



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

December 2015

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Our Outlook

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Sunday Services | December 2015

December 6 | *Of Freebies and Freedoms*

A consideration of some of the varieties of religious freedom.
- Celie Katovitch

December 13 | *Music Sunday*

You are warmly invited to this year's Music Sunday on December 13th, 2015! The choir, the Reverend Celie, and I have worked hard all season to create a not-to-be-missed celebration of December Festivals Around the World. Gathering from the Jewish, French, Canadian, Russian, German, African, Welsh, and American traditions, this musical extravaganza will feature choirs, sextets, theatre, solos, and more! Furthermore, since the organ will be tuned this December 1st, we are more than excited to hear our dear Hope Jones Organ restored to its full glory. Join us a one-of-a-kind experience! We hope very much to see old and new friends at this memorable celebration! - Carol Xiong, Music Director

December 20 | *One Light, Many Windows*

Christmas, Hanukkah, Solstice, Kwanzaa, Bodhi Day... This month and its many holidays put theological diversity on full display. We will consider this topic with the help of wisdom both ancient and modern.
- Celie Katovitch

December 24 | *Christmas Eve Service*

7:00 PM. Join us for this annual service of lessons, carols, and candlelight. - Celie Katovitch



December 27 | *Dreaming a Better World: A Service About Hope.*

As the Three Kings of the Christmas story travel towards Bethlehem, following the promise of a distant star, let us consider hope. The movie "Pride" tells the true story of gay and lesbian activists who supported striking mine workers in Britain in the 1980's. The miners lost; the gay community was devastated by AIDS, and yet, this is an uplifting, even joyful, story. Why is that? What gives us hope in a troubled world, and how do we keep hope alive?
- Bridget Watts





Pastor's Perspective

Message from Rev. Celie Katovitch

Following last month's terrorist attacks in Paris and Beirut, an excerpt from a poem by Somali-British writer Warsan Shire was shared widely on social media. Here are her words:

"i held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?
it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere."

So many of us felt the resonance of these sad, but powerful, words. The terror attacks, the ongoing refugee crisis, trials of violence and homelessness here at home, a myriad other places--from Baghdad to Kenya--where fear has become a part of daily life... All of these things have made us keenly aware of the hurt, and the vulnerability, of this world.

I find that it can be challenging to try and hold the holiday season, with its carols of peace and joyful decorations, alongside these painful realities. But then I think about the deeper currents that run through these days: the way Solstice honors the truth of the dark as well as the light; Hanukkah's commemoration of an unlikely victory set against a backdrop of battle and protest; Christmas' wild claim that the Holy makes itself known in fragile human beings -- even in a tiny baby born in an occupied territory (born, so the legend goes, in the improvised, temporary shelter of a stable).

This is meant to be a joyful season. But joy is big enough to embrace Life with all of its tensions and complexities. This is a season of hope-- and hope is always honest about the struggle out of which it comes. So has it ever been. So it is for us today.

So let us sing; let us share gifts and meals and fellowship; let us celebrate with the beauty of lights and garlands, and rest in the renewing stillness of winter nights. And let us also donate coats and serve at soup kitchens; attend REACH meetings and UUSC conference calls; share a word of comfort or encouragement with those sorely in need of it this winter. Then we will be living the robust faith that this season both symbolizes and demands. Let us seek to praise this vulnerable world, to heal it where we can, and to love it always.

In faith, --Celie ❖

Forum on Regionalization

On December 7th, at 1 PM, First Universalist is hosting a forum on Regionalization for UUs in the greater Rochester area. Regionalization is a proposed process of re-organization at the denominational level, by which UUA "Districts" would be replaced by "Regions" covering a larger geographical area. The discussion will be facilitated by staff from the UUA's Central East Regional Group (CERG). This is a great chance to learn about the proposed changes and to ask questions. You can also find more information about the reasoning behind the proposal here: <http://www.cerguua.org/about-us/regionalization/781-videos.html>.

~CK ❖



Adult Religious Education

UU History

Meets the following Wednesdays from 6:30-8:30pm

Dec 2nd- Part 4

Universalism: Murray to Ballou

Jan 20th- Part 5

The Road to Merger: Playing Well Together

March 2nd- Part 6

The Road to Merger and the First 50 Years

We will be watching one of the six hour-long videos produced by Ron Cordes for the series *Long Strange Trip: 2000 years of UU History*, followed by facilitated discussion.

