



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

March 2018

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Sunday Services | March 2018

March 4 | *Nurturing the Spirit.* What nurtures your spirit, both in your “normal” day-to-day life and in those times when you’re in real pain and feeling alone? In this next in a series of sermons on spiritual practices, we’ll look at a variety of practices and how they can deepen our lives.
—Rev. Peggy Meeker

March 11 | *Voices of People of Color.* Our Worship Associates will lead us in a service that centers the voices and stories of black Unitarian Universalists, giving us an opportunity to listen deeply to some of the stories in our movement that have not been heard.
—Worship Associates

March 18 | *Young and Old (and So On) Together.* This service, including a Child Dedication and Teacher Recognition, will celebrate our diversity as a community of different ages, different skills, and different worship styles.
—Rev. Peggy Meeker and Rev. Michelle Yates

March 25 | *Warm Fuzzies and Stewardship.* In the midst of our stewardship campaign, we’ll take a light-hearted (and truth-telling) look at generosity and sharing, stinginess and worry, and giving and receiving. We’ll also welcome some new members into our community!
—Rev. Peggy Meeker and a Fine Cast of Characters





Pastor's Perspective

Message from
The Reverend Peggy Meeker

Can't Hold Back the Spring

I first heard this phrase—Can't Hold Back the Spring—about twenty years ago as the title of a book about Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church in downtown Rochester. The phrase referred to the amazing growth of that church in the 1990s (from two hundred parishioners to three thousand) as the church engaged in “taking risks, reaching out to the poor, and welcoming all people to God’s table.” That quote is from Spiritus Christi’s website. Welcoming all people meant giving women greater roles on the altar, inviting non-Catholics to Communion, and celebrating the lives and relationships of lesbian and gay people. By the end of the decade, under pressure from the Vatican, the Catholic Diocese ended these practices, and 1100 members left to form Spiritus Christi, now a thriving, independent Catholic church (and one of a growing number around the country).

Today this phrase comes to mind as I think of the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, who I suspect may be about to change the world. These students grew up knowing about school shootings. The Columbine shooting happened before they were born. They grew up practicing active shooter drills. And now we are hearing their voices. As I write this column, they are speaking out on television, radio, and social media as well as in state capitols. Our debate over gun violence and regulation will, I think, never be the same.

You can't hold back a people who have found their mission and their voice. Just like you can't hold back the spring. It will come. We may still have some wintry days, but we have felt spring already, we've seen it. I feel and see something similar here in our Journey to Justice: Facing Systemic Racism. We are stretching, searching, noticing, thinking, acting. I hear the voice that is beginning to emerge here, and I look forward to the building of the momentum that will not be held back.

There is new life coming. Blessings to you all as we move through March and into spring!

Cozy Night Supper

Submitted by Constance Valk

Friday Cozy Night Supper with Faith Development March 23: Focus on Immigration Issues

“When People of Faith Hit the Road”

A Mexican dinner, with vegetarian and vegan options, will be provided by the Harvesting Justice Social Justice Circle at 5:30 pm on March 23th to prepare us for an amazing experience led by West Cosgrove, Western New York Coordinator of Rural & Migrant Ministry.

West was the founder of an educational program Project Puente (Bridge Project) at the border of Mexico and the USA. The project literally took people from the USA across bridges into Mexico to know and experience other people, cultures, and ways of looking at the world. Participants came back to the USA transformed.

For our Faith Development portion of the evening, West will lead us through a presentation and reflection on immigration. We will look at various immigration issues from a political perspective, as well as from an economic, moral and faith perspective.

You can sign up on the Court Street bulletin board or contact Kathy Russell to reserve your spot. Thirty slots are available.



West is leading a group of college students at the border of Mexico and the USA.



Walking Together

*Submitted by The Rev. Michelle Yates,
Director of Life Span Faith
Development*

This year, in Children’s Worship and beyond, we will be exploring our Unitarian Universalist Principles which we covenant to affirm and promote. Our Faith Development theme for March is the Fifth Principle, **“The Right of CONSCIENCE and the Use of the DEMOCRATIC PROCESS Within Our Congregations and in Society at Large,”** or in our children’s version of the principles, **“We believe that all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.”**

Kenneth Collier tells us that Conscience is central in every religious tradition. It is not the voice of conventional morality. It is the voice that pulls us deeper and more directly into the worth of all. **Unitarian Universalists think of Conscience as the manifestation of our inherent worth and dignity.** It is the way that each person’s inner most being responds to the world around them. It tells us how we are connected with all, and each of us are responsible for the well-being of all. It tells us how to exercise that responsibility while retaining the humility to recognize that even when most people agree with us, we may still be wrong.

