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## NEWS FROM THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH JANUARY 2010

Office hours: Monday – Thursday, 8 – 11:30 a.m. and  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 1 – 4 p.m.

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Interim Minister: Myron Andes

Director of Religious Education: Jan Hutslar

Deadline for next newsletter: Wed. January 20

### A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

Worship services and religious education for children and youth begin at 10:30 a.m.

#### **January 3 Intention: Potential and Peril – Myron Andes, Interim Minister**

As a new year begins and resolutions are made (and broken), perhaps it would be good to look into the impact of intention on our lives.

*Greeters:* Janet and John Green, Richard Grover

*Social Hour:* Jim and Stevie Michaelson, David and Sally Vrooman

#### **January 10 "COM" - Myron Andes, Interim Minister**

COMMunity, COMMunication, COMfort. COMe and consider the root meanings of these words and their interrelationships. You may find that no three words could be more significant for us, each and together. The service will include the 2010 Church Council installation and the Congregational Meeting will follow.

*Greeters:* Bart and Margaret Harloe, John Hammond and Kathleen Horton

*Social Hour:* Becky and Peter Van de Water, Dave Weissbard and Karen Wells

#### **January 17 Honoring Martin Luther King - Myron Andes, Interim Minister**

This week is the holiday set aside to honor the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. How should we honor him? How can we carry forward his work and his dream today?

*Greeters:* Bobbi Haldane, Gary and Sally Hoose, Valerie Ingram

*Social Hour:* Cliff and Janice Westerling, Eileen Wheeler

#### **January 24 The Chalice Circle – Viki Levitt, Lay Leader**

Hear about what Chalice Circles have meant to some of the members of our congregation in their own words.

*Greeters:* Charles and Lila Hunnewell, Helen and Roger Hutchinson

*Social Hour:* Eric and Jean Williams-Bergen, Theresa Witmer

#### **January 31 A Healing Journey Home – Jon Montan, Lay Leader**

Matilda Larson will share a story of the repatriation of human remains to St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, the community's experience of welcoming their ancestors home, and how Buddhism assisted with her personal journey of healing.

*Greeters:* Adam and Eileen Jarrett, Boris and Kim Jukic

*Social Hour:* 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade class

### **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING NOTICE**

**A Congregational Meeting will be held in the**

**Sanctuary immediately after the service on Sunday, January 10, to adopt the 2010 operating budget. All are welcome at the meeting; only those who have signed the Membership Book may vote.**

### **THOUGHTS IN THE INTERIM**

*Life is a gift for which we are grateful.*

*We gather in community to celebrate the glories  
and mysteries of this great gift.*

These words by Marjorie Montgomery give us a bright frame for our shiny new year.

There is much to anticipate eagerly in 2010. The church will continue to move forward in its search for a new minister. With a bit of effort toward some fundraising activities we will meet our budgetary needs.

The Religious Education program will continue to support our children and young people as they grow, learn, and become the people they will be. The Coats Library will have all its wonderful books for us to read, and will keep adding more. Music will save us with its beauty as the choir, bell choir, organ, and others make their offerings through the year.

The Caring Circle will see that our love and concern are expressed where needed in tangible ways. The Council will protect the church and lead it forward, worship will be planned and shared, the interim year transition tasks will be tended to, the record keeping, scheduling, and coordinating will continue in the church office. The building and grounds will be maintained with the loving care that has become the custom.

And in so many other ways I can't begin to count, we will engage in exploring and sharing "life's glories and mysteries." We have much to be thankful for and much to look forward to as the year begins. Let us "gather in community" to share the precious gift of life.

May the year for you be filled with blessings, happy surprises and peacefulness of spirit.

Happy New Year!

*Myron Andes, Interim Minister*

Myron's office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 1 to 4 p.m., and other times by appointment.

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#### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year! Our regular newsletter deadline is proving to be particularly challenging this month. While you will read this column in January, I wrote it way back in December - before New Year's Day, before Kwanzaa, before Christmas, even before the holiday pageant. I write in anticipation of the past tense as I hope the holidays offered you time to share with others and space for your own spirit. I also extend my very best wishes for the New Year.

