



CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The First Universalist Church
of Central Square
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

The Rev. Margaret Hart, Minister	668-1268
Andrea Abbott, Lay Speaker	635-7122
Janie Garlow, President	668-1631
Ronna Schindler, Religious Education Coordinator	623-7685
Rita Thornton, Director of Music	699-4824

Our church building is handicapped accessible.

Routes 49 west & 11, Post Office Box 429, Central Square, New York 13036 Phone: 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.

DECEMBER 2008

MINISTERIAL MUSINGS

Dear members and friends,

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season. Thanksgiving has just been celebrated, and it seems appropriate that this secular holiday is celebrated before we enter into the various religious holidays in December. It is a wonderful reminder that when gratitude permeates our lives, it makes all our days spiritual and worth celebrating. And our religious holidays are marked at the other end by Kwanzaa, another secular holiday which teaches and celebrates the values which make our lives truly great.

You may have noticed that the lighted sign in front of our church now has a new message each month. In November it said "Feast of Gratitude," in December it says "Birth of Innocence and Hope" and in January it will be "Beloved Community." If you have ideas for the message of the month, please pass them to me or another Worship Committee member for our consideration as a committee. We want the sign to reflect something about the church, as it is part of our outreach to the community.

We are currently without a Membership Committee, but this doesn't mean that people can't join the church! There are a number of people who have expressed an interest in joining, and I am hoping to schedule a Membership Conversation in January to explore with people what membership entails. I am thinking about scheduling it after church on January 11 or 25, for about an hour (you could get coffee and then join the conversation). If you are interested in joining the church, please let me know. Also let me know if either or both of these dates would work for you. I would like to know well in advance so I can arrange childcare as needed. Please talk with me, e-mail or call me. Thanks. See you in church.

With love and respect,
The Rev. Margaret Hart

Note: Please have items for the next newsletter to Bob Haskell by no later than NOON on SATURDAY, JANUARY 3. 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

GREEN MINUTE: \$100 HOLIDAY

We've just read the book "Hundred Dollar Holiday" by Bill McKibben and he makes a strong case for a more joyful and green holiday.

Making the holidays more about joy and less about consumerism isn't something you just announce and it is done, it is something that will probably take time. If you decide you want to take this journey you'll need to explain to your family and friends what you want to do and even more important you need to show them why since people seldom accept change without seeing what benefit they will gain. Part of my family has decided to give to a charity that has been important to our family and get together for a wonderful dinner without the gifts this year. Still, I just heard from one member who wanted to send me a present and not tell the rest. Oh well, change is not always easy, but it gets easier and can be lots of fun over time.

McKibben suggests that people give each other coupons for their time, some job that needs to be done, a meal cooked or some other service you can provide. The recipient gets the service and you both get the joy of spending time together. Some like to make their gifts. They don't need to be elaborate. I can't wait to see what kind of drawing my grandson will be giving me this year. I've made a stocking for each new grandchild over the years, and everyone looks forward to seeing what this year's will be. Are you good at cooking? How about making bagels, cookies, a pan of your best dish. Maybe making up a dry soup or cookie mix with all the ingredients and packaging it in a bag that you or the children have decorated.

McKibben mentions that some families have a running gag gift and gives an example of a really tacky holiday tie that is passed around the family from year to year but disguised in some way including being baked in a holiday cake. Do you have someone who loves the birds? Maybe a bag of birdseed or a coupon to plant a tree or bush near their favorite feeder in the spring so the birds have some shelter and the person gets to enjoy the birds all year long. Do you have old or new pictures that could be incorporated in a gift? Are you really good at computers but awful at woodworking? How about a barter gift? The ideas are endless and almost as much fun to think up and gather together as they are to give and share.

All of this joyful giving can become a habit but just like all habits it will evolve over time. Why not start in a small way this year and watch the fun grow over the years as you develop new traditions.

— Ellen LaPine, Social Justice Committee's Green Team

SPIRITUAL DISCUSSION GROUP

Come join us for our next Spiritual Discussion Group meeting scheduled for Friday, December 12, at 7 p.m.

We will be discussing our thoughts regarding the holiday season and what it means to each of us. If you are interested in attending or want to know more, contact John or Pam Landers at 458-5615 or on the web at appleheartsjp@aol.com.

