



CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The First Universalist Society of Central Square

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

3243 Fulton Street (Route 49, near Route 11)
Post Office Box 429, Central Square, New York 13036-0429
Telephone: 315-668-6821
Church Web site: <http://www.centralsquareuu.com>
Our church building is handicapped accessible.

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the First Universalist Society of Central Square is to be a welcoming, diverse congregation, which values spiritual growth and service to the local and world community.

Andrea Abbott, Student Minister
Rita Thornton, Music Coordinator
Robert Haskell, President

315-635-7122
315-699-4824
315-635-5294

The Rev. Libbie Stoddard, Minister Emerita
Ronna Schindler, RE Chairperson
Nancy Hallock, Vice President

315-343-4352
315-623-7685
315-675-8357

DECEMBER 2011

STUDENT MINISTER SNIPPET

What is there to say about December except Christmas? Getting the house ready, putting up decorations, writing cards, receiving cards, invitations, cooking, baking, shopping, shopping, shopping, parties, dinners, gift exchanges, Christmas pageants, concerts, caroling, candles, bells, and possibly even whistles. What else could anyone think about in December?

Well, of course, there are lots of things to think about in December besides what has become our national holiday season. The world still turns with its usual amounts of obligations and responsibilities despite, or, it sometimes seems, to spite, the holiday. People still get sick, cars break down. People lose jobs, get new jobs. People fall in love, fall out of love. Babies are born and people die, all without regard for the season. Of course, for some this season is not their holiday season and the constant reminders of holiday time, no matter how secular, can increase their sense of distance from the mainstream of this society. And, for others, Christmas may not bring fond memories at all but only memories of deprivation or depression.

But I would not counsel an inch less of tinsel. We need holidays. We need times of giving and feasting and merriment and singing as much as we need times of sober duty. I would just like to remind everyone that this season could also be seen as a celebration of compassion. For those whose holiday this is not, for those for whom holidaying comes hard, let us extend the hand of friendship and understanding. But ring the bells and light the lights as well.

— Andrea Abbott

Please have articles for the next newsletter to Bob Haskell by no later than NOON on THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29. Bob would be grateful if everyone would have articles to him as soon as possible and not wait until the last minute. His e-mail address is rhaskell@twcny.rr.com, his postal address is 29 Grove Street, Baldwinsville, NY 13027-2332; his telephone number is 315-635-5294.

THE REVEREND WEISSBARD TO SPEAK ON DECEMBER 4

The Rev. David Weissbard has chosen “The House and the Lineage of David” as his sermon topic when he preaches at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 4.

He writes, “December seems like a good month to turn to the Hebrew/Christian Scriptures. This is peripherally a sermon about Jesus, since part of the claim to his legitimacy is based on his supposed (but doubtful) relationship to King David. But the sermon is not about him but about our cultural hero David and how what we know about him speaks both to the questions of Scriptures and of leadership.”

A VERY RENAISSANCE CHRISTMAS

On Sunday, December 4, a local Renaissance group will present a program in our church that includes Christmas carols of that period as well as some history of the Christmas tree and other traditions. The program promises to be entertaining as well as educational.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. It is free and open to the public. Invite your friends and family. There will be refreshments to follow.

There will be a potluck luncheon after the church service and preceding the Renaissance program. Hope to see everyone there.

– Ann Peterson, UU Circle secretary-treasurer

UU CIRCLE BAKE SALE

The UU Circle will hold an in-house bake sale on Sunday, December 18. This is a good time to bake your own favorites and to purchase some of those specialties that our fellow members are so good at.

There will be a sign-up sheet in the dining room.

– Ann Peterson, UU Circle secretary-treasurer

DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUALITY

The Adult Religious Education Program for 2011-12 will offer one more workshop in its three-part series on “Discovering Your Spirituality.”

It is titled “Dreamwork and Spirituality.” Led by Arnold Hook. Date and Time: January 7, 2012, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Location: Dining Room. There is a sign-up sheet.

If you have questions, please contact Arnold Hook by e-mail at ahook@twcny.rr.com or by telephone at 315-635-7122.

DRUM CIRCLE

We will hold the usual Drum Circle from 6 until 8’ish p.m. on Friday, December 9. If you have not

heard the didgeridoo played, this will be a good time to hear its unique sound.

We have a very warm and inviting group of drummers and drums to share.

