

Social Justice

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Social Justice Committee meeting scheduled for January 2 has been cancelled. In its place members are urged to attend the Rhode Island Interfaith Power & Light (RI-IPL) evening Conference "Greening Your Congregation" scheduled for January 10, 7-9:30 pm, at Bishop Hendricken High School in Warwick. This is the first interfaith conference on developing a religious community response to climate change in Rhode Island and is for clergy, lay leaders, parents, educators, business people and other interested persons. Register on line at www.riipl.org/register.htm Suggested donation is \$10. Beth Milham, discussing our "green congregation" efforts, will be a featured speaker in the "Cool Congregations" workshop. Pick up flyers at the rear of the Sanctuary, as well as in the Parish Hall.

Hot Topic for January 23 - "Comprehensive Sexuality Education." How comprehensive is comprehensive? Does RI accept federal funding for teaching abstinence only sex education, or, has it, like Massachusetts, and 12 other states, refused federal funding because of this limitation? How does comprehensive sexuality education compare with our own OWL program? What is UUA's position? What is your position? Bring a pot luck dish at 6:30 to the Parish Hall, share good food and join the discussion.

Make a note that our **Hot Topics Forum, February 27**, is on "Homeland Security and Privacy Rights." Later this spring the May Hot Topic will be on climate control.

In light of upcoming elections it is important that we remember the separation of church and state. We encourage everyone to be politically active and to share your convictions with your community. However, anyone may advocate for a cause but not a candidate on Church property. Don Mallinson
Social Justice Chair

Green Corner

Here we are embarking on the New Year, and, we hope, considering "greener" living among our resolutions. One option for ideas and support is a Sustainability Circle. We're fortunate to have a qualified facilitator, Cheryl Grove, in Newport. She'd like to bring this concept, patterned on the Small Group Ministry model, to Channing with a four-session program. The program, entitled "Global Warming: Changing Co²urse," by Northwest Earth Institute (www.nwei.org) is free, with a charge just for the excellent course guide. Enrollment is limited to 8 to 12 people, and we'll give Channing people first priority. If you're interested, please contact Beth: bpmilham@cox.net, or 847-7637. We'll schedule according to participants' availability.

EcoBits & Tips

Have you seen the new winter foliage—plastic shopping bags flying from bare tree branches? Pretty, eh? What's worse, according to the Sierra Club, we throw almost 100 BILLION of these petroleum products away each year, and only 1 to 3 percent are recycled. Paper bags aren't much better, because of the cost in trees and the energy to produce them.

But there's an alternative! Most chain stores now offer inexpensive cloth bags (made in China, of course—yet another trade-off.) You can use them for all your shopping errands, not just groceries. You can spend a bit more for fancy, designer bags, and those also make nice gifts. It takes a little discipline to form the habit of returning them to the car after a shopping trip, and then bringing them into the store with you, but speaking from experience, it's not that hard! And it's a good feeling to master this first baby step towards sustainability.

Mystery Friends is here!

What is Mystery Friends? Well, it is the beloved Channing tradition "Secret Friends", with a new, 21st century, moniker. Beginning in January, children of the Channing congregation fill out forms telling us who they are and what they like. Adults also complete an interest form. We pair up one child to each adult, who then send notes, leave clues and tiny gifts for their "Mystery Friend" during the week and especially on the Sundays of January 27th and February 3rd. On February 10th, the RE Committee will lead an intergenerational service after which the Mystery Friends will meet and exchange a small gift with each other. Very strong connections are made for these new friends in our congregation. What ever you call it, Mystery Friends is a lot of fun for adults and children alike! Call coordinator Kim Shute or me with questions.