According to Earl K. Holt III, the political notion that people have a right to self-government grows out of a religious conviction that human beings have the capacity to shape their own destiny and are worthy of doing so. Democracy is more than a mechanism of governance. It is an expression of faith in the power and ability of human beings to shape their own lives.

As Unitarian Universalists, we support the Democratic Process as a way of honoring and engaging the Conscience of all. We recognize that even democracy is imperfect, and we are committed to ensure that the minority in a system possess equal rights and protections.

It can be tempting, in a theologically diverse faith like ours, to seek to establish something more safe or certain. To be able to say clearly who we are and what we believe. But it is indeed a long-standing belief of both our Unitarian and Universalist heritage to uphold Freedom of Conscience.

This month consider.... Where is your Conscience calling you to respond to and engage with the world? Look for those whose voice is not being heard or represented in democratic processes.

When you find yourself in conflict with others, consider how their conscience might be calling them.



Submitted by Lew Ward-Baker

Our Passover Seder will be held in the Clara Barton Lounge on March 30th at 6:00 pm. It will be a UU edition of the traditional family event with song and story in English and Hebrew and will include active participation by children school-age and above and a potluck dinner served around 7:15 pm. Traditional ritual foods and beverages will be provided. All guests are welcome! Sign-up for those planning to attend begins March 4th after church. To volunteer help or for more information, please contact Lew Ward-Baker via office@uuoc.org.

Illuminating Justice Film and Discussion Series

Submitted by The Rev. Michelle Yates

On the **second Sunday of the month** thru April, one or several film clips on a justice issue will be shown in the sanctuary after service at 12:00 noon. Films will last no more than 45 minutes to leave time for discussion.

Please email Rev. Michelle Yates with film, clip, or documentary ideas at edu@uuoc.org.

March 11th - Incarceration in the Criminal Justice System

April 8th - DREAMers Among Us



The Membership Committee of First Universalist Church

Submitted by Connie Valk

One of the members of the Search Committee asked us, because some of the pre-candidates were curious, “So, what does the Membership Committee do?” When we told her, she said, “Wow! I think the whole congregation needs to know this!”

Membership Committee steps into action the moment visitors step in the door, when they are greeted and offered visitor packets containing basic information about our church. Visitors who complete the visitor information card receive a follow-up phone call. If the visitor has a particular interest, Children’s Faith Development for instance, the appropriate staff or member is alerted and follows up.

Each first Sunday of the month an orientation to First Universalist and the UU faith is offered. If frequent visitors are interested in pursuing membership, they are offered the Path To Membership, coordinated with the minister.

The Path To Membership is a fun Saturday morning (**the next one is March 24th**), complete with activities, short talks regarding Faith Development, Stewardship, and Social Justice. Mid-morning, a brunch is served, where participants have an opportunity to get to know each other.

While the adults are having orientation, their children are having a grand time with a child-friendly orientation that includes a scavenger hunt in the sanctuary to locate religious symbols and a study of famous UUs, including Beatrix Potter. The children astound their parents later with their original watercolors of their favorite animals in the Beatrix Potter style. Of course, they join their parents for the brunch.

There are also some nitty-gritty things behind the scenes, like arranging for ushers and greeters, coordinating Membership Sunday, and ordering pamphlets from the UUA.

One more thing: YOU are a member of the Membership Committee, whether you know it or not. We appreciate the care you take to make visitors comfortable, your suggestions to frequent visitors to attend an orientation, and inviting them to activities like Cozy Night Suppers and the LUUnch BUUnch that help them connect. It takes a whole church community to have a strong Membership Committee. Thanks for being a part of it.



MSC Report: Interview Time!

