



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

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Sunday Services | November 2018

November 4, 10:30 am | *The Walls We Build...* Let's explore together the barriers we have built in our lives in the name of comfort, self-protection, and deep hurt. We will join in literally building a wall together in the sanctuary to symbolize the walls we have built in our hearts.
—Rev. Lane Campbell

November 11, 10:30 am | *...The Walls We Tear Down.* Following last Sunday, we will join in exploring what it might take to tear some of these walls down. In what ways are old coping mechanisms no longer serving us? What do we have to lose by letting them go? We will join in the cathartic, embodied action of tearing down the wall built last week.
—Rev. Lane Campbell

November 18, 10:30 am | *Stone Soup.* An old tale that can speak to any time about newfound travelers in a village where folks are separated from one another and keep to themselves. All come together in the making of stone soup. Community members are encouraged to bring fresh produce and/or bread for this service as we make stone soup and celebrate Bread Sunday with a bread communion.
—Rev. Lane Campbell

November 25, 10:30 am | *Gratitude.* A service in multiple voices exploring the theme of Gratitude on Thanksgiving weekend. Through story, song, and poetry, we will take a look at what it truly means to be grateful at this time and throughout our lives.
—Worship Associates





Rev. Lane Campbell

Finding Joy and Gratitude in the Midst of Challenges

My wallet was lost and/or stolen this past week. I must honestly say I was furious!! It had already been a busy week. My phone had been broken for the first half of the week while I was out of town at a program. I got it fixed on Thursday and that evening my wallet was gone. I just got into the car and let out a huge yell of sadness - rage - grief. This loss put me in touch with so many emotions surrounding our difficult political climate, our current challenges as women, the continued outrage I experience when seeing that people of color, black folks, are not valued in our country. This loss got right to the heart of so much that I had been experiencing.

I reached out to folks around me to help me find the wallet. People were helpful. They were willing to drop what they were doing to turn on flashlights, looking above and below to help me track this thing down. I was so overcome with the emotions, I forgot to be appreciative with them. Later, messages of gratitude were sent. I was so touched by all the help and support I received.

It is amazing how we can show up for one another isn't it?

I took time once I got home to cancel the debit card and the folks over the phone were so helpful. I went out to a state park for a planned visit to enjoy some of the beauty of the natural world. I came home to a wedding rehearsal for a dear couple, where so many of their friends and family members were present to support and love them.

What I learned is that sometimes we just need to get out of ourselves for a moment when we are truly struggling. There have been times in my life, times past, when I would have allowed this loss or theft of a wallet to ruin my entire day. I would have spent time anxiously recounting every move, going over and over what had happened. Sometimes, we need to make the extra effort to get in touch with a little joy and a little gratitude as we are faced with difficulties. It helps us to remember that there is more than this moment. It reminds us that we have had difficult experiences and have lived through them before.

Following the wedding rehearsal on Friday, I received a call that the wallet had been returned. Such relief just filled my body and my mind. How often does something like that happen?! And I know there are times when stories like these do not have a happy ending. I know there are times when the wallet remains lost or stolen and we never see it again and we have to live in and deal with the consequences. In those moments too-finding the joy and the gratitude in the people and the circumstances that surround us becomes so much more important.

As we begin this season of gratitude, my wish for you is to find it in the present moment-in this day and time right now. Take a pause and recognize all you are grateful for. It is well worth the time.

In Faith and Love,
Rev. Lane

Ministerial Installation Save The Date

On Sunday, November 18 at 4:00 pm you are invited to witness and celebrate the formal installation of Rev. Lane Campbell at the First Universalist Church of Rochester. A reception and fellowship will follow in the Clara Barton Lounge. The party will be catered, and you can participate in this holy and joyous event as an usher, greeter, decorator, or all-round-helper. If you have questions, please contact Paula Marchese, Katherine Flynn or Kitty Forbush.

Walking Together



*Minister of Life Span Faith Development
Rev. Michelle Yates*

This month our Adult Faith Development offering, *Spirit in Practice*, will consider *Personal Spiritual Practices*. These are practices done alone such as meditation, dream work, journaling, prayer, and so on. They're what most people think of when they hear the words "spiritual practice."

I remember hearing a story of a priest who was known for praying an hour every day. Someone asked him, "What if you are really busy that day?" He replied, "On those days I pray for two hours."

