



# Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

November 2011

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## Sunday Services | November 2011

**November 6th** | *Are you Happy?*

The Buddha is reported to have counseled that all life is suffering. With all due respect, I must disagree. -- Rev. Munson.

**November 13th** | *A War Church, A Peace Church*

We are not by heritage a strict "peace church", but many among us have deep roots in peace movements. On this Veterans Day weekend, the service will focus on war, peace, and sacrifices of many kinds. -- Rev. Munson.

**November 20th** | *Small Boxes, Big Dreams*

A Thanksgiving Service for all ages. We'll kick off the UU Service Committee's "Guest at Your Table" initiative for this year. Rev. Munson and friends.

**November 27th** | TBA, Verdis Robinson



*Decorative Cross over Clinton Street Entrance*

*Photo by David Damico, 2010*





## Minister's Message

Submitted by Rev. Martha Munson

### Walking With You

Many of you have been kind to inquire about how I'm getting along at First Universalist, if I need anything, and to ask how you can help. Thanks! Many of you have inquired about Sally, how she's getting along, and how you can help. Sally and I are in touch some and I am glad to report that each time I speak with her, her voice seems stronger.

Here is how you can help both of us, and your beloved First Universalist: Just show up. Who was it, Woody Allen or John Lennon or someone else who said that 90% of life is just showing up? Well, in this case it is especially true. As some of you know, I am an Accredited Interim Minister. After long years of settled ministry, my specialty now is with congregations in transition. And while you are not "in transition" between ministers, you are in transition in other ways. My task with you, as I understand it, is to "hold the center". Your task is to continue to be the congregation. Showing up, especially on Sunday mornings when all gather, enables you to greet and make the acquaintance of visitors and newcomers, to support and "hold" one another, and to uphold the community you share (which we share in this time). Attendance has seemed strong this fall. These words are designed to thank those who come every week, and to encourage those of you who may be waiting for Sally's return. She will return to a stronger place than she left, a healthier more vibrant place, as you are the congregation together even as she is physically absent from your midst (if not far from your thoughts).

In this month of Thanksgiving (my favorite holiday as it is about the last one devoid of consumerist excess), I thank you for inviting me to walk with you. And I look forward to seeing you in church. ❖

Martha



## R.E.flections

Submitted by Kim Dehon,  
Religious Education Coordinator

*If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice. ~Meister Eckhart*

Dear friends,

This is one of my very favorite quotations. I especially love it for Unitarian Universalists, who sometimes find it difficult to develop a spiritual practice that they truly enjoy and feel nourished by, because it reminds us that the only spiritual practice we truly need is gratitude. I've recently been thinking about this, in fact, and one thing I realized is that gratitude is important because it reminds us of the bigger picture. In these hard times we can end up focusing on what's wrong and spending our time trying to fix things: our problems, our projects, our partners, ourselves. Gratitude, however, refocuses our attention to what is right, what is perfect, in fact, just the way it is. It gives us a more well-rounded picture of life. For that, I know I am grateful.

I am also grateful to Rev. Martha, the RE Committee, the teachers and the parents for supporting the recent changes to the RE program. The children have been enjoying being together as a larger group each week and also to continuing the theme of the service in their own worship experiences, which include discussions of the stories, joys and concerns, and related spiritual practices and activities. I am grateful for their flexibility and enthusiastic participation.

Gratitude is on my mind and in my heart this month and I plan to continue this prayer in months ahead. ❖

In faith,  
Kim





# Fracking and Magical Empowerment

—A Report from the Universalist Convention

*Submitted by Michael Scott*

Last month this column advertised the then-upcoming annual meeting of the New York State Convention of Universalists. On Oct. 7 and 8, First Universalist was represented at the meeting by Karen Dau, Joyce and Dick Gilbert, Dick and Suzanne McNamara, Michael and Kelly Scott, and Loretta Young. Business items included elections of Trustees and members of the Nominating Committee, and a vote to admit the Jamestown, NY, congregation to membership. Opening and closing worship services were led by the Rev. Douglas Taylor of Binghamton and the Rev. Ralph Christianson of Brooklyn, PA, respectively. Delegates were also able to choose from 10 different workshops, on a variety of topics.

