	17	12

I hope everyone will participate, as able. If there is anyone who can help on 8/17, please contact me. Thank you.

Nancy Hallock  
Social Justice Chair

**Some Openings Still Available For A Different Way of Living Course**

If you would like to attend the upcoming lunch-discussion course, “A Different Way: Living Simply in a Complex World”, but haven't registered yet, please do so asap. The course is limited to 12 participants and open to both congregation and community members. There are just a few seats left and we will begin publicizing the course more broadly at the beginning of August. This informative plus peer-based learning opportunity takes place over six Saturdays, August 31 through October 5, from 12:30 to 2 p.m., with lunch included. There is no cost to attend and the cost of a course book for each participant will be reimbursed upon course completion. For more details on the course content, see the Northwest Earth Institute website at <https://nwei.org/discussion-course-books/a-different-way>.

Mary Fran Yafchak  
Course Coordinator

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**Ministerial Musings**

Deep summer, warm, leafy, flowery. Picnics and swimming, impromptu ball games, reunions and weddings. We have just enjoyed a wonderful church picnic at the Stieber's and we are looking forward to an ecumenical Sunday with our neighbors from two other Central Square churches next week. We celebrate our lives together and unite with others in a million ways, always a little happier to connect with those around us. This is a blossoming of the human spirit, a way in which we bring to full flower that which is the best in us, as all around us, in millions upon millions of ways, we see nature also blossoming and unfolding as it should.

Within our mini-Eden of summer, the news of yet two more massacres was, of possible, more horrific, more devastating. So many people have now died in these acts of domestic terror. We say that this should never happen again and yet it happens again and again and again. We have had vigils and prayers. We have made vows and wept tears and yet these blood lettings go on and on. It is not just that there is a vast ocean of anger that lies beneath our feet. It is not just that there is great division in our country. What is more frightening to me is that so many are alienated from themselves, alienated from each other. So many, almost entirely young men, are so estranged from who they are and from those around them that killing becomes the only way that they can feel anything. There is something wrong here that goes way beyond politics and slogans and easy solutions. There is a deadness at the heart, the heart of each of these men and the heart of our society. How can we heal and become whole?

Andrea Abbott

**Sermon Calendar**

**August 4th: Rev. David Weissbard-Back in July, I had intended, and announced, that, for my after-the-4th-of-July sermon, I was going to update a sermon I delivered three years ago that focused on Sinclair Lewis' 1934 novel It Can't Happen Here. As I prepared that sermon, I ended up going in another direction but said I would come back to Lewis' novel for August. Well, here it is, and there have been a significant number of online and cable news mentions of the book. So I will be raising the important question, "Is It Happening Here?" for the pre-picnic service**

**August 11th: Ecumenical Service at Taft Bay Park in Bernhard's Bay on Sunday, August 11 at 10:45.**

**August 18th: Rev. Bud Adams**

**August 25th: Rev. Jon Kuiper . Jon is a UCC minister, currently living in Florida, who spoke at our church for an ecumenical vigil at the time of the Charleston shootings. He is originally from the Netherlands.**

**His sermon is titled: A Funny Thing Happened on My Way to Central Square.**

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**Religious Education**

During my week attending the Faith Development Conference on Star Island I had the eye opening and faith challenging opportunity to take the workshop offered by the Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley.

We sometime take things at face value never delving into the details or having them but not knowing how to use the voice we have.

Please check out the youtube below for a synopsis of the workshop.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCJn2aYgBRY&feature=share>

I also had the opportunity to connect with other religious educators and compare programs that have worked for their classrooms and ways to tweak for a smaller group.

There is a new program trying to get off the ground to help smaller UU churches in the district to merge resources and work together to create a larger community.

Because this is just beginning, I do not have many details but did let the leaders of the group know about us and that we are interested in any help they may be able to give us to connect. I also let them know who our neighboring congregations are.

I have come home with many ideas for our young people and hopefully for the entire congregation.

It was a very informative and busy week.

Thank you for having faith in me to help guide and teach our children,

Ronna Schindler

RE Director

**UU Circle**

Thanks to everyone who helped to make our yard sale a success. After recent struggles with a variety of dinners as fund raisers, we have found what works for us. Our total profit was \$900.75. Thanks again to every one who donated items for the sale and generously gave of their time.

Ann Peterson

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### Church Events Calendar

**Sunday, August 11th:** Please join us as our congregation will gather with the local congregations of the Methodist and Community church for an ecumenical service at Taft Bay Park in Bernhard's Bay at 10:45 am.

**August 14th: Board Retreat–** Hosted by Marcia and Winfield at their home in Oswego.

**August 17th: Ecumenical Program** to provide needed school supplies to children though donatios to be held at the Methodist Church in Cleveland, New York. See Page 3 for details.

**Saturday, August 17th:**In honor of the bicentennial of the 1819 formation of the First Universalist Society of Henderson, the Henderson Historical Society has arranged a Celebration Service at 2PM at the church. The Historical Society received the building when the church closed. Rev. David Weissbard will give a brief overview of Universalism and he and Rev. Andrea Abbott will conduct a service using an order of service, readings and hymns from sources that span the life of the church. Albert Zaranka will play for the service. A reception will follow with a tour of the historic buildings in the Museum complex.

### Notable Pieces of Interest

**[Mama's Last Hug](#)** by primatologist, Frans De Waal, is my latest read. It gives new and exciting ways of understanding the emotional lives of animals especially us primates and our cousins. I would urge everyone to take a look in part because as UUs we strive to expand our understanding of how our biology AND our social life shape our collective lives. De Waal goes far in making the case that emotions are vital in shaping how we learn and continue to get along with each other. –AJH