I must admit I look forward with anticipation and excitement. We have been through a lot of change in the last few months, and in the near future, the search committee will identify and introduce us to a settled minister candidate. In the meantime, we will continue to prepare to welcome this new addition to our congregation and church family as we work through the remainder of our interim year with Myron. Times of change are challenging and confusing, but can also be stimulating and exhilarating as new potential is uncovered and new opportunities are explored. When we began our interim year last fall, I admit my anxiety level was high because so much was unknown and I was so uncertain about how we would respond. Now, half a year later, I am much more certain that we can and will continue to grow and learn and adapt to change. I have always had great respect and regard for both the individuals and the collective whole of our congregation, and the events of this year have only solidified my opinion. It is indeed an honor to serve as your president.

I also want to again extend my gratitude to all who participated in the 2010 canvass. As you know, our pledge income did go down a bit this year, but thanks to the hard work of both the Stewardship and Budget and Finance committees, the considerable contribution of Church Council, and the incredible generosity of all those who pledged and those who increased their pledges, we are in a much better spot than we were when I made my December update. Council will review the updated budget at our January meeting, and we will present this version to the congregation on January 10 for a final vote. Please mark your calendars and plan on attending this important congregational meeting.

We will also install the 2010 Church Council on January 10. In the midst of so much change, there is remarkable continuity on the Council. Oscar Sarmiento will begin a three year term as a trustee, replacing Joan Collins. I will miss Joan and am thankful for her contribution, and I am looking forward to working with Oscar.

If you have any questions or concerns, any of us on Council would be happy to chat with you.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

As we get back to our routine after all the festivities of the last few weeks, I look forward to seeing the RE classrooms full and busy again. I am excited to announce that we have a new Assistant Director of Religious Education. Gina Nicoletta-Budler, who will work 10 hours a week, has a BA in Art Education and has been a classroom teacher, as well as a birth doula and a community integration specialist helping a young adult with Down's syndrome to gain independence and acquire living skills. Gina is enthusiastic about working with our children and youth and feels the involvement here will benefit her as well. Welcome Gina!

This month, along with our year's curriculum, the 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders will have a Children's Chapel to explore our fourth UU Principle, which is (in rainbow language) "Grow in Spirit and Mind." The official wording is "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning." I close with excerpts from a poem by Walt Whitman that speaks to this principle:

*Afoot and light-hearted, I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me...  
Henceforth I ask not good-fortune –  
I myself am good fortune...  
strong and content, I travel the open road...  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads,  
as roads for traveling souls.*

Happy travels!

Jan Hutslar

## JOYS & SORROWS

- Our thoughts are with *Emmy Stevenson* – and *Brooke* and *Ruth* – on the death of Emmy's father.
- We recently learned that in October *Dick Kimball* was injured in an accident while working on a project at the St. Lawrence Power and Equipment Museum in Madrid. He was hospitalized in Burlington, but has been home and recovering well. Dick and Donna can be reached at 3827 North 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, AZ 85014.

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

To everyone who helped make our church even more beautiful for the holidays: Becky Van de Water for the beautiful wreaths on our front doors; Bill and Katherine Brown for their gift of the BIG tree in the sanctuary and to Peter and Becky Van de Water for "procuring" it!; Tom Cutter and Jim Michaelson for putting up the tree and the lights--a tough job; Connie and David Nelson, Barb Beekman, Katherine Brown, Ann Elmer and Becky Van de Water for decorating the sanctuary; and Stu and Wilma Hills for the beautiful poinsettias.

## WINTER POTLUCKS

Be sure to check the information table for winter potluck sign-ups. We need hosts with dates first, then partakers who will choose one(s) they can attend. We encourage all to get involved in this winter-long activity involving food, fun, food, relaxing conversation and food. For questions call *Stevie Michaelson* at 386-5250.

## PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE THE HISTORICAL HAPPENING

On Saturday evening, December 5, approximately 50 people gathered in the Romer Room and the Social Room to enjoy looking at selected historical items from the Church archives and devour delicious fajitas and jalapeño apple crisp prepared by David Weissbard.

At each table there were three questions to which the participants responded by writing brief thoughts on cards that were then compiled.

The questions were:

- A remembrance associated with the church: why was it significant to you?
- How has our past influenced how we are today?
- How will we live out our heritage in the future?

As you might imagine, responses were as individual as each person but some themes emerged. Many folks answered the first question with remembrances of feeling welcomed when they first came to this church and the significance of celebrations of major life events such as weddings, memorial services, etc. Memories emerged of special things children have said and done, Unirondack, the Memorial Garden, church building and landscaping projects, pageants and lining the sidewalk to greet Anne and Wade when they first arrived.

Sometimes the strongest memories can come from what might seem an ordinary event. Rajiv Narula recalled that: "When I was teaching about vegetarianism in RE Sunday, a 6<sup>th</sup> grader told me, 'Isn't it more important what comes *out* from our mouth than what goes in?' This struck me as quintessentially UU – we can *and do* learn from everyone, regardless of their age or other artificial distinctions."

The second question yielded comments that acknowledged our link to the Theological School at SLU, the profound benefit we have received from our outstanding ministers, our long-standing liberal tradition of openness, tolerance, and social action, and a feeling that we have the strength and resilience to flourish as a welcoming religious community.

The third question required some crystal-ball gazing. A response that rather eloquently summarized a bundle of similar responses was, "As we continue to lead the way for equal treatment for everyone and to respect life and its gifts, we will carry our commitments forward in our continuing celebration of beauty and justice." I was inspired to read words like:

- Helping people in need.
- Be a voice for tolerance and equality. With open hands, open minds and open hearts.
- Embrace art as an inroad to spiritual development.
- Being persistent in promoting diversity.
- Challenge reactionaries.
- Make the world a better place, by how we think, how we talk and how we live.
- Being a true "welcoming congregation" to all who come.
- Roots hold me close, wings set me free.

Thanks to all of those who helped make the "Historical Happening" a successful and fulfilling event!

*Jon Montan, Transition Team*

### **ATTENTION SOCIAL HOUR HOSTS**

If you find that you cannot host on the assigned day, kindly try to trade someone who hosts later in the season. If you cannot find someone, then please call *Lois Cutter* (328-4675) who is temporarily taking over as social hour coordinator for Judy DeGraaff.

### **JANUARY CHOIR SCHEDULE**

Sunday, January 3 – rehearse at 9:15 am  
Sunday, January 10 – rehearse at 9:15, sing in church  
Sunday, January 17 – no rehearsal  
Sunday, January 24 – rehearse at 9:15, sing in church  
Sunday, January 31 – rehearse at 9:15

### **THE FLAMING CHALICE...**

...was chosen as the theme for a set of cards originally designed and printed in 1997 by the eight participants in our Coming of Age Program. Each member of the group developed a design concept, which was refined and drawn on limestone by printmaker Roger Bailey. A limited edition of lithograph prints was pulled by hand with students serving as workshop assistants. The eight images have now been re-printed commercially and are packaged in sets of eight cards, with envelopes, for \$10/set. Proceeds from the sale of the cards will go to the church's Capital Reserve Fund. We sincerely thank the eight participants for allowing us to use their designs for this project.

### **FROM THE COOTS LIBRARY**

I realize I am really getting old when I look at some of the new children and young adult books, especially the non-fiction. They may have as many facts as the ones I struggled with (or didn't read) but what spectacular illustrations and texts that don't "dumb down."

For example, *An Environmental Guide from A to Z*, illustrated by Aubri Vincent-Barwood, granddaughter of Aileen Vincent-Barwood, who attends our church, a book for grades 3 and up, with text, illustrations, and questions to engage the reader on every letter of the alphabet. For example, D is for Darwin, with sketches of his boat, three different finches, an island, and an explanation of the Law of Natural Selection. What a wonderful way to learn! The letter L is for Paolo Lugari. Who? Check out the book and find out!

