



CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The First Universalist Society of Central Square

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Andrea Abbott, Student Minister

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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://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.

MARCH 2011

STUDENT MINISTER SNIPPET

It's a real act of faith to think that spring will actually arrive. I go through the same act of faith every winter and, miraculously, every winter ends and spring begins. I keep thinking of this as I watch the revolutions in the Middle East. I'm sure many thought that the winter of dictatorship would never end. After all, the rulers of Tunisia and Egypt and Libya thought that their icy grip would never end. The thaw has happened in Tunisia and Egypt. As I write this, we can all hope and pray that Libyans, too, will be free. None of us has a crystal ball, and none of us can say what the outcome of these revolutions will be. Will they truly bring a more humane society, or will they bring conflict, civil war and bloodshed? Whatever happens in the future, what we know now is that many people, most of them young, said that they were not going to endure what had become unendurable any more. Because of their courage, change came.

It is all too easy to fall into the grip of the winter of the mind. It is all too easy to decide that what is will always be, and because of this it is too difficult to work for change. We all need a thawing of the soul, spring rising in the spirit. What is does not have to always be. As a matter of fact, it never is. In a mass society such as ours, we can sometimes feel as though we have no voice, no ability to change the monolithic structures around us. We sometimes feel we cannot even change ourselves. But spring comes every year, and, for those willing to see the green shoots beneath the four-foot banks of snow, spring will come for us. We need to welcome it into our hearts and into our minds. We need to prepare ourselves for its gifts. We need to be ready to be swept by its power.

– Andrea Abbott

THE REVEREND WEISSBARD PICKS HIS SERMON TOPIC FOR MARCH 6

The Rev. Dave Weissbard writes:

“It is common for us to experience unfairness. Other people do things that cause us pain -- intentionally or inadvertently. Popular culture seems to link forgiveness with weakness. ‘Strong people stand their ground’. In truth, forgiveness often requires more fortitude than does grudge-holding. Our lives and the lives of those around us benefit from our honing the ability to forgive. My sermon for this month is on ‘The Point of Forgiveness’.”

Note: Please have items for the next newsletter to Bob Haskell by no later than NOON on THURSDAY, MARCH 31. His address is 29 Grove Street, Baldwinsville, NY 13027-2332; his telephone number is 315-635-5294; his e-mail address is rhaskell@twcny.rr.com

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

My Dear Friends,

Our niece, Kelly, lost her 22-year-old son, Aaron, when he was killed in an automobile accident last month. It was an unnecessary tragedy, as tragedies often are at that young age. He was not wearing his seatbelt, he was texting and he had been drinking. Knowing this doesn't make it any easier. I recently read that texting while driving is more hazardous than drinking alcohol while driving. Put them together and they are lethal. Many of us can say that it is "dumb luck" that we survived our youth. We cannot make good luck, but we can make good choices. The latter is something we try to teach our children. Good luck is a gift.

Happiness is really quite fragile. It is often ignored or taken for granted. We usually don't take the time to realize its value until it is lost. It can slip through our fingers in a heart beat. I once heard a scholar say that real happiness is when grandparents, parents and children die in that order. It is really quite simple; everything else in life is happiness. We cannot will good luck by making wise choices. But take heart, your determination to make good choices in the good and bad luck in your life will help you to grow through, not merely go through, misfortune.

With warm appreciation, love and the best of luck,
Janie

*"We are seldom happy with what we now have, but would go to pieces if we lost any part of it."
- Mignon McLaughlin*

DRUM CIRCLE

The Drum Circle will meet at 6 p.m. on the usual second Friday of the month, March 11. We will drum until about 8:30 p.m.

If you do not have a drum or a rattle, come and you will find drums, rattles and other rhythm instruments that you can borrow and experiment with at the Drum Circle. We have recently added the haunting sound of a didgeridoo to the group.

Come, bring a friend and a smile.
- Ann Peterson, adult programs,
Religious Education Committee

SENIOR CITIZEN LUNCH

Each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday a Senior Lunch is served at Saint Bernadette's Church in Constantia. The charge for lunch is \$3. A typical lunch consists of chicken and biscuit with vegetable, dessert, coffee and juice. An evening meal can also be purchased.

The program is directed by Diedre McCarthy of Central Square.
- Ann Peterson, secretary-treasurer, UU Circle

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, March 16.

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.

VIDEO DISCUSSION GROUP

The Video Discussion Group will view "Not in God's Name" when it meets in the Goettel Room at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 18.

Written, directed and produced by Paula Fouce and featuring the Dalai Lama, the film addresses the fundamental question "Why do people kill in the name of God?"

India, with a population of more than one billion, is a microcosm of our world - a cradle of many of the world's great religions. Normally eight faiths co-exist peacefully there in close quarters. Yet, at times, things go terribly wrong.

Again, we plan to have supper before the discussion group at the Akropolis Restaurant on Route 11 in Central Square. Please let Janie Garlow know at mjgarlow@aol.com or at 436-2238 by Thursday, March 17, if you plan to attend.

Everyone is invited to attend.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Random Acts of Kindness is our congregation's program to financially assist those in need, whether church members/friends or people in the wider community. Funding is provided by the congregation through a special once-a-month offering.

The next Random Acts of Kindness will be observed on Sunday, March 6.

OUTREACH (SOCIAL JUSTICE) COMMITTEE

The committee is scheduled to meet at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 13. I invite everyone to attend.

