

North Fork Unitarian Universalist Fellowship



Jamesport, Long Island

Newsletter

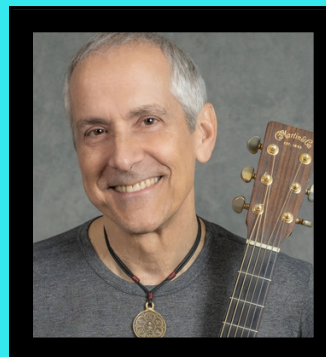
Spring, 2026



Love radically, serve gratefully, wonder daily.

AN EVENING WITH DAVID ROTH

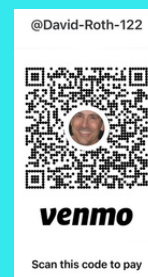
Saturday
May 16th
7 PM
www.nfuuf.org



Jamesport Meeting House

David's songs have found their way to Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, several Chicken Soup for the Soul books, the Kennedy Center, NASA's Space Shuttle "Atlantis", Peter, Paul, & Mary and Kingston Trio CDs, (and 15 of his own), the Rise Up Singing and Rise Again songbooks, and countless venues in this and other countries (and now other WORLDS) for more than three decades. Poignant to improbable, holistic to hilarious, the Chicago native (now living on Cape Cod) comes to Long Island's North Fork!

Advance tickets through
Venmo AND on the
nfuuf.org website.



A MOMENT OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

MOTHER'S DAY AND THE UNITARIAN CONNECTION BY REVEREND BEN

Even some of us who love or loved our mothers are often put off by the sheer mawkishness and hyper-sentimentality of Mother's Day cards. One mom told me this day was "the holiday from Hallmark." However, I remember going down an entire aisle of cards, many of them undoubtedly Hallmark, and not finding one that wasn't over the top with verbal goop.

I developed a different opinion of Mother's Day when I found out about its origins. Julia Ward Howe, author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, in 1870, founded "Mother's Day for Peace." Julia Ward Howe, an abolitionist, after visiting President Lincoln in 1861, volunteered at hospitals during the Civil War, improving sanitary conditions and providing support to wounded soldiers. But she found herself in anguish during and after the war, at the deaths and suffering of so many people. Approximately 750,000 died from battle wounds and disease in the Civil War, more Americans than from any other war in our history. Julia Ward Howe was moved to write these words in 1870...

"Arise, then, women of this day!
"...Our husbands shall not come to us,
Reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.
"Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that
we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience.
"...From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own.
It says, 'Disarm, Disarm!'"

That is an excerpt from her Mother's Day Proclamation, which is found in our hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, #573. Julia Ward Howe went on to help the 15th Amendment pass, abolishing slavery, and work during her remaining years for women's suffrage.

Raised Episcopal, she became a Unitarian in 1841.

Happy Mother's Day!



Prominent among my earliest memories were the many midtown Manhattan musicals I attended with my adoring aunt. "Bye, bye, Birdie", "The King and I", "My Fair Lady", topped off the endless theatrical parade. My scratchy voice bellowed every verse of "Sound of Music" and "South Pacific". And later, my show song mimicry was joined by an amateur chorus of my baby boomer Long Island friends.

Oh, how I wanted to be a Star on Broadway. I achieved this title decades later, when I lived on Broadway (a street in Hewlett, LI) and carried my last name, Starr. But, being Andrea Starr on Broadway was not quite the same.

Broadway was a theme that carried through during my later life. After retiring, I wrote short plays that have been performed by talented retired members of the United Federation of Teachers. These are ten minute and one act plays that embraced characters such as Mickey Mouse, Jackie Kennedy, and Monica Lewinsky. And, where were these productions? At 52 Broadway, NYC. Again, a Starr on Broadway.

Neurodiversity is a subject that's very topical. I think, I pretty much fit into the neurodiverse category. Although I was an intelligent, super curious child...my dyslexia held me back from reading fluently until I was 11 years old. Somehow, being different from the norm sparked a need for diversity, a future with a variety of outlets. Professionally, I've successfully held numerous positions. These included Associate Editor of Doubleday's paperback "Works in Progress", first Resource Room teacher in the State of Vermont, Social Director of an International Resort, Equitable Insurance Agent, NYC reading specialist, and NYC speech pathologist and speech language evaluator.

I so enjoyed these vast experiences. And so, in choosing my spiritual orientation, Universal Unitarianism was the amalgam of just and fulfilling thoughts, perspectives, and ideas to which I was drawn.

Likewise, in terms of a life partner, I was drawn to Ben who brings variety, ethics, and lovingly fills my spirit.