St. Francis de Sales remarked that, "Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy—then we need an hour."

Putting aside an hour or two for spiritual practice on an already busy day can feel impossible, or even foolish. But, when you consider that the purpose of prayer as a spiritual practice is to quiet the chatter and remove the distractions that keep us unable to hear the "still small voice within," it starts to make more sense. If a spiritual practice can help me to feel grounded and clear—to process and release anxieties, worries, and fears—then it would open up more time in my day. If I felt more clear and less distracted a busy day would feel less frantic and I could get more done in the time I have.

These words remind me that the busier I am, the more I need spiritual practices. As someone with young children, it can be so hard to know what to do and when I can do it. I steal moments at stop lights and after everyone goes to sleep. Like a commitment to an exercise routine, it's the promise of feeling better afterward that motivates me to overcome the inertia of the moment.

If personal spiritual practice is something new to you, I encourage you to try something for even 5 minutes and see how you feel. Not sure what to try? Come to our session Wednesday, November 21 from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm in the Clara Barton Lounge. Reach out to me, Rev. Lane, or someone in the congregation who does a practice that interests you. The church library and bookstore have lots of resources, too.

Don't just do something; sit there, ... and do your *Spiritual Practice*.

Spirit in Practice A New Faith Development Program

*Submitted by Rev. Michelle Yates
Minister of Lifespan Faith Development*

The *Spirit in Practice* workshops were created to help Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines, or practices, of the spirit—practices that help them connect with the sacred ground of their being, however they understand it.

Workshops will take place on the third Wednesday of each month (second Wednesday in April 2019) from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm in the Clara Barton Lounge. Come to each session or when you can.

In our session on Wednesday, November 21, we will consider *Personal Spiritual Practices* like prayer, meditation, and more. You will have an opportunity to learn a UU prayer bead practice and make your own prayer beads. Please email our facilitator Rev. Michelle Yates at edu@uuroc.org if you plan to attend or have questions.



Shared Pulpit Course with Rev. Lane



Are you interested in learning how to preach a sermon? Delivering a sermon is an artform that nourishes both the person delivering as well as the people present to listen and witness. The Shared Pulpit is a series of workshops for lay-people to learn about how to deliver a sermon in a Unitarian Universalist context. The book, *The Shared Pulpit* by Erika Hewitt is required of each participant and can be purchased online or in the First Universalist Library on Sunday. Class will meet on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month at from 1:00 pm until 3:30 pm, starting December 1 and continuing through March 16, 2019. To sign up, email Rev. Lane Campbell at minister@uuroc.org.

Guest At Your Table Is Back ...

Submitted by Rev. Michelle Yates

Donation boxes for this program, supporting the efforts of the UU Service Committee, will be available in the Clara Barton Lounge for the holiday season. They will be collected in January 2019.



Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

uus.org

RAIHN Works!



*Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network
Keeping families together.
Getting families home for good.*

Submitted by Marti Eggers

Suzie's Story

A few weeks ago, Kim Hunt-Uzelac wrote the following account to the RAIHN coordinators, and we'd like to share it with you.

“Lyanette and I were cleaning two guest rooms today after an incredibly busy week of families moving into housing and Juanita and her children moving into the bridge apartment. Imagine our surprise and joy when we received a delivery of an Edible Arrangement from a graduate mom and her children to thank us for everything we have done for them!! ‘Suzie’ was in the program with her children from the end of December 2017 to mid-March 2018. (She was the first family in the bridge apartment while waiting for her Section 8 inspection). She is now working and going to school to earn her LPN. We are so proud of her. She is a wonderful example of how RAIHN touches lives! Thank you, Suzie - you made our day, week, and year!”

RAIHN Works!



Project Team Update

Submitted by Dolores Da Lomba

Survey. Thanks to all of you who participated in the online and hard copy surveys. We expect that the results will be of invaluable assistance to the Team in planning events for the rest of the church year. We also thank Dave Van Arsdale (online survey) and Richard Reed (hard copy) for their hard work in this effort. The results are not yet tabulated, but we will share them with you in our next article.

Suggestions. We still welcome suggestions. The Project Team is working toward developing ideas by which the entire congregation can work with a local community group toward the goal of eradicating racism. Ideas about guest speakers, activities, and discussions are welcomed as well as suggestions for our all-church project.

