

Welcome to All!

## CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

Monthly Message for All Ages –December 2023

“We cannot begin to find ourselves without love.”  
Elizabeth Mount

### OUR MISSION

To be a welcoming diverse congregation that values spiritual growth and service to the local and world community.

The First Universalist Society  
of Central Square, New York.  
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#### Trustees

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Janie Garlow	Nancy Hallock
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We are more than a “church”. We are a community that believes in the **Seven Principles** which are grounded in the humanistic teachings of the world’s religions.

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation.
4. A free and responsible search for meaning and truth.
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.



### DECEMBER EVENTS CALENDAR

\* Dec. 3rd , Sunday - **Trustee Meeting, 8:30 AM – (in person & zoom)**

\* Dec. 9th, Sat., 9 AM to 3:30 PM – **AARP Smart Driver Training Course. This could lower your insurance rates!! Space is limited & you must register in advance. See page 2 below.**

### SUNDAY SERVICE CONVERSATIONS

#### **December 3rd– Rev. David Weissbard**

As I struggle with trying to understand how we have gotten into some of the messes in which we find ourselves, looking back at some sermons from a decade ago, I found one in particular that I believe is still timely and worth an update. This Sunday we will be returning to "The Virtue\$ and Vice\$ of \$elfishne\$\$". I trust you will agree that it is, sorry to say, even more relevant today than it was in 2011.

#### **December 10th – Rev. Kurt Hohmann**

Service will be held downstairs in the dining room. In this Yule season of short days and long, cold nights, the strength of community brings light and warmth into our lives. Join us once more in the Germanic ceremony of sumpel. Individually and as a community, we will honor our guiding spirits, heroes, ancestors, and one another. You are welcome (but not required) to share a poem, a story, a song, a reading...and perhaps a promise for the coming year. Blessed Yule!

#### **December 17th - Rev. Bud Adams**

#### **December 24<sup>th</sup> – Rev Andrea Abbott**

### Pastoral Care

Rev. Bud Adams is the minister to call if someone needs pastoral care. If you or someone else you know needs to speak with a minister please contact Bud at (315) 395-1926 or (315) 637-0468. His email is [bud.adams.1@juno.com](mailto:bud.adams.1@juno.com)

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – Nancy Hallock**

The congregation has donated hats and mittens for school age children. I will deliver everything to the Lioness group next week. They will distribute to local schools.

I delivered 3 more bags to the food pantry today.

Thanks to everyone who supported these projects.

I talked to a rep at PW4W and asked if they could suggest another charity that also continues with a theme of clean water. They are sending me the summary of a group in Honduras that they promote. The SJC will review and discuss. We will continue to collect cans and coins on Sundays. That's all for now.

## **MARKETING COMMITTEE – Susan, Paul, Erin, Army**

\* Reminder - wear your 1<sup>st</sup> U hoodies and T's, not just to service but everywhere! If there is enough interest (need an order of at least 12 pieces) we may have more printed with a different saying on the back. Perhaps "WE ARE ALL RELATED". Let one of the Committee members know if you are interested.

\* We've slightly modified the Welcome opening at Service.

## **MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE – Paul W, Paul S, Win, Army.**

\* We contracted with Stewart's (the ones who cut the lawn for free) to do snowing plowing on the handicapped door side .

\* Paul W. has gotten quotes from two contractors to fit the water leak in the dining room on the Agway side. The Trustees will decide is the price is worth the cost of moping.

## **EDUCATION FOR YOUTH & ADULTS**



As we enter into the month of December things become increasingly hectic.

In 2005 a group of Unitarian Universalist young adults began brainstorming to find a way to slow down and become more centered. What they created was a celebration they called Chalice. Beginning on the first

Monday of December they would focus on the first principle, on Tuesday the second, on Wednesday the third and so on touching on all seven principles.

The goal is to put into practice in some meaningful way each principle. It doesn't have to be anything large or time consuming. Just something to realign and center you in your beliefs.

Happy Chalice

Ronna Schindler

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## **UU BOOK CLUB**

The UU Club typically meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 2PM. Zoom only. *There will not be a meeting in December.*

On Wednesday, January 31, 2024 we will discuss the book "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Gamus. This will be a Zoom only discussion.

It is not necessary to be member of the congregation to participate. Most books are readily available through the library or on-line, or discount books. Please contact Nancy Hallock (315) 533-7067 if you are interested in participating.

**Refresh your driving skills with the AARP SMART DRIVER COURSE!**

You will learn:

- Defensive driving techniques
- Proven safety strategies
- New traffic laws and rules of the road

Plus, there are no tests to pass. You simply sign up and learn. Upon completion you can save 10% on your car insurance and remove up to 4 points from your license.'

**AARP Smart Driver In-Person Course**  
**First Universalist Society**  
**3243 Fulton Ave**  
**Central Square NY 13036**

**Saturday, December 9, 2023**  
**9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

This class is open to the general public. Upon completion you may save at least 10% on your car insurance or, with some exceptions, remove up to 4 points from your license. Class participants must bring their driver's license with them for registration.