Feel free to come to one or all sessions as you can. Please RSVP so we can plan for enough space and seating to Michelle Yates at edu@uuroc.org or 585-310-2484.

Childcare available if requested a week in advance. ❖



Walking Together:

Director of Life Span Faith Development

Submitted by Michelle Yates, DRE

In *Age of Miracles*, our Book Group's November read, Karen Thompson Walker considers how our lives would be changed if the length of our days were to change, and how our earth's rhythms are affected by the timing of the rising and setting of the sun. Each one of us can't help but notice the daily reduction of our daylight hours in this season of the year. Some of us keenly feel the lack of light, and await its slow return after December 21. There are many things that the sun provides us: light to see, warmth, an order to our days, essential elements of life....

"Light" has become an important part of our language and cultural theology, such as seeing a light when we are dying. The Quakers, or Religious Society of Friends, often use the phrase and practice of "holding someone in the light" in the way other traditions might pray for a person.

In this holiday season, let us consider "light" in our faith development explorations. Let's be mindful of the role "light" plays in all the holidays of the season: in candles, decorations, and metaphors. What does "light" mean to you? Consider our Flaming Chalice, that we light every time we meet. It represents the search for truth, light to see by, love, hope, and so many other things. What does "light" symbolize or capture in your spiritual life?

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." — Martin Luther King Jr.

"May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out." — J.R.R. Tolkien

"There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." — Leonard Cohen

"Whatever you are physically... male or female, strong or weak, ill or healthy--all those things matter less than what your heart contains. If you have the soul of a warrior, you are a warrior. All those other things, they are the glass that contains the lamp, but you are the light inside." — Cassandra Clare, *Clockwork Angel*

Music: "Lover of the Light" by Mumford & Sons
"What Light" by Wilco

TED talk- *Why Light Needs Darkness*: Rogier van der Heide. ❖

Mitten Tree

This year our church children will decorate the mitten tree on December 13. Please bring in store bought or handmade or barely used mittens, gloves, scarves and hats to place either under the tree or just on the chancel floor to the right. All adult and children's sizes are needed.

Donations following the 13th will still be gratefully accepted, until after Christmas. Stuffed animals cannot be used. Thanks in advance! ❖



Writing Group: Exploring Character

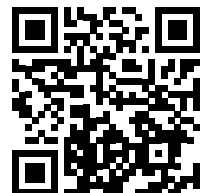
"Character" has long been a central part of Unitarian Universalist ethics and spirituality. Discussion generated by columnist David Brooks' recent book, *The Road to Character*, has even resulted in the creation of a website where people across the country can share with one another their written reflections on what it means to lead a good life. In the new year, there will be a chance to do something similar at church. We will write our own responses based on Brooks' questions, and share them together as a group. Maybe we will even submit them to the website! This is an informal group, but commitment to writing on your own will be required.

Week 1: "Moral Bucket List"

Week 2: "Purpose"

Week 3: "Heroes"

Week 4: "Eulogies"



If interested, please take a moment to indicate your preferred days and times at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GHPZPJX>. ❖

REACH House

*Submitted by Lois Baum, Chair
Homelessness Task Force, UURoc*

REACH: Rochester Emergency Action Committee for the Homeless ... Never again, Rochester!

REACH is a regional effort in the Rochester area, to be sure that what happened to our homeless population will never happen again!

Born out of community concern for the sheltering of Rochester's chronically homeless, REACH was formed (9/15) to urgently find a shelter location for this coming winter, raise the necessary funds to operate the shelter, manage the logistics and provide volunteer labor to staff the shelter ... until the House of Mercy's newly obtained, permanent location is ready in 2016. The REACH organization is made up of members from area faith organizations, numerous civic groups, otherwise unaffiliated individuals from the community, and homeless services providers.

