

CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP

Monthly Message for All Ages –January 2024

Welcome to this place of possibility! This is love's hearth, the home of hope, a refuge for minds in search of truth unfolding, ever beautiful, ever strange.

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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Ellen LaPine

Ann Peterson

Ronna Schindler

Arny Stieber

Lucy Stieber

Paul Wenham

Susan Woods

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.

Welcome to All!



THINK SPRING!

JANUARY EVENTS CALENDAR

Jan. 7th, Sunday, 8:30 a.m. Important Council of Trustees Meeting. In the Dining Room and on Zoom

ALL ARE WELCOME

The majority of the meeting will be devoted to **ideas and commitments to support the future of First Universalist. We need everyone!**

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few.” ~Shunryu Suzuki~

We are all experts in what we have always done. What would a beginner like to see and know. I give you this quote as a way to give us all a **challenge to think about new ways to continue to do the things we love and to let go of things we no longer need.**

As you know, we will be losing one of our ministers with David’s last service on January 7th. The Reverends Bud Adams and Kurt Hohmann have affirmed that they want to stay on. We also have a couple other possibilities we are currently exploring and should know more by the time of the meeting. We will no longer have a piano player/organist after this service due to financial constraints. We are working on providing music electronically for each service. All that said, **we are at a crossroads at this point in our beloved community’s life and we need everyone’s input and help to move us forward.**

Please join us in person or on Zoom.

Ellen LaPine Trustee

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting Name: Board Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94881952240?pwd=TEVPVEo2WE4zVHdJaHdIR1lwNWVZz09>

Jan. 19th, Friday: Red Cross Blood Drive. See page 3.

Jan. 31st, Wednesday: Book Club. See page 3.

SUNDAY SERVICE CONVERSATIONS

January 7th– Rev. David Weissbard

"Church Going"

The above will be the 176th and **final sermon** I will have delivered in your pulpit. As I trust you've heard by now, early in December I sent a letter to your leaders informing them of my decision to retire from my relationship with your church. It was not a decision I arrived at easily, but it felt and feels appropriate. I've looked back on the list of those sermons -- mind boggling! I deeply appreciate the opportunity you have given me to decompress gradually from fulltime ministry -- cold turkey would have been very difficult. Sunday's sermon will be a look back, a look around, and a look ahead. I hope you'll join us. Dave

January 14th – Rev. Kurt Hohmann

"A Gift of Love"

Service will be held in the sanctuary.

January's Soul Matters theme is Liberating Love. How can something as amorphous as love—a concept that takes many forms, that can shift from day to day, sometimes minute to minute—be liberating?

January 21st - Rev. Bud Adams

January 28th – Peg Peck (see bio page 3)

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

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – Nancy Hallock

We continue to collect hats, mitts and scarves for distribution by the Lioness.

We will continue to collect cans and coins on Sundays.

SPECIAL – PALESTINE

Compiled by Arny Stieber

Our Seven Principals guide us in our relations. The first Principal is: The inherent worth and dignity of every person. Our fourth Principal is: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. If you have an interest in Palestine and Israel, you may want to review this information.

Suggested background information:

* Life in Occupied Palestine by Anna Baltzer. (Lucy and Arny met Anna and watched her documentary at Michigan State University about 15 years ago. This was our first, formal introduction to Palestine.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_MDC2Gty4I

* Israel Lobby and Settler Colonialism by history professor Walter Hixson (10/10/23)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1f6nUmeYFg>

* The 100 year war on Palestine w/Rashid Khalidi. (12/1/23)

<https://youtu.be/cZ55JmOISdg?si=PQ3K4Jqa3yo36Qwf>

* June 8th, 1967, Israel attacks the USS Liberty killing 34 and wounding 171 U.S. military.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tx72tAWVcoM>

* Chris Hedges "The Genocide in Gaza". (12/6/23) <https://youtu.be/ly6lfhOxTe0?si=-JvwNmXl47PvhxU8>

* Israeli Myths:

<http://www.annainthemiddleeast.com/findoutmore/myths/appendices.pdf>

* Book: "The Hidden History of Zionism" by Ralph Schoenman.

* Web site: <https://ifamericansknew.org/>

If you're interested in doing something, here are some suggestions.

1. Familiarize yourself with Palestine. What is typically presented by U.S. corporate media is Israel's version of history and current events. Go beyond that.

2. Become familiar with the BDS movement.

<https://youtu.be/1dQIFgMhxcI?si=teSKIZsaCTVC1OSH>

3. Contact your federal politicians (President, Senators, Representative) every day by email and/or phone. Their contact information is on their web sites. Once you fill out their email form, it's saved, so repeated contacts are easy. The people of Palestine are being brutalized every day and our politicians need to be reminded that our tax dollars (\$4 billion/year and billions more in weapons) are the major funding source for the death and destruction.

4. Attend seminars and actions in support of Palestine. U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights:

<https://uscpr.org>

5. Support individuals and groups that speak up for Palestine.

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/12/27/campus_palestine_exception

**Red Cross Blood Drive
Friday, January 19, 2024**

1:30-6:30 p.m.