Snacks will be provided.

We had 20 people at our Drum Circle in November, including some drummers from May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse.

Hope to see you on December 9.

– Ann Peterson

BOOK CLUB

The Book Club meetings on Sunday morning don’t seem to be working; people want to visit, and they should. Could we meet on a week night?

Please let me know your opinion, and your ideas for our next read. The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) has chosen a book for the 2011 “Common Read.” I borrowed the book from the public library and enjoyed it. It is “Acts of Faith” by Eboo Patel. You can find out more about it at Beacon Press. Maybe it could be our next selection.

Again, let me know what you think. I am out of town until December 5 but will check my e-mails. My e-mail address is njhallock@gmail.com. Thank you.

– Nancy Hallock

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote acceptance of one another
and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Outreach (Social Justice) Committee meeting on November 13 was used to discuss the “Water Issue” and how to get more congregational involvement in this committee. No decision was made on choosing a charity to support.

This will be our focus when the committee meets again at 9 a.m. on Sunday, December 11. One new member will be there, and I welcome all to attend. Melanie Cutillo has proposed a great program to sponsor, and I will have an update about it at that time.

– Nancy Hallock, Outreach Committee chairperson

GREEN MINUTE: BOTTLED WATER CLAIMS ARE ALL WET

According to Peter Gleick, author of “Bottled and Sold,” between 25 and 45 percent of the bottled water sold in the United States originates as tap water. Has a bottler fooled you with extravagant claims such as the following?

“It’s oxygenated.” This is supposed to improve athletic performance, but scientists who tested five brands of oxygen-enriched water found no performance boost. No surprise since a single breath contains more oxygen than a whole bottle of this type of water.

“It’s a diet aid.” Yes and no. Drinking lots of water can promote weight loss but you get that advantage from any type of water, whether it’s enriched with vitamins and minerals or not.

Then there are the waters that make you wonder why you would buy them once you read the label. Many vitamin and antioxidant waters contain as many as 33 grams of sugar per 20-ounce bottle. In response to a lawsuit, one bottler offered as its defense, “No consumer could reasonably be misled into thinking that (its) water is a healthy beverage.” When the name of the water contains the word “vitamin” what else are consumers to think?

Think your water came from a certain area known for natural springs or glaciers? Probably not. Waters with names that include “Arctic,” “Springs,” “Glacier” and “Natural” have come from New Jersey, Ohio, Texas and Tennessee.

Concerned about buying locally? Then don’t buy waters that are shipped from Norway, Fiji, France or New Zealand. Water has the same basic property no matter where it comes from.

Here are my two personal favorites. There is one company that says if you drink its brand of water you will be living in the “now” and in a grateful state of being. Really? Emotional peace through water? There is another that claims to be holy water and “if you are a sinner or evil in nature, this product may cause burning, intense heat, sweating, skin irritation, rashes, itchiness, vomiting, bloodshot and watery eyes, pale skin color and oral irritations.” Wow!

There is no proven difference in waters. Yes, bottled water is convenient sometimes, but the best and most economical solution is a refillable bottle you take from home. If you don’t like the taste of your water, get a filter pitcher which will take out most of the hard water and chlorine taste that some people don’t like.

This Christmas, let’s be thankful that we live in this part of the country where water is plentiful, safe and easy to get, and do the responsible thing by making use of that wonderful water instead of buying it bottled.

Merry Christmas,

– Ellen LaPine, Social Justice, Outreach Committee

SHARE MUSIC WITH OTHERS

Now is the time we hear music everywhere. Bring it to our sanctuary, to share with others. Special music is always welcomed. We rehearse Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the sanctuary. Join us!!! See you there!!!

– Rita Thornton, music coordinator

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

IT IS A HOLIDAY TRADITION

The Guest at Your Table program continues throughout this holiday season.

Thanks to your support, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) works throughout the United States and around the world to advance human rights. UUSC is an independent membership-based human-rights organization and receives no money from any government or the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Your Guest at Your Table box and “Stories of Hope” booklet introduce you to people whose lives have been changed by the work of UUSC. Each week, with family and friends, you can focus on a different person’s story of hope as you sit down to meals together and consider your many blessings.