Submitted by the Search Committee

We have begun the most exciting part of our search—interviewing ministers! In January, we received the names of ministers who expressed interest in First Universalist after studying the materials we had prepared. In turn, we read the ministers' packets and listened to sample sermons. From this group of applicants, we chose ministers to interview. After interviewing ministers in Zoom online conferences, we chose ministers to interview in person during February and March. To prevent jeopardizing ministers' relationships with their current congregations, we can't share with you the ministers' names, numbers, or characteristics, but we can say we are impressed with the ministers and are enjoying getting to know them. In April we hope to name one candidate for the whole church to meet and interview. Please keep your schedule open for Candidating Week, May 12-20th, when church members can meet the candidate at various events. Especially plan to attend the services on Sunday, May 13th, and Sunday, May 20th, when the candidate will preach. And plan to stay after the service on May 20th to vote on whether to call the candidate as our settled minister. In the meanwhile, we're doing our best to represent you!

Chili Cook Off!



Submitted by William Elwell

An uptick of Internet searches for chili recipes on the Internet and recipe boxes in countless homes of members and friends of First Universalist Church of Rochester has been noted. **YES! THE ANNUAL CHILI COOK OFF** is scheduled for March 11th after the Sunday service.

The event brings out the best in friendly rivalry to be named Chili Champion. Not quite as impressive as an Olympic event or winning a Super Bowl; nevertheless, the contest makes for good times shared by good people and is wildly popular.

The contest is open to anyone who attends First Universalist as a member, friend, or occasional guest. This reflects our principle of the inherent worth of all humans. So, get out your cookbooks, google recipes on the internet or get creative in the kitchen. Enter the contest by contacting Bill Elwell if you want to highlight your culinary skills.

2018 Stewardship News

Submitted by Richard Reed and Ann Rhody

THUS DO WE COVENANT

Perhaps the most important word in this year's Stewardship theme is 'WE.' We are the ones who covenant. We are the ones who must bring a message of hope to the world. We are the ones who reach out to help one another; and yes, we are the ones who care for this community of faith.

Just after St. Patrick's Day you will be receiving your pledge information by mail. We ask that you look through it and either renew your commitment or begin anew to support our programs, ministries, and our mission here at First Universalist. Your pledge will support the 2018-2019 budget year.

We ask that your pledge card be returned by Stewardship Sunday, April 8th. Your pledge card can be mailed in the enclosed envelope, dropped in the Sunday offering basket, put in the receptacle in the hallway at church, or you can pledge online at uuoc.org.

It is our honor to serve as your 2018 Stewardship co-chairs, and to be a part of this beloved community. If you should have any questions or you do not receive your pledge packet, please contact one of us.

Finance

Submitted by Ann Rhody

We CARE about Fiscal Responsibility here at First Universalist!

From time to time, it's healthy to have an audit of the church's finances. After all, the funds of the church belong to the congregation and are meant to support our mission. We all want to make sure that the finances of the church are being handled responsibly.

While a traditional "audit" focuses on examining financial statements and verifying fund balances, the board and finance team elected to go with a process called CARE (Church Administrative Review and Evaluation) conducted by a CPA. In this process, the examiner looks at our fiscal practices. Who is authorized to write checks? Deposit funds? Spend money? Is there a system of checks and balances so that irregularities can be found and investigated?

I'm happy to report that the CARE process conducted by Heveron & Company yielded some good answers: we are doing many, many things right, and there are a few things we could be doing better. If you are interested in looking at the report, you can request that a copy be emailed to you, or there is a hard copy in the office. Looking ahead.....

It's almost time for us to start building the 2018-2019 budget! The finance team takes great ideas, combines them with information about how income and expenses have trended over the past several years, puts them together with support from the congregation, and that's how budgets are born! If you have questions or ideas about the budget process or would like to participate in the development, please contact finance chair Ann Rhody via office@uuoc.org.

Roc/ACTS NEWS

Submitted by Shirley Bond

Roc/ACTS had their annual retreat January 8th. We all received a packet with some interesting information and misinformation we (white people) have all acquired. I thought I would dedicate this month's article to some of those misconceptions.



Thursday Lunchtime Concerts

The *Eastman at Washington Square* concert will be here at First Universalist Church every Thursday during March. Join us on the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd starting at 12:15 pm and ending at approximately 12:45 pm. Brown bag lunches are welcome during the performances, and admission is free.

For more information and the schedule, visit www.esm.rochester.edu/community/events/lunchtime

Social Justice Plate

Submitted by Shirley Bond



February's Social Justice Plate offering went to Metro Justice. Metro Justice has been in existence for 52 years relying on community support. It works! Thank you for your support!