We have found a location (to be announced soon), referred to as "REACH House". REACH will establish and run this temporary shelter for six months during the upcoming winter for men and women who are chronically homeless. The shelter is designed to fill a gap in services for a specific, "difficult-to-serve" population that is not served by the current shelter system. The mission will be similar to Sanctuary Village (Jan-April, 2015), but REACH House will be more of a community response with extra organization, oversight, and structure. In late spring 2016, a new, larger low barrier House of Mercy facility will open which should eliminate the need for a temporary shelter or tent city in the future.

REACH estimates it will cost \$150,000 to obtain and operate a temporary shelter this winter. The organization is working to obtain funding across a variety of community sources: public, business and private donations. Positive progress is happening each week on each of these areas and a REACH / FLACE (Finger Lakes Area Community Endowment) account has been set up with Canandaigua National Bank & Trust.

REACH welcomes anyone and everyone who wants to get involved with this effort. Besides financial support, we are looking for people to volunteer with day-to-day operation of the shelter.

MEALS: REACH House welcomes groups, or individuals, willing to prepare meals, donate their time and serve the meals to the REACH House community of approximately 30 "guests". Volunteers are encouraged to join them in dining, for a time of sharing and socializing.

If you are interested in joining a group from First Universalist Church, to volunteer your time, and/or to help prepare a meal for 30+ people, contact Carole Hoffman: choffman002@rochester.rr.com.

Send your tax-deductible donation:
make check out to "REACH / FLACE"; mail to:

REACH
PO Box 31765
Rochester, NY 14603-999

Email: ReachRochester@gmail.com
<http://ReachRochester.wix.com/REACH>

Supplies Needed: Contact Lois Baum ~
KissaPawDaily@aol.com ❖

How Can I Help? – 1.2.3

Submitted by Marti Eggers

Whether or not you volunteer for RAIHN*, you can help get homeless families back on their feet and back home again. Here are three of the ways –



- 1) Donate gift cards for locations such as Walmart, Tops, Aldi, Price Rite, Sav-A-Lot, or various gas stations. Bus tickets and cleaning supplies are also welcome. Marti Eggers can deliver donations to the RAIHN Day Center, 34 Meigs Street, or you can deliver them yourself.
- 2) Link your Amazon accounts to RAIHN at AmazonSmile, and a portion of every purchase will be donated to RAIHN. Follow this link -<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2064888>.
- 3) If you want to shop at Old Navy, Target, Staples, Expedia, Shutterfly, and lots more, visit <http://www.goodsearch.com/goodshop> first to find coupons, then shop through their link and they will donate to RAIHN.

*Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network - Housing homeless families; getting families home. ❖

Ka-Ching... *Thanks for the change!*

Submitted by Ann Rhody for the Finance Committee

Our change drive raised over **\$740** this year! Thanks to all who participated, and especially to Paula Marchese and Glenda Brayman who helped to organize and staff the drive.

So where does that money go? And how about our other fundraisers? What exactly are we supporting when we participate?

In general, funds go to support our church's programs as designated in our budget. Our annual operating budget provides for all of our church's works, both within our walls and out in the community: Sunday Services, Music, Faith Development, Social Justice, and so on. In other words, ALL funds raised go to support our mission *to nurture the spirit and serve the community*.

In addition, the Finance team likes to make sure that our fundraisers provide fun and fellowship. So join in the action for our remaining two upcoming events:

- **The Holiday Shoppe** will run during coffee hour on Sundays November 22–December 20. We are seeking donations of craft items, gifts, and baked goods. We welcome items that can be sold for \$20 or less, and donations can be dropped off any Sunday (including the Holiday Shoppe Sundays) at church. Contact Paula Marchese (pmarchese@rochester.rr.com) for additional information, and plan now to do some of your holiday shopping at church (it's so much better than the mall... trust us!!)
- Our annual **Service Auction** will be held on Sunday, February 7, 2016, and donation forms will be available in late December. Think about items or events you can offer to add to the fun, and mark the date on your calendar! For information about the auction, contact Paula Marchese or Ann Rhody (annrhody@gmail.com). ❖



Social Justice Plate Collection a Success!

Submitted by Shirley Bond

The Social Justice Plate Collection Committee is pleased to announce that the October 18th collection for the UUSC/UUA Refugee Crisis Fund amounted to a whooping \$841.00!

