



CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The First Universalist Society of Central Square

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Andrea Abbott, Student Minister 315-635-7122
Janie Garlow, President 315-436-2238
Rita Thornton, Music Coordinator 315-699-4824

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.

DECEMBER 2010

STUDENT MINISTER SNIPPET

Is there any other topic for a December newsletter except Christmas? Like Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen, holiday fun and anxiety are galloping down upon us all, even in a UU church. Lights, music, decoration, food, gifts, all needing to be seen, heard, created, tasted, bought. It seems as if an enormous amount of memories and beauty, nostalgia and joy are packed into a relatively short period of time. It is often too commercial; it is often too intense. However, there must be something in this time of year that cries out for bustle and excitement. There is a fine line between too much and not enough. It is a line that is in a different place for each of us. I would wish for everyone the right amount of holiday, the correct dose of busyness and cheer, and at least a small dash of quiet and contemplation, as we learn from the year behind us and ready ourselves for the challenge of the year ahead.

– Andrea Abbott

THE REVEREND WEISSBARD PICKS HIS SERMON TOPIC

My sermon for December 5th will be on “Being Fair.” It is interesting that while justice was a central theme for the Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is no mention of it in the Ten Commandments. I believe “fairness” is a central religious idea for many of us and that it is worthy of exploration.

– Dave

FREE CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER

This year our annual Christmas Day dinner will be held on Saturday, December 25, at the First Universalist Church of Central Square. Dinner will be served from noon until 4 p.m. This dinner is open to anyone and everyone, and it is free. Kurt and Ronna will arrive at the church at about 8 a.m. to begin cooking, decorating, and setting the dinner tables.

We appreciate help, especially once people begin to arrive: greeting the folks, chatting with them, helping them feel loved at this time of year. Of course, cleanup help is appreciated so we can leave as close to 4 p.m. as possible to be with our family.

Desserts are graciously solicited, whether cakes, pies, Christmas cookies, gelatin salad, brownies, or cherry cheese cake, just to name a few of my favorites.

Thank you in advance for your help in making this ninth annual Christmas dinner the best ever.

– Kurt Schindler

EXECUTIVE BOARD OKs COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Executive Board, meeting in the church dining room on Sunday morning, October 31, approved the church committee members appointed by President Janie Garlow:

1. **Spiritual Committee: Chairperson Pat Cerro-Reehil**
 - A. **Worship: Nancy Haskell**
 - Guest speakers
 - Order of service
 - Special services
 - B. **Music: Rita Thornton**
 - Organist
 - Choir
 - Special music programs
 - C. **Altar: Betty Figie**
 - Flower arrangements, etc.
 - D. **Hospitality: ?**
 - Greeters at the door
 - Welcoming visitors
 - Coffee hour
 - E. **Ministerial Relations: George Tennant**
 - Provide support for ministers and a communication channel with the congregation as needed.
2. **Administrative Committee: Chairperson Arnold Hook**
 - A. **Outside church maintenance: Sean Tennant**
 - Lawn mowing (**)
 - Lawn cleanup
 - Snow removal (**)
 - General outside maintenance
 - B. **Inside church maintenance: Steve Garlow**
 - General repairs
 - Janitorial (**)
 - Obtain needed supplies: Chester Perkins
 - C. **Finance: Chester Perkins**
 - Propose budget
 - Assist treasurer
 - Audit
 - Stewardship campaign
 - D. **Records and history**
 - Registrar: Betty Figie
 - Archivist: ?

3. **Outreach: Chairperson Nancy Hallock**
 - A. **Social Justice: Ellen LaPine, Nancy Hallock**
 - Determine areas of interest to church members.
 - Arrange awareness publicity and meetings.
 - B. **Denominational affairs: Janie Garlow**
 - Keep congregation informed on activities of SLUUD and UUA.
 - Keep informed on activities at other UU churches in area.
 - C. **Publicity: Ann Peterson, Janie Garlow**
 - Provide news items to media.
 - Obtain paid advertisements when needed
 - D. **Membership: Chester Perkins, Janie Garlow**
 - Develop programs to increase membership.
 - Plan and schedule "introduction to membership meetings."
 - Maintain list of active members.
4. **Religious education: Chairperson Chris Lajewski**
 - A. **Nursery: ?**
 - Care for children 2 and younger.
 - B. **Younger Children: Pat Hellinger**
 - Develop and administer programs for younger children.
 - C. **Teens: Chris Lajewski, Ronna Schindler, Beth Sonnacchio**
 - Develop and administer programs for teens.
 - D. **Adult: Ann Peterson**
 - Develop and administer programs for adults.

