

Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

February 2013

Minister

Rev. Martha Munson

585.325.5092 (minister's study)

minister@uuroc.org

Director of Music

Bryan Holten

music@uuroc.org

Director of

Religious Education

Rev. Lori Staubitz

dre@uuroc.org

Office Administrator

Kris McCarty-White

585.546.2826

office@uuroc.org

Our Outlook

Newsletter Editor

David Damico

uurocnews@gmail.com

First Universalist Church

150 South Clinton Avenue

(corner of Court St.)

Rochester, NY 14604

Visit us online www.uuroc.org

Inside

Page

Minister's Message 2

Gleanings 2

Tale of Two Churches 3

Adult Growth & Learning 4

Transition Team Report 4

House Report Highlights 5

RAIHN Dates 5

Drop-In Discussions 6

Auction 6

Auld Lang Syne 7

Sunday Services | February 2013

February 3 | *Tools of the Trade, or, How I Resist Change*

We all know that the only thing constant is change. And yet, sometimes it seems more difficult than we can manage.

-- Rev. Martha Munson



February 10 | *Just Signing the Book*

What does it mean to belong to a place, a people, a congregation? Are there rights, or rites? Are there any responsibilities? What if you're not a joiner?

-- Rev. Martha Munson



February 17 | *Dear Mr. President*

A letter to President Obama on the weekend which honors his illustrious predecessors Washington and Lincoln.

-- Rev. Martha Munson



February 24 | *Radical Hospitality*

Who is welcome here? Who is not? Or who might not be?

-- Rev. Martha Munson



Our regular morning service as well as Religious Education classes begin at 10:30 am.



Walking With You

Message from the Interim Minister

During the month of February the Board and I will review the interim ministry here at First Universalist. The questions include, how is the interim minister doing? How is the leadership doing? How is the congregation doing? The focus includes the overall ministry of the congregation, and specifically the interim time tasks. I invite each of you to reflect on how we're doing, how you're doing, in this walk together.

FIVE TASKS OF INTERIM MINISTRY

adapted from Temporary Shepherds by Roger Nicholson

1. Coming to Terms with History (The good and the bad)
2. Discovering a New Identity (Who are we now?)
3. Empowering & Equipping New Leadership
4. Renewing Denominational Linkages
5. Preparing for New Professional Leadership

I look forward to seeing you on the corner of S. Clinton and Court. It's where it's all happening in 2013!

Faithfully,
Martha ❖

Budget Time is Coming!

Submitted by Ann Rhody, for the Finance Committee

Yes, it's that time again... and this year we are going to ask for "formless" input on the budget! We will not use budget request forms as we have done in the past, but if you have ideas on what should be in the 2013-14 church budget, or if you know of an area of church functioning that needs some financial attention, your ideas are welcome! Please contact Finance Chair Ann Rhody or Treasurer Laretta Young if you want to share your input or if you need more information. We ask that input be provided by the end of February to be included in the budget. ❖



Gleanings

Reflections by Minister Rev. Lori Staubitz

The first time I saw an Aspen Grove, I noticed the beauty of the trees but I was unaware that they exist as a single, living organism. In reality, there is no such thing as an "Aspen Tree"; only the Grove. These unique beings only appear to be separate, individual trees. Below ground they share a common root—a single source for sustaining the life of the Grove.

What happens to one Aspen tree affects the entire grove.

You of course know where I am going with this by now!

How very much ministry and congregational life are analogous to the Aspen Grove.

Do you know how much your personal choices have a direct effect upon the whole of our community?

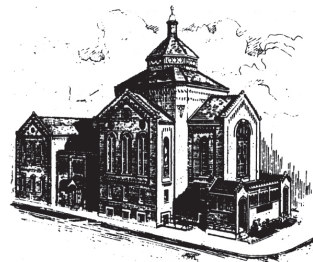
Are you aware of all those who benefit from the ways you offer support?

Did you know that your effort as a member, friend or visitor has a profound impact on the quality of Religious Education for everyone here at First Universalist?

In some ways, there is no such thing as a single Unitarian Universalist... only a faith lived out in action within community, only a congregation with a supportive, vibrant ministry... joining with the whole of our common life together.