The first meeting was well attended and a lot of fun and we gathered a long list of spiritual topics we would like to discuss in the coming months.

If you are interested in exploring the nature of what God or divinity is to you and others, come share with us. All thoughts and ideas can teach us something of our divine nature. All are welcome.

See you there.

— John and Pam Landers

FAIR SHARE APPEAL

The Fair Share is the contribution our congregation is asked to give each fiscal year to the St. Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District (SLUUD) and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) based upon the number of members in our congregation.

This year's combined contribution is about \$75 per member.

These contributions finance programs, services and resources that directly benefit and strengthen our congregation and the Unitarian Universalist movement as a whole.

Our congregation has a line item in our budget which covers only about 25 percent of this contribution. Each year we try to pay our Fair Share in full. The last couple of years we have not come close to reaching that goal. Wouldn't it be great to meet the goal? If you are able, we are asking members to pay their amount. This would help us reach the goal. Please write a check for \$75 to the church and write "Fair Share" in the memo. For more information, call Chet Perkins at 668-6719.

SOME REFLECTIONS BY OUR CHURCH PRESIDENT

My Dear Friends,

The sun is slowly moving closer to the horizon towards the Tropic of Capricorn as we begin the glittering holidays of Light and giving. This morning, I can see the dawn slowly rising in the southeastern sky. I take a few moments to breathe in the glory of the dawning of this day. Soon as the days move forward, I will be busy preparing for these holidays of Light: trimming the tree, baking, decorating the home, entertaining and so much more. I must remind myself not to give gifts of stuff. My grandkids may disagree. I know I am giving them more when I give them less stuff, that is. It is a time of giving the gift of love and receiving the love that flows from our friends and family. It is a time of delighting in the grace that illuminates our lives. "We must set our hearts right." We are all bright shining stars. Relax; it is not a season about how much we can buy for each other but about giving the gift of love year around.

I enjoyed this web site: [The Story of Stuff with Annie Leonard](#). It is worth viewing. It may give you second thoughts as you head for the mall or Wally world. Give the gift of love and peace from your heart.

May your holidays be filled with LOVE.

Janie

"To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order;
to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order;
to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life;
and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right."
Confucius, 551-479 BC

THE LATEST NEWS ABOUT THE MARTINS

(The following is part of an e-mail message received recently by Mary Perkins from Linda Martin-Morris and tells about her parents, Hartley and Jane Martin, members of our church.)

Dear Mary,

I'm glad you kept my e-mail address!

There have been big changes. I'll give you a quick update.

Both have moved to Maryland. Hartley didn't make any progress from his hip fracture and has been non-ambulatory since his fall in March. The rehab place was just that – rehab – and he needed to get to a more long-term care facility.

Jane made terrific progress and is doing very well with her hip and shoulder issues. But to deal with the Hartley-care issue AND the being closer to family issue, both are now residing in Maryland. They are part of Asbury Methodist (!?!) Village in Gaithersburg. The place has a full range – from independent care (Mom) to nursing care (Dad). They live in neighboring buildings. Mom sees him most every day. ...

Address:

407 Russell Avenue, Apartment 511 (Jane's address, so if writing Hartley, say C/O)

Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Telephone: 301-987-6539

Hope all is well with you and yours!

Thanks for your note, and continued kindness.

Linda Martin-Morris

TREASURER'S REPORT

During the first six months of the church year, June through November, we had an income of \$19,044, with expenses of \$17,167, leaving a balance of \$1,877. Income from pledges, \$15,372, was above budget as several members paid their yearly pledges in full during this period. Expenses were all within budget except for the cost of removing the tree from the Sunday school roof and cleanup. The total cost was \$1,700, of which \$700 was covered by insurance.

– Chet Perkins

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.

CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE DECEMBER 21

A small church in Austria, the date is December 24, 1818. The church organ was not working and Father Josef Mohr needed music for the Christmas Eve service. He asked a friend, Franz Xaver Gruber, who played guitar to write music for a poem he had written two years before. Thus "Silent Night" was born. Please join the children in their version of this well-known and loved song during the December 21 Sunday service.

Looking forward to seeing all there.

We will need all the practice time we can get, so please make sure your children attend the weeks before our performance.

May we take the time to enjoy the special gifts of friends and future friends. All is calm.

— Ronna

HELP! HELP! HELP!