For many attendees, however, the most exciting events were the Friday and Saturday speakers.

On Friday, Mike Lovegreen, Manager of the Bradford County, PA, Conservation District and Chair of the Bradford County Natural Gas Advisory Committee, presented a detailed on-the-ground report on natural gas mining in northern Pennsylvania. Many attendees described the presentation as the most comprehensive and balanced coverage of “fracking” they had seen.

Starting from nothing just a few years ago, gas drilling in Bradford County has grown to impact nearly everything aspect of local life, from roads and water supplies, to housing and taxes, to a tragic waste of harvested timber and a shortage of drivers for milk trucks. Some of the impacts have been highly negative; a few have been quite positive; many are distinctly mixed. Whatever their

perspective on the development, however, there is much that local residents would do differently in hindsight, and much that New York could learn from Pennsylvania’s experience. There are also clearly great issues at stake for a church committed to social and environmental justice.

On Saturday morning, the focus turned to history, with a fascinating address by Dan McKanan, the Ralph Waldo Emerson UUA Senior Lecturer in Divinity at Harvard University. Dr. McKanan began his remarks with a question: why it is, when we consider the history of radical thought in America, that Unitarian names spring much more quickly to mind than Universalist? It isn’t the historical record: Universalists were at the forefront of all of the 19th century’s great social movements. The answer, McKanan suggests, may lie in their approach to power.

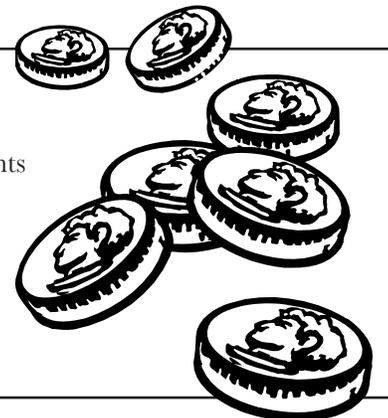
For those who are relatively prosperous, the focus of radicalism tends to be ethical: “how shall we use our power for the common good?” For those who are downtrodden, the focus is more often on empowerment: “how can we get more power?” The ethical perspective—more prevalent among Unitarians—is commonly seen by outsiders (and history) as overtly religious in nature. The empowerment perspective—more prevalent among Universalists—is commonly seen as political, though it may in truth be just as firmly rooted in religion.

For McKanan, empowerment movements are closely tied to magic, a term he uses, very broadly, to refer to any spiritual practice that serves to increase power—even if only by consciousness-raising. Seen from this perspective, 19th-century Universalism was deeply rooted in magic—a concept many NYSCU attendees found both unfamiliar and intriguing. For more on the history of religion and the political Left, check out McKanan’s new book, available from Beacon Press: <http://www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=1315> ❖

## “Change” is Coming!

Our annual change drive will take place on November 6 and 13. Please dig out that coffee cup or small dish where you’ve accumulated your change, and bring the contents to church on one of these two Sundays. When we all “pool our pennies,” we get an amount that will make a difference in supporting our church’s mission! Thanks for participating! ❖

Ann Rhody and Charles Gibson, Finance co-chairs



# Drop-In Discussion, November Schedule

*Submitted by Phil Ebersole*

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday in the adult lounge on the second floor of our church. You don't have to read anything or do any advance preparation to participate. Just drop in. People of all viewpoints are welcome to make presentations or join in the discussions.

Discussions are at 9:15 a.m. and, unless otherwise indicated, 12 noon. Here is the schedule for November.

**Sunday, Nov. 6** | *Why I Am Not a Christian.* We'll read and discuss Bertrand Russell's famous 1927 lecture in which he argued the case against Christianity. Click on <<http://users.drew.edu/~jlenz/whynot.html>> to read it in advance. Phil Ebersole will facilitate.

**Sunday, Nov. 13** | *Innovation.* Is innovation good all the time? What is truly innovative and to what degree? Is continuous innovation sustainable or do we need a stasis of normality before something new comes along? Is innovation speeding up? Are innovation and trust equals or opposites? What prompts innovation and what motivates us to adopt it? How do you handle it? David Damico facilitates.

