



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

August 2013

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Our Outlook

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Sunday Summer Services | August 2013

August 4 | *The Elusiveness of Closure*

We all spend so much time reading novels and watching movies, that we've come to expect that our life stories have closure in which the loose ends are tied up. Real life does not work that way.

— Peter House



August 11 | *Benjamin's Choice*

We will explore the wisdom of understanding what we can control, and what we simply have to accept.

— Peter House



August 18 | *Don't Expect Too Much of Reality*

The pursuit of the perfect experience is a sure path to disappointment. There are better alternatives which leave us grateful and satisfied.

— Peter House



August 25 | *Right and Left*

The so-called "religious right" is not a monolith, but has multiple strands. Let's make common cause with our allies, and perhaps stretch ourselves in the process.

— Rev. Martha Munson



Summer worship services and religious education classes begin at 10:00 am Sundays.



Take a News Holiday

— Peter House, *Summer Minister*

As many of you know, I lost my mother suddenly in early June. I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of First Universalist for the tremendous amount of love, and support I received, and to share with you all an insight that I have had as a result of this personal sorrow.

Prior to my mother's death, I had become a news junkie. In spite of the fact I do not have television at home, I was "plugged in" to the news cycle every day via NPR and the internet. I prided myself on being able to identify the NPR anchors and reporters, by voice alone, before they identified themselves. I knew every Supreme Court Ruling which came out, I knew the outcome every special congressional election which was held anywhere in the country, and I knew which bills were being voted on in the New York State Legislature in any given week. Unfortunately, even from the relatively "high brow" sources I chose, I also knew every move that George Zimmerman made, every new product that Apple released (that's not even news), and I knew vaguely that there was a family named Kardashian who seemed to be famous for something.

On my first regular school day after my mother's death, I tuned into NPR for my long commute as I always did, and discovered, after five minutes or so, that I couldn't listen to it. I was in a contemplative and reflective mood. I couldn't focus on the details of the news, and I wanted to be soothed, not informed. So, I switched to the classical music station instead. It had the desired effect. I was soothed and the music facilitated the quiet reflection I was looking for during my drive time.

Something else happened, however, that I had not expected. I was much more present on my drive. I actually noticed where I was. I appreciated the beauty of the meadows I was passing. I didn't feel as impatient to get where I was going as I had before.

I also began to notice that my mood was better, and I spent less time worrying about the state of the economy, the environment, and the political situation around the globe. I have a sense of peace that I haven't had since the early 90's, before we were wired to the entire world twenty-four hours a day.

August is a good month for reflection and rest. I highly recommend taking a "news holiday" until Labor Day. Try it for one month, and see if it gives you the sense of peace it has brought to my life. ❖



Ministerial Search Committee Update

The Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) was launched at a retreat in June led by St. Lawrence District Settlement Representative Rev. Priscilla Richter. We built ourselves as a team, as well as receiving our marching orders.

Our roles are these:

- Connie Valk — Chair from now until January and hospitality for pre-candidates and final candidate
- Lisa Gwinner — Chair from January to May and packet editor/distributor
- John Wellin — "Neutral pulpit" scheduler for ministerial pre-candidates and reference checker
- Chris DeGolyer — Secretary
- Tom Ruganis — Treasurer
- Sarah Singal — Congregational record processor
- Loretta Young and Dolores DaLomba — Survey coordinators

If you would like to know what these roles involve, ask us. The MSC has also placed copies of the MSC Handbooks in our church library, if you want to know the fine details. The UUA, from its long experience with church transitions, has developed guidelines to keep the search process fair for both churches and ministers. The guidelines also make MSC's job easier.

In July we have been working on the MSC's covenant, which describes the committee's purpose and how we plan to accomplish it. Although confidentiality rules require that we not reveal any names of possible candidates, we pledge to keep you fully informed about our progress during the year. One of our tallest tasks is to represent you, the congregation, to potential candidates in the best way possible. We plan to survey the whole congregation in September, as well as hold cottage meetings, so that you can tell us how you see the congregation's strengths and challenges and also what characteristics you want to see in our next minister. ❖





General Assembly Recap

— Michael Scott

The 2013 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association was held June 19–23 in Louisville, Kentucky. There were 3,426 registered attendees, including 1,732 on-site and 112 off-site delegates representing 611 congregations—roughly 60% of the 1,000+ congregations in the UUA. Our own Loretta Young was one of the off-site delegates.

