



**First Unitarian Society of
Westchester
Coming of Age Trip to Boston
March 2015**

COA Trip to Boston, March 2015



In the front lobby, playing cards in the sitting area of the International Hostel Boston, before leaving on the Duck Tour.

Saturday March 28. After traveling in a merry caravan through snow and sleet, we arrived at HI-Boston, the international youth hostel in the Chinatown/theatre district of Boston at lunchtime. The hostel, an old manufacturing building, was renovated in a contemporary industrial style chic, spartan but with many amenities. It caters to mostly people of student age, with smaller numbers of older people and some families. So our youth felt right at home. We met a UU group staying there from Columbia, Maryland, (April's friend from Star Island saw her Facebook post and told her to look out for them). They gave us good advice about booking a tour to go up to the bell tower at the Arlington Street Church, where you can ring the bells that are still rung by hand. We were however, too late to book this tour, but it should definitely be included on future visits.

The weather was not welcoming, windy with sleet coming down. But the youth braved the elements without complaint. We ate a good meal in a Panera Bread cafe

near the hostel. The COA youth seemed delighted to sit at their own table with the adult chaperones around the corner from them.

After lunch, we began to walk toward the Prudential Center. Ryan had bought himself a large loaf of bread



Ryan sharing a baguette he bought after lunch at Panera Bread.



On the Duck Tour Bus.



Outside the Prudential Center on our way to the Duck Tour Bus.

at Panera, which was nicknamed and then shared with his peers as the group walked along. At some point, he was wearing a sort of baguette bracelet, which looked quite stylish. Then, some of the youth noticed a sign to welcome patrons to a bar called "Rock Bottom," and they took turns leaping up to tap the sign, so they could announce, "I've hit rock bottom!"

At the Prudential Center, we boarded the **Duck Tour**, which involves riding in a special vehicle based on World War II amphibious beach landing craft. Our guide was

"Tour Route Tommy," a goofy-looking middle-aged guy with a professorial herringbone jacket, taped-up glasses, and a propeller beanie on his head. There were only a few other riders on the vehicle, so we asked Tommy to fill us in on Unitarian history when possible as he drove about. A road closure forced us to take a detour, so we had plenty of time for questions. Also, because the river was still frozen in parts, our Duck Tour covered only half the usual water route and consequentially we got a partial refund. But it was a good introduction to the city



Tour Route Tommy, our guide and Duck Tour driver.



Having fun reaching up to try to touch the sign 'Rock Bottom'!



Eating a delicious meal at the Dumpling Cafe on Saturday Evening.

and Tommy did his best to amuse us, while pointing out the sights.

In the evening, on the recommendation of the Hotel staff, we went to a little Chinese place around the corner called the Dumpling Cafe, (Kathleen had the foresight to call ahead for a reservation). There were some authentic-looking items on the menu, like "duck tongue," and

intestines, but we stuck to more familiar fare. Three of the youth selected the popular beverage called "bubble tea," (a tea-based drink with fruit and milk and chewy tapioca balls which weirdly clog the wide straw as one drinks). We shared tastes of our dishes and played with the tapioca balls. Everyone enjoyed the meal.

Returning to the Hostel, youth spent the evening working on their COA statements. They were refining their initial program, changing some songs for others and working on their statements. Clare took some time in the evening to meet with the youth on the credo statements for the Coming of Age Service.



Having breakfast at the Hostel on Sunday morning.

Sunday March 29. Breakfast at the hostel had a fun atmosphere. Many young adults sat around, some working at their laptops, some dining in groups, and some video chatting in other languages with far away family or friends. Selecting the food was a bit of an adventure. While we were happy to discover that a variety of foods were provided, the COA youth mostly went for the waffles, which, even after being run through the toaster, remained frozen in the middle, but they all ate something. Some were pleased with the beverage machines, and concocted coffee with hot cocoa powder mixed in.

Though the weather was still cold, it was not snowing, so after breakfast, we walked to the **Arlington Street Church** for their 11am service. The present Church was dedicated in 1861. The architectural style of the church



ABOVE: Kathleen and Sarah admiring the stained glass, as Sarah thoughtfully collects up the hymnals.

LEFT: Breaking with traditional church colors of deep blue and deep red, Tiffany, the famous designer and glass maker, chose subtle modulated hues in blues, greens and pale yellow for the stained glass windows in this church.

was very formal, with the pulpit rising at least about fifteen feet above us, softened only by a string of gently pulsating pink party lights. Our group wandered partway up the aisles, and opened the “door” to a few upholstered pews to sit down. The reverend Kim Crawford Harvie in her opening statement, made it very clear that she was not formal and welcomed us all with open arms. She acknowledged the groups visiting from three Unitarian Universalist congregations from across the country, including ourselves, who were there to attend the service.