**Sunday, Nov. 20** | *Animal Rescue.* Large numbers of dogs, cats and other pets are abandoned by their owners to die unnecessarily. Eileen Fernandez and Elexis Lindberg, volunteers for two different animal rescue groups in our community, will do a presentation on what these rescue groups do and how they do it, and lead a discussion.

**Sunday, Nov. 27** | *And Equal Justice for All?* Harvey Rothbeind will facilitate a discussion on whether we have equal justice in this country, in the light of the black-white ratio in prisons, racial profiling by traffic cops and the recent executions of Cameron Todd Willingham in Texas and Troy Davis in Georgia, despite new evidence that cast considerable doubt upon their guilt.

Topics are subject to change. For updates, check the bulletin board in First Universalist Church's Clara Barton lounge or the Schedule of Drop-In Discussions on <<http://philebersole.wordpress.com>>. If you have a topic you'd like discussed or, better still, would like to lead a discussion, speak to Phil Ebersole or David Damico. ❖

## Autumnal Auditing

*Submitted by Marie Sidoti, Co-chair, Music Committee*

What is it we think about every year in the fall? Autumn leaves! Bright blue weather! Halloween! Christopher Columbus! Veterans! Thankfulness! And tax-deductible charitable contributions that must be made before December 31st!

So if you haven't done so yet, this is an ideal time to contribute to the First Universalist Hope-Jones Organ Restoration Fund, Phase One. Phase One is intended to stop increasing organ deterioration and carries a tag of \$8,850. (Actual restorative work begins in the next phase.) Never forget that when you share your blessings, you become a blessing, too.

So far we have received 14 contributions. Total contributions are being matched up to \$4,000. So act now to become a double blessing, promote beautiful music for our church and the community, and raise your tax deductions.

Please put "Organ Restoration" on your check's memo line. Many, many thanks. ❖



**Robert Hope-Jones**

# Committee on Ministry

*Submitted by Michael Scott*

Concerned about something at church? Unsure of whom to talk to? The *Committee on Ministry* is charged with enhancing the quality of ministry within the congregation, in the broadest sense of the term. Simply put, our job is to keep an eye on every aspect of church life, and to help us all to better care for one another. In this role we serve as something of a “trouble-shooting” team. If there’s an issue that’s troubling you, be it with leadership, staff, or a fellow congregant, we always encourage you to speak directly with the person(s) involved. But if you are not sure how to proceed, please talk to a member of the committee. We’ll work with you to get things back on track. ❖

Dolores Da Lomba (chair), Elizabeth Osta, Verdis Robinson, Michael Scott, Bridget Watts, and Tom Williams

## RAIHN\* Dates

*Submitted by Marti Eggers*



**November 27 – December 4**, Hosting Week at First Universalist Church. Attend the training on October 13<sup>th</sup> so that you’ll be ready to volunteer for this Hosting Week. We will have 87 volunteer slots to fill, so please try to set aside some time for RAIHN in November/December.

\* RAIHN, the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, is a consortium of 15 faith communities that host families in temporary need of housing, and 26 faith communities that provide volunteers and other support to the host congregations. First Universalist is a host congregation, supported by St. Mary’s. Four times a year, for a week each time, volunteers from both congregations work together to provide a welcoming, safe place for these families to come home to after a day at the RAIHN Center where they get help looking for housing and, for some, new employment. We prepare and serve a hot evening meal, help with homework, offer a lap, a story and a hug, a listening ear, a word of encouragement, overnight presence, breakfast and whatever else might be needed before the families return to their jobs or to the Center for another day of hard work. ❖



## The Larger Faith

*Submitted by Keith Stott*

Did you know that the first woman in America to receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree was a Universalist? Augusta Jane Chapin (1836-1905) was also the second Universalist woman to be ordained. Read about her work in Charles A. Howe’s *The Larger Faith, A Short History of American Universalism*, available for borrowing (**289.1**) or purchase in our library/bookstore. (For many years Rev. Howe was minister of our Syracuse church.) ❖

## Volunteering to Greet

*Submitted by Karen Ruganis*

Greeters are the friendly people you meet at the door as you enter for Sunday Services. Their presence, with a smile and a handshake or hug, adds to the welcoming atmosphere at First Universalist.