This week, meet Carmen Molina, a Guatemalan woman who witnessed many injustices over two decades working on a banana plantation. Moved to take action, Carmen joined and then became a leader in UUSC partner STITCH, an organization that helps workers defend their rights. Think about what it means to a woman such as Carmen to be able to stand up and become a leader in her workplace, helping support and connect other women. And consider what even a small gift to this Guest at Your Table will mean to the members of STITCH who are organizing female workers in Central America and the United States.

You can learn more about UUSC’s work to protect workers’ rights online at www.uusc.org/economic_justice.

Your generosity with the Guest at Your Table is tax deductible! Be sure to complete the form on your box.

You are also asked to consider taking an additional step, and become a UUSC member, or renew your membership, at this time.

And remember, gifts of \$100 are eligible to be matched by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, New York, to double the impact of your support!

If you did not pick up a Gift at Your Table box on Sunday, November 20, you may still pick up one at church.

If you would prefer not to take home a box, you may give a check to Nancy Hallock, our congregation’s Gift at Your Table program coordinator, or support UUSC directly online at www.uusc.org/givetoguest. Donations received online will be automatically credited to our congregation.

VIDEO DISCUSSION GROUP

The Video Discussion Group will view the first half of part 2 of “The Mormons” when it meets in the Goettel Room at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 2.

“American Experience” and “Frontline,” two of PBS’ most acclaimed series, join forces to present “The Mormons,” a documentary series about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Part 2 looks at the contemporary realities of the Mormon church.

Again, the group plans to have supper at the Akropolis Restaurant on Route 11 in Central Square at 5:30 p.m. the same day. Please let Janie Garlow know at mjgarlow@aol.com or at 315-436-2238 by Thursday, December 1, if you plan to attend the supper so that she may make a reservation.

Everyone is invited to attend.

COFFEE AND CHAT

Women and men of the church will gather for Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread on Route 31 in Clay at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 21.

All are welcome to join in casual conversation and to enjoy coffee or tea and other goodies.

The women’s and men’s groups meet separately.

For more information about the women’s group, you may contact Nancy Haskell.

For more information about the men’s group, you may contact Chet Perkins.

CHANTING AND MEDITATION

Anyone who is interested in chanting and meditation is invited to contact Tim Hart at timhart@aznet.com or at 315-439-2541.

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER

Christmas is fast approaching and with it our annual Christmas Day Dinner at the church. This will be our 10th year serving the community.

All are welcome to share friendship and food.

Serving time will be from noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 25.

Please consider helping in any way you can.

If you want to help prepare, serve, clean up or make pies, please contact Kurt Schindler at 623-7685.

TREASURER'S REPORT

As of the end of November, our church's Operating Budget has approximately \$5,599.76 in it. It is hard to believe that we are at the half-way point in the fiscal year, and I am happy to report that, barring any major, unforeseen expenses, we are on our way to meet the budget that was approved by the congregation at our annual meeting in June. Many people have paid up in total on their pledges, and many others are faithful in their weekly contributions to the collection plates. For whatever you feel able to contribute to the church, we are thankful.

I would also like to remind members of the church of the Fair Share fund. As a congregation, we are financially responsible for the continuation and operations of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) and the Saint Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District (SLUUD). Without our support of them, we cannot expect support in return. Our first of two contributions for this fiscal year will be made in early December.

While we are a small congregation, we are blessed to have so many people who participate within the church, and contribute financially to the church resources.

In early January, I will provide contribution statements for 2011.

Regards,
Cara Lajewski, treasurer

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There is a busy month ahead for Sunday religious education classes. With the holidays just around the corner, the children are learning about Advent, Hanukkah and Christmas.

The older children are also working on raising money for the Heifer Project. Their goal is money enough for a flock of chicks and a share of a goat. We will continue to collect ink cartridges to redeem for money toward the Heifer Project.

We continue to collect discarded eyeglasses for "Gift of Sight."

– Ronna Schindler, Religious Education Committee chairperson and older children's teacher

RECYCLE YOUR MAGAZINES

The Outreach (Social Justice) Committee is asking you to bring magazines to the church dining room on the first Sunday of each month so that you may exchange them for others.

Nancy Hallock, committee chairperson, will continue the recycling process by passing on any magazines that are left to the Public Safety Building Jail in Syracuse every two or three months.

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

NEW MEMBERS

Six people have become new members of the congregation.

Kate Cutillo, Melanie Cutillo, Lucy Stieber and Arny Stieber joined the church in a ceremony during the worship service on Sunday, November 13. Judy Tennant and George Tennant became members in a ceremony during the worship service on Sunday, November 27.