The church organ and a piano alternated playing hymns, sung by a choir in green robes. This traditional scene was accompanied by the vibrant upbeat rhythms of an African drum. Reverend Kim Crawford Harvie acknowledged Palm Sunday in her Sermon, but the main theme was about Passover and the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. The Church is clearly very involved in social action, much of which is described in their Arlington Street Church newsletter “Inside”.





ABOVE: Sitting in the upholstered pews, holding a palm leaf to wave the children off to their service.

BELOW: Standing on the steps of the Arlington Street Church.



After the service the Reverend Crawford Harvie greeted us, and others, and the children looked around. Some went upstairs to look at the stained glass windows made by Tiffany, the world famous designer and glass maker. We then went downstairs to the basement. Having had a fund raiser the night before they had apparently food to give for lunch to all. But the comparatively dimly lit basement space, with hardly a young person in sight, was not encouraging, so following our original plans, we left to eat elsewhere. We walked across the Public Gardens, where some of us fondly recalled scenes from *Make Way for Ducklings*. Clare's handy fig bars saved some hungry youth from misery as we walked along. Eventually, we found our way, with the help of April's smartphone navigation techniques, to Beacon Street. We ate lunch at the Boston pub that was used as the site for the once popular TV series 'Cheers', a fact totally unknown of course to our youth. But memorabilia from the TV show was everywhere inside.

After lunch, we started out toward the sites on the self-guided Historical Boston Universalist Unitarian



We ate at the bar food restaurant "Cheers".

Walking Tour, many of which are clustered off Beacon Street. Well known to Americans, Boston was the center in the 18th and 19th century for those drawn to the revolutionary liberal social movements; anti-slavery, Unitarianism, and transcendentalist philosophy, etc. Many famous people involved in the Unitarian movement were drawn to Boston, like the minister Ellery Channing, artist Anne Whitney, Louisa May Alcott, Francis Parkinson, Julia Ward Howe, Samuel Eliot and others. They all lived near each other, at one time or another, off Beacon Street.

But we ran out of time before we reached that destination and had to meet our guide, 'Rachel Revere' (the second wife of Paul Revere). We met Rachel on Boston

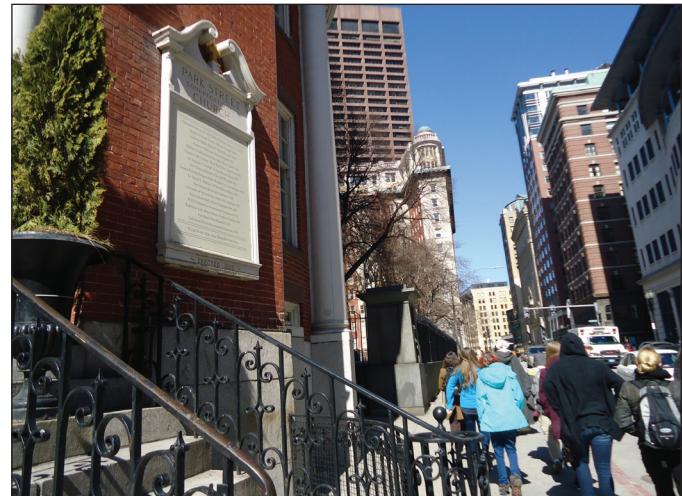


Reading the menu at "Cheers".

Common for the **Freedom Trail Tour**, dressed in period costume. **Boston Common**, dating from 1634, is the oldest park in the US. Rachel noted that the Puritans who founded Boston had very strict ideas about behavior, and those who did not fit the norm were punished severely and often with death. But with the increase in the numbers of immigrants from all religious faiths they were unable to impose their strict religious views. Subsequently Boston became the center for the development and expression of new ideas which lead to independence.



Sitting on the steps of the Park Street Church.



Following Rachel Revere past the Park Street Church on our way to the Granary Burying Ground next door.

We saw the **Massachusetts State House** or the "New" State House as it is called, completed in 1895, and noted the statues of famous people. We saw the outside of the fine red brick **Park Street Church** completed in 1810. The Church is located right next to the **Granary Burying Ground**. Rachel took us through the burial ground. Noting the fine decorative ornamental carving on some of the gravestones, she told us that the Puritan church did not believe in religious icons or imagery, so the people of Boston used tombstones as an outlet for artistic expression of

their beliefs about the afterlife, with carvings of skeletons and delicate flowers etc. Rachel told us stories about Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Robert Treat Paine, some of the many famous people buried there.

We then walked to **Kings Chapel**, now an independent Christian Unitarian Congregation. The Church is affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association. The original bell made in England cracked and Paul Revere happily made a replacement. King's Chapel Burying Ground is next to the church and is the oldest cemetery in the city from 1630.

