



# Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

December 2017

## Minister

The Rev. Peggy Meeker  
[minister@uuroc.org](mailto:minister@uuroc.org)

## Director of Life Span Faith Development

The Rev. Michelle Yates  
[edu@uuroc.org](mailto:edu@uuroc.org)

## Director of Music

Stacey Yang  
[music@uuroc.org](mailto:music@uuroc.org)

## Office Administrator

Andrea Lewis  
585-546-2826  
[office@uuroc.org](mailto:office@uuroc.org)

## Our Outlook Editor

Andrea Lewis  
[uurocnews@gmail.com](mailto:uurocnews@gmail.com)

## First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14604

Visit us online: [www.uuroc.org](http://www.uuroc.org)

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## Sunday Services / December 2017

### December 3 | *Entering the Dark*

As we enter the darkest part of the year and the season of winter lights and holy days, we will remember and honor the changes and losses that have come into our lives this past year, seeking blessing from the circles of life and death, light and dark.

- The Reverend Peggy Meeker

### December 10 | *Music Sunday*

This service will be a celebration of the music of the season, featuring many of our own musicians in special selections as well as our choir—and a few guests—in a presentation of Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," for choir and harp.

### December 17 | *The Light of Hanukkah*

We will seek inspiration in this eight-day festival of lights that celebrates the successful revolt of a small band of faithful Jewish fighters against a great army and the rededication of their Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

- The Reverend Peggy Meeker

### December 24 Morning Service | *Winter Solstice*

Our morning service on Christmas Eve Day will be an informal gathering in the Clara Barton Lounge to celebrate the solstice with music (led by the Gathered Here Quartet), refreshments, and opportunities for participation for all ages.

- The Reverend Peggy Meeker and Lisa Gwinner

### December 24 Evening Service | *Christmas Eve*

This traditional 7 p.m. Christmas Eve service will feature Christmas carols and readings, including the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight, plus the special pleasure of Christmas cookies.

- The Reverend Peggy Meeker

### December 31 | *New Year's Eve*

Our Worship Associates will be leading a New Year's Eve service, with details forthcoming. Happy New Year!



## Pastor's Perspective

Message from  
The Reverend Peggy Meeker

### The Holiday Season

It's hard to believe the holiday season is here. Wasn't it just a few weeks ago that we were starting out this interim year together? The time has flown, for me. I want to slow things down!

Last month at this time I was on retreat with my colleagues from the St. Lawrence Chapter of the UU Ministers Association. I learned (okay, re-learned) something important there, which seems very applicable now, when it's easy to get so busy with holiday preparations that we lose track of what the holidays mean to us, and forget to simply experience and enjoy them.

Our retreats are held twice a year, with the fall retreat starting on a Monday afternoon and ending after lunch on Wednesday. The first afternoon is for opening worship and check-in, and that evening we begin our program. The programs have covered a wide range of topics – like storytelling and multicultural competence, for example – and they're always interesting and inspiring. Programming fills the second day, with a couple of free hours for rest and relaxation. On the final morning there's a business meeting and closing worship. But at our Spring '17 retreat there was a call for something different: this fall's retreat would be a "retreat" retreat, not filled with programming but offering a few opportunities for spiritual exploration and a lot of free time.

When I arrived on Monday I was looking through the schedule for times I could break away to keep up with my email and coordinate plans for Sunday. Fortunately, the spirit of retreat took over. I spent Tuesday watching the sky and the water (on the shore of tiny Lake Moraine, southeast of Syracuse), participating in a dream group, creating a collage representing my hopes for my ministry with you, sharing in worship, and playing board games!

It was a good reminder for me that you can't do your best work, let alone enjoy life, with your nose stuck to the grindstone. You have to stop, relax, breathe, play, and talk with the people who matter in your life. It was good to share deeply with my colleagues about our work, our challenges, and our hearts. And so, I'm reminding you, as we enter this sacred season: find ways to set your work aside. Let yourself experience the darkness, the many lights, and the continuing promise of new life. Happy Holidays!

## Cozy Night Supper

Submitted by Kathy Russell

The final *COZY NIGHT SUPPER* of this church year will be held Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 – 7:30 pm in the Clara Barton Lounge. Our potluck dinner will be from 5:30 – 6:30 and the program, from 6:30 – 7:30. Our program will be informative and interactive and will be led by our ECOJustice Group.

