



CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The First Universalist Church
of Central Square
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Andrea Abbott, Divinity Student
Janie Garlow, President
Rita Thornton, Director of Music

635-7122
436-2238
699-4824

Our church building is handicapped accessible.

3243 Fulton Street (Route 49), near Route 11, Post Office Box 429, Central Square, New York 13036-0429
Telephone: 315 668-6821

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.

JULY 2009

MUTTERINGS

This is the first newsletter since the Reverend Hart is no longer the minister. We embark on a very different voyage than what we have done before, because, for the first time, we have no designated minister, not even a part-time one. This does not mean we are rudderless. We have an active board which has guided us well thus far. We have a dedicated crew who has stepped up, time and again, to keep us going and thriving. We are not a large church, but we have a strong heart.

It is commonplace to mark times of change as times of opportunity. I do believe this, but I also believe this time is a time of reflection. What has this church meant to all of us? What would we like to see it become?

As a congregation, we have a great say in what will happen. More than for many churches, we make the decisions. The church belongs to us. It is time for us to claim our ownership. To return to the boat metaphor, it is time for us all to have our oars in the water and to pull in the same direction.

The last will be the tricky part. It has been said that organizing UUs is like herding cats. We are, by definition, a church of seekers. Therefore, we all can see a different vision, a different path that we should take. It is difficult to construct the vessel that can hold these disparate views and make the journey safe for all. It must be a stout ship, indeed.

But it has been a stout ship. While other small congregations have gone down, we have lasted for a hundred years. In this, a very new venture, let us see how skillfully we can come together to steer by our guiding stars, the principles that have brought us so far.

Andrea Abbott, divinity student

A NEW TITLE FOR ANDREA

The Executive Board, meeting for its annual retreat at the home of Janie and Steve Garlow on Saturday afternoon, June 27, agreed to designate Andrea Abbott as "divinity student." Andrea, who has been serving as lay speaker, attends the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School.

Note: Please have items for the next newsletter to Bob Haskell by no later than NOON on SATURDAY, AUGUST 1. Bob would be grateful if everyone would have articles to him as soon as possible and not wait until the last minute. His address is 29 Grove Street, Baldwinsville, NY 13027-2332; his telephone number is 635-5294; his e-mail address is rhaskell@twcny.rr.com

COME AROUND WITH UU CIRCLE

Remember that there are no special requirements to belong. We are a big part of fund-raising for the church and also social fellowship with each other. You are not obligated to attend all or any of our events, but we surely would love to see you and welcome your input or suggestions. We meet every third Sunday after church at 11:45 in the Community Room. Anyone may attend.

Now for current information. When we met last Sunday, we started preparing a calendar for the church year so you can be aware of all upcoming events well in advance so you can work your schedule around them. A special UU Circle Event Calendar should be ready in September hopefully. Events will also be listed on the church calendar, and some are already there.

In July we would like to have people join us to help clean out the church shed. As of now we don't have a date scheduled. You will be informed. If anyone is interested in helping, contact Chet Perkins.

Coming up on September 13th will be our church family picnic to be held at Betty Figie's home. If it rains we will be having it at Goettel Park. This year will be a little different. We will not be grilling. We are making it a potluck picnic. We will be furnishing the meat tray. There also will be games and activities for all. More information to come. Save the date.

October 17th will be a church rummage sale, and in the spring we will be having another one with the village.

November 14th will be our smorgasbord dinner.

December 20th, we will be having a cookie sale.

July 19th we will have our next meeting. Join us and help us with our planning. See you around.

– Rita Thornton, UU Circle president

“BLESSING OF THE BEASTS”

We are looking forward to a different service on Sunday, July 26th. At that time, we will have a “Blessing of the Beasts.” My cocker spaniel next to me says, “Who are you calling a beast?”, but this is what this sort of service has been called in other religious traditions. We share the planet with many other animals. Some of them have found their way into our hearts and are as much, or more, a part of us as are our two-legged friends and relations. We are devoting a service to the recognition of our love for creatures great and small. In addition to live animals, people have brought pictures of departed pets, stuffed animals (also dear to our hearts) and, in one service, a 300,000-year-old fossil. Common sense rules, of course, and it would be wise to keep the pet python a safe distance from the beloved guinea pig. A valued companion to one is lunch to another. Such is the kingdom of earth. Let us celebrate our shared planet together.