Im Colorblind: People are just people. I don't see color, we're all just human. Character, not color, is what counts with me.

Reality Check: By saying that we are not different and that we don't see color, we are also saying that we don't see whiteness. This denies experiences of racism and experiences of white privilege. Black people don't mind if you notice they are black!

Bootstrap Theory: America is the land of opportunity, built by rugged individuals, where anyone with grit can succeed if they just pull up hard enough on their bootstraps.

Reality Check: This has allowed generations to deny the impact of either oppression or privilege on any person's chance for success.

The White Knight or White Missionary: We know just where to build your new community center. You would be better served by traveling to our suburban training centers. We organized a used clothing drive, where do you want us to put the clothes?

Reality Check: It is a paternalistic assumption that we well-meaning white people know what is best for people of color as if they do not know how to make their own decisions. It is about control.

The St. Joseph's website is a great resource for this information. As First Universalist continues on our Structural Racism journey let us remember that we cannot rest from anti-racism work. One of the elemental privileges of being white is my freedom to retreat from the issue. If things get tough I can always take a break.

On a side note, please put April 22nd on your calendar as that is the Spring fundraiser for the Roc/ACTS dinner. More information will be forthcoming. Next time you see me I may have tickets in my hand so either run or purchase. I prefer you purchase. Watch out for Robert Remley also.

Living Our Values, Making A Difference

Concert to End Gun Violence – Sept. 24, 2017

On Sunday, Sept. 24, 2017, Rochester joined more than 180 cities across the USA to hold free concerts to End Gun Violence. The event, held at First Universalist Church, was a partnership among the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Eastman Community Music School and First Universalist Church. The concert, emceed by WXXI's Julia Figueras, featured 14 performances.



John Akers poured his heart out in song.

Our own Howard Spindler and Glenda Brayman performed *Au Pays Ou Se Fait La Guerre* by Henri Duparc.





Richard Reed and Kitty Forbush joined about 50 fellow church members and other Rochesterians at the concert.



One of the visuals at the Concert to End Gun Violence: Stop Bad Apple Gun Dealers, #StopBadApples

RAIHN* by the Numbers

Submitted by Marti Eggers

100 - homeless families in Rochester on any given night
42% - homeless children under the age of 6

RAIHN was established in 2003 to help meet the need for family emergency shelter. In 14 years RAIHN has served;

- 423 - Families
- 1,323 - Individuals
- 772 - Children
- 13 - Host congregations**
- 34 - Support Congregations
- 80 - Volunteers fill each Host Week
- 400 - Volunteer hours each Host Week

Statistics for 2017 -

- 33 - families served in shelter
- 100 - individuals, including
 - 33 adult females
 - 10 adult males
 - 57 children
- 4,170 - bed nights
- 12,510 - meals
- 43 - days average length of stay
- 82% of families graduated into permanent housing
- 61% of families in program were employed or in school
- 85% of families remain housed 1 year later (2016-2017)
- 273 - families called for shelter and could not be accepted due to being at-capacity at the time of request
- 27 - families served in aftercare
 - 3 - evictions/returns to homelessness prevented due to after-care services

* RAIHN - Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, a not-for-profit, interfaith, culturally-competent organization that assists homeless families to achieve **sustainable independence** by supporting them with tailored services including shelter, food, personalized case management at the Day Center, and a diverse network of caring volunteers.

** First Universalist is a Host Congregation. Four times a year, for a week at a time, the church serves as a safe shelter for families who are temporarily homeless. Volunteers from First Universalist, assisted by members of partner faith communities, prepare and serve hot evening meals, provide evening and overnight presence and breakfasts before the families return to their jobs or to the Day Center.

What Does the Eco-Justice Group Do?

Submitted by Sarah Singal

We are individuals committed to trying to change our own life styles, our church's practices, and our smaller and greater communities' decisions to promote sustainability of our planet. We strive to identify specific actions, instead of just talk. Last year, our first year together, our focus was on recycling, and this year we have added a focus on energy and reducing our carbon footprint. Our activities peak in April, Earth Month, and on Earth Day, April 22nd. Let's try to be especially good stewards of the earth then. Here's a run-down of our activities. Please add them to your April calendar!

April 1st, Easter. Think green. Plan a garden or join the garden committee. Start or keep on saving items for Eco-park.