As in past years, the program included innumerable worship services, workshops, lectures, performances, and social events. Eboo Patel, founder and Executive Director of Interfaith Youth Core, delivered an impassioned keynote address on interfaith activism. Sunday worship was led by the Rev. William Schulz, former President of the UUA, former Executive Director of Amnesty International–USA, and current President and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

A variety of follow-up stories will appear in future columns. Briefly,

- The Commission on Appraisal (our denominational self-study team) released its new report entitled “Who’s in Charge Here,” addressing “the complex relationship between ministry and authority.”
- Jim Key, of Beaufort, South Carolina, was elected to succeed Gini Courter as Moderator of the UUA. It was an extremely close election: Key outpolled rival Tamara Payne-Alex by only 40 votes.
- The Rev. Peter Morales was re-elected President (he was running unopposed).
- The UUA welcomed one new congregation, in Cookeville, Tennessee.
- Four business resolutions were adopted, including one that makes official the new system of multi-district “Regions” within the UUA.
- Attendees rallied with author and activist Wendell Berry at a mass demonstration to witness for clean energy.
- A Statement of Conscience on “Immigration as a Moral Issue” was overwhelmingly approved in the

wake of three years of study and discussion. (These statements evolve in an overlapping fashion: consideration of Reproductive Justice began last year, and is expected to culminate in a Statement of Conscience in 2015; the topic after that will be selected in 2014, for completion in 2017.)

- Three “Actions of Immediate Witness”—resolutions in response to current events—were also adopted:
 - “Consider Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry.”
 - “Support the Proposed 28th ‘We the People’ Amendment to the Constitution: Corporations Are Not Persons and Money Is Not Speech.”
 - “Condemn the Mass Incarceration, Killing, and Mistreatment of Young Men of Color by Police.” This resolution grew out of a presentation at last year’s GA by Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.
- There were also two “responsive resolutions”: one thanking Gini Courter for her years of service; the other calling UUs to “Deepen our commitment to an anti-oppressive, multicultural Unitarian Universalist Association.”

Extensive GA coverage can be found on-line at <http://uuworld.org/news/articles/287254.shtml>

In light of the ongoing political debate surrounding immigration reform, I also encourage everyone to read our new Statement of Conscience: <http://uaa.org/statements/statements/288860.shtml> ❖

Board News

— Ed Deller, Board President

The board had a special meeting on June 29 and as part of that meeting elected Joy Leccese as Vice-President of the congregation. Michael Scott was re-elected Clerk. These positions are consistent with the revised by-laws.

Another key action from this meeting was the approval of staff salaries for the new church year. We were pleased to be able to offer compensation increases to all staff members.

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 12. ❖

House Report Highlights

— *Alain Perregaux*

Sanctuary Renovation

All the heavy-duty work was completed Saturday afternoon, July 6, when the carpet on the main floor was fully installed. Our first Sunday service back in the sanctuary took place on July 7, as we had secretly anticipated for a long time, and planned for about one month.

Some details still need to be completed:

- Carpet on some stairs and a bit of finishing work
- Nine cushions that have been back-ordered
- New lights that need to be installed
- Display cases that must be cleaned and moved
- Old cushions must be disposed of
- Balconies need to be cleaned

A whole bunch of people deserve to be thanked. First in line are the members of the Renovation Committee who were instrumental in taking critical decisions over the last 18 months: Lisa Gwinner, Sarah Singal, Karen Dau, Joyce Gilbert, Michael Scott, Marcy Klein, Marty Vyverberg, Mike VanArsdale and Howard Spindler (vice chair). ❖

Save the Date!

The 187th Annual Meeting of the New York State Convention of Universalists will be held at St. Paul's Universalist Church in Little Falls, NY, on October 25 & 26, 2013. The theme is "Beyond Borders — Geographical, Theological, Cultural." Registration details to come next month.

Finance Team Report

— *Ann Rhody, Finance Chair*

Summertime... and the livin' is easy... But your Finance team is still at work!

We are busy wrapping up the 2012–13 fiscal year, preparing year-end reports, and implementing budget and payroll changes for the 2013–14 year. We are also planning the coming year's fundraising activities.

Many hands make light work, and the Finance team can use a few good folks to help! If you are interested in assisting with any finance or fundraising tasks, please contact Ann Rhody at annrhody@yahoo.com. We can design

Drop-In Discussion – August Schedule

— *Phil Ebersole*

From June 30 to September 1, summer Drop-In Discussions are held each Sunday after the service at 11:15 am in the adult lounge on the second floor of our church. 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.

August 4 | *Spies, Security and the Constitution*

Phil Ebersole will argue for the public need for whistleblowers to reveal what our government is secretly doing in our name.

August 11 | *Univeralism 101*

David Damico will lead a general discussion of Richard Trudeau's book. See Phil Ebersole about buying or borrowing the book.

August 18 | *Community Planning*

Eric VanDusen will do a presentation and lead a discussion.

August 25 | *Dreams*

Do you dream every night? Do you dream in color, black and white, or both? What is the "work" of dreams? And do dreams tell us something about what goes on in our lives? Do you have "repeat" dreams? Janet Perregaux will help us explore some of the different themes in our dreams, and what those themes might mean to us.