Please let me know that you will be attending at [krussel6@frontiernet.net](mailto:krussel6@frontiernet.net), or on the church sign up sheet, and what you would like to bring – salad, dessert, main dish, bread, handheld fruit or vegetables. Drinks, silverware and dishes will be provided. Your RSVP will allow us to know how many folks to plan for logistically, and just how many we will have!!

And for those who like to plan ahead, other dates for our dinners are February 02, March 23, and April 20, 2018.



## Service Auction

Submitted by Ann Rhody

The clock is ticking – and Auction time is coming! The big event is scheduled for **Sunday, February 4, 2018** after the church service, but NOW is the time to plan! Think about what you might like to donate to the auction – perhaps dinner, a service, or unique item. Donation forms (and donations on our website, [uuroc.org](http://uuroc.org)) will be available by early January. Contact Paula Marchese ([pmarchese@rochester.rr.com](mailto:pmarchese@rochester.rr.com)) with questions.

# Winter Holidays - Hope

*Submitted by The Rev. Michelle Yates,  
Director of Life Span Faith Development*

This year, in Children's Worship and beyond, we will be exploring our Unitarian Universalist Principles, but for December we will focus on **Hope and the Winter Holidays**.

The major religious holidays this winter include Mawlid an-Nabi (celebrating the birth of the prophet Muhammad), Hanukkah, Winter Solstice/Yule, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. Primary symbols within these holidays are **candles** and **birth**; both symbols of **hope**. The birth of spiritual leaders in times of chaos, candles that stay lit longer than thought possible, small fires that keep us warm while we wait for the sun to be 'reborn,' and candles that remind us of values that guide us to be our best selves and build Beloved Community.

All of these symbols, candles, babies and hope, are gifts of the holiday season, but like many other gifts perhaps they should come with the label "Some assembly required," or "Batteries not included." For these gifts also ask something of us to make them "go": effort, care and love. They must be cared for to keep you and them safe. They must be nurtured to ensure that you will continue to have, use and enjoy them for years to come.

There is lots of information available on how to care for candles and babies, but how do you care for and nurture hope?

How does hope guide your actions during the winter holiday season, and your life throughout the year?

In what ways do you find your hope challenged or nurtured over the holidays?



This month let's explore together the 'care and feeding' of Hope.

Here are some resources to get you started:

- "How to Nurture Hope When Life Starts Getting Really Tough"-  
<http://blog.iqmatrix.com/nurturing-hope>
- google TED talks on hope
- "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." -Desmond Tutu
- "You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own." -Michelle Obama

## Coffee Hour

*Submitted by William Elwell*



Sunday Coffee Hour desperately needs new volunteers. This Sunday will feature only cookies and coffee and juice. Too few people are being asked to do this yeoman service. Perhaps that is enough to keep people enjoying each other's company.

The volunteers, who are reimbursed for their expenses, usually provide a variety of cookies, bagels, veggies, crackers and cheese and perhaps a cake. The coffee is made by the sexton and keeping the coffee refilled is required as is clean-up.

So, if you like Coffee Hour on Sunday, please consider serving at least one Sunday a month.

Contact Bill Elwell for complete instructions.



# News from the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC)

*Submitted by Chris DeGolyer*



MSC working on the Congregational Record (photo by Moritz Wagner)

The MSC was delighted to see so many members and friends at the October 30<sup>th</sup> Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop with Keith Kron. Keith is the director of the UUA Transitions office and the person who will be talking to ministers in search about our church. Your willingness to come out on a rainy night demonstrated what an engaged and thoughtful congregation this is and warmed the hearts of your search team! The workshop sparked discussion about the issues that categories such as race, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ often raise for congregations when choosing a minister.

In November we finished our work on the Congregational Record, a 25-page document that gives ministers in search a comprehensive picture of our church. Jeff Donahue, our UUA Transitions line website. In December, interested ministers will read this document

(we hope) and apply for the settled minister position at First Universalist. We are now building the search website that gives a more personal view of the congregation. Many people have contributed information for both of the projects, and we are very grateful.

On Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, from 12-12:30 pm in the sanctuary, we will report on our progress including results of October's congregational survey. Please remember that we can't share any information about the ministers who apply, even their numbers or characteristics, but we can tell you what we have been doing and plan to do. We hope you can join us!