The course fee is \$25 for AARP members (bring membership card to qualify for the discount price) or \$30 for nonmembers. Preferred payment on the day of the class is by check or money order. No credit cards can be accepted. *Space is limited so please call (315) 675-3385 to register.*

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## UUA Reading Suggestion

### [A Fire at the Center](#)

#### **Solidarity, Whiteness, and Becoming a Water Protector**

With penetrating insight, Karen Van Fossan blends memoir, history, and cultural critique to take readers behind the scenes of the resistance efforts to two colonial pipeline

This is a story of becoming and un-becoming. When the living waters that crisscrossed the Standing Rock reservation came under threat, minister of the nearby Unitarian Universalist congregation Karen Van Fossan asked herself what it means, as a descendent of colonialism, to resist her own colonial culture. When another pipeline, Line 3, came to threaten Anishinaabe ways of life, the question became even more resounding.

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## UUA Through Time

As we learn more about UU history we can more clearly convey the meaning of Universalism for ourselves and others. On to the **1970s**

**1970** President West makes deep cuts to the UUA's budget. The UUA stops publishing a subscription-only magazine, and starts publishing *Unitarian Universalist World*—a newspaper sent to every member, and the precursor of this magazine. The UUA also publishes its candid *About Your Sexuality* curriculum for teens.

**1971** The UUA's Beacon Press publishes the complete text of the leaked [Pentagon Papers](#), which reveals the government's bleak assessment of the Vietnam War. UUA President West and Sen. Mike Gravel, who released the documents into the public record, protest the FBI's attempt to seize UUA bank records. An expensive legal fight continues until U.S. President Richard Nixon resigns in 1974.

**1971** a Long Island church—now the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, New York—helps restore the UUA's finances with major loans and grants from the bequest of Caroline Veatch. Its [Veatch Program](#) sets up a \$20 million endowment fund for the UUA in 1985. The program continues to support the UUA, other UU organizations, and social justice programs with grants each year.

**1977** The General Assembly adopts the [Women and Religion Resolution](#), pledging to challenge sexist language, assumptions, and practices. Curricula (such as [Cakes for the Queen of Heaven](#)), new worship practices (like the water ceremony), and revised texts follow. In 1977, only 5 percent of UU clergy are women; today more than half of UU ministers are women. [The Rev. Paul Nathaniel Carnes](#) is elected president, but dies in office two years later.

**1979** [The Rev. O. Eugene Pickett](#) is elected president; he completes the UUA's first capital campaign. During his tenure, Unitarian Universalism begins to grow again after a decade in decline.

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## SOUL MATTERS

### The Gift of Mystery

A culture that loves to conquer mysteries.

For us modern folks, the unexplainable is simply a lock to be picked, a code to be cracked, a puzzle to be figured out. But what if mystery isn't just something to solve? What if it's also something to be listened to? This is the lesser recognized call of our faith. "Yes," it says, "Stay skeptical, continue to question and seek answers. But at the same time, leave space for like to speak!" One of the most elegant articulations of this comes from the poet Mary Oliver. In her beloved poem, *Wild Geese*, she writes,

"Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese,  
harsh and exciting —  
over and over announcing your place in the family of things."

Oliver's call to listen for life's mysterious announcements implies a letting go. Mystery is funny this way. You can't make it speak. Indeed, often the more you pursue the meaning of life's mysteries, the more distant it becomes. If we want mystery to speak, it seems we have to be willing to put down the pursuit and open ourselves to being caught off guard. UU humanist minister and poet, David Breiden, captures this beautifully when he writes,

"I dug and dug  
Deeper into the earth  
Looking for blue heaven  
Choking always  
On piles of dust rising  
Then once  
At midnight  
I slipped  
And fell into the sky."

Slipping, and then falling into the sky is there a better way to describe our dance with mystery? Isn't this what all the great mystics have been trying to tell us from the start? That sitting at the heart of mystery is not the unknown, but unity. We fall into the mysterious oneness of life and then it falls to us. Its voice whispers, "I am you and you are me." Simply put, mystery doesn't put up barriers; it dissolves them. Haven't all of us faced the wonder and mystery of a sunset, the stars, a baby's first cry or a lover's wet kiss, and thought to ourselves, "who I am does not end at the barrier of my skin!". And it is not just words of connectedness, but words of comfort too. We find ourselves crushed by

the weight of the world, so we take a walk in the woods, watch the waves kindly caress the shore, stare into the night sky or stumble on the smile of a stranger. And often, but not always, we hear the world gently sing, "It will be ok. In fact, it is all already ok!"

UU minister Angela Herrera, puts it this way, "You bring yourself before the sacred, before the holy, before what is ultimate and bigger than your lone life.. You stand at the edge of mystery. Meanwhile, the armful of worries you brought to the edge of mystery have fluttered to your feet."

So friends, this month let's let mystery work its magic. Let's allow ourselves to fall in and be opened up. Let's slip into the sky and let it slip into us. Let's set the sleuthing down, for just a moment, and simply listen, wait to hear what the world whispers back.

It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of thinking and into the space of doing.

We've all experienced it: the mystery of an ordinary moment that suddenly lit up and reminded you of the marvel and preciousness of being alive. It moved you from a feeling of "the same old, same old" to a feeling of dancing with the sacred. Or maybe you heard a voice in your head saying, "This matters most!" and "Don't forget this!" It added meaning to our lives and *defined* meaning at the same time.

With this in mind, spend some time this month reclaiming a handful of those mysteriously luminous moments.

### NEWSLETTER ITEMS

The Newsletter comes out at the beginning of each month. It is assembled by Lucy Stieber based on your input. If you have items, please email to Lucy at [LASTIEBER@aol.com](mailto:LASTIEBER@aol.com)