Andrea Abbott, student minister, presided over the ceremonies; Betty Figie, registrar, witnessed the signing of the registration book; Chester Perkins, who led a recent Conversation About Our Church session, presented each new member with a rose; and Robert Haskell, president, extended the right hand of fellowship.

LIONESS CLUB COLLECTING GIFTS

The Central Square Lioness Club is collecting gifts for the Lions Club Christmas baskets again.

It has been the custom of this church to donate knitted gloves, mittens, hats and scarves each year. So if you able, grab your knitting needles and have your contributions at the church by Sunday, December 11.

If you cannot complete your knitting by that date, the Lioness Club will be glad to receive your mittens, hats and scarves at any time after that for next year's Christmas gifts.

BOARD SPLINTERS

Among discussions at the Executive Board meeting on November 6, Ann Peterson, UU Circle secretary-treasurer, reported that the smorgasbord on November 5 was a success and made \$267.02 for the church. She said that on December 4, there would be a potluck lunch to be followed by a performance by a Renaissance Reenactment Group.

There was a Love Your Church (cleanup) Day on November 3 organized and carried out by Cara Lajewski. Many thanks were proffered.

Also, Arnold Hook, Administrative Committee chairperson, reported on the investigation of the rejuvenating of the stained-glass windows. It may be an expensive project to have done. Cara Lajewski, treasurer, will look into the possibility of applying for a grant for a historical site.

Nancy Hallock, Outreach Committee chairperson, said Gift-at-Your-Table boxes would be distributed on November 20.

Religious Education Workshops took place and one more is scheduled. On October 15, there was a workshop entitled "What Is Spirituality?" led by the Rev. Libbie Stoddard and Ann Peterson. On November 5, there was a workshop entitled "Mandalas and Soul Collages," led by Gracia Sears. An upcoming workshop is "Dreamwork and Spirituality," to be led by Arnold Hook on January 7.

Finally there was a discussion on the clarification of the guidelines for disbursement of money from the Random Acts of Kindness program.

The next Board meeting will be on Sunday, December 4, at 9 a.m. All congregation members are welcome to attend.

Sincerely,

Winfield Ihlow, corresponding secretary

ORNAMENT COMMUNION

The congregation will observe Ornament Communion during the worship service at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 11.

Everyone planning to attend the service is asked to bring an ornament to be placed on the tree in the sanctuary.

Andrea Abbott, student minister, will be in the pulpit.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Andrea Abbott, student minister, and Rita Thornton, music coordinator, will conduct a Christmas Eve candlelight service in the sanctuary beginning at 7 p.m. on Saturday, December 24.

The service will include traditional Christmas carols.

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

Dear Friends,

I am 82 years old and I am still learning things surprisingly new to me about the Unitarian Universalist denomination in which I have been active since the late 1950s.

During a telephone conversation I recently had with Connie Goodbread, the interim district executive of the Saint Lawrence District, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, about one of our Society's rights under congregational polity she stressed to me the continuing importance of the Cambridge Platform.

What, I thought, was the Cambridge Platform. So I went to one of the UUA Web sites, and this is what I found.

"In 1637, the settlers in what was to become the town of Dedham, Massachusetts, wanted to start a church. The problem was, the roughly 30 families didn't know each other, and, therefore, didn't know what sort of church to begin. As newcomers to the American wilderness, they had had time only to set up enough government to apportion land, build and equip homes, and begin the work of farming. Religiously, they were strangers. However, the exigencies of survival and the religious call of their hearts imposed the need for them to come together.

"To that end, they began a yearlong series of cottage meetings, each organized around discussion of a particular question. We might think that in order to know each other's religious views and needs these New England ancestors might choose topics like salvation, damnation, predestination or morality. But they did not. What they mostly discussed were matters of civil organization, for in their understanding, the church would reflect the ethic of the larger society, and what they longed for was sincere religious association based in love and founded in freedom.

"In the England they had left behind, these meetings would have been illegal. The bishops of the English churches had begun to crack down on the ministers, scholars, and lay people who looked at the lessons of the Bible stories in a political and social light. Discontent grew, not with church theology so much as with the ecclesiastical structure that dictated every facet of local church affairs. The idea of a free church took shape among the people – a church whose individual congregations were controlled by no outside authority.