The very first suggestion we received addressed the terrible rate of infant mortality of black babies in Rochester. One way to counter that, it was suggested, was to make it easier for mothers to get babies to medical appointments. Providing transportation was one of the things we could do to help. This is a topic that will be looked at and explored more fully when we consider access to health care as one of the many facets of racism.

Another suggestion was to invite representatives from the group, *Teen Empowerment*, to speak to us. It would give us an opportunity to hear ideas and concerns of young people of our community. We are following up on that suggestion, but a date has not yet been determined.

Another suggestion, more a caution, was not to reinvent the wheel. That would be counter to our charge as our goal is to support the efforts of an existing community organization

that is working on some aspect of deterring racism. And there's the rub. Our church community consists of people from a wide range of locations, suburbs as well as the city.

One's perception of how to effectively fight racism, or even one's definition of what racism is depends, in large part, on one's own experiences. We all see through a glass, darkly. What the Team hopes to do, during this year, is "un-fog" the glass so that we can remove obstacles that may obscure our vision when we think of how we might best combat racism and its effects.

Actions. Our congregation is blessed with kind, loving people with good intentions, but with varying and diverse ideas of how best to serve the community. We will be presenting the congregation with many opportunities to discuss its thoughts about specific issues. To start, we are looking forward to a discussion of the pros and cons of a *Black Lives Matter* banner for the church which will be facilitated by Rev. Lane Campbell in the Sanctuary after the service on November 11. All are welcome. Hope to see you there!

RAIHN

Spare Change Drive!

Submitted by Paula Marchese



Empty all your pockets, your cup holders, and drawers and bring your spare change to church to be collected before service on Sunday, November 4 and November 11. Last year's collection helped make the holidays bright for a settled RAIHN family of five.

Through your generosity toys, clothing, and a gift card, as well as a book for each child were purchased, wrapped and delivered to the Day Center. Let's keep the tradition going. Yes, let's!



Social Justice Plate

Submitted by Shirley Bond

Enough is Enough

Our plate offering for the month of November will be for the organization *Enough is Enough*. This organization was formed in 2013 after the brutal beating of Benny T. Warr. Since that time, *Enough is Enough* has worked tirelessly to revise the Police Accountability Board (PAB), give court support to victims and listen to their stories. They have drafted a new PAB recommendation and presented it to the City Council.

They are an activist collective. For example they have been showing up every third Tuesday of the month at City Hall. Members of our church have been attending to voice their concerns. Their organization gets very little outside funding, and donations are always welcome. With that being said, please be as generous as you see fit this holiday season and help this volunteer organization fight the good fight.

Our chosen organization for October 21 was Flower City Pickers in which your kindness netted a generous \$379.00! Thanks so much.

Finance News and Notes

- **Save the Date!** The annual Service Auction is scheduled for Sunday, February 3, 2019 after the service. This event is fun for all—and it's user-friendly, even for auction novices. Watch for more information coming later this Fall!
- The annual Treasurer's Report is now available. This report summarizes the church's finances for the fiscal year which ended on June 30, 2018. Many thanks to our Treasurer, Dick Shroyer, for preparing the report, and to all who help to sustain the church financially.
- Want to get involved? The Finance Committee currently has volunteer opportunities, large and small. Whether it's helping at the auction or learning how to fax in a payroll report, we've got a spot for you! Please contact Finance Chair Ann Rhody, [click here](#) for more information.
- Fun with Funds. As you may have heard, the Finance Committee is working with other committees and the Board to restructure, rename, and streamline some of our funds. One of the first tasks is to be clear on categories of funds. Do you know what is meant by a "Special Purpose" fund? A restricted fund? A Discretionary Fund?
- The Finance Committee is working to come to some common understandings about funds and their purposes. We'll be updating and sharing information about this as we go through the year.

If you have questions about a particular fund or the Finance Committee's plans, please contact Finance Chair Ann Rhody, [click here](#) or Treasurer Dick Shroyer, [click here](#).



Submitted by Shelley Adams

Understanding Biochar

Pre-Columbian civilizations in the Amazon rain forests used a biochar method for twenty five centuries to enrich acidic soils. Using a bury and burn method, ancient Amazonians disposed of all their organic wastes. Without exposure to air, waste was baked, producing terra preta, or black earth. One application of this charcoal-like soil supplement maintained soil fertility for decades (up to 500 years in some studies).