Do you have a library copy of "Hundred Dollar Holiday"? If so, please call Nancy Hallock at 675-8357 and return it to the public library by Tuesday, December 9. Thank you.

— Nancy Hallock

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 17.

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.

A HOLIDAY TRADITION

Guest at Your Table boxes are available at church. Please take one home and put your donations in to support the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Boxes and donations will be returned on January 18. Your donation may be used toward a UUSC membership as follows: Regular \$40 per person; Youth/student \$10; Senior \$20; Dual regular \$75. All individual and family unrestricted contributions of \$100 or more are eligible to be matched dollar for dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, New York.

SUPPORTING THE LIONS AND LIONESSES IN THEIR WORK THIS CHRISTMAS

The Random Acts of Kindness collection for December will be dedicated to the Lions to help them prepare Christmas baskets for those in need in Central

Square. If you didn't get to make a donation on December 7, but would like to do so, please send a check (with RAK in the memo line) to the church treasurer.

We also have a basket in the sanctuary to receive new gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves to be given to the Lionesses for the Christmas baskets.

UUA BOOKSTORE ORDER

I am planning to submit an order to the UUA bookstore by mid-December, as the Worship Committee wants something for January. If you want to add anything to the order, please let me know asap, and no later than December 14. Thank you.

—The Rev. Margaret Hart

IF IT'S SNOWING ...

To find out if church will be held on a Sunday morning when winter weather is raging, you may call:

Janie Garlow at 436-2238, or

Chet Perkins at 668-6719.

The decision will be made by 8:30 a.m.

Ann Peterson has also made arrangements for cancellations to be broadcast over WIXT television and WSYR radio.

WINTER SOLSTICE/YULE RITUAL

The Central New York chapter of CUUPS will hold a Winter Solstice/Yule Ritual downstairs in the Creekside Chapel at May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society in Syracuse at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, December 22. All are welcome to attend and celebrate the return of the light after the shortest (and darkest) day of the year. For more information, please contact me at 476-0447 or jfb523@gmail.com.

— Jody Brown

UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote the goal of

world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.

SEVENTH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER

A free Christmas dinner will be served on Christmas day from 12 noon through 4 p.m. Turkey and the fixin's will be served. All are welcome. We hope to draw from the community to offer warmth of body and spirit if for just a little while. Cookie donations are welcome. Good conversationalists are welcome to share time with our guests and make their day special. A few clean-up specialists are also desired. No sign-up is needed, for we know that you will be there on this special day.

“God bless us, everyone” -- Tiny Tim, from Charles Dickens' “A Christmas Carol”

— Kurt Schindler

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

The Christmas Eve service at our church will be conducted on Wednesday, December 24, beginning at 6 p.m. and ending promptly at 6:30 p.m. This will be a peace-inspiring service with a Nativity reading and traditional Christmas carols. All are welcome.

— Kurt Schindler

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD

The Executive Board accepted the resignation of Chrisanthi Squires as corresponding secretary and appointed Ellen LaPine to succeed her, at the Board's regular monthly meeting on Sunday, December 7.

Board members asked that the president request the Rev. Dr. Tom Chulak, district executive of the Saint Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District, to conduct an evaluation of the health and well-being of our church and to report his findings to the minister, the Executive Board and the congregation in April 2009.

The Rev. Margaret Hart announced plans to schedule an orientation session sometime after Christmas.

Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, agreed to do a workshop at our church from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on January 17 on Emergency Preparedness Training for Congregations.

Ann Peterson, UU Circle secretary-treasurer, said she would soon write a \$2,500 check as part of the Circle's pledge to the church.

The Board voted to allow teen members of the religious education program to use part of the community room as their room.

Kurt Schindler announced that he was resigning as president of the UU Circle. It was also announced that Kate Stanton had resigned as chair of the Ministerial Relations Committee.

Board members agreed to send letters of gratitude

to the UU Circle for conducting the Service and Merchandise Auction, to Kurt Schindler his work as UU Circle president and for overseeing the making of stone soup recently, to Rita Thornton, Patricia Hellinger, Ann Peterson, Mike and Cheryl DiGiovanni and Chris and Kara Lajewski for decorating the sanctuary for the holidays, to Ronna Schindler for watching over the children during the time the sanctuary was being decorated, to Kate Stanton for her work as chair of the Ministerial Relations Committee and to Chrisanthi Squires for her contributions as corresponding secretary.