If you have a topic you would like discussed or, better still, would like to lead a discussion, speak to David Damico or Phil Ebersole. ❖

a job that is just the right size for you, and have you work alongside a more experienced member.

Here is a summer checklist for all church members and friends:

- ✓ Pay any remaining balance on your 2012–13 pledge as soon as possible. Contact Bill Jones if you have questions (jones@chem.rochester.edu)
- ✓ If you have not yet made a pledge for 2013–14, we encourage you to do so by contacting Bill Jones
- ✓ Save your loose change for our change drive, to be held in late October!

Thank you and enjoy summer! ❖

Auld Lang Syne

—Karen Dau

A correspondent to the Empire State Universalist in November of 1949—possibly the editor—was outraged at the “Occasional Sermon” delivered to the General Assembly of the Universalist Church of America, which had been held in this church the previous month. Here are some excerpts from his lively remarks. I would note that our beloved member the late Beryl Haas served on the Board of the State Association of Universalist Women which had hosted this gigantic event.

...The gathering in Rochester, the biennial session of the General Assembly of the Universalist Church of America, October, 1949, was disheartening and disrupting. It was not colorless. Oh no—the color was red! RED with a big deficit for the past two years—red with the anticipation of another big deficit for the two ensuing years—red with chagrin... Such a situation is tragic while orthodoxy is roaring its reactionary teaching...

The Occasional Sermon at Rochester was preached by the Rev. Bernard F. Gibbons of Wausau, Wisc... The speaker had every right to speak for himself but unfortunately newspapers everywhere publicized the sermon as proclaiming our break with Christianity...

Mr. Gibbons said: “The Christian interpretation of unity means the conversion of everyone to Christianity and smacks of Soviet Russia’s ambition to communize the world.”—Where has Mr. Gibbons seen Christians using Soviet methods? Where?...

True, the Unified Appeal will suffer until this matter is cleared up. As one minister expresses it, “If our official position is to renounce Christianity, then we must be prepared for an exodus of members and churches[,] for our people in a referendum would never repudiate the universal religion of Christianity. It may mean that we shall have to consider withdrawing some of our state conventions [governing bodies] from the national body until we know whether we are within or without the tradition which we have loved and served. Something of a declaration along this line is in order now!”

...The bottom of the [fiscal] barrel has been reached and this non-Christian Universalism is disrupting. The situation is serious and it is not something to be ignored...

Monday’s newspapers in Rochester on October 24, carried extracts from the sermon delivered by Dr. Donald B. F. Hoyt, pastor of the Universalist Church, in which he sought to clarify statements issuing from the newspaper report of parts of the Occasional Sermon. The congregation was assured that Universalist leaders are not urging a break with Christianity nor have they any thought of departing from the religion of Jesus...

Back in the nineteen twenties, we had a Christ Crusade in our churches and it brought all of us nearer to His way, truth and life. Jesus in his Christianity did more than was required of Him, going the second mile. Our observation of those who claim that they have outgrown Christianity is that they are still at the One-Mile Mark. ❖

Six Big Questions

—Marti Eggers



Who? You

What? Nurture the spirit; serve the community

Where? First Universalist Church

When? August 11–18

How? Volunteer for RAIHN

Why? Because you are needed!

On any given night in Rochester, as many as 100 families with children are homeless. The Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN), a consortium of faith communities of which First Universalist is a part, provides a safe place for families to stay while they work toward returning to sustainable independence.

During the week of August 11, First Universalist will be hosting RAIHN families, and many volunteers will be needed. You can learn more about volunteering for RAIHN by attending a 2-hour training session on Wednesday, August 21 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Asbury United Methodist Church, 1010 East Avenue, or you can shadow a trained volunteer during our Host Week to see firsthand the power of RAIHN.

For more information, or to ask about shadowing, please see Marti Eggers, Sarah Singal or Chris DeGolyer. You are needed! ❖

First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue

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.

Summer worship services and religious education classes begin at 10:00 am Sundays

Summer Minister | Peter House

Director of Religious Education | Rev. Lori Staubit

Music Director | Bryan Holten

Sexton | Brandon Fagan

Nursery Care Provider | Carol Williams

Office Administrator | Kris McCarty-White

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

Board Of Trustees

Ed Deller (President), Joy Leccese (Vice president), Michael Scott (Clerk), Shirley Bond, Michael VanArsdale, Howard Spindler, Janet Rothbeind, Rev. Martha Munson (Interim Minister, ex officio)

Editor, Weekly *eOutlook*: Kris McCarty-White; Editor, Monthly paper *Our Outlook*, Marcy Klein / David Damico. More information is available on our website: <http://uuroc.org>.