Learning & Delight

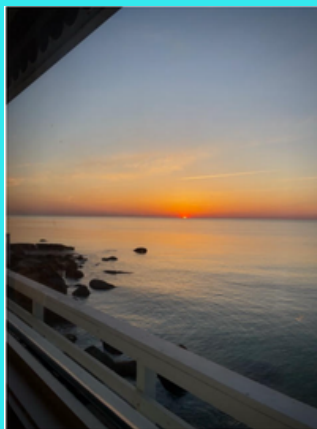
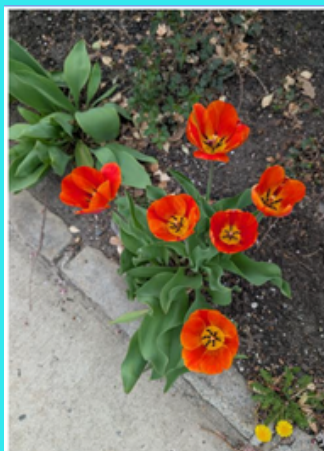
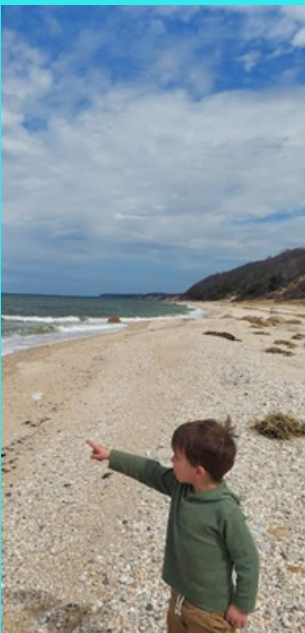
We are blessed by the talents, knowledge and experiences of our diverse congregation. Our members continue to contribute to the richness of our Sunday services.

Thank you, Liala Strotman for sharing your experience of growing up as a Muslim in Queens, NY in the fifties and sixties. Your insight and humor helped our understanding of both Islam and our multi ethnic culture.



Liala displayed her treasured collection of family Korans.

Another thanks goes out to the wonderful photographers--Jessica Barry, Donna Mohlman, Liz Yenetchi, Joyce Culver, Maryellen Tomaszewski and Reverend Ben--who brightened our Earth Day service with their wonderful pictures. Great photos of beauty, peace and calm graced our meetinghouse that day. Thank you too to Tom who put the slide show together!



A SPECIAL WELCOME A SPECIAL THANK YOU

A warm welcome to the congregation to Barbara Reuschle, Bev Wowak, and Diane Nendza. They will be introduced more fully at a later date, but meanwhile, we are delighted that they have joined the Fellowship!

A special appreciative nod to Jim Cain, who is stepping down from his position on the Fellowship Board. Jim has been a pillar of our congregation and will continue to do so in his many other roles. Many Thanks, Jim!



Book Corner

The Wind Knows My Name by Isabel Allende, recommended by Kathy Murray. This novel by a much-beloved author creates the stories of two child refugees, exploring the themes of war, immigration, family separation, yet tempered by the kindness of strangers.

Defying the Nazis: The Sharps War by Artemis Joukowsky, recommended by Bob Benish. A historic story about the author's grandparents who served on a secret mission in the early days of WW11. Their efforts saved at least one hundred people from the Nazis. The author's grandfather was the minister of the Unitarian Society of Wellsley Hills, Massachusetts, and the author was a childhood friend of our very own Bob Benish!



CARING CORNER

We send many get well wishes to Joyce Culver and Bob Benish along with hopes for speedy recoveries and good health.

If any member wishes to reach out to someone with support, concern or celebration, email Desiree at desiree.passantino@gmail.com

REFLECTIONS

From Rev. Ben

For around three years, I served as a hospital chaplain. I was part of a loose-knit team that included clergy of Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim persuasion. Our responsibilities were not to represent our own faith traditions, let alone promote them, or attempt to convert patients and others in the hospital to our theological points of view.

We were instead, amid our diverse religious perspectives, to offer companionship and support, to listen to and “be” with patients and staff.

I very shortly realized what a meaningful and valuable vocation hospital chaplaincy can be. Patients may not have relatives in the immediate community, at least ones who are free to visit. With people’s busy lives, patients may not have friends nearby, those with time to come to the hospital. On top of what can be a difficult physical experience, a medical problem serious enough to warrant hospitalization, a patient not uncommonly can experience loneliness. Granted, hospital staff visit patients – conducting medical tests, bringing food and water, reporting on one’s medical condition. Vital as these services are, hospital staff understandably don’t have a lot of time to visit with patients. And visiting, taking time to spend time with people, when desired, is spiritual support.

My first year, matters got suddenly interrupted by Covid. The vaccine had not been discovered. Chaplains were not to visit hospitals. That phase, ironically, developed into my most intense period of chaplaincy. By phone, I spoke to nurses who might witness three or four deaths a day, then come home and fear they were mortally exposing their own families. Nurses can be among the truly great people of this earth.

What I learned and re-learned in my hospital chaplaincy experience was how important and valuable listening is. Even more than advice, especially unsolicited, what people struggling with a life issue most want and need is someone to listen to them. There is a tendency, I learned in my early counselling classes, to be too hasty about giving suggestions, to offer an immediate proposed solution to whatever a given problem might be. Sometimes, as with the pandemic prior to available vaccines, there is no easy solution. But even when it appears that there is some sort of remedy, a person wrestling with a problem often is better served by being enabled to work through the matter himself or herself. And few responses better facilitate that possibility than listening. In these matters, I would never say never. (Well, almost never.) If someone, for example, is threatening to do something violent, for everyone’s protection, that person needs to be warded off and calmed down, if possible.

But generally, inside and outside the caretaking context, listening is a true gift. It communicates that what you say, matters to me. It is one of the most authentic ways we have of affirming one another.

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 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 10:30 a.m. Jamesport Meeting House, 1590 Main Road, Jamesport, NY www.nfuuf.org

Editor Betsy Kaplan