# Communications Committee Report to the Leadership Assembly

*Submitted by Lisa Gwinner*

At the Leadership Assembly, the Communications Committee reviewed its history and job description as created and approved by the Board of Trustees. The activities of the committee, including revamping "This Week at First Universalist" (weekly email) and web site over the past three years, were reviewed as well. Currently our focus is on creating a unified appearance in all our church communications to the greater community by using a specific logo and font, and making sure the website and contact information are included.

Participants were also told that approved photos of church activities are available for use in pamphlets and activity notices. We encourage contacting us about these approved photos because photos for public use require permission from those pictured and illustrations found on the internet may not be in the public domain or may be licensed. As a church, it's important to remember that we need to stay within legal and ethical boundaries in our communications.

Communications Committee has had lightweight, but durable, signs made, which say "First Universalist Church Affirms Justice For All," that may be taken to public protests and rallies. They may be signed out by church members attending any activities that are supported by the church.

The Board of Trustees recently approved a policy that has guidelines for determining the kinds of activities that the church officially supports, essentially any activity relating to our FIAC efforts, including Social Justice Circles, and others that are consistent with our Purposes and Principles.

A sign-up sheet and copy of the policy are attached to the box where the signs are kept to the left of the copier in the Volunteer Office.

Following the Clara Barton Lounge renovations, we discovered that the acoustic panels placed where the bulletin boards used to be, on the north wall, were not strong enough to be used as replacement bulletin boards, as we'd expected. Communications Committee has been working on bulletin board alternatives, as we understand just how important these are to church communications. Standup frames that fit 8 1/2" x 11" paper have been purchased and may be placed on tables during coffee hour to publicize specific activities. They may be found on top of the storage cabinet in the Volunteer Office. In the meantime, the hallway bulletin board is available for use by the Search Committee, Religious Education and the Social Justice Circles. Additional space is being researched as well as the use of portable bulletin boards.

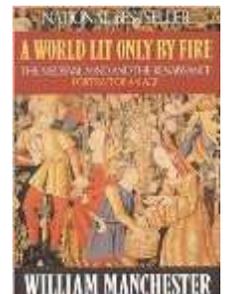
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## Book Group

*Submitted by Sarah Singal and Shirl Bond*

There is no book group Dec 31<sup>st</sup>.

January's selection is "A World Lit By Fire" by William Manchester.



February offers us "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Soshin Hamid. More information forthcoming. Just wanted everyone to have the book titles ahead of the New Year. By the way, "Happiest Holidays to everyone!"

Shirley Bond ([bondshirl1@gmail.com](mailto:bondshirl1@gmail.com))  
Sarah Singal ([ssingal@rochester.rr.com](mailto:ssingal@rochester.rr.com))

# Roc/ACTS News

*Submitted by Shirley Bond, Roc/ACTS Board Representative*

Roc/ACTS ANNUAL PUBLIC ACTION MEETING November 2<sup>nd</sup> was a huge success thanks to all the faith organizations that attended.

The meeting was held at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. City Council candidates and other guest speakers were present. Roc/ACTS pinpointed certain areas that are important to the citizens of Rochester. The three major areas of concern worked on this past year were:

- Police Accountability
- Childcare monetary assistance for parents
- Wage Equality for Healthcare Workers

I must say that the UU's were very well represented and I want to thank everyone who attended, thought about attending, and generally gave their support.

It was a lot of hard work but over 400 people came out on a cold dark fall night. The FIAC team was represented by Becky Elwell.

Excerpts from "THE LOW ROAD," By Marge Piercy

One person can have faith, but it can be lonely.  
Three people are a delegation, a community, a wedge.  
With six you can rent a whole house,  
eat pie for dinner, hold a fundraiser.  
A dozen makes a demonstration.  
A hundred can fill a hall,  
make a worship service  
and have their own newsletter.  
It goes on, one at a time;  
it starts when you care to act.  
It starts when you do it  
again after they said it couldn't be done.  
It starts when you say "we"  
and know who you mean; and  
each day you mean one more.

I was especially proud to be a member of The First Universalist Society that November Thursday night. So, thank you all.