"This was the sort of church the small group in Dedham, Massachusetts, decided to build. It was a church much like its neighbors, and much like the other churches that would be built in New England in the coming decades, a radically lay-led church gathered by mutual consent rather than by mutual belief, founded in covenant rather than creed, and governed by the congregation itself.

"Make no mistake, this group did not hold widely varying theological beliefs that would have made it unable to exist as a creedal church, but their belief that churches should be self-governing organizations gathered in the spirit of mutual love was paramount. This basis for gathering and governing a church by congregational determination was described ten years after the founding of the Dedham church in a document known commonly as the Cambridge Platform (or, more formally, as A Platform of Church Discipline Gathered Out of the Word of God and Agreed Upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in the Synod at Cambridge in New England).

"The Cambridge Platform defined congregational polity. Based in the Calvinist theology of the Puritans, it set out a structure for churches founded on New Testament descriptions of early churches. It defined matters of church officers, ministry, membership, and cooperation between churches. Although changes in practice were being made as early as the second generation, the Cambridge Platform remains a defining document for the denominations, including Unitarian Universalism, that continue to practice congregational polity. Of the 65 congregations that voted to ratify the Platform in 1648, 21 are members of the Unitarian Universalist Association today."

Connie Goodbread's main point: Although churches are autonomous, they should cooperate with each other and see to each other's welfare.

Bob

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against the idolatries of the mind and spirit.

The living tradition which Unitarian Universalists share draws from many sources, including spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

IF A WORSHIP SERVICE IS IN DOUBT ...

There are various ways to find out if a worship service will be held on a Sunday morning when winter weather is raging.

1. You may call Janie Garlow at 436-2238 or Chester Perkins at 668-6719.
 2. You may turn to Channel 10 television, Channel 9 television and WSYR radio. Ann Peterson, an Outreach Committee member, has made arrangements with those media outlets to broadcast a notice of any cancellation.
 3. You may check your e-mail for a message from Bob Haskell.
- The decision as to whether a worship service will be conducted will be made by 8:30 a.m.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

2 – 5:30 p.m., Supper at Akropolis. 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group will view the first half of part 2 of “The Mormons” in the Goettel Room.

4 – 9 a.m., Executive Board. 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. David Weissbard. Sermon topic: “The House and the Lineage of David.” 10:50 a.m., Religious Education. 11:45 a.m., UU Circle potluck, followed by entertainment presented by a local Renaissance reenactment group. This is the once-a-month Sunday on which you are asked by the Outreach (Social Justice) Committee to bring magazines to the church dining room so that you may exchange them for others. Nancy Hallock, committee chairperson, will continue the recycling process by passing on any magazines that are left to the Public Safety Building Jail in Syracuse every two or three months.

9 – 6 until 8’ish p.m., Drum Circle.

11 – 9 a.m., Outreach (Social Justice) Committee. 9 a.m., Spiritual Committee. 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott. Ornament Communion. 10:50 a.m., Religious Education. 1 p.m., Project Bloom’s Holiday Party. This is the once-a-month Sunday on which everyone is asked by the Outreach Committee to donate food items for the Downstairs Scottie, which later will be taken to the Food Bank at Saint Michael’s Church.

16 – 5:30 p.m., Supper at Akropolis. 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group.

18 – 9 a.m., Religious Education Committee. 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. Tanya Atwood-Adams. 10:50 a.m., Religious Education. Christmas cookie sale.

21 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.

24 – 7 p.m., Christmas Eve service led by Andrea Abbott.

25 – 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott. Christmas Day. 10:50 a.m., Religious Education. Noon to 4 p.m., Christmas Day Dinner.

“LEANING AGAINST THE WIND”

Our church has copies of the Rev. Max Coots’s book, “Leaning Against the Wind,” for sale. All you have to do is give Cara Lajewski or Bob Haskell a check or cash totaling \$13.

From 1958 to 1992 Max Coots delivered more than 1,400 sermons as minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton. In 1991 a group of UU church members selected 59 of those sermons that they agreed were some of Max’s best. First published in 1992, “Leaning Against the Wind” was re-printed twice, but for the last several years the book has been out of print. The recent fourth printing means that “Leaning Against the Wind” is once again available.

Max preached at our church for years after his retirement at Canton.

Visit our church Web site at <http://www.centalsquareuu.com>