Board members agreed to proceed with the submission of a request to the New York State Convention of Universalists for a grant for a new sound system. The deadline is December 31.

The Board approved of Christmas gifts for staff members as provided for in the church budget.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE UU CIRCLE

Thank you to all who generously donated to the auction and thank you to all who worked to make it a success. Thanks to Kurt for providing the great food fare. If you did not come to the auction, you missed bidding on some wonderful items as well as services. Some of the items were the tried and true that are always a hit and some were totally new. Use of a camp, handmade jewelry, handyman services, homemade desserts, a set of handmade nesting tables and SU memorabilia are only a few of the wonderful things that were bid on and were either taken home or will be enjoyed this coming year.

We had an abundance of laughter and managed to make a profit that will help support our church. We made about \$1,600 and will be writing another check to the church as part of our pledge. Thanks, everyone.

— Ann Peterson, secretary-treasurer, UU Circle

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.

WORLD HEALING MEDITATION

There will be a World Healing Meditation held in the sanctuary of May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society in Syracuse from 7 to 8 a.m. on December 31. The World Healing Meditation began in 1986 as a grassroots cooperative effort to unite people in a common bond of love and to bring our planet back into balance. All who meditate around the globe do so for the same hour, which is noon Greenwich Mean Time. We hope you will join us and pass the word along to all who may be interested. Following the meditation we will have coffee and donuts in the social hall.

— Jody Brown

CALENDAR

December

- 12 – 7 p.m., Spiritual Discussion Group.
- 14 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship. Holiday cookie treats for sale after the service; bring your favorites.
- 17 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 19 – 7 p.m., Video Discussion Group.
- 21 – 9 a.m., Religious Education Committee meeting. The Rev. Margaret Hart leads worship; children contribute to the holidays.
- 24 – 6 p.m., Christmas Eve service led by Kurt Schindler and Rita Thornton.
- 25 – Christmas Day dinner; free to all who would like to come; Kurt and Ronna Schindler organizing it.
- 28 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship.

January

- 4 – 9 a.m., Executive Board meeting. Random Acts of Kindness donations received. Guest speaker TBA.
- 11 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship.
- 17 – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Workshop on Emergency Preparedness Training.
- 18 – 9 a.m., Religious Education Committee meeting. The Rev. Margaret Hart leads worship; focus on principle number 1; Guest at Your Table boxes and donations to the UUSC are returned.
- 21 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 25 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship.

February

- 1 – Guest speaker TBA.
- 8 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship.
- 15 – 9 a.m., Religious Education Committee meeting. The Rev. Margaret Hart leads worship; Evolution Sunday.
- 18 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 22 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship; focus on principle number 2.

March

- 1 – Guest speaker TBA.
- 8 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship; Association Sunday.
- 15 – 9 a.m., Religious Education Committee meeting. The Rev. Margaret Hart leads worship; focus on principle number 3.
- 18 – 9:30 a.m., Coffee and Chat at Panera Bread, Route 31, Clay.
- 29 – Andrea Abbott, lay speaker, leads worship; focus on principle number 4.

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 2008-2009 CHARITABLE IRA ROLLOVER

Individuals over the age of 70 1/2 can make annual tax-free deductions in 2008 and 2009 of up to \$100,000 from their IRAs directly to their congregation, the UUA, or any other UU entity.

This is a limited time opportunity. You must make the gift on or before December 31, 2009.

How to make a donation:

1. Send a letter to your IRA custodian requesting a rollover directly from your IRA to the organization of your choice (a template for a letter is available online at www.uua.org/giftplanning)

2. Notify the UUA or your congregation of your intentions.

Please plan ahead. It can take up to two to three weeks for the transfer to occur.

DECEMBER 2008 FAITH DEVELOPMENT THOUGHT

Whether you celebrate Christmas or not, the following Christmas Pledge taken from "Unplug the Christmas Machine" may be helpful in keeping you centered during this frantic month:

Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit myself to ...

- Remember those people who truly need my gifts
- Express my love in more direct ways than gifts
- Examine my holiday activities in the light of my deepest values
- Be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends
- Rededicate myself to my spiritual growth.

— Karen LoBracco,

St. Lawrence District Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development

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.

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://www.geocities.com/centralsquareuu/>