(**): Paid/contracted
The Executive Board appointed Ellen LaPine as Chalice Lighter Ambassador to succeed Mary Perkins. It also expressed its gratitude to Mary Perkins for serving as Chalice Lighter Ambassador for many years and to Marcia Burrell-Ihlow and Winfield Ihlow for helping a church member and for providing transportation for the Rev. Libbie Stoddard.

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 15. 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.

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.

THE DOWNSTAIRS SCOTTIE AND CHRISTMAS

Yes, Virginia, the Downstairs Scottie is actually downstairs. For most of us, the Downstairs Scottie has been a rather worn red box that is in the church dining room. You can find the real Downstairs Scottie if you enter the rear door of Saint Michael's Church. That is the smaller building on the west side of Route 11 in Central Square. As you go downstairs, you will find a rather small space that is full of clothing and other donations that are sold very reasonably. You will find that the kitchen, which stores the food donations, is also small, but well organized. Each month when I bring donations from our church, I am greeted with smiles and many thanks from the volunteers who shelve, organize, sign up and hand out. With changes in the economy, there have been increases in the number of people receiving food stamps everywhere. There has also been an increase in those who sign up for food and things that food stamps won't pay for at the Scottie. "There are always new faces turning up." "Some folks that used to donate are coming in for food." "On Friday 37 families signed up, big families." These are a few of the comments that are made by the Scottie volunteers. Some of those who have recently signed up have lost their jobs and haven't received unemployment checks yet, making it hard for them for the holidays.

Donations for the Downstairs Scottie are collected at our church on the second Sunday of each month. Here is a wish list from Carol and the other volunteers:

- Tuna fish. The order didn't come in this month.
 - Macaroni and cheese always goes over well.
 - Paper products that food stamps do not cover.
 - Any health products, tooth paste, soap, deodorant.
- Thanks for everyone's generosity.

– Ann Peterson, Outreach Committee

THE SMORGASBORD WAS A SUCCESS

Thanks to everyone who worked on the smorgasbord dinner on Saturday night, November 20. It couldn't have happened if all didn't pitch in. Also, any suggestions for improvement would be appreciated.

Again, thank you.

– Marilyn Nye, UU Circle coordinator

Thanks to all of you who cooked, baked, sliced and chopped. Also thanks to those who set up, cleaned up, greeted, served and put away. Our guests went away full of food and said that they enjoyed the variety that was served.

Our profit of \$300 will go into the church treasury to help pay for the many things that keep our church going. Most recently we had siding replaced on the rear of the building. In the near future we will have necessary work done on windows and on the front doors. Thanks again for all of your hard work that helps support this church.

– Ann B. Peterson, UU Circle secretary-treasurer

MONTHLY DRUM CIRCLE

Our monthly Drum Circle will be held on Friday,

December 10, from 6 until about 8:30 p.m. The Drum Circle is open to everyone. If you have not had a chance to enjoy the Drum Circle yet, there may be some reasons for you to check it out.

Although drumming has been used for healing for many centuries, there is some current medical research that shows the healing properties of drumming for modern times. OK, it is just plain fun, and you meet some great people. There is more. Drumming has been shown to increase circulation, improve short-term memory and increase the attention span. It may benefit the immune system. The same hormones that are released during meditation and yoga are released during drumming. The "feel good" hormones are released and make you feel better able to cope. Drumming has been used as therapy for stroke survivors who have lost their ability to speak. Somehow getting in touch with the bodily rhythms has a positive effect on the return of speech.

