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First Universalist Church

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Our outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

January 2018

Sunday Services / January 2018

January 7 |

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

January 14 | 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.

January 21 |

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

January 28 |

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





Pastor's Perspective

Message from
The Reverend Peggy Meeker

oliday 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

The final *COZY NIGHT SUPPER* of this church year will be held Friday, December 29th 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, 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) will be available by early January. Contact Paula Marchese (pmarchese@rochester.rr.com) with questions.



Luunch Buunch

The Luunch Buunch will meet January 7, 2018 at Pita in College Town. Everyone is welcome. Contact Joyce Gilbert @ 244-7403 with any questions.

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 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 year.

Contact Bill Elwell for complete instructions.

Thursday Lunchtime Concerts



The last concert for 2017 took place here on December 14th. Concerts will resume January 04, 2018. See you in the New Year! For more information visit; www.esm.rochester.edu/community/events/lunchtime.



News from the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC)

The Interim Minister Transition Team Welcomes Your Feedback

As recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), a transition team was established within our congregation to support our Interim Minister, Rev. Peggy Meeker, as she helps prepare us for our next settled minister. Our team of Karen Ruganis, Marie Sidoti, Janet Clarke-Hazlett and Ed Deller has been working with Rev. Peggy in this role.

Together with the board, the transition team assessed the focus of Rev. Peggy's interim ministry to be more one of sustaining us rather than driving major process changes. The areas identified for Rev. Peggy's attention are:

- Help the congregation heal from Celie's departure, addressing lingering questions that may exist regarding the range of religious identities our members, friends and guests bring to our church.
- Maintain the momentum of the new Social Justice process.
- Help the board continue to fine-tune the governance structure for the church.
- Maintain the sense of optimism that exists in the congregation.
- Support our congregation's continuing presence in downtown ministries.

Rev. Peggy and the transition team welcome feedback about the congregation and this shared interim ministry. We have feedback from the Leadership Assembly held in October and from a Drop-In Discussion group, but less structured feedback is welcome too. How do you feel things are going? Let us know.



Caring Committee

We shopped, we wrapped, we delivered the goods to the new RAIHN center on Webster Avenue. And all was gratefully received. Many thanks to those who helped make this an abundant holiday for a family in need through the monies collected in November's Spare Change Drive. Members and friends donated gift items as well, so most requests and special wishes have been met for this family of five. Thank you all for helping put our faith to good action this holiday season.

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.

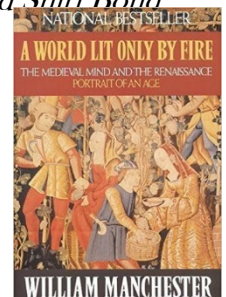
The Board of Trustees recently approved a policy that has guidelines for determining the kinds of activities that the church officially supports, essentially any activity relating to our FIAC efforts, including Social Justice Circles, and others that are consistent with our Purposes and Principles.

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.

Book Group

Submitted by Sarah Singal and Shirly Bond



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)
Sarah Singal (ssingal@rochester.rr.com)

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.

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.

A Note from Phil Ebersole

This is my 20th 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.

During RAIHN Week, January 7-14, 2018: We will turn our church into a home for temporarily homeless families by converting our classrooms into bedrooms, cooking meals, staying overnight, washing bedding, and providing other help. To join our volunteer team, sign up in the lounge after church on Sunday, or contact Chris DeGolyer at chrisdeg@frontiernet.net. If you are still interested in being a RAIHN volunteer, please contact Jen Canning at coordinator@raihn.org. Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network: keeping families together. Getting families home for good.



House Committee News

Submitted by Tom Ruganis

The annual Fall Clean-up Day took place on Saturday, October 21st. 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), Sarah Singal, Marcy Klein, Michael Scott, Ed Deller and Shirley Bond. We would love to hear from you!

Roc/ACTS News



From the Social Justice Circle

“Harvesting Justice”

Join us in supporting a “Limited Purpose
Driver’s License for Undocumented

Farmworkers in New York State.” After the
service on January 28 consider signing a post
card to be shared with NYS legislators.

Why we are doing this:

Imagine working in the apple orchards or on a
dairy farm in rural areas with no access to
transportation. You are dependent upon the
farmer to take you to the grocery store once a
week, because New York State does not allow
the undocumented to have a drivers’ license.

So, what do you do if your child’s school calls
and says to pick her up, because she has a
fever? Sometimes you borrow a car. And if
law enforcement pulls you over, and you
cannot show a license, you will be arrested
and deported. Your family will be without one
of its parents.

This does not have to be. Twelve states and
the District of Columbia issue a limited driver’s
license to the undocumented. These licenses
cannot be used for other purposes – just for
driving. And it’s safer for ALL drivers. Since
New Mexico changed its policy in 2003, their
rate of uninsured drivers fell from 33% to less
than 9%. Even Alabama has a limited drivers’
license for the undocumented.

Drop by our table on January 28, and
learn more, and support this effort by
signing a post card. The post cards
will be brought to legislators by the
New York Immigration Coalition.

First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue
Rochester, New York 14606

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 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

Board of Trustees 2-2019018

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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>.