I invite you to come "dig deeper" to find your common roots within this community through our Adult offerings this winter season.

See you in church. — Rev. Lori Staubitz ❖





A Tale of Two Churches

Submitted by Michael Scott

My mother’s church—the one in which my wife, Kelly, and I were married—was long a twin of our own. Both are downtown congregations, with historic buildings constructed in the first decade of the 20th century. Both called new ministers in 1990 and again in 2001. Throughout the ’80s and ’90s, both had about 150 adult members, and nearly identical budgets. But then their histories diverged. By 2010, my mother’s church had grown to 253 adult members and a church school enrollment of 123. They undertook a million-dollar building renovation. Meanwhile our church has stayed roughly the same size.

Why the difference? Certainly there were many factors, but I have come to believe that one of the biggest reasons for success in my mother’s church was a change in what you might call the “culture of governance.” The change was triggered by a crisis. The minister they called in 2001, a young family man, began to make changes in church life. He modified the order of service. He preached without a tie. There were changes to the newsletter, the RE program, the coffee hour, the division of duties among committees. Most of these changes were small, and all of them were supported or accepted by the Board. Attendance was up, but there was a growing sense among some long-time members that “this isn’t how we do things.” People began to complain, and eventually the Board felt compelled to call in a team of conflict management consultants from the District.

One of the things the congregation learned from working with the consultants was that once a church reaches a certain size—around our magic 150 members—it is no longer healthy (or frankly even feasible) for everyone to have a voice in everything. It’s sort of like the difference between a “flat” democracy and a republic. In a flat democracy, everyone participates in each decision. In a republic, people choose representatives who make decisions on their behalf. Members of my mother’s church came to understand that their minister and Board—whom they had chosen as their leaders—were acting with talent and good intentions, and could be trusted to make good decisions. But that was *not* the same as making decisions

that everyone would like—or even that the congregation would ultimately have made if they debated the issue and voted. Members—including most of the “old timers”—were able to let go of the need to have a voice in every decision, and their leaders felt empowered to take actions that led to vibrant growth.

I think our church may still be working largely as a flat democracy. When one of our leaders makes a decision with visible impact, he or she can usually expect to receive a flurry of emails, some of them critical, but many of them simply offering well-intentioned opinions and advice. The result, I think, is that leaders hesitate to act. It’s safer and easier to stick with the status quo. When the Nominating Committee approaches someone about taking on a new responsibility, I fear the natural response is too often, “Oh gosh, how am I going to do this in a way that keeps 150 people happy?” If we could change our “culture of governance” and really empower our leaders, perhaps the response might become, “Wow, there are 150 people who think I’m the right one to do this, and have offered me their trust and support.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could make that change? I know it’s possible, because I’ve seen it done. And I’d like to believe we can do it without the crisis that my mother’s church went through. The results could be incredibly exciting! ❖

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Library News

Submitted by Keith Stott

What do a creation of a famous Norwegian composer and our “Affirmation of Faith” have in common? Love, set to music. Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) set to music a poem by family friend Hans Christian Andersen and dedicated it to his sweetheart—later his wife—Nina Grieg (1845-1935): “Ich Liebe Dich”. She and Edvard “shared an antipathy towards the narrow dogmatism of the Norwegian State Church” and both attended the Unitarian Church in Christiana. They both felt that “poor is the person who is not drawn and beguiled by the profound mystique of the Nature of Music and the Music of Nature”. Read more about their beliefs and those of many other notable Unitarian Universalists in [Credo International: Voices of Religious Liberalism From Around the World](#) by Don McEvoy. Call number is 920 M. ❖

Adult Growth & Learning

“I’ve Got A New Way To Talk”

As part of our celebration of the “Winter Feast For the Soul” we invite you to join in this three-part adult series on developing tools for creative Life change.

- What if you learned the secret to limiting destructive family drama?
- How would it feel to have your new ideas being encouraged and supported!
- Surprise yourself on how well you can handle a difficult situation.
- Come join in this joyful and interactive time as we think outside the box and develop some new ways of being in relationship with others.