– Andrea Abbott, lay speaker

MUSIC NOTES

Choir and Spiritual Dance will be taking the summer off. Will resume in September. Keep your voices soaring and your body moving.

I'm looking for special music for the summer months. If you play a musical instrument or sing and would like to share your talent for at least one Sunday,

please contact me. Groups, solos or duets also welcome. So, how about pulling out those instruments or raising your voice in service.

– Rita Thornton, director of music

DID YOU KNOW?

Michael Servetus, considered an early Unitarian Universalist, was a physician considered to be ahead of his time. He angered John Calvin by questioning the trinity, original sin and child baptism during the years of the Reformation. As a result, he was burned at the stake in 1553. To find out more about this Spanish martyr and other Unitarian Universalist history, check out UUA.org. To find out even more, read the paperback book “Hunted Heretic: The Life and Times of Michael Servetus 1511-1553” by R. Bainton.

– Ann Peterson, adult religious education

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, July 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. For information about the women's group, you may contact Nancy Haskell. For information about the men's group, you may contact Chet Perkins.

PRESIDENTIAL THOUGHTS

My Dear Friends,

I am drawn to the writings of the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. He has led an extraordinary life as a poet and as a human rights and peace activist. He was born in Vietnam, and during the Vietnam War he chose to help the villagers who were suffering the devastation of war. He founded the “engaged Buddhism” movement, a balance between meditation and social commitment ... working in a peaceful way to alleviate social suffering. He is one of the most respected Zen masters in the world today.

I have promised myself to read his poetry daily, even if it is only a couple of lines from my calendars, which it usually is. His writings are calming and inspirational, a true reflection of his life’s mission. I close my eyes and can hear his quiet voice. Now I take a deeeeeeeep breath and let it out slooooooowly and relax. Ahhhh! When I am too preoccupied with my everyday busyness and forget, I start to move away from my center.

Being present in the moment is really all we have. It is a gift. Why is the word “present” synonymous with the word “gift”? Don’t lose this treasured gift! When we go about our daily activities, in the kitchen, with the kids (grandkids), walking, working, eating, etc., we try to do it in mindfulness and awareness of what we are doing. It is not easy. Life is so much more peaceful and rewarding if we do.

Let us live our life with love and compassion approaching every moment with curiosity, a sense of search, and humor, especially humor in the moment. Don’t be too serious about ourselves.

With warm appreciation and Peace,
Janie

“Our home is in the present moment. To live in the present is a miracle.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

BOARD APPROVES COVENANT

The Executive Board, meeting for its annual retreat at the home of Janie and Steve Garlow on Saturday afternoon, June 27, voted to approve the following covenant, previously written by the Rev. Margaret A. Hart and the Board president:

June 24, 2009

Letter of Agreement between the Rev. Margaret A. Hart and the First Universalist Society of Central Square effective upon Margaret’s resignation from ministry at that congregation on June 30, 2009.

In keeping with the guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association (UUMA), Margaret will not participate in any church functions for at least two years. Her actions will be guided by the UUMA’s Code of Professional Practices.

Margaret may participate in ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, holy unions, child dedications, at the specific request of family members, and with the full knowledge and approval of the called minister (or in the absence of a minister, the congregational President). She may officiate at such ceremonies for anyone not affiliated with First Universalist Society, but will do so in conversation with a called minister when there is one.

Margaret may continue social contact with members of First Universalist Society, but will not discuss church matters.

Margaret may continue to provide resources and support to Andrea Abbott, Lay Speaker, if requested to do so.

Margaret will inform the called minister (President or his/her designee in the absence of a called minister) of any pastoral calls, such as hospital visits (without violating confidentiality), even if such visits are made on the basis of friendship.

YOU ARE INVITED TO DONATE FOOD

The Social Justice Committee encourages everyone in the congregation to bring food items for the Downstairs Scottie at the church on the second Sunday of each month.

This month’s date is Sunday, July 12. The food will be transported to the Food Bank at St. Michael’s Church the next day.

The committee will continue to accept non-food items for the Downstairs Scottie at this and all other times.