April 8th, Recycling Demo at Coffee Hour. We all still have much to learn! Criteria for recycling plastic wraps at stores—NOT the city recycling bins—are posted at Wegman's entrances and at plasticfilmrecycling.org. Other participating stores are TOPS, PriceRite, Walmart, and Target but check with each store for what wraps are accepted.

April 15th, Drop-In Discussion. A representative from Suncommon will show how they evaluate two individuals' opportunities for solar energy in their homes. Come with questions about solar energy and to find out more about the Eco-Justice Group.

April 22nd, Earth Day. The service theme will be renewable energy. Songs, a Message for All Ages, the sermon, and other elements of the service will carry the theme. Note: actors, especially children, and walk-ons are invited to participate. And does anyone have a woman's blond wig?

April 28th, Saturday. An Eco-park excursion will leave from our church parking lot at 10:00 am. For first timers we will show you how easy and amazing the operation is.

Please check the April Outlook for links to various Earth Day activities in Rochester. And anyone who would like to join the Eco-Justice Group, please do! We meet the first Sunday of the month at 12:00 noon in the Chalice Room.



Second Level Training and RAIHN Week Coming Up

Submitted by Christine DeGolyer

Have you volunteered for RAIHN and attended our Volunteer Orientation? Would you like to learn more about issues our families face that shape their experiences, such as culture, trauma, and poverty? Then please attend this interactive discussion with other volunteers as we increase our understanding about our guests' lives and share our own RAIHN stories and experiences on Thursday, March 22nd from 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm at Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1010 East Ave, Rochester. RSVP at (585) 506-9050 or coordinator@raihn.org.

During RAIHN Week, April 15th - 22nd, 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 via office@uuroc.org. If you would like to learn more before volunteering, we have opportunities to "shadow" experienced volunteers.

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

Book Group

Submitted by Sarah Singal and Shirley Bond

The Book selection this month is "LaRose," by Louise Erdrich. Throughout her work Erdrich shows how her Native American characters took from the white man what could be of use, while holding on to the parts of their heritage that would enable them to survive.

Just a reminder that one does not have to have read the book to come to the discussion group. We will meet upstairs in the Chalice Room at noon on March 25th.

For questions please contact Shirley Bond or Sarah Singal via office@uuroc.org. Hope to see you there.

Drop-in Discussion Schedule

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Drop-in discussions are held each Sunday morning 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.

March 4 | Pursuing Justice in the Empire State. Dick Gilbert, President of Interfaith Impact of New York State (IINYS), will lead a discussion on the problems and possibilities for justice in our state. IINYS is a recognized member of the UUA State Advocacy Network. Among issues to be addressed are health care, voting reform, environmental stewardship, criminal justice reform and church/state separation—and how we get involved.

March 11 | Deep State. What is a deep state? Does the USA have one? Phil Ebersole will present some information, express some opinions and lead a discussion.

March 18 | Ageless Friendships. Join Janus Mary Jones as she describes her experiences, and leads a discussion, of the rewards of volunteering at her local nursing home as a one-on-one visitor. Janus Mary has experienced friendship and humor and witnessed profound grief from residents, many of whom are living with dementia or have never had a visitor.

March 25 | Justice and Accountability. Community activists are striving to create a Police Accountability Board, which will be responsible to the community and not the Rochester Police Department and be sufficiently powerful in conducting meaningful investigations of police misconduct. Shirley Bond will present information and lead a discussion.

April 1 | Open Forum Discussion. We'll meet and talk without a set topic. Phil Ebersole will facilitate.

If you wish to have a topic discussed or, better still, are willing to lead a discussion, speak to Phil Ebersole.

Save the Dates for the UUA

2018 Seaway UU Spring Gathering:

This is the event that used to be known as DA. It will be held Friday and Saturday, April 13-14th, at the First UU Society of Syracuse. The theme of the gathering is "You Can't Spell Church without J-O-Y." Come hear First Unitarian's Sheila Schuh present the Gould Discourse, and enjoy worshipping, learning, and connecting with UUs from around the state. For more information and to register, click here - <https://www.uua.org/central-east/events/region/2018-cer-st-lawrence-seaway-spring-gathering>.

General Assembly:

This year's GA - *All Are Called* - will be held June 20-24th in Kansas City, MO. Information is available at - <https://www.uua.org/calendars/uua/general-assembly-2018>.