The UUSC partners with an organization that provides legal and casework assistance to thousands of refugees. As an added bonus our contribution will be matched dollar for dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock!

We are proud to be members of this congregation and we thank you for your generosity.

Shirley Bond, Becky Elwell, Sarah Singal ❖



Newest Members

Submitted by Nancy Gaede

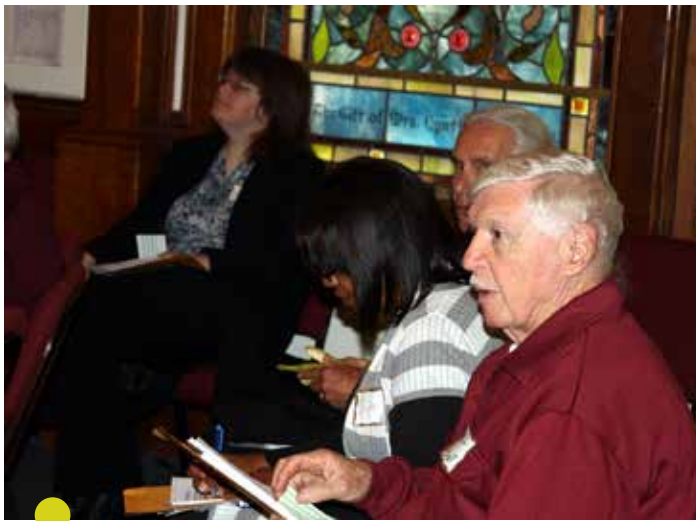
Please join us in welcoming our newest members: **Janet Clarke-Hazlett**, **Bob Remley**, and **Shirley Malone**. Janet, Bob and Shirley, we are so glad that you have found a home with us at First Universalist.

Membership at First Universalist is always possible. If you feel that you have found a spiritual home here with us, contact Reverend Celie (minister@uuroc.org) or Nancy Gaede (flower50@frontiernet.net) and we will make arrangements for you to sign the membership book.

On Saturday, April 9, we will hold a Path to Membership class that we hope all new members and those considering membership will attend. On Sunday, April 10, we will welcome all new members during the church service. ❖

Living Our Values, Making A Difference

Submitted by Newcomb Losh, Communications Committee



First Universalist delegate **Dick Gilbert** (rt) and the **Rev. Celie** (left) listen as the annual NYSCU meeting gets underway. By attending, we supported at least three of our principles, including the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.



Our delegates to the annual NYS Convention of Universalists (NYSCU) were joined by other members and friends of our congregation in Oneonta, NY on Oct 23-24. Pictured (l to r) are **Connie Valk, Kelly Scott, Michael Scott, Karen Dau, Bridget Watts, Gary Levine** and **Dolores Dalomba**. Attendees not pictured: **Ed Deller, Joyce Gilbert** and **Newcomb Losh**.



Oh, do we ever value music. One of our quartets, comprised of (l to r): **Lisa Gwinner, Kitty Forbush, Ed Deller** and **Charlie Courtsal**, sang Enya's *May It Be* during the ordination of **Michelle George Yates**, our Director of Lifespan Faith Development, as a UU minister on Nov. 1. Several of our members and friends attended the ceremony held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst.



Connie Valk puts the finishing touches on the silent auction to benefit Rural & Migrant Ministries at their Harvesting Justice Symposium and dinner on Oct. 29. The symposium focused on finding ways to support migrant youth, while the dinner program recognized outstanding efforts and accomplishments. Several members and friends of our church attended, along with members from other UU congregations.



Thanks to the tireless organizational efforts of our own **Lois Baum**, Congregation President **Ed Deller** was one of several of our members and friends to help ready REACH's new winter shelter for homeless women and men in November.

Have some photos of our members and friends being inclusive, living our values or making a difference?

Contact Newcomb Losh at jnewcomb.losh@yahoo.com to share them.



Carole Hoffman vacuums a future bedroom at the new winter shelter spearheaded by REACH (Rochester Emergency Action Committee for the Homeless). Some of us may remember cooking and serving a dinner organized by Carole at the Sanctuary Village shelter last April.