Although this method of soil supporting charcoal dates back twenty-five hundred years, new research on this old practice shows it to be commercially viable and environmentally sustainable for modern agronomists. Biomass residues such as peanut shells, rice straw, wood scraps or any organic waste material left to naturally decompose, emit carbon dioxide and methane into our atmosphere.

Using a method called pyrolysis, an anaerobic or oxygen free slow burn of waste crops and wood, we can instead sequester the carbon. When this is done, what remains is a charcoal-like, extremely fertile soil amendment, with an abundance of tiny pores and a negative electrical charge that pulls in calcium and potassium into the pores to be very slowly released into the soil. This product is called Biochar. It can be used in farming to reduce soil acidity and increases crop yields. It can be used alone or to amplify the action of conventional fertilizers, and to sequester billions of tons of CO₂. It may be made in large industrial systems or small make-shift kilns.

At an environmental event in the Rochester area, I talked to a farmer working on using a tanker body as a kiln and saw the results of farm crops using biochar and a small stainless-steel tank. The crops were extremely large and healthy for how early in the season it was, a good recommendation.



Some people are concerned about proper regulation of this method. Some concerns are what wastes may be turned into biochar, the possible cutting down of forests, which would damage soils and cause more problems. This method has to be done sustainably. Some of our ancient societies certainly had great knowledge on how to live lightly and productively on our earth.



Living Our Values, Making A Difference

Painting Our Church August 2018

We Worked Together



Karen Dau



Ed Deller



Karen Ruganis

Some Upcoming Events At First Universalist



November 3, 2018 - Fall Clean Up Day

November 18, 2018 - Installation Service

November 22, 2018 - Thanksgiving

December 9, 2018 - Music Sunday

December 25, 2018 - Christmas Day

January 1, 2019 - New Year

January 20 - 27, 2019 - RAIHN Week

February 3, 2019 - Service Auction

March 2, 2019 - Rochester Model Railroad Club Open House

March 10, 2019 - Chili Cook Off
Day Light Savings Time

March 31, 2019 - Stewardship Sunday

April 14, 2019 - Palm Sunday

April 14 - 21, 2019 - RAIHN Week

April 21, 2019 - Easter Sunday

April 26, 2019 - Passover Seder

May 3 - 4, 2019 - Seaway Gathering

May 12, 2019 - Mother's Day

June 2, 2019 - Annual Meeting

June 16, 2019 - Annual Church Picnic



Eastman at Washington Square Lunchtime Concerts Are Back!

Thursday Lunchtime Concerts Located at the First Universalist Church. Each concert begins at 12:15 pm and ends at approximately 12:45 pm. Admission is free. Bring your brown bag lunch and enjoy.

November 1: *String Serenade*. Enjoy Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's String Quartet No. 17 in B-flat major, K. 458, performed by violinists Eri Noda-Agostini and Jonathan Hwang, violist Joshua Lohner, and cellist Svetlana Garitselov.

November 8: *Spain 101: Guitar*. Come and experience 100 years of Spanish music for classical guitar in 30 minutes! Petar Kodzas will be performing music of Tarrega, Torroba, Albeniz and Rodrigo.

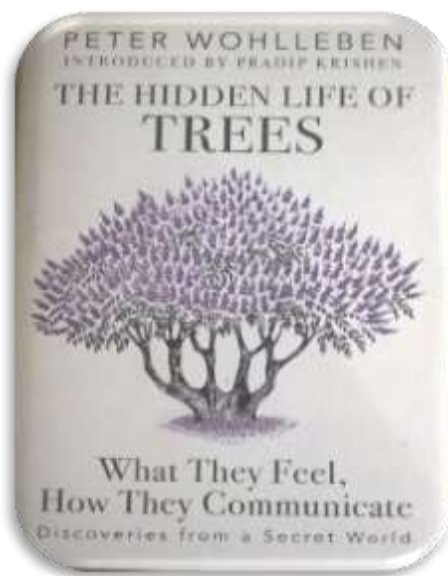
November 15: *Baroque Trumpet*. Revel in the glorious sound of Baroque trumpets resounding in the resplendent acoustics of First Universalist Church! This concert is presented in conjunction with the Rochester Early Music Festival.