The Membership Committee wants to encourage everyone to volunteer to greet on Sundays. There is a sign-up sheet on the MOCHA bulletin board. Someone from the Membership Committee will stand with you and “show you the ropes” if you are not familiar with it. Please sign up and be the one with that friendly welcome. ❖

## Attention All Bloggers

A number of our members and friends have their own web logs. We’d like to compile a list of our bloggers and their blogs. If you have a blog and would like to be on the list, send an e-mail to [uurocnews@gmail.com](mailto:uurocnews@gmail.com) with your name, your blog’s name and your blog’s URL.

Philip Ebersole, *Phil Ebersole’s Blog*  
<http://philebersole.wordpress.com/>



David Damico, *Guardant Press*  
<http://www.ddamico.net/wordpress/>

For anyone owning a cell phone with camera and QR (Quick Response) code reader, scan the QR code above to take you directly to the websites.

# Auld Lang Syne

Submitted by Karen Dau, archivist



AS AMERICA began its struggle through the financial crisis that became known as the Panic of 1837, the Universalists of Rochester purchased an aging, run-down former Presbyterian church on Stone Street located at what is now the entrance to the Court Street parking garage, and held a dedication service on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1837.

Then in 1839 the congregation established a “Sabbath School” which joyfully gathered for the first time on the second of June. Their record book which has been passed down to our time is a priceless historian’s treasure. On December 30, 1841 the congregation incorporated itself, interestingly, as the Court Street Church Society. Rev. Jacob Chase served the congregation for four years, and when he took a pastorate at Middleport in March of 1843, Rev. Charles Hammond became his successor two months later. Hammond was clearly the most colorful person to occupy the pulpit before the permanent incorporation of the church in 1846, and I will write more of him later.

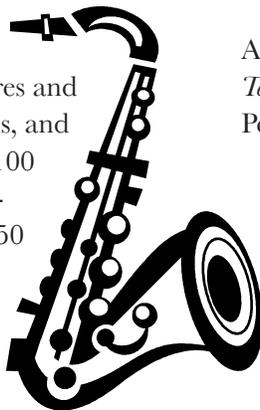
It seemed to the Universalist public that their Rochester co-religionists were at last on a solid footing. But Hammond’s brief supply pastorate was unhappily consumed with preparations for the sale of the church building in May of 1844 and the disbandment of the congregation soon afterward. Only the Sabbath School survived, meeting in the basement of the nearby Unitarian church. In a weekly Universalist newspaper which he edited, Hammond wrote in February of

1845, “The few friends [of Universalism] in this city have sacrificed much for the cause, but not being of the wealthy class, were unable to meet the expenses of supporting stated preaching, and discharge their pecuniary obligations.—We are not without hope, however, that the time is not far distant when we shall be able to give a more favorable report of the cause in this place.” Then a month later he wrote more bluntly, “One word more. The society in this city owes its misfortunes to a man who has long since left our ministry... He succeeded in inducing three or four of our best friends to purchase an old dilapidated building, poorly located, at an expense of three times its value. He soon left the city and commenced the study of law. Br. [Rev. Jacob] Chase was then called to the pastoral charge of the city, and by the most unwearied zeal kept the society together, but still the old debt of all the church property was worth, hung over their heads. And when we came to this city, nearly every member of the society, save those whose [personal] property had become involved by the transaction, were decidedly opposed to taking any measures for its redemption. They chose to occupy the house while they could, and then let it pay for itself.”

But Hammond had not given up on the great cause. In that same issue of his paper he wrote, “Divine Service will be held on the third Sunday inst., at the Frankfort Institute, at the usual hours. The Universalists of this city will bear this in mind.” ❖

## Raihn Third Annual Snazzy Jazzy Sunday

Snazzy Jazzy is continuing the tradition of excellent music, delicious hors d’oeuvres and desserts provided by Tasteful Connections, and amazing live and silent auctions of over 100 items. Admission is only \$50 and reservations can be made by calling 585-506-9050 or mailing your request to RAIHN Day Center, 34 Meigs Street, Rochester, NY 14607.