Court/Clinton Cleaners

Submitted by Nancy Gaede

A special thank you to the following people who adopted-a-room to keep First Universalist beautiful:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Shirley Bond | Jan Hickman |
| Janine Casillo | Carole Hoffman |
| Ed Deller | Marie Sidoti |
| Eileen Fernandez | Connie Valk |
| Kitty Forbush | Jared VanCor |
| Kim Floeser | Tom Williams ❖ |

Cozy Night Supper

Words and Deeds of Prophetic Women and Men - January 15th

Submitted by Kathy Russell

“Words and Deeds of Prophetic Women and Men” is the focus for our Friday, January 15th COZY NIGHT SUPPER. This program, from 5:30 to 7:30, continues our exploration of the Unitarian Universalist sources. Held in the Clara Barton Lounge, a simple supper, including a vegan option, will be provided along with wonderful camaraderie - hopefully including you! At 6:30 we will then focus on the second source, “Words and deeds of prophetic men and women which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love.”



Let us know of your ability to attend by signing up on the Religious Education Bulletin Board/Membership Table or by contacting Kathy Russell at krussel6@frontiernet.net. Your RSVP/sign up will allow us to prepare appropriately. Child-friendly activities exploring this source will be arranged if you make a request one week in advance.

And for those who like to plan ahead... Future Cozy Friday Night Supper Dates exploring other sources are February 26th and March 18th. ❖

Auld Lang Syne

Submitted by Karen Dau, archivist



A TREASURE TROVE of early Universalism in Rochester can be discovered in “Records of the First Universalist Sabbath of the City of Rochester, Monroe Co.,” which thankfully survived passage down through many decades and now resides in the church archive. This volume opens a window into an early religious education program taught in our congregation, from its establishment in June 1839 through April 1852, and it seems that the implied word “School” was perhaps inadvertently omitted from the title.

The book itself contains records written by hand in ink—no doubt with the use of a quill—on durable paper made with a high rag content, in contrast to the poorer-quality paper used later in the century made from wood pulp that deteriorated much more quickly. When I first saw this book, the binding was seriously crumbled and the pages were falling out as a consequence, so I took it to a professional bookbinder and had it rebound. Now it can be handled, using care, without so much danger of irreversible damage.

The introduction reads like this: “At a meeting of the First Universalist Society of the City of Rochester, N.Y., Br. S. Moses was chosen chairman & George Roberts secretary—. The object of the meeting having been expressed, which was to organize a Sabbath School in the Society—the meeting then proceeded to elect officers for said School—which action resulted in the nomination and election of Br. George Roberts as Superintendent, Willis O. Fitch Secretary and Br. Hiram [?] as Treasurer. On motion it was resolved that the Sabbath School now constituted be known and called the ‘First Universalist Sabbath School of the City of Rochester, N.Y.’ On motion it was further resolved that the annual election of officers take place hereafter [sic] the Sabbath preceding the expiration of the several offices annually... Adjourned in order, Rochester, N.Y., Sunday June 16th, 1839.” Schuyler Moses authored this memoranda. He was one of Rochester’s earliest pioneers, and had buried two wives and two toddlers by the time he wrote these sentences. The newly appointed superintendent Geo. H. Roberts signed off as well. He was the son of a pioneer Universalist preacher, and was perhaps drawn to the children of his Society because apparently he himself was childless.

On the first day of classes the following week, secretary Willis Fitch noted, “Through the good providence of ‘Our Father who art in heaven’ we have been permitted this day to assemble our newly constituted Sabbath School for the first time—Opened with prayer by the Superintendent who deeply evinced his interest...by his fervent and ardent appeals to the Throne of Grace for Divine assistance and blessings to rest upon the feeble efforts of the Sabbath School, in our design to instruct the young and tender mind in the great principles of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior..., and thus lead them in the morning of life to consecrate themselves... to the service [of] God—how high! how holy! an aim. May the spiritual dew from on high so refresh and water this plant of the Kingdom of our Redeemer that it may never die.”

(Part 1 of 2- Continued next issue) ❖



New Year’s Eve at First Universalist

From Membership Committee

Membership Committee will host the New Year’s Eve family friendly event in the Clara Barton Lounge. Won’t you join us?