Facilitator: Rev. Lori Staubitz,
Director of Religious Education

Location: First Universalist Church of Rochester,
Clara Barton Lounge

Dates: March 6th, 13th, 20th

Time: 6:30 pm–8:00 pm

Registration: Free
Sign-up now by calling 585-546-2826 or
email DRE@uuroc.org

Session #1

One Among Many; New Tools for Empowering Relationships

Systems Thinking / Conflict Management

Personal Assessment

Social Dynamics / Leading in Anxious Times

Triangulation

Session #2

Imagine This Is Heaven; The Beauty That is Before Us

Daily Practice for Health and Leadership

Universal Meditation / Mindfulness Thinking

Session #3

The Art of Creative Problem Solving

Appreciative Inquiry: “A Positive Revolution in Change”

I’ve Never Thought this Way Before! ❖

Warm and Welcoming? YES! AND...

YES, we ARE warm and welcoming AND there is always more we can do to help visitors feel at home among us.

I recently visited two UU congregations while in Florida. One was about our size, an urban church in an older building. The next was larger (about 300 members) and only a bit further away from “downtown.”

In the first church, we got a few “hello’s” on the way in, but there was no formal way of welcoming us. The service began with a lengthy announcement about Board business, and then a Joys and Sorrows time where individual congregation members spoke about events in their lives. I quickly grew weary from “too much information.”

Finally the chalice was lit and the service began. I felt enriched by the music and worship. During coffee hour a few people said hello, but there was really nothing else for us to do, so we made our way to the door.

At the next church, they did have an official greeter at the door, and people seemed friendly. Still, no one offered us a name tag or asked about us. The service quickly got into “worship” mode, which I appreciated.

During coffee hour, there was a “visitors table.” This was a designated place where newcomers knew that someone would be available to chat and to answer their questions about the church. THIS is an idea I think we ought to “steal!!”

After those two visits, I really feel that we do SO much “right.” AND we can do more. Let’s build on those strengths and be open to new suggestions that may have a big impact on how welcome someone feels among us.

Submitted by Ann Rhody for the Transition Team:

Karl Abbott, chair; Bill Elwell, Mary Louise Gerek,

Santosha Kuykendall ❖



House Report Highlights

Submitted by *Alain Perregeaux*

Sanctuary Renovation

As of this writing, we are waiting for quotes for the following projects:

- 3 quotes for the fire detection
- 4 quotes for the lighting
- 4 quotes for the pews and floor

In the meantime, the cost of the pew cushions has gone up, in part due to our concern for durability and in part due to the fact that normal margin of errors in early estimates always seem to go in the same direction.

We are waiting to have all these quotes in hand before proposing measures that will allow us to meet our cost targets.

Steam Consumption

Just as it was last winter, the consumption of steam is significantly higher than expected based on past seasons. All the corrective actions taken over the last 12 months have had little or no effect.

Last December, Dave VanArsdale suggested that a heating engineer from RDH be called to audit the steam portion of our heating system. This audit took place on December 18 and the resulting report was received on January 7. It appears that the main cause of the problem is with two old steam traps that do not operate properly. They will need to be replaced “immediately”. A number of other improvements are also suggested in the report; they will improve the overall efficiency of the system.

Many thanks go to Dave for taking this initiative. ❖

School 7

Submitted by *Sarah Singal*

Thank you, one and all, for the beautiful scarves, gloves, mittens, hats, and gifts for children of School 7. Your generosity is most welcome!

What we need right now are more tutors. Are there new friends of the church who would like to try tutoring? Even a half hour a week would be very helpful to a child who would benefit from one-on-one attention. Please see Sarah (ssingal@rochester.rr.com) for details. ❖

RAIHN* Dates

Submitted by *Marti Eggers*



Upcoming Volunteer Training Sessions

- *January 31*, 7–9 pm at First Unitarian, S. Winton Rd.
- *February 12*, 6:30–8:30 pm at Bethany Presbyterian, 3000 Dewey Avenue
- *March 21*, 7–9 pm at Temple Sinai, Penfield

Volunteers are expected to attend a two-hour training session before or soon after volunteering for the first time. Training sessions orient volunteers to the RAIHN philosophy and the expectations of guests and volunteers. There is ample time for questions as well. Seasoned volunteers are also welcome and provide valuable input based on their personal experiences.