Empty Bowls Project

Thanks to all who contributed to the **EMPTY BOWLS PROJECT** by participating in the February Cozy Night Supper to hear Heather Newton, from Foodlink, speak of their Initiatives, gave a donation to Foodlink, and took home a lovely bowl donated by MAG Creative Workshop faculty, students and friends. Thanks also to those of you who made a donation and took home a bowl after February services. The significance of this project is not only the **\$550** raised for Foodlink as well as information gained about hunger and programs in the Rochester community, but self-awareness. This was eloquently expressed by one participant. "Just want you to know that my empty bowl is my new every-morning oatmeal dish. It will help me remember each morning to be grateful for the food I have each day."

A tour to Foodlink is planned for May and a sign-up sheet is on the hall bulletin board.

Interfaith IMPACT of NYS (IINYS)

Rochester Chapter

is pleased to invite you to attend our
Annual Legislative Briefing
**"A Better Prescription
for Health Care in New York State"**

Sunday, March 11, 2018 from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Road

Speakers

Harry Bronson, NYS Assemblyman
Carol Tegas, Executive Director, Finger Lakes
Performing Provider System
Rohith Palli, Rochester Campaign
for New York Health

The health care issue is ever changing and may be different in March than it is today. The current situation in New York State; status of health care in the legislature; and the case for single payer, universal health care will be discussed by the panelists.

Interfaith IMPACT of NYS (IINYS) is the progressive religious community's voice for justice and human rights in New York State. We advocate for state policies that will improve the lives of all New Yorkers while stressing the moral and ethical values of these policies.

Please consider becoming a member of IINYS, at any level. Your contribution will help to continue the important work of IINYS. Donations can be made at <http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org/Donations.html> to either our 501C4 action arm or to the tax deductible 501C3 Interfaith IMPACT Foundation (518) 463-5652.

There will a Q & A after the formal presentations and a reception will follow immediately after the closing remarks. This event is free and an extremely important program.

For more information contact Judy Schwartz, Chair IINYS Planning Committee, Rochester Chapter at (585) 442-5111.

*Interfaith IMPACT of New York State (IINYS), Inc.
works for the common good through progressive
religious advocacy with the State Legislature, Executive
Chamber and State agencies.*

Auction Buffet 2018

Submitted by Joyce Gilbert

Reserve your place at the table! Ten tickets are still available for the annual fund-raising buffet!

Join us for the Auction Buffet 2018 in the Clara Barton Lounge at the First Universalist Church on Sunday, May 6th, starting at 5:30 pm. There will be a wide-ranging menu, from Herbed Tomato Soup through Spiced Apple and Havarti-Stuffed Turkey to Home-Made Zabaglione, with tasty stops in between, accompanied by a selection of beverages. Vegetarians will have choices. Only \$25 per person. Please make checks payable to First Universalist Church, with notation Auction #H8.

There may even be live music!

Sign up in the Clara Barton Lounge after services throughout March - until all places have been filled. Questions? Contact Paula Marchese, Katherine Flynn, or Joyce Gilbert.



Weekly Peace Vigils

Submitted by Hal Bauer

Join us at Goodman Street & East Avenue for our weekly, Sunday Noon, PEACE VIGILs from 12:00 - 1:00 pm, at the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC), where you can warm up & enjoy Science too. Make your sign sharing your views or choose one of many. Please - dress appropriately for the weather.

Questions? Contact Hal Bauer, Springwater Farm: (585) 335-2325.

A Unitarian-Universalist Good Read

DARING DEMOCRACY: Igniting Power, Meaning and Connection for the America We Want
by Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen (2017)

Submitted by Phil Ebersole

Democracy means rule of the people. But in practice, the USA is an oligarchy.

Public opinion polls show that Americans want control of rising drug prices, expanded Social Security benefits, action to control climate change, and rules to keep big money out of politics. But the public's wishes do not prevail.

This is not just how things happened to work out. *Daring Democracy*, which is one of the two UUA Good Reads for 2017-2018, shows that there has been an anti-democratic movement in the United States that has been working for decades.

The anti-democratic movement has three elements;

- Use the power of money to dominate political discourse.
- Use the power of money to influence elections and political decisions.
- Use the power of government to restrict the right to vote.