Stopping outside a teashop, Rachel served us, free samples of hot fruit tea, which were very welcome.



Our guide, Rachel Revere, standing by the grave of 'her husband', Paul Revere, telling us his story.



Rachel shows us a large lead bullet made to be shot from a musket.



An elaborately carved tombstone. The only creative outlet for artists in Puritan Society, which did not permit decoration in any other form.



Old South Meeting House, the organizing point for the Boston Tea Party.



Drinking welcome free samples of hot tea outside David's Tea Shop.

We then walked to the **site of the former Boston Latin School** and saw a **statue of the Founding Father Benjamin Franklin**. Nearby was the former site of an old spring that brought water to the local population, now covered over by a building and stone walkway. Afterwards we realized that we had not seen the site of the Old Corner Bookstore at this point on our tour. An historic



Walking under the balcony of the Old State House, where Colonel Thomas Crafts read the Declaration of Independence.

commercial building now stands on the site of the former home of Anne Hutchinson. We walked on to the **Old South Meeting House**, which was an organizing point for the Boston Tea Party. The Boston Massacre in 1770 happened outside close by.

We then walked on to the **Old State House** built in 1713. It is one of the oldest public buildings in the United States. It is here on July 18, 1776, The Declaration of Independence was read from the east side balcony by Colonel Thomas Crafts to the jubilant crowd below.



'Rachel Revere' said goodbye to us by the Faneuil Hall Market.

Rachel left us at **Faneuil Market** where we let the youth wander around the stores for about an hour or so, (April had to depart at this time, and returned to the hostel to meet Michael). Then we walked back to the hostel. In the evening after a pizza dinner, we walked to Loews movie theatre to watch 'Insurgent'. Realizing that it was a 3-D movie, Ryan went off to find the 3-D glasses for us, which we all wore to experience greater dramatic effect! While we enjoyed the film, it was a bit disappointing to those who had read the book, since the film version of the plot had been simplified.

Monday, March 30. After breakfast we checked out of our rooms, leaving our luggage in the downstairs lockup to collect later. We walked to the new **UUA headquarters** building at 24 Farnsworth Street, across the Fort Point Channel, past the Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum. The building is a converted mill with large updated spaces, once used to house huge industrial machinery. Jill, their media services director, gave us a guided tour.



At UUA headquarters we met with Jill in the open reception area and she took us upstairs to the offices and conference room above.



At the top of the stairs, Jill talked about the plaque hung on the wall dedicated to the memory of the three Unitarians who were killed on the march to Selma, Alabama in 1965.



Upstairs in a very open space designed to be used for multi-purposes use. Jill stands by a pulpit that was used by the Reverend William Ellery Channing in the former Arlington Street Church.

Some original paintings and furniture were brought from the old town houses and installed there. Other pieces were given to different museums. Wanting to make a smaller carbon foot print in their new building, Jill pointed out a very solid desk top made out of recycled paper. In fact the building conversion is LEED Certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a standard for