**First Baptist Church
701 N Main St.**

Central Square NY

**Sponsored by the First Universalist Society
of Central Square**

Since this is the beginning of a new year, I thought I'd give a little history of our important commitment to these essential blood drives. We will hold our 60th drive on Friday, January 19th so we have been supporting these drives for over 10 years! During our previous drives we have collected a total of 1158 units of blood from 1172 donors. We average 20 units of blood from each drive. These numbers show that we have truly helped our community support the life saving mission of supplying blood and blood products by the American Red Cross. Thank you for your support.

However, as I write this, we have only 11 people scheduled to give at this drive. Please tell your friends and neighbors about this drive and consider donating yourself if you can. It is highly encouraged that you schedule an appointment but walk-ins may be welcome if all appointments do not fill. You can schedule an appointment by visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS. This drive is staffed by our own First Universalist Society volunteers. If you can help, please contact me. Thank you. Ellen LaPine.

MARKETING COMMITTEE – Susan, Paul, Erin, Arny

* Reminder - **wear your 1st U hoodies and T's**, not just to Service but everywhere! Our attendance at Service has dwindled. The community doesn't know we exist. Hoodies and T's are one way to spread the word and get noticed. 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. If you have ideas on how we can let others know about our open approach and acceptance to all beliefs, please let a committee member know. *Our message is greatly needed in this time of division, distrust and fear.*

EDUCATION FOR YOUTH & ADULTS



January brings us the opportunity to hold each other with love and kindness even when we do not agree. To take responsibility for our actions and help others to the best of our ability.

This month we will be exploring our principles and how they can guide us. Ronna Schindler

Our January Presenter Peg Peck

Peg Peck and her husband Jim, live in a converted barn in the Gayville area of Constantia. Her sons, Jon and Alex grew up in the First Universalist Society of Central Square. After living in six different states, Alex has moved back to Central New York. Jon, his wife Sarah, and their daughters Genevieve and Hazel live in New York State too.

Having retired from a career in teaching, educational research, writing and music, Peg is busy with volunteer work as Constantia Town Historian and trustee of the Constantia Rural Cemetery.

Peg's favorite and well-earned title is Gramma©

UU BOOK CLUB

The UU Club typically meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 2PM. Zoom only.

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.

UUA Reading Suggestion

The Spiritual Teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Author: [Barry M. Andrews](#)

Explores Emerson's writings, including his journals and letters, and makes them accessible to today's spiritual seekers.

Even during his lifetime, Ralph Waldo Emerson was called the Sage of Concord, a fitting title for this leader of the American Transcendentalist movement.

Everything that Emerson said and wrote directly addressed the conduct of life, and in his view, spiritual truth and understanding were the essence of religion.

Unsurprisingly, he sought to rescue spirituality from decay, eschewing dry preaching and rote rituals.

UUA Through Time

1980s

As we learn more about UU history we can more clearly convey the meaning of Universalism to ourselves and others.

In 1980, two Unitarian Universalist women—Carolyn McDade and Lucile Schuck Longview—were asked to create a worship service for the Women and Religion Continental Convocation of Unitarian Universalists. As they shaped that service, McDade and Longview wanted to create a new ritual “that spoke to our connectedness to one another, to the totality of life, and to our place on this planet.” They included a **new, inclusive symbol of women’s spirituality: water**. They write, “Water is more than simply a metaphor. It is elemental and primary, calling forth feelings of awe and reverence. Acknowledging that the ocean is considered by many to be the place from which all life on our planet came—it is the womb of life—and that amniotic waters surround each of us prenatally, we now realize that [this worship service] was for us a new story of creation... *We choose water as our symbol of our empowerment.*”

Liberating Love

Love, it sits in the chest, at least at the start.

It’s what makes our heart beat again after being broken and our lungs breathe again after being closed off in the dark for far too long.

For some, it came in the form of our grandfather’s eyes which saw us as carriers of something bigger and more precious and older than our little bodies disclosed.

For others, it arrived as we pressed hard against our mothers’ warm skin and heard a speechless whisper say we can always come home.

We recognize love as the thing that allowed us to finally remove our masks, or that which said I don’t want you to take it off, until you are ready.

We were taught love by those who arrived in the midst of our fear and shook as we shook, instead of simply trying to make our trembling stop.

But here is the secret. The inevitable awakening.

The wonder that each of our lives is meant to reveal.

Love doesn’t just love us; it asks us to become it.

That’s why those metaphors of comforting quilts which wrap us in their warmth will never do.

True love is always a thunderstorm that cracks us clean open so the echoes of other breaking hearts can make their way in. Yes, it wants us to be whole and strong.

But love’s deepest longing is that we will use that strength to tear down the structures that leave others bloodied and bruised.

We must always remember what Selma’s prophet of peace regularly preached:

Love and power are always rightly wed.

And maybe this is where the second secret comes loose.

As I shake the walls to let others free,

I learn that the ones I’ve liberating include me.

Love takes many forms. How it shows up in our life this year is often quite different from last year. Sometimes it shifts and morphs even faster than that.

So what form is it currently taking in your life today?

And what story/moment captures, not only the form it is taking, but the gift it is giving you?

For your spiritual exercise this month, spend some time trying to identify this single moment that exemplifies

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