GREEN MINUTE: GREEN EATING TIPS

It's that time of year. All the good stuff is starting to ripen, and it makes it easier to eat locally. It is a good time to take a look at how we eat and see if we want to make some changes throughout the year to eat "green."

Organic vegetables, fruits, grains, juice, dairy, eggs and meat are grown and processed in ways that support healthy people and a healthy planet. Buying seasonal, local organic food is a boon for the environment for a lot of reasons. Since most food travels many miles to reach your table, 1,500 miles on average, locally sourced food cuts back on the climate-change impact of transportation. Local food also generally uses less packaging, is fresher and tastier, and comes in more varieties. It also supports small local growers and lets them get more for their produce by not having to spend so much on packaging, processing, refrigeration, marketing and shipping. The best way to track down local food is at a farmers market, but be sure to ask if the food is grown locally because some vendors ship their food in. People who make an effort to eat as much locally as possible are called "localvores." They come in different degrees, from people who eat as much locally as they can during the summer and fall season to people who refuse to eat anything that has not been produced within a specific mile radius. It's your choice. You can also find out more about locally grown food through community supported agriculture (CSA), which often offers home delivery. You can find out more about CSA and local delivery by visiting grindstonefarm.com.

Want to make some more changes? Don't follow the pack. Instead of buying foods that come in extensive packaging, look for unpackaged foods, experiment with bringing your own containers and buying in bulk or pick up brands that use bio-based packaging. Of course, try to reuse any packaging you end up with. Put some extra planning into the amount of food you cook to cut back on waste, and if it's something that will spoil quickly, try to avoid making more than you or your family can eat. If you've got extra, make a friend happy with a home-cooked surprise. If you do have leftovers, compost them to ease the burden on landfills and give your soil a wonderful gift and keep your kitchen waste basket from smelling.

Lastly, consider easing up on the meat. Meat is the most resource-intensive food on the table, and eating less of it can be the single most "green" move a person can make. Producing meat requires huge amounts of water, grain, land and other inputs, including hormones and antibiotics in meat that is not organic. This leads to pollution of soil, air and water. A pound of beef requires about 12,000 gallons of water to produce, compared with 60 gallons for a pound of potatoes. If you're a meat eater, try cutting out a serving of meat each week and increase to two, and so on, when you're ready.

Slow, deliberate steps such as buying more local products, searching out CSA organizations, trying to buy "fair trade" when you can and cutting back on the amount of meat you eat will help you in your quest to eat in a more environmentally friendly way and just might help your waistline and overall health, too.

– Social Justice Committee's Green Team

OUR NEXT TWO SUNDAYS

The worship service at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 5, will feature an audio sermon by the late Rev. Max Alden Coots, the former supply minister at our church. The sermon, "From Fossils to a Faith," is included in a book and a CD by the Reverend Coots, "Leaning Against the Wind: A Selection of Sermons." Nancy Haskell, a member of the Worship Committee, will facilitate the service.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Cleveland, who served as interim minister at our church during 2004-2005, will return to our pulpit at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 12.

Bob received his bachelor of arts degree from Thomas E. Edison College in Trenton, New Jersey. He earned his master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees in theology from Fordham University in the Bronx. He earned his pastoral certification from Salem Bible School in Brooklyn.

Bob was involved in children's ministry (1974-78), and later served as an instructor/administrator and then as an assistant pastor at a Christian Fellowship Church and Bible School (1978-86), as a fourth grade teacher (1986-87), as program coordinator for a statewide respite care program and foster care support program and as Protestant chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic, New Jersey (1989-92). Bob attended Fordham as a graduate student from 1993 to 2000. Beginning in 2000, he served as an adjunct assistant professor of religion at LeMoyne College in Syracuse and Nazareth College in Rochester. Bob also acted as a professional tutor at Onondaga Community College. After serving as our interim minister, Bob moved to North Carolina and later to Pennsylvania.

It happened at Syracuse

A 50th Anniversary Conference:

Celebrating the Birth and Growth of Unitarian Universalism

October 30-31, 2009, Syracuse, NY

<http://www.sld.uua.org/50thAnniversary/50thanniversary.html>

A significant anniversary for Unitarian Universalists will be celebrated on October 31, 2009. This day marks exactly fifty years since negotiations were completed and a plan was adopted for consolidating the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and the Universalist Church of America (UCA) to create the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). To commemorate this event the St. Lawrence District of the UUA is sponsoring a conference on Friday and Saturday, October 30 & 31, 2009.