November 22: No Concert. Happy Thanksgiving

November 29: Hope-Jones Organ Showcase Rejoice with the sound of First Universalist Church's organ as Eastman School of Music student Isaac Drewes showcases this important and beautiful instrument.

Book Group

Submitted by Shirley Bond



The selection for the November Book Group is *The Hidden Life of Trees – What They Feel, How They Communicate*, by Peter Wohlleben.

Taken from the inside cover: “The author makes the case that yes, the forest is a social network...he shares his deep love of woods and forests, explaining the amazing processes of life, death and regeneration he has observed.”

Chapter titles include Friendships, The Language of Trees, and Social Security. Read some, all, or none and join us for discussion upstairs in the Chalice Room at 12:15 pm on Sunday, November 25.

For those of you who want to get a head start for December's book group the selection will be: *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande.



RocACTS

Submitted by Shirley Bond

What a busy month October was! Please allow me to recap some of the work that was accomplished. Several UUs attended the City Council meeting Thursday, October 23 in support of our efforts to get a new Police Accountability Board (PAB) Ordinance passed. This meeting was well planned by Roc/ACTS and the organization *Enough is Enough*. It was a packed house and our continued efforts to get an independent agency of city government with subpoena power is showing signs of success.

On October 23 a Family Court Judge Candidates Forum was held at East High School supported by Roc/ACTS and attended by members of First Universalist to show their support. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was the main sponsor.

The Roc/ACTS Education Task Force has completed their surveys and are in the process of compiling the information. This survey was engineered to ask the PARENTS of the students: "What do THEY want for their children?"

The Roc/ACTS Poverty and Jobs Task Force is concentrating on several issues! Solitary confinement of prisoners was a huge part of their education in October. For example, people in isolated confinement spend 24 hours a day locked in a cell the size of an elevator. Solitary confinement has never been shown to decrease prison violence.

The organization *Enough is Enough* has been a committed supporter of Roc/ACTS. We work together to share information. They meet every Tuesday night at the Flying Squirrel Community Center in Cobbs Hill at 7:00 pm.

First Universalist is also a member of the PAB Alliance. This is a group of about 30 faith groups who have pledged to work on the PAB and get it done! Shirley Bond is the representative from First Universalist.

Moving forward Roc/ACTS is hoping to hire a recruiter, sign up for a grant writing seminar, work on the Spring 2019 Fund-raiser, continue attending City Council meetings, and attend the Criminal Justice Task Force action event being held in the Community Room at the Carriage Factory Apartments, 33 Litchfield Street from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm on November 12, to help fight against solitary confinement.

Please kindly remember we are all members of Roc/ACTS and are welcome to any and all events.

There are many more tasks Roc/ACTS and *Enough is Enough* are working on. If you have a special passion or want to get involved and need further information or to just get questions answered please contact Shirley Bond or Robert Remley. We are in the directory.

Drop-in Discussion

Submitted by Beth Ares



NOVEMBER 2018

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday morning in the Chalice Room on the second floor of our church, starting at 9:15 am 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.

November 4: *Welcoming the Stranger*. How do we welcome folks as a congregation and as individuals? As Rochester's downtown is ever-evolving and our neighbors are changing, come participate in a conversation about welcome. Rev. Lane Campbell will talk with us about welcoming homeless people, welcoming younger folks, safety, and the boundaries/realities of welcome.

November 11: *God? Homo Deus* is a history of the future where humans become gods. Homo Erectus, Homo Sapiens, Homo Deus. We're getting there at a rapid pace. We will discuss why evolution is leading us to this future. Bill Elwell will be the presenter.

November 18: *Time and Memory*. With the passing of time in our life, it is common for us to recall fondly things and events that we hold dear to our hearts: Family, acquaintances, homes, possessions, experiences, etc. Some intentionally collect things that they find appealing, often from a generation or two preceding their birth. Why are these memories so dear? What motivates us to collect things from a bygone era? Sharing will be encouraged. David Damico will facilitate this discussion.

November 25: *Open Topic*. What's on your mind? We are never wanting for an enriching discussion as our initially scattered thoughts evolve into a topic of interest to all present.