# House Committee News

*Submitted by Tom Ruganis*

The annual Fall Clean-up Day took place on Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>. Several projects were completed including repair of window sash cords and hanging of the last sound panel, both in the Clara Barton Lounge. Numerous areas were cleaned and polished as well. Thanks to all who helped-out!

The fire alarm system passed inspection and is now scheduled for an annual inspection as required by the City of Rochester.

Bees were a problem in October. They have been getting inside the third floor of the RE wing. To date three trips by an exterminator have been made to try to remove them. As they are proving difficult to remove cold weather may be the solution. Yellow jackets do not use the same hive year to year and will not be in the same location next year.

Speaking of looking forward to cold weather, a snow plow contract was signed for the coming year. The contract was given to the same company as last year.

Two new doorbell extenders were purchased to allow those in the Chalice Room, RE office and Minister's Office to hear the parking lot doorbell.

Quotes for replacement storm windows for various parts of the building were obtained. These will be reviewed in December.

As always, if you are interested in helping with the planning and maintenance of the building please feel free to contact anyone on the committee. The Committee is currently: Tom Ruganis, Chair ([tom.ruganis@frontier.com](mailto:tom.ruganis@frontier.com)), Sarah Singal, Marcy Klein, Michael Scott, Ed Deller and Shirley Bond. We would love to hear from you!

# Drop-in Discussion Schedule

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday in the Chalice Room on the second floor of our church, **starting at 9:15 a.m. during the regular church year.** Sometimes our discussions are based on certain books or articles, but 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.

**December 3 | Giving to Beggars.** Is it right or wrong to give money to panhandlers? We'll share our thoughts. Phil Ebersole will facilitate.

**December 10 | A Brand New Approach to Community?** Here's a revolutionary idea. After a local tragedy crime struck, Rochester native Peter Lovenheim decided that it was time to get to know his neighbors. His startling decision was to counter living "in a comfortable enclave ... among strangers" by a practice that will amaze you! His seminal book is called *In The Neighborhood: The Search for Community on an American Street*. John Belli will facilitate discussion.

**December 17 | Christmas Past.** Santa Claus, Christmas gifts, Christmas trees and many other familiar customs weren't always a part of Christmas celebrations in the USA and the UK. How did our present-day Christmas originate? What parts of it are meaningful? Phil Ebersole will lead a discussion, drawing on *The Battle for Christmas* by Stephen Nissenbaum.

**December 24.** No drop-in discussion.

**December 31.** No drop-in discussion.

**January 7 | UUs and Social Activism.** Do you have to be a social activist to be a good Unitarian Universalist? That question is asked in an article

In the Winter issue of UU World. We'll look for answers. Phil Ebersole will facilitate.

If you wish to have a topic discussed or, better still, are willing to lead a discussion, speak to Phil Ebersole.

## A Note from Phil Ebersole

This is my 20<sup>th</sup> year of leading the Sunday morning drop-in discussion group. I've decided to give it up after the church year ends in June. My reasons are that I am running low on energy, enthusiasm, and ideas. Also, the church has much richer adult religious education programs and adult programs in general than they did when I started in 1998.

I will be happy to work with anyone who wants to have a Sunday morning program. I will prepare a job description of the drop-in discussion leader for the church records, and I also will be happy to send it to anyone who is interested or curious. I also will be happy to work with anyone who wants to start a Sunday morning program, provided I don't have to take responsibility.

My recommendation would be that, instead of re-starting the drop-in discussion, the church adult RE authorities think about what use should be made of the Sunday morning hour before the church service. What I have done reflects my personal interests, abilities and limitations; others may have different and better idea. Also, the new minister may have ideas.



# First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue  
Rochester, New York 14604

## First Universalist Church of Rochester, New York

*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 service begins at 10:30 am Sundays

**Minister** | The Rev. Peggy Meeker

**Director of Life Span Faith Development** | The Rev. Michelle Yates

**Music Director** | Stacey Yang

**Sexton** | Brandon Fagan

**Nursery Care Providers** | Carol Williams & Sundae Hodge

**Office Administrator** | Andrea Lewis

**Office hours**, Tuesday – Friday, 9:00 am – 3:45 pm.

Closed Mondays. **Telephone** 585.546.2826

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Editor, *This Week at First Universalist* (digital) and monthly newsletter *Our Outlook*: Andrea Lewis

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