Drumming can help you to be in the present and to be more in touch with yourself.

Come and try drumming and see what it does for you.

Peace.

– Ann Peterson,
Adult Religious Education

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.

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

My Dear Friends,

Many blessings this holiday season!

Thanksgiving 2010 is history. I am sure most of us are lamenting the fact that we ate too much. Somewhere between the pool of turkey gravy in the mashed potatoes and the pumpkin pie smothered with whipped cream, my healthy eating plan went south, to my belly. This is only the beginning. The holiday season certainly can sabotage just about any healthy diet. But it is not about a diet. This is the season to rejoice. To rejoice in the love that flows from our friends and family. To rejoice in the glittering constellation of the holidays from the beginning of Advent, to Hanukkah, Bodhi Day (the enlightenment of the Buddha), the Winter Solstice and the Wiccan Yule, to our Christmas Eve candlelight service at church, then Christmas Day and on to the first day of Kwanzaa, then to New Year's Eve when we have come full circle to start again with our resolutions. The winter holidays beckon us to celebrate love and the Light. As we decorate, entertain, and enjoy the luminescence of the season, we can celebrate our own inner light. We are bright and beautiful stars. Let us delight in the grace that illuminates us.

May your holidays be bright and filled with love and grace!

– Janie

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Outreach Committee members, including Janie Garlow, Ellen LaPine, Ann Peterson, Arne Hook and me, met Sunday morning, November 14.

The discussion started with our ongoing projects, which we will continue:

1. Adopt-a-Highway three times a year. Contract renewal in May 2011.
2. Spring Tree Stewardship Project with the Village of Central Square.
3. Collect non-food items weekly and non-perishable food items on the second Sunday of each month. The contributions are delivered to the food pantry at Saint Michael's Church for distribution locally.
4. Increase our efforts to make the church more energy efficient and educate our members on environmental conservation issues.

One future project will be a presentation to explain hydrofracking and its impact on the environment and nearby communities. Ellen and I learned enough at the October Saint Lawrence District Social Justice Conference to be motivated to learn more. The Rev. Richard S. Gilbert, social justice coordinator and editor for the Saint Lawrence District Social Justice Council and board member of Interfaith Impact of New York State, is focusing strong concern on this issue. We encourage you to take an opportunity to urge your Assembly person to suspend this process until more investigation is completed. You can do this by reading the note below and taking action today.

– Nancy Hallock, chairperson

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING ALERT

In August, the New York Senate passed an act to suspend hydraulic fracturing for natural gas until May 15, 2011. The Assembly has not yet voted on the bill (A11443-B). We have created an e-campaign that will allow you to send an e-mail or fax directly to your Assembly member urging him or her to bring it to the floor and vote yes before the end of the year.

Hydraulic fracturing, also called hydrofracking, involves drilling deep horizontal wells and injecting a high pressure mixture of water, sand and enabling chemicals, some of which are toxic and/or carcinogenic. Passage of a moratorium allowing for completion of studies on the safety of this controversial process could be crucial to the continued purity of our drinking water across the state.

On Monday, November 29, 2010, the Assembly will meet in an extraordinary session called by Governor Paterson. Environmental activists will be demonstrating on behalf of a hydrofracking moratorium at the Capitol on Monday and possibly Tuesday, if the Legislature remains in session.

Send a message now to your Assembly Member to make your voice heard.

Interfaith Impact of New York State, "Working for the Common Good through Progressive Religious Advocacy"

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

GREEN MINUTE: SPEND LESS, ENJOY IT MORE

“Christmas should be something to enjoy rather than endure. Instead of an island of bustle, it should be an island of peace amid a busy life. We want so much more out of Christmas: more music, more companionship, more contemplation, more time outdoors, more love.” – Bill McKibben

Many of us read Bill McKibben’s book “Hundred Dollar Holiday” a few years ago. About this time of year I try to reread at least parts of it. I admit that I am a bit of a “humbug” this time of year now that the kids are grown and all of my family is so far away. But I do look forward to the delight in people’s eyes when I’ve done something simple yet meaningful for them. Here are some suggestions.