The evening begins with appetizers and socializing at 7:00 PM, followed by a potluck dinner at 7:20 PM. When you bring your dish to pass, be sure to accompany your dish with a list of the ingredients.

After the dishes are cleared away, John “The Amazing” Adams will astonish us with a magic show. Music will follow -- if you’d like to share your talent, contact Nancy Gaede at flower50@frontiernet.net.”

As the fireworks begin, usually about 10:00 PM, we will step outside watch the display. Please sign up on the list at Membership Table in the Clara Barton Lounge, but if you decide at the last minute to join us, please do! There is always room for more. ❖

Drop-In Discussion Schedule, Dec. 2015

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday at 9:15 a.m. (except during the summer) 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.

December 6 | *The Devil Is in the Details.* Well-meaning programs and reforms often fail because the people in charge don't consult the people affected. Jessie Werner will give some examples from her own experience, and lead a discussion.

December 13 | *Planned Parenthood.* Rick Bartell of Planned Parenthood of Western New York will give an overview of Planned Parenthood and its services, and answer questions.

December 20 | *Santa Claus.* Were you taught to believe in Santa Claus as a child? If you have children, what do you tell your children about Santa Claus? Does Santa Claus symbolize anything except getting presents? Phil Ebersole will lead a discussion.

December 27 | *To be announced.*

If you have a topic you'd like discussed or, better still, would be willing to lead a discussion, speak to Phil Ebersole. ❖



News

Submitted by Keith Stott

The Way

What do Caucasians – UU's in particular – have in common with The Way of the Cherokee? According to Grandpa in *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter, "Take only what ye need." That seems to agree with our Principle "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part". Little Tree's education entails having exciting adventures, exploring his world, and learning to respect and love it. For an inspiring read sign out *The Education of Little Tree* by the Cherokee Forrest Carter. **Call number is 813 C.** ❖

House News, Dec. 2015

Submitted by Tom Ruganis

December is here and luckily we have had a reprieve (so far) on cold and snow to allow us to get ready for the winter. The heat is working with only routine minor leaks, the garden hoses have been safely stored for the winter, most of the exterior painting has been completed and the snow plow contract has been signed.

Here are some other highlights of the building related activities.

- The leak on one of the three flat roofs has been repaired. It appeared that a piece of ice fell and created a small hole, so hopefully the roofs will last at least a few more years.
- Plans are being made to renovate the Church office. A new desk, ceiling, light fixture, paint and floor refinishing are being considered.
- An analysis on our steam consumption by Dave VanArsdale has shown a decrease in usage after including adjustments for outside temperature. Lower consumption was found in the 2014/2015 season over the 2013/2014 season and so far in continuing into this fall. Hopefully his trend will continue. Thanks Dave!

As always, if you are interested in the above or have any other repair or project you would like to see completed, or would like to take on, or join the House Committee, please let anyone on the committee know.

The Committee is currently: Tom Ruganis, Chair (tom@ruganis.net), Sarah Singal, Mary Vyverberg, Karen Dau, Marcy Klein, Mike VanArsdale and Ed Deller. We would love to hear from you! ❖

The LUUnch BUUnch Dec. 2015

Flavors of Asia

831 S. Clinton Ave.



12:30
Sunday, Dec. 27.

Suggestions on restaurants?

Contact Joyce Gilbert at JTGilbert@frontiernet.net.

First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue

Rochester, NY 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 from the Jewish and Christian traditions.

Worship service begins at 10:30am Sundays

Minister | Rev. Celie Katovitch

Director of Life Span Faith Development | Michelle Yates

Music Director | Carol Xiong

Sexton | Brandon Fagan

Nursery Care Provider | Carol Williams

Office Administrator | Melissa Davies

Office hours, Monday – Friday, 9:30–2:30. Telephone 585.546.2826

Board Of Trustees 2015–2016

Ed Deller (President), Nancy Gaede (Vice-president), Karen Ruganis (Clerk), Michael VanArsdale, Janet Rothbeind, Kitty Forbush, Tim Mullins, Rev. Celie Katovitch (ex-officio)

Editor, *This Week at First Universalist* (digital): Melissa Davies; Monthly newsletter *Our Outlook*, David Damico. Church photo on cover by Tom Ruganis.

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