A viewing of "All Fracked Up" at the Video Discussion Group on Friday night, February 18, sparked some discussion and interest in possibly involving the community in an effort to educate our neighbors as to why we should worry about hydro-fracking and how to become active. I have a copy of 3 DVDs on this subject that are available to borrow.

I would like suggestions as to a place to pass along our magazines (after a couple of months in our exchange) before I put them in the recycle bin. I did try one senior center and nursing home in Brewerton, but they have plenty of magazines.

The present Book Club selection is due back April 1. The discussion group should meet Friday, March 25, or Sunday, March 27. Please vote for the date that works best for you: Friday evening or Sunday at 12:30.

Thank you to all who supported the Syracuse Peace Council Bowlathon!!!

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Hallock, chairperson

GREEN MINUTE: HYDROFRACKING -- LET'S SLOW IT DOWN

I've been surfing the Web again and ran across an editorial from the Post-Star which is published in Glens Falls. I am going to take just a few of the points and present them here. I encourage you all to go to http://poststar.com/news/opinion/editorial/article_5079b9f0-3718-11e0-815b-001cc4c03286.html and read the editorial. It is a good overview of why we need to slow down and really review all aspects of hydrofracking before it is allowed in New York State.

The editorial begins with a huge list of chemicals and then points out, "According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the substances listed are just a few of the more than 590 chemicals pumped into the ground during hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking, the controversial process used to extract vast amounts of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale region.

"These chemicals, some of them cancerous, are combined with sand and millions of gallons of water to create a slurry, which is forced thousands of feet into the ground at high pressure, where it is then used to create fractures in the shale and free up the reserves of natural gas trapped inside the rock. A significant amount of contaminated water and gas is brought back up to the surface through a process known as 'flowback'. That material is then stored in big lined pits or hauled away in trucks.

"Gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale region through hydrofracking has the potential to reinvigorate the upstate economy with thousands of jobs and ease our dependence on foreign oil. ...

"Full development of such a fuel project could create 280,000 jobs over 10 years. It's the American version of a Middle East oil field, right in our own backyard.

"But the Marcellus Shale region is located in a watershed that provides drinking water to 17 million people, from Philadelphia to New York City, including a significant portion of central New York.

"Fully half of New York's population draws its drinking water from unfiltered water in the watershed. ..."

The editors assert, "All residents of the state should be concerned about the potential impact of this practice on the environment and the water supply. And therefore, all residents should be concerned at the speed at which the state Department of Environmental Conservation is moving on creating new regulations for the drilling.

"The DEC is hoping to complete its regulations by June, refusing to wait for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to complete its own, more exhaustive review of the process. ..."

The editors summarize the article by saying, "Until the industry can prove that its methods won't harm New Yorkers, the state should continue to withhold all approvals for hydrofracking activities."

Several of us on the Outreach (Social Justice) Committee have been viewing documentaries on hydrofracking and plan to show one in the future to help everyone understand the pros and cons of this controversial process. However, right now one thing is extremely clear: until we really know what will happen to our precious aquifer, the state needs to slow down and get all of the facts. We encourage you to contact your state representative as well as Governor Cuomo and ask them to make sure that we have good science and research before drilling is allowed in New York State.

– Ellen LaPine, Social Justice, Outreach Committee

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.

IF IT'S SNOWING ...

To find out if church services will be held on a Sunday morning when winter weather is raging, you may call Janie Garlow at 436-2238 or Chester Perkins at 668-6719.

Ann Peterson, a member of the Outreach Committee, has also made arrangements with Channel 10 television, Channel 9 television and WSYR radio to broadcast a notice of any cancellations of worship services.

The decision as to whether services will be conducted or cancelled will be made by 8:30 a.m.

RETURN THOSE BOTTLES

You may continue to help the environment and make money for the Outreach Committee by leaving your returnable bottles at the church.

Nancy Hallock, chairperson of the Outreach Committee, is returning deposit bottles and cans for the committee treasury. Please remember to participate in this ongoing fundraiser.

MARCH CALENDAR

6 – 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. David Weissbard. Sermon title: “The Point of Forgiveness.” Random Acts of Kindness Sunday.

10 – 8:30 a.m., Spiritual Committee meets in the church dining room.

11 – 6 p.m. until 8'ish p.m., Monthly Drum Circle.

13 – 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 9:30 a.m., Outreach (Social Justice) Committee to meet. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott, student minister. 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 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, town of Clay.

18 – 5:30 p.m., Supper at the Akropolis Restaurant, Route 11, Central Square. 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group will view “Not in God's Name” in the Goettel Room.

20 – 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. Libbie Stoddard, minister emerita.

27 – 9:30 a.m., Choir practice. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott, student minister. 11:45 p.m., Stewardship Luncheon.

Chanting and meditation

People who are interested may call Tim Hart at 439-2541.

REMINDERS

If you have an announcement you would like to be included in the church's weekly e-mail announcements, please send it to Janie Garlow at mjgarlow@aol.com by 5 p.m. on Sundays. Earlier submissions would be appreciated.

Don't forget to send your articles for the April newsletter to Bob Haskell at rhaskell@twcny.rr.com by noon on Thursday, March 31. Earlier submissions would be appreciated.

We have audio CDs of most of the current Sunday sermons. These may be borrowed for your listening enjoyment.

Please help spread the word to anyone without e-mail. Thank you!

We respect your privacy and if you prefer not to receive future announcements, just hit Reply and put the word REMOVE on the subject line.

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