Next Host Week at First Universalist: May 5–12

Attend one of the training sessions listed above so that you’ll be ready to volunteer for this Hosting Week. We will have 80 volunteer slots to fill, so please try to set aside some time for RAIHN in May!

** RAIHN, the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, is a consortium of 14 faith communities that host families in temporary need of housing, and 25 faith communities that provide volunteers and other support to the host congregations. First Universalist is a host congregation, supported by St. Mary’s. Four times a year, for a week each time, volunteers from both congregations work together to provide a welcoming, safe place for these families to come home to after a day at the RAIHN Center where they get help looking for housing and, for some, new employment. We prepare and serve a hot evening meal, help with homework, offer a lap, a story and a hug, a listening ear, a word of encouragement, overnight presence, breakfast and whatever else might be needed before the families return to their jobs or to the Center for another day of hard work. ❖*

“Academy Awards” Premier for Video



Come, Come, Whoever You Are: An Introduction to First Universalist Church!

Submitted by *Connie Valk*

February 17th after the church service promises to be the event of the year! After a delicious lunch in the Clara Barton Lounge, we will view the new video, applaud the stars of the video as they receive their coveted awards, and be entertained by an exciting musical group “The Membership Committee Doo-Wops”. This is a not-to-be-missed family event. ❖

Drop-In Discussion Schedule—February

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday 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. Our discussions are held each Sunday at 9:15 am, preceding the Sunday service.

February 3 | **One-Page Salon**

How would you answer the question "What does a positive world future require?" Hank Stone has collected more than 25 one-page answers so far. He'll lead a discussion of those answers, our own answers and the power of discussing the future.

February 10 | **The Spirituality of the Highly Sensitive Person**

Some Highly Sensitive People have tidal waves of spiritual feelings, and many meditate daily, knowing for themselves that no "faith", except for a faith that all will be well, is satisfying for them. They create a sacred space for themselves and pass it to others for contemplation. Come join us to explore these different ways of living in a sacred space and thriving from the experiences. Janet Perregaux will facilitate.

February 17 | **Life as a Drop-In Discussion**

Hal Bauer suggests thinking of drop-in discussions as a metaphor for life. We arrive unprepared; sometimes, sadly, leave early; make a contribution; listen to friends, family and others; try to be kind. Beyond youth, life is often too short for most to fully grasp. Hal Bauer invites you to share yours.

February 24 | **The Great Migration**

Shirley Bond will discuss the migration of black Americans from the American South to the cities of the North and West, how difficult it was and why it matters today, based on Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Great Migration*.

Topics are subject to change. For updates, check the bulletin board in First Universalist Church's Clara Barton lounge or the Schedule of Drop-In Discussions on <<http://philebersole.wordpress.com>>. ❖

Our Service Auction: *Something for Everyone!!* **Be There February 3!!**

Submitted by Ann Rhody

Our annual Service Auction is on Sunday, February 3 after the church service. Please plan to stay and have some fun! We'll enjoy lunch, fellowship, laughs, and at the same time we'll be supporting our church's mission and programs.

Whatever your budget, there will be something to bid on: in the past, auction items have ranged from \$5 to over \$200. Our auction is designed to include everyone. And our auction is user-friendly: no fast talk or secret bidding signs; no experience necessary and instructions included!

Be sure the auction is on your calendar and get in on the fun- (and FUNd-) raising!!

To request a donation booklet, proxy form (for those who can't be at the auction), or for general information, contact Paula Marchese at pmarchese@rochester.rr.com. ❖

LUUnch BUUnch



Submitted by Connie Valk

The LUUnch BUUnch will gather on February 10, after the By-Laws Congregational Meeting, at Dac Hoa, 230 Monroe Avenue. The prices on the menu are modest; the food is yummy. There are also over a dozen vegetarian options. All are welcome! Come, celebrate our new By-Laws! ❖

Cozy Supper



Submitted by Connie Valk

The February Cozy Supper with Multigenerational Religious Education will be held 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on February 22. The topic is "Love".

