

On the Spiritual Side

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Unitarian Church at Washington Crossing celebrates 100th anniversary with service

Invoking its history of standing up to injustice, Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing marked the 100th anniversary of its founding in a special service on April 17.

During the service, members recalled the steps UUCWC has taken over the years to fulfill the promise of religion as a unifying force rather than a vehicle that divides people.

UUCWC was founded as the First Unitarian Church of Trenton on April 16, 1916, in response to a "hellfire and damnation" revival in Trenton, N.J., by preacher Billy Sunday. A prominent traveling evangelist in his day, he used the event to condemn "Unitarian sinners."

The centennial service focused on the message of inclusion behind UUCWC's five Candles of Fellowship, which are lit at the start of each service.

One candle symbolizes the right of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to participate openly and authentically in worship. A second recognizes the church's self-designation as a peace site, a no-hate zone.

The other three symbolize UUCWC's commitment to accessibility, stewardship of the earth, and commitment to ending oppression and racial injustice.

"As new members discover



Members of the Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing, in Titusville, N.J., gathered to celebrate the church's centennial of being an inclusive faith community.

UUCWC, they are surprised to hear that these candles aren't lit in every Unitarian Universalist congregation," said the Rev. Kimberly Wildzowski, UUCWC's minister.

"This community intentionally chooses this work of inclusion, engagement and appreciation that leads to justice — not because the larger denomination requires it, but because our people at UUCWC express their faith by opening their arms, hearts and

minds wider."

In recent years, as part of its history of promoting social justice, UUCWC has worked to fulfill a societal obligation to help people obtain the basic needs of food and education. On April 28, UUCWC's Food Ministry provided its 10,000th hot meal to local community centers and residents of Section 8 housing.

For more than two decades, the church has partnered with HomeFront, hosting volunteers who

provide homework help and a hot meal for more than 70 disadvantaged children from Trenton each Monday night.

This year, UUCWC has embarked on an initiative to promote social justice, focusing on anti-racism, anti-oppression and multi-culturalism. In its first year, this effort has focused on awareness of one's own bias, as well as education about societal and legal structures that promote intolerance, marginalize economic

opportunity, and feed a school-to-prison pipeline in black communities.

More than 30 percent of church members have become involved in activities that range from small-group reflections to a cooperative effort with the Lionheart Foundation called "Houses of Healing," which provides one-on-one, mindfulness-based reflection with inmates about behaviors that contribute to their incarceration.

UUCWC also hopes to partner with one or more local organizations this year on direct outreach programs in communities of color.

"It's been a challenging year for each of our hearts and minds and we are better for it — as individuals and certainly as a community. This work will continue and the demand for this is coming from every corner of the congregation," Wildzowski said. "I know the founders of that first church in Trenton would be humbled by who we've become and how we live out their vision."

UUCWC moved to its present location in Titusville (268 Washington Crossing-Pemington Road in Hopewell Township, N.J.) in 1975. Today, it serves communities in Mercer, Bucks and Hunterdon counties.

For information, visit uucwc.org or call 609-737-0515.

Ohev Shalom marks 40 years in Bucks County

An idea that blossomed in 1976 among a tiny group of local Jewish families to create a warm and welcoming Conservative synagogue has reached a landmark anniversary.

Ohev Shalom of Bucks County, 944 Second Street Pike, Richboro, is celebrating 40 years of supporting its 500-family community as a progressive, Conservative synagogue.

The milestone has provided the synagogue an opportunity to pay tribute to its past through a series of gifts to the community, such as tuition-free Hebrew School through third grade and complimentary membership for unaffiliated families whose oldest child has not yet reached third grade.

In its infancy, Ohev Shalom was nomadic, renting space for religious services from a Friends

Meeting House and holding Hebrew School in congregants' basements. Its first Passover drew 22 families to a model seder.

After membership jumped from 60 to 120 families and property purchased from Addisville Reform Church was no longer sufficient, High Holy Days services were conducted in tents, an era that lasted three years.

In 1983, the temple's 240 fami-



An early Bat Mitzvah class at Ohev Shalom poses for a photograph.

lies celebrated the dedication of Ohev Shalom's new sanctuary.