The dramatic events of the “1959 Conference at Syracuse” occurred in downtown Syracuse, New York. In celebrating this pivotal moment in the history of Unitarian Universalism we will return to the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Syracuse, the central site of the conference where general sessions were held. The 2009 conference will be a celebration of our history and a quest to advance our future by exploring the meaning of “What Happened at Syracuse?”, examining the development of Unitarian Universalism in the past fifty years, and addressing the challenges that face us.

The conference will:

- Relive the music, liturgy, faith practices and actions of that historic period.
- Revisit significant events leading up to the Conference at Syracuse.
- Explore the growth of the movement in the past 50 years.
- Consider the nature of our faith and the threads that weave our theological diversity into a common identity.
- Help us embrace the challenges we face in working to advance our future as a unique religious people with something to offer the world.

Four prominent UU scholars will be on hand to provide their insights and perspectives about the meaning of “What Happened at Syracuse?” David Bumbaugh, David Parke, Richard Gilbert and Elizabeth Strong have each played important leadership roles in the growth of the Unitarian Universalist movement. They will bring a considerable body of experience and great insight to share in advancing our quest.

Don't miss the Party

Join fellow UUs at the Hotel Syracuse

Oct. 30 & 31, 2009

To download the registration brochure and read more about
“What Happened at Syracuse” go to:

<http://www.sld.uua.org/50thAnniversary/50thanniversary.html>

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.

CALENDAR

July

- 5 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service. Audio sermon, “From Fossils to a Faith,” by the Rev. Max Coots. Nancy Haskell will facilitate the service. Random Acts of Kindness Sunday. 11 a.m., Religious education.
- 12 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. Dr. Robert Cleveland. 11 a.m., Religious education. This is also the once-a-month Sunday on which everyone is asked to donate food items for the Downstairs Scottie, which will later be transported to the Food Bank at St. Michael’s Church.
- 15 – Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 19 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service. 11 a.m., Religious education. 11:45 a.m., UU Circle meeting.
- 24 – 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group.
- 26 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by Andrea Abbott, divinity student. “Blessing of the Beasts.” 11 a.m., Religious education.

August

- 2 – 9 a.m., Executive Board meeting. 10:30 a.m., Worship service. Random Acts of Kindness Sunday. 11 a.m., Religious education.
- 9 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service. Sermon by Chris Squires. 11 a.m., Religious education. This is also the once-a-month Sunday on which everyone is asked to donate food items for the Downstairs Scottie, which will later be transported to the Food Bank at St. Michael’s Church.
- 16 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service. Sermon by Chris Lajewski. 11 a.m., Religious education.
- 19 – Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 23 – 10:30 a.m., Worship service. 11 a.m., Religious education.
- 30 – 9 a.m., Executive Board meeting. 10:30 a.m., Worship service led by the Rev. David Weissbard. 11 a.m., Religious education.

September

- 13 – Church family picnic at Betty Figie’s home. If it rains, the picnic will be moved to Goettel Park.
- 26 – Presidents’ Conference, Saint Lawrence District, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, at our church.

October

- 17 – Church rummage sale.
- 30-31 – A 50th Anniversary Conference Celebrating the Birth & Growth of Unitarian Universalism, Grand Ballroom, Hotel Syracuse, Syracuse.

November

- 14 – Smorgasbord dinner.

December

- 20 – Cookie sale.

Regular meetings

Wednesdays – 7 p.m., Spiritual Development and Empowerment group meets at the church.

Chanting and meditation

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

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

The Wednesday evening group is now called Spiritual Development and Empowerment.

We meet Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the church. This is now a co-ed group.

We share personal spiritual experiences and take part in different personal empowerment programs as they are presented by our members and invited guests.

All are welcome, and we promote a safe environment with no proselytizing.

We are high energy, and welcome your input and experiences.

If you have questions, please call Chet Perkins at 668-6719 or Kurt Schindler at 247-0432.

– Kurt Schindler

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.