Supper is provided by the RE Committee, with help from others in the Church. A vegan option is available. Childcare is provided for children under age six, if you let Connie Valk know one week in advance.

Sign up on the bulletin board in the Clara Barton Lounge, on the website: <http://uuroc.org>, or leave a message at 585-467-3191. ❖

Auld Lang Syne

Submitted by Karen Dau

In 1949, during the week of October 13–19, The Universalist Church of America (UCA), a national organization, held its General Assembly in the basement of our church building. It might have been a fairly ordinary event in the annals of Universalism except for the message of the speaker who addressed the opening session, Rev. Brainard F. Gibbons of Wausau, Wisconsin. By that time in its history the denomination was in conflict about both its identity and its future. But it is not apparent that the Assembly attendees were prepared for what they were going to hear!

Gibbons had titled his presentation “New Wine and Old Bottles,” and he began with a conciliatory approach. “Every Universalist realizes that Universalism has changed considerably since the days of its New England forbears and many Christian dogmas have been supplanted... Indeed, Universalism has disavowed many essential Christian doctrines... For a long time, though formally acknowledging it but recently, Universalists have been reaching beyond the narrow bounds of Christianity to pluck their grapes of knowledge from vines growing in the boundless vineyards of truth, and the religious wine pressed from them cannot be contained in the old Christian bottles.”

It was after this point that he began wading into the swirling waters of contention. After describing Christianity as “an almost insurmountable barrier to the oneness of humanity,” he continued, “The Christian interpretation of unity means the conversion of everyone to Christianity and smacks of Soviet Russia’s ambitions to communize the world. This would not be unity, religiously or politically, but dominant and enslavement. Only historical and emotional ties to Christianity have prevented Universalists generally from realizing sooner the dynamic effects of the truth deliberately sought and in which they now avow faith.

“Christianity is but one of several world-wide religions asserting superiority and authority over each other by virtue of alleged super-natural founders or God-written scriptures or both, and not one of these pretensions rests on grounds more verifiable than another. It is inconceivable that such religions will ever surrender one iota of their supposedly God-given positions to further the oneness of religion... At most, Universalists are nominal Christians and that solely by virtue of their own definition—a definition not acceptable to the great body of Christianity!” Speaking in this way as he did during the early period of American history known as The Red Scare, Gibbons was possibly

placing himself at risk—and the denomination as well.

In spite of his highly controversial remarks—or perhaps because of them—Gibbons went on to serve for a year as president of the denomination and for three years as its General Superintendent. Because of him, this Rochester edifice that is our church home was the site of one of the major events which eventually led to the creation in 1961 of our present-day Unitarian Universalist Association.

And now, when I wander among the enchanting model train constructions downstairs, sixty-plus years after this message, I sometimes think about what the walls might have seen and heard that year. ❖

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“Winton-Clinton” Joint Endeavor

Submitted by Karen Dau

In observance of Women’s History Month, both Rochester UU churches are uniting to bring you a performance of “Too Many Questions: An Evening With Virginia Durr.” This one-person drama will be performed by its original actress Ginny Loggins on Saturday, March 23, at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester at 7:30 p.m. It is set in Virginia Durr’s Montgomery, Alabama, home following the incarceration of Rosa Parks in 1955 for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white person. The play reveals the transformation of Mrs. Durr from a pampered southern belle to a civil rights activist as she entertains company and fields calls from her attorney husband about Mrs. Parks’ plight—except that when the phone rings, it isn’t always her husband on the other end... Do plan to attend! More details will be forthcoming. ❖

Clara Baldwin

Submitted by Eileen Fernandez

We were informed by her daughter-in-law that Clara Baldwin, a long-time and active member of First Universalist, died on December 13, 2012. She will be remembered fondly by many of our long-time members. ❖

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.

Worship services and Religious Education classes begin at 10:30 am Sundays

Minister | Rev. Martha Munson

Director of Religious Education | Rev. Lori Staubitz

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

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