One year before acquiring its permanent home, members of Ohev Shalom had another milestone to celebrate: Rabbi Elliott Perlestein — who had supported the synagogue as a student rabbi since its inception — graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Immediately, he assumed the full-time position as the synagogue's spiritual leader, a position he holds today.

Under his leadership, Ohev Shalom has fostered strong bonds with its Christian neighbors, affirmed the synagogue's commitment to Israel and welcomed well-known authors, musicians and religious leaders into its sanctuary.

Perlestein and Ohev Shalom members have adopted a broad congregational focus on inclusiveness that ensures everyone has a place in the Jewish community. In some cases this has meant increasing physical accessibility within the sanctuary, enlarging print and holding customized services for individuals with sensory sensitivities.

It has also meant bringing High

Holy Day services to those who are bedridden by becoming one of the rare Conservative synagogues that livestreams Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services.

Ohev Shalom has formed an Interfaith Family Outreach Committee comprised of congregants interested in understanding how the synagogue can best address the issues and needs of interfaith families. Ohev Shalom's first Interfaith Shabbat was held in 2014.

"Families need to feel that all their members are supported and welcomed by our community, regardless of whether or not they are Jewish," Perlestein said. "Acceptance serves to help the family grow stronger and more deeply connected, despite differences in beliefs."

Most recently, the hiring of Cantor Annelise Ocano-Romo has created a new form of inclusiveness, with the addition of musical instruments, a choir, writing original music, and even the use of wordless melodies to encourage participation.

For information about Ohev Shalom, visit ohev.org or call 215-322-9595.



Participants hold the Torah during the 1976 dedication of the Sanctuary at Ohev Shalom in Richboro.

Pebble Hill Church hosts Sunday Celebration, healing workshop

Michael Reddy will present a workshop, "Healing personal and family trauma, how these work and new DIY tools you can use to heal."

The workshop will take place from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, May 15, at Pebble Hill Interfaith Church in Doylestown.

It will be a follow-up to the

Sunday Celebration at 10:30 a.m., where Reddy, who had a doctorate, will give a talk about the latest understandings of personal and ancestral trauma and some of the newer tools for healing.

Reddy's most recent book is "Health, Happiness, & Family Constellations: How Ancestors, Family Systems, and Hidden

Loyalties Shape Your Life—and What YOU Can do About it."

Reddy undertook seven years training in shamanic healing techniques and more recently became a certified professional coach.

Admission is \$30, \$40 or \$50. For information, contact Reddy at michael@reddyworks.com or 610-469-7588.

HAPPENINGS

Visit stphilipsnewhope.org for information.

More than 100 women attended the event.

St. Philip's New Hope hosts pride service

As part of New Hope Celebrates Pride Week, St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 10 Chapel Road, New Hope, will host a Service of Justice at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 18.

Noted GLBT rights lawyer Angela Giampolo will reflect upon the changing role of justice and equality.

Participants will reflect upon the transgender community and its many struggles for justice. It will be a time to hear individual and family stories, as well as build community.

A reception will follow the service. All are invited to attend.

Mt. Carmel group names Woman of the Year

Sandra dePorry, a longtime member of The Ladies of Mt. Carmel, from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Doylestown, was named Woman of the Year at the Ladies' 67th annual Communion Breakfast at the Doylestown Country Club on May 1.

She was selected for a variety of reasons, among them, her many years of service at the Ladies' Annual Rummage Sale, and her dedication and work at Pearl S. Buck International.

Remnant Conference set for River of Life Church

River of Life Church in Doylestown hosts Remnant Conference 2016, with evangelist Pat Schatzline, a best-selling author, conference speaker and guest on many Christian television programs.

Service times are 7 p.m. Friday, May 20, and Saturday, May 21, and 9 and 11 a.m. Sunday, May 22. The free event is open to the public. For information, call 215-794-9393 or visit rcl-doylestown.org.

Worship Directory

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday, May 15, 2016

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

9:30 a.m. Worship / Sunday School

Pastor Michele Schenk

10:30 a.m. Fellowship and Refreshments

Nursery Service Available

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