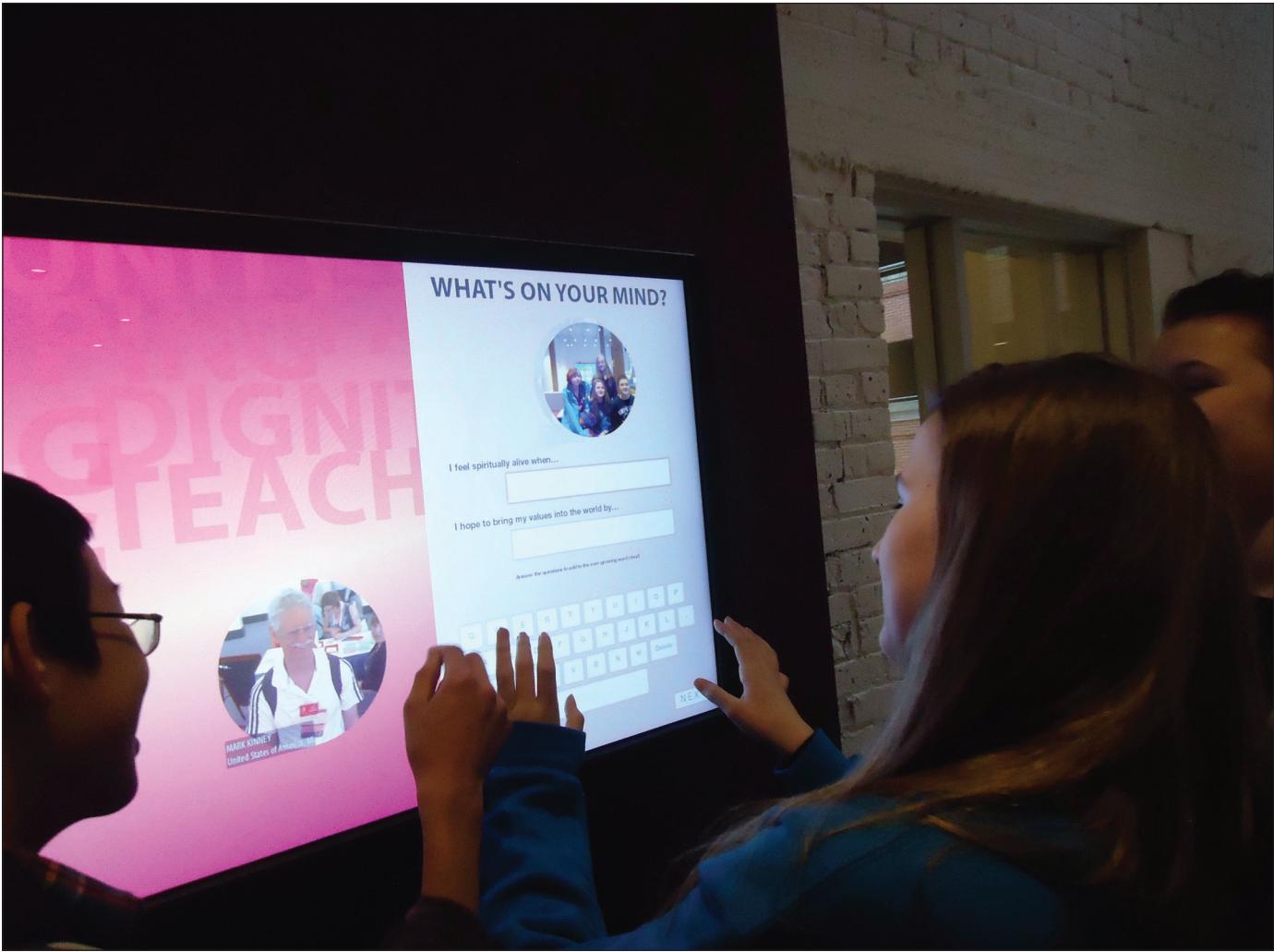


ABOVE: Bart Frost talking to our youth, while they fill in out questionnaire on an ipad. In the background at right is the book and gift store, selling UUA chocolate which proved to be very popular!

LEFT: In a conference room watching a video of three people giving testimonials about their lives as Unitarian Universalists, including MSNBC talk show host Melissa Harris-Perry.



Just before leaving Bart asked us to sign into the UUA record 'book' through an interactive screen. The youth were having fun taking selfies, and recording what town and state we came from.



Responding to the entertaining interactive questionnaire.

green building and design. Jill showed us various offices and work stations. Then we went into a conference room to watch a video of powerful testimonials from three different people who described what a difference being a Unitarian Universalist had meant to their lives. Bart Frost, who is the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director, then met us downstairs in the meeting area. He

talked with the youth, outlining all the opportunities for participation and personal development in UUA. While listening, they each in turn completed a survey on an ipad. Throughout they asked Bart questions, which he encouraged and answered enthusiastically.

We walked back to the hostel as office workers were coming out to take a lunch break. We ate a delicious



Sitting by their luggage having played their last game of giant Jenga.



Playing a last game of cards, while we wait with our luggage for Michael and Kathleen to retrieve their cars for the last part of our journey to Walden Pond.



Standing at the frozen edge of Walden Pond. As Thoreau wrote; "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them." Sounds like good advice for our youth!

lunch at a nearby Thai restaurant. Michael had recommended a traditional Thai soup dish; noodles and vegetables with meat cooked in a delicious hot broth which some of us ordered. Others ordered a cold Pad Thai noodle dish. We went back to the hostel, collected our luggage from the lockup and the youth played Jenga for the last time, while we waited for Michael and Kathleen to pick us up in their cars.

From there we drove to **Walden Pond**. We arrived at about 3:00, later than planned. But because of that our guide was able to take out a UU group before us, from Rochester, NY. We saw the replica of Thoreau's Cabin, near the parking lot. The guide discussed Thoreau's life, including the question of who cooked his meals and did

his laundry, details that show the growing interest and importance of domestic history. We then walked out to Walden Pond, a kettle pond made by a glacier from the retreating ice sheet that covered these parts about 10,000 years ago. The pond was still covered in snow and ice, no obvious signs of spring yet. On the way back we stopped for a take out drink and donuts at Dunkin Donuts, arriving back at 8:00pm.

**We would like to thank all those
who made this
COA trip to Boston possible
for our youth:**

PLANNING

TRACY BRENEMAN, DRE

REV. PEGGY CLARKE

KATHLEEN FAY

IRENE JONG

CHAPERONES

APRIL CASTOLDI

KATHLEEN FAY

CLARE FRANCIS

MICHAEL MON