All proceeds benefit RAIHN. Featuring the debut of the *Temple Sinai Jazz Expedition*. Location: Temple Sinai (363 Penfield Road, Penfield), 3:30–5:30 pm. ❖



# House Report Highlight - Nov. 2011

*Submitted by Alain Perreghaux*

## Energy Audit

Regarding the replacement of the old ballasts and tubes in the train room, the numbers are in. It would cost us \$3000 and we would get \$1000 back as a subsidy from NYSERDA. The official claim is that we should recover this cost in 6 to 7 years due to energy conservation. This estimation is based on the assumption that the lights are turned on 40 hours per week or more. The reality is that the lights are turned on roughly 8 hours per week (not per day); thus the recovery time becomes 30 to 35 years. Conclusion: it does not make sense to go through the upgrade at this time.

What will make sense, however, will be to take a look at the old exit signs that use incandescent bulbs and are turned on 24 hours per day. Replacing those with LED models, and getting a small subsidy for it, will be next in the plan.

## Court Street Entrance Door

We have hired a carpenter to look at this door. At first sight, it appears that it does not close well due to a number of small problems, such as interferences between the door and the frame, hardware that needs readjusting, a strike plate that is out of alignment, etc. After all these improvements have been made, the closer can be fine tuned and the door should close smoothly and securely. We hope that this work will be completed in October.

## North-West Exterior Patio

The repair of the exterior patio in front of the North door of the Clinton Avenue entrance was completed on September 29. Because many tiles were cracked and could not be replaced, they were all removed and replaced to optimize the aesthetics. The original central cross was left untouched. The few old tiles that were neither cracked nor broken have been saved and will be stored in the old coal bin. They may be needed at some later time for other repairs.

## Fire Extinguishers

On Thursday September 29, all our fire extinguishers were checked by a technician from Rochester Fire Equipment Co. Inc. There are about 15 in the building. Many were in good shape; several had to be recharged; some were totally obsolete and had to be replaced. A few more were just sitting around without any specific place to go; for these, new brackets were mounted so that they could be hung at proper locations.

## Capital Improvements

In anticipation of upcoming capital improvements of the building, we have hired an architect from Bero Architecture to help us plan and get estimates for various repairs and improvements. The current assumption is that we would start with a renovation of the sanctuary that would include the refinishing of the floor and of the pews, a slight beefing up of the lighting, improvement of the sound system, replacement of the last steam radiators with hot water types, inspection and repairs of all the windows, and perhaps a few more details. We are just in the scoping phase and we are a long way from deciding anything. We anticipate that for any changes that will affect the aesthetics of the place, e.g. lighting, carpets and cushions, specialists in the field will be asked to present proposals and the congregation will have an opportunity to express its opinion(s). ❖

## Newsletter Deadlines

My normal newsletter deadline is the second Monday of the month. I have been asked on several occasions "why do I need to submit articles for the newsletter so early?" Good question, and here's the answer. Because of my schedule, it takes me up to a week to gather, edit and lay out an issue. Each issue presents unique challenges. It is copied when I am in the Rochester area (either on a Friday or Monday), folded the third Tuesday, and mailed within a day or so of folding. By then, it's around the 20th. Some people report getting their newsletter before the first of the month, some a week or so later, then the cycle starts again. Hope this helps clear up any questions. ❖

*David Damico, ddamico361@gmail.com*

## **First Universalist Church**

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Rochester, NY 14604

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# **First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY**

*Nurture the spirit and serve the community*

First Universalist Church is a member of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, a liberal religion with historical roots from the Jewish and Christian traditions.

**Worship services and Religious Education classes begin at 10:30am Sundays**

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**Minister** | Rev. Martha Munson

**Religious Education Coordinator** | Kim Dehon

**Music Director** | Josiah Armes

**Sexton** | Brandon Fagan

**Nursery Care Provider** | Carol Williams

**Office Administrator** | Kris McCarty White

*Office hours, Tuesday through Friday, 8:30am–2:45pm. Telephone 585.546.2826*

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More information is available on our website: <http://uuroc.org>.