The beginning can be traced to 1971 when future Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell called on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to mobilize to counteract what he saw as threats to the American business system. This required a systematic effort to roll back labor union power, high taxes on the rich, welfare for the poor, and regulations on health, safety and the environment.

The Koch, Olin, DeVos and other wealthy families provided funds for such organizations as the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, among others, supposedly independent research organizations, but dedicated to promoting a particular agenda.

The Federalist Society has promoted a right-wing judicial philosophy and appointment of conservative judges. The James Madison Center for Free Speech has won court decisions overturning restrictions on money in politics. The American Legislative Exchange Council provides right-wing state legislators with draft legislation on any subject.

Alternative news media, such as Fox News, Breitbart News, and Sinclair Broadcasting, were given free rein during the Reagan administration with the overturning of the Fairness Doctrine. The rationale was to offset supposed liberal bias in journalism and academia. Bias is in the eye of the beholder, and nobody is an unbiased judge of their own bias. But most scholars and journalists in the earlier era did try to follow professional standards. The corporatist movement only believes in ideology, not objective standards.

They have changed the climate of opinion. Things once taken for granted, such as public education, are now in question. Things one thought unthinkable, such as privatizing Social Security, are now on the table.

Opposition to the corporate agenda is diminished because candidates for public office depend on big donors. They look forward to second careers as lobbyists or corporate executives after they retire, as do their staffs and appointees in the executive branch.

Along with the increase in money power comes a deliberate attempt to restrict people power. The Republican State Leadership Committee in 2010 waged a campaign called RED-MAP that gave them control of both houses of state legislatures in 25 states. They used this power to redraw state legislative and congressional districts so as to lock in their power, and it worked.

Republicans in state legislatures also moved to restrict the franchise. One technique was to require voter ID, and then create obstacles to getting the ID, which disproportionately hurts poor people and working people. Under various pretexts, voting rolls are purged of characteristically black and Hispanic names.

State legislatures are increasingly preempting local laws—overriding local minimum wage laws, for example, or bans on hydraulic fracking.

Lappé and Eichen think the solution to the anti-democratic movement is a renewed democratic movement. It would operate in public, not in secret. Its power would come from citizens operating at the grass roots, not a corporate elite. Such money as is needed would come from small donations.

They think public financing of elections would help a lot. They want financial disclosure of political activity, elimination of the government-lobbyist revolving door and an end to gerrymandering, in order to restore people power.

Their models for grass-roots political activity include the Rev. William J. Barber's Moral Monday movement, the Movement for Black Lives and their own Democracy Initiative.

The situation for American democracy is not hopeless. Human action brought about the situation we now are in. Human action can create a new situation.

Copies of this book are available for borrowing and buying in the First Universalist library and bookstore, which are open in the Clara Barton lounge on Sundays during coffee hour.

I wrote a longer review on my web log at <https://philebersole.wordpress.com/2017/10/16/the-anti-democracy-movement-in-america/>.



Coffee Hour

Submitted by William Elwell

Sunday Coffee Hour needs new volunteers. Too few people are being asked to do this yeoman service. 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 via office@uuroc.org.

Church Library and Bookstore



Submitted by Phil Ebersole

The First Universalist church library and bookstore are open each Sunday during coffee hour for browsing, borrowing and buying.

We have an extensive collection of books of liberal religious interest arranged along the wall shelves in order of Dewey decimal number. They may be borrowed for up to four weeks by any church member or by any friend who has attended long enough to get a name tag. If you have overdue books you're not done with yet, they can be renewed.

We have a collection of books ordered from the UUA Bookstore, which are for sale at half price. They are on the outward shelves of the freestanding bookcase. On the bottom shelf are used UUA books for sale for 50 cents. We have books donated by members, which also are for sale for 50 cents each. They are on the inward shelves of the freestanding bookcase.

If you have books in good condition that you think others would like to read, we welcome donations. If you have a handful or bagful of books to donate, please leave them on the library desk. If you have multiple boxes of books you'd like to donate, please speak to Phil Ebersole, and he'll come to your place and make a selection.

We have shelves of donated children's books, which are free for the taking at any time. We have a magazine exchange rack, with magazines that are free for the taking at any time. We often have overflow books in boxes along the entrance ramp at the Court Street entrance, which are free for the taking at any time. But if you want to borrow or buy a book, we ask that you please wait for Sunday coffee hour.