YOUR TURN! Have you read or written a book or article, attended or presented a workshop or talk or have a topic that you would like to share with us? Please contact any of our Drop-In Discussion team members: Shelley Adams, John Belli, David Damico, Kate Fleury, Bob Remley, or Beth Ares, coordinator.

Church Library and Bookstore

Submitted by Phil Ebersole



New Books Of UU Interest

The First Universalist Church library has three new books of UU interest for buying and borrowing during MOCHA. They are:

- *Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersection of Race, Class and the Environment* by Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Jennifer Nordstrom (261.8). Fourteen activist ministers apply a keen intersectional analysis to the environmental crisis, revealing ways in which systems of oppression intersect with and contribute to environmental destruction. This is the recommended UU Common Read for 2018-2019.
- *Faithful Practices: Everyday Ways to Feed Your Spirit* edited by Erik Walker Wikstrom (204.4). An eclectic mix of contributors share their reflections about spiritual practices in their everyday lives and provide models for those seeking a practice of their own.
- *Revisiting the Empowerment Controversy: Black Power and Unitarian Universalism* by Mark Morrison-Reed (289.1). The pre-eminent scholar of black Unitarian Universalist history presents the long-awaited chronicle and analysis of the events of the Empowerment controversy.

UU books for sale at half-price are found on the free-standing shelves facing the wall. Books in the lending library are arranged along the wall shelves in order of Dewey decimal number (given here in parentheses).

House Committee News

Submitted by Tom Ruganis

Thanks to all who continue to help in the maintenance and operation of our beautiful space. Here are some noteworthy items since our last report:

- The storm windows for the parking lot side of the volunteer office have been painted and installed. Based on the success and enhanced appearance of the interior windows, the committee will look at expanding this approach to other storm windows.
- Quotes for the replacement of the copper roofing that was stolen have been received. The work will be scheduled to be completed as soon as possible.
- Numerous outdoor light bulbs have been replaced. New fixtures are being considered to get more reliable lighting.
- As winter will soon be here the church has purchased environmentally friendly salt in bulk. The savings is over 75 per-cent. We now have two and a half years supply for less than what we spent last year alone. We also have arranged for a new snow plow service. We have been assured they will keep our handicap spaces clearer.
- **Mice:** last month it was ants. This month it is mice. PLEASE do not leave food accessible to minimize the activity.
- **Fall Clean Up Day:** Please mark Saturday, November 3 from 9:00 am until noon, on your calendar to help with the cleaning and winter preparation of the church. There are tasks for any level of ability.

If you are interested in joining our committee, or just want to help with certain projects, please let us know.

In service, Tom Ruganis and Ed Deller (co-chairs).



Cozy Night Supper

Submitted by Kathy Russell

A Cozy Night Supper will be held Friday, November 23 (the day after Thanksgiving) from 5:30 pm until 7:30 pm in the Clara Barton Lounge. Our potluck dinner will be from 5:30 pm until 6:30 pm, the program from 6:30 pm until 7:30 pm, will focus on gratitude and the church-selected theme of racial justice.

Where are we with *White Fragility*, the topic, the book, our (dis)comfort with discussing racism, and how is that related to our sense of and expressions of gratitude for all of the good in our lives? Come share in the abundance around us and expand your thinking (if not your waistline). This will be facilitated by FIAC (Faith in Action Council).

Please let us know that you will be attending. This is potluck and perhaps a good opportunity to *repurpose* your Thanksgiving abundance. It is appreciated if you list the ingredients in your dish. Drinks, silverware and dishes will be provided. Childcare is available if requested one week in advance. Your RSVP will allow us to know how many folks to plan for. Sign-up sheets are posted on the hall bulletin board and in the Clara Barton Lounge or you can RSVP to Kathy Russell at the church office, office@uuroc.org.

For those who like to plan ahead, here are the other Cozy Night Suppers planned for this church year.

December 2018	February 2019	March 2019	April 2019
28	1	8	12

UU Book Note

FAITHFUL PRACTICES: Everyday Ways to Feed Your Spirit edited by Erik Walker Wikstrom (2018)

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Spirituality is something I've mostly felt is outside my frame of reference. I am temperamentally less open to spiritual experience than the average person, as well as being less sensitive to art, music and the beauty of nature. But the fact that I'm spiritually tone-deaf, relatively speaking, does not diminish its reality and importance.