- Make a recording of yourself reading a book to a child or ask a grandparent to tape himself or herself reading the book for the child.
- I have an aunt that takes birch bark, decorates it with scraps of cloth, ribbon and glitter, and sends each piece as a holiday card. I look forward to it every year.
- Have fun. Pass around the same garish gag gift each year. The person who has it has to give it to the next person drawn from a hat but he or she has to disguise the gift in some way (McKibben uses the example of a necktie baked into a Christmas cake).
- Give to someone’s favorite charity instead of giving the person a gift that he or she will never use, or have the family get together for a holiday dinner but instead of gifts give to someone’s favorite charity, choosing a different person each year.
- Make something. If you can cook, cook something; if you can build, build something; if you are good at decorating, decorate something. Good at giving a back rub? Lots of people love those. Use your imagination, and the sky is the limit.
- Get the family together to make gifts. Maybe you want to try the assembly-line approach where one person does his or her specialty, then the gift moves to the next person and so on until you have a completed project.
- Make a photo album of treasured moments for someone, or have a photo printed on a shirt, plate, mug, etc. Make a CD of someone’s favorite songs or poems.
- Give someone a coupon for a trip to the zoo, a favorite hike or paddle, a game of Scrabble on demand, a foot massage, a much needed hug, evenings reading a book to someone, a private musical concert. Find out what someone cherishes and then give the person your service to get it. You’ll find that most people don’t really want the material things; they often want companionship, a chance to be as one with their environment or a moment of peace and harmony.
- Don’t forget that, if you are able, volunteering gives both to the people you help and to yourself. I will never forget the feeling we all had many years ago when I worked for a hospital affiliate that worked with addicted and often homeless folks. The whole staff got together and bought heavy socks to give on Christmas morning and wrapped them up with paper and ribbon. Some of our clients were moved to tears (as were we) because we had given thought to them and what they truly needed. I don’t remember a thing I got for Christmas that year but I will always remember their faces. There is no better gift than the feeling you get when you have made even a small difference to someone.

May your holidays be filled with true joy and wonder and most of all true peace.

– Ellen LaPine, Social Justice, Outreach Committee

VIDEO DISCUSSION GROUP

The Video Discussion Group will view the second hour of part 2 of the PBS series “God in America” when it meets in the Goettel Room at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 3.

“God in America” explores the tumultuous 400-year history of the intersection of religion and public life in America, from the first European settlements to the 2008 presidential election.

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, December 2, if you plan to attend so that she may make a reservation a day ahead. Everyone is invited to attend.

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.

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, normally on the first Sunday of each month. Random Acts of Kindness envelopes are found on the back of the pews.

The next Random Acts of Kindness will be observed on Sunday, December 5.

The fund is administered by the student minister and two appointed lay persons.

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.

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

CALENDAR

December

3 – 5:30 p.m., Supper 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, December 2, if you plan to attend. 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group will view the second hour of part 2 of the PBS series "God in America" when it meets in the Goettel Room

5 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. David Weissbard. Sermon topic: Being Fair." Random Acts of Kindness Sunday.

10 – 6 p.m. until 8:30ish p.m., Monthly Drum Circle.

12 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott, student minister. The service will include our Christmas Ornament Communion and the White Christmas donations (It is asked that everyone wrap items for the Downstairs Scottie in white tissue paper for a brief sojourn under our tree). 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.

15 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, town of Clay.

17 – 8 p.m., "A Christmas Story" at Syracuse Stage.

19 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. Tanya Atwood-Adams.

24 – 7 p.m., Christmas Eve candlelight service.

25 – Noon to 4 p.m., Free Christmas Day Dinner open to all.

26 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott, student minister.

January

5 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. David Weissbard. Random Acts of Kindness Sunday.

Chanting and meditation

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

REMINDERS

If you have an announcement you would like 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 January newsletter to Bob Haskell at rhaskell@twcny.rr.com by noon on Thursday, December 30. Earlier submissions would be appreciated.

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.

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.

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 idolatries of the mind and spirit.

**Circle of Fellowship
December 2010**

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.

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