If you like people and like books, you might want to consider joining the Library Committee. Speak to Phil Ebersole or any Library Committee member.

House Committee News

Submitted by Tom Ruganis

The lock on the parking lot door has been slowly deteriorating. We have reached the point that we have decided to replace it. There are many keys in circulation, some of them copies of copies that contribute to the wear and tear on the lock. In order to improve security and ease of use, we have decided that new keys will be generated. The first step will be to determine who currently needs keys. Once that is done and the new keys are distributed the lock will be changed. This process is planned for completion sometime in April. In the meantime please be patient with the difficulty to turn and the sticking of the key on removal. More to follow shortly.

An additional quote was obtained for storm windows in the Minister's Office. A final decision will be made soon.

Hot water has returned to the kitchen sink. A washer on the shut-off broke apart and clogged the hot water side of the faucet. Our sexton saved the expense of a plumber's visit by correcting the problem.

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 via office@uuroc.org. The Committee is currently: Tom Ruganis, Chair, Sarah Singal, Marcy Klein, Michael Scott, Ed Deller and Shirley Bond. We would love to hear from you!



Congregational Circle at First Universalist Church

Spiritual Direction at First Unitarian

Spiritual direction is a way of deepening your spiritual life through exploration of life's profound questions: Who am I? Why am I here? How can I nurture a connection with that which is larger than myself, or with the holy? How can I bring my life into alignment with my spiritual values? Spiritual direction involves two people: a "director" and a seeker who is looking for a companion/guide along the way. They meet, usually monthly, to plunge into whatever spiritual questions arise for the seeker. The spiritual director's role is to listen, to question, to hold with compassion, and to offer guidance.

Several spiritual directors are available at our sister congregation, First Unitarian. Spiritual direction is not for people in crisis who might benefit from pastoral care, nor for those who would be better served in a psychotherapy setting. Spiritual directors typically charge an hourly fee of \$40-\$80, and fees are often negotiable. For more information, contact Joy Collins at joy@revjoycollins.com or Libby Moore at libbymoore81@gmail.com.

Project Team Update

Submitted by Dolores Da Lomba

It's been a rough year—for our country, for the UUA, for our church and for some of personally. But still we, as a congregation, not only persist, but move on. We are fortunate to have the calm, steady hand of our Interim Minister, Peggy Meeker as well as the inspiring programs our Director of Life Span Faith Development, Michelle Yates, and the Adult Development Ministry have offered us. The church is buzzing with committee activities, ministries, reflections, discussions and music. And more is on the way.

The Project Team is working on an Action Plan for our congregation to deal with the issue of systemic racism as approved by the Board and the congregation. Between now and the end of the

church year in June, we have planned activities that will better enlighten us about the chosen topic. We will read and listen and discuss and, hopefully, learn much more about systemic racism in the months ahead.

We have begun to talk about activities for our upcoming church year and we want to hear from you. What would help you get a deeper understanding of the issue? Are there any particular topics that you would like emphasized in relationship to systemic racism? Perhaps education, jobs, housing, etc.? Do you have questions you need answered? Do you have specific concerns as to how we engage with or support a community organization? This is meant to be a church-wide activity and we want your input. Let us know if you have a special interest, talent, or experience that will help our church progress toward its goal. Your input is not only welcome but needed.

For your convenience, there will be a suggestion box in the Clara Barton Lounge. We encourage you to leave your written suggestions in the box for now. We will be investigating the possibility of an on-line suggestion box, but in the meantime, pen or pencil will be better than verbal suggestions that might not be remembered.

For those for whom distance, time, or family obligations prohibit participation in as many activities as you would like, all is not lost. Take a look at the calendar on Rev. Meeker's office door. It lists significant events in the history of racism. Or see what the library (ours or the public library) has to offer. We'll be making recommendations for your reading and are interested in hearing your experience in reading the book and/or your recommendations for further reading.

Our first group discussion will be "*Waking Up White: and Finding Myself in the Story of Race.*" The discussion will be held in the Chalice Room from 12:15 pm to 1:45 pm on March 18th. This is the same book that First Unitarian discussed recently but that many of us were unable to attend. Now's your chance. Monroe County Library has 16 copies.

Another good read (on your own): Ta-Nehisi Coates, "*We Were Eight Years in Power.*"

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 Xiaoyu 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 2017 - 2018

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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>.



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