Many years ago, I took part in an adult religious education program on spirituality at First Universalist Church, and this is what I came up with as a definition of spirituality –

Spirituality is the belief that there is an important part of reality that can't be known through observation, gathering facts, thinking, discussion or conducting experiments. Instead this reality is known through having a certain type of peak experience, which brings joy, strength and a feeling of love. The likelihood of such an experience is increased through great art and music, through contact with the natural world, through prayer and meditation, and through the emotion of love, contact with loving people and the performance of loving actions.

I'm enrolled in another adult RE program on spirituality, this one conducted during the current church year by the Rev. Michelle Yates on the third Wednesdays of each month (except in April 2019, when it will be on the second Wednesday).

Our guide is the Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom's *Faithful Practices*. It is a compilation of essays by Unitarian Universalists about their varied approaches to the world of the spirit. Each month we'll touch on a different spiritual practice mentioned in the book.

Being UUs, the contributors to this book embrace highly diverse practices. A retired UU minister has committed himself to a Soto Zen practice, building on meditation practices he's followed since college days and put himself under the direction of a Zen master. Another minister goes on regular religious retreats to Villa Maria, a Catholic community, under the direction of a Sister Barbara. A third has gone with her partner on the grueling 500-mile Camino de Santiago pilgrimage across northern Spain.

Some writers find inspiration in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau. There are essays on prayer, ritual, art, contemplation of nature and most other things I think of as spiritual, along with some things that at first reading seem eccentric or even frivolous – blowing bubbles mindfully, participating in roller derbies or fooling around with Batman action figures.

But even the odd ones are used to calm the mind, focus the attention and dissolve tension and anxiety. The lower rungs of a ladder are just as important as the higher rungs.

The common themes among the essays seem to me to be these:

Attentiveness. One thing I've learned from my own dabbling in meditation is how little control I have over my mind and thoughts. To be able to do one thing at a time, for any length of time, is a great achievement. I am rarely free of distracted thinking about the past, the future, what might-have-been and what never was.

Awareness. To be fully aware of what's going on around you is another great achievement. This was the great project of Henry Thoreau—to be fully awake to the wonders of the world he lived in.

Gratitude. It's easy to spend your life thinking up reasons to be unhappy. Stopping to count your blessings puts life in perspective.

Meditation practice is like physical exercise. Within reason, anything you take up will do you good if you stick with it.

Faithful Practices may be bought or borrowed from the church bookstore and library, which is open Sundays during MOCHA.



First Universalist Church

150 Clinton Avenue South
Rochester, New York 14604

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 in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

Worship Service Begins at 10:30 am Sundays

Minister | Rev. Lane Campbell (585) 325-5092

Minister of Life Span Faith Development | The Rev. Michelle Yates

Music Director | Brock Tjosvold

Sexton | Brandon Fagan

Nursery Care Providers | Carol Williams & Sundae Hodge

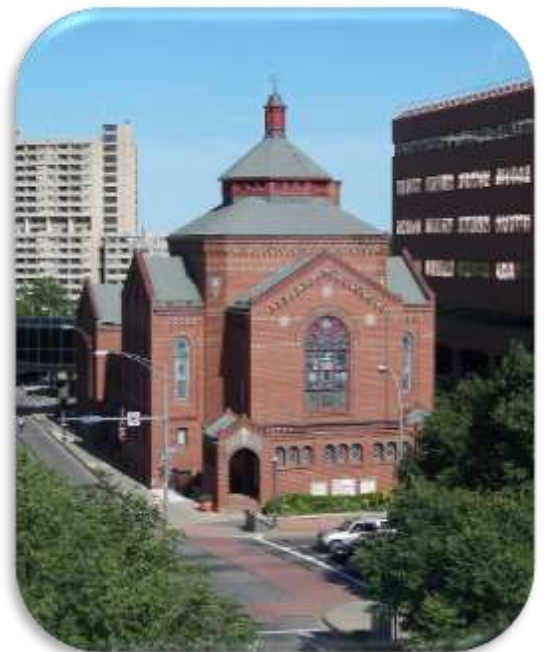
Office Administrator | Andrea Lewis

Office Hours, Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 am - 3:45 pm

Closed Monday. **Telephone** 585-546-2826

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More information is available on our website: <http://uuoc.org>. The usual deadline for all submissions to *Our Outlook* is the 20th of each month.