Al Gore's *Our Choice, Young Readers Edition*, was under the Kepes Christmas tree as well as in the church library. Again, a difficult topic--global warming--has been simplified some, but not so much that adults, as well as older children, will feel "talked down to." Fabulous illustrations and photographs are found on almost every page. An illustration of a co-generation plant is detailed but understandable (even if the one in Canton was a failure!). I have never understood the phrase "cap and trade" until I read a simple two sentence explanation and simple illustration on page 171.

We need more of the above type books for our older children. The Coots Library Committee would love some suggestions or donations.

Joan Kepes

### *I Just Read...*

"God has died many times. And yet God still lives." This idea is found on the book jacket of *God, A Brief History*, by John Bowker, and forms the basis for this exploration of how human understanding of God is constantly changing. I am not qualified to give you a history of God, but John Bowker is. A professor of religious studies, he has written many books on world religions, including one on why human brains may be hard wired for belief in God. *God, A Brief History* is a beautiful, compact presentation of the different ways that humans have come to interpret God, throughout time and across cultures. My children have been drawn many times to this hefty book while browsing in our library, thumbing through the pages to enjoy the hundreds of photographs, drawings, paintings, and sculptures that illustrate each page. Bowker uses many literary references to show us human conceptions of God and his writing is accompanied by excerpts from sacred books, poetry, and works of philosophy, praise and devotion, often translated from other languages.

The book begins with a background to belief in God, including discussion of the death of God and arguments for atheism. The author then goes on to illustrate the many human imaginations of God, starting with images of the Goddess and the natural world. The bulk of the book is composed of chapters that explore the ways belief in God began and have developed and is divided into sections on India, the religions of Asia and the religions of Abraham (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Bowker seems to have a very biological, organic view of why human imagination is drawn to God. He uses an example of people experiencing the awe of the Grand Canyon unexpectedly, for the first time, to try to illustrate this point. He maintains "Experiencing the world leads to the recognition of God. The way that human bodies and brains are built leads us to see and experience the world (and our own inner nature) in both emotional and rational ways. Fundamentally, therefore, we see and experience God directly through the occasions of the world because our brains and bodies are built in the way they are. We can no more not feel God than we can not feel fear." Bowker sees no conflict between the worlds of science and human belief in God. Both are ways of understanding human experience.

You may not agree with all the perspectives of the author, but this book offers lots of food for thought, entertainment, and literary enrichment. This is not a book that needs to be read cover to cover. The topics are organized in one to a few pages, inviting dipping and skimming in small doses. This is a wonderful diversion for contemplation on cold winter nights. Check it out for yourself!

Lorraine Olendzenski

### **January Library Table Volunteers**

January 3 – Jean Thompson  
January 10 – Jean/Eric Williams-Bergen  
January 17 – Barb/Pete Beekman  
January 24 – Ann Elmer  
January 31 – David Nelson

## EFFECTIVE MEETING TIPS: PROCESS OBSERVATION

In meetings, as elsewhere, there is what you do and there is how you go about doing it. And that “how you go about doing it,” can be as important as what you do; sometimes even more important. It can be helpful to intentionally examine the “how” of meetings in addition to the “what.” One way to do this is by designating someone at each meeting as the “Process Observer.” This person’s job is to, well, observe the process of the meeting. At the end of the meeting, (s)he reports to the group what (s)he has observed.

The Process Observer looks for things like: Was the meeting productive? Was time wasted? What worked particularly well? What promoted understanding? Is there something that can be done for next meeting that would help it go better? Was everyone heard? Did anyone dominate? Were the needs of minorities or traditionally-marginalized people fully included in the discussions? Was the discussion respectful of all those present, and of those not present? Were anyone’s ideas discounted? Did anyone’s ideas get preference? Was the meeting enjoyable? Was it in harmony with our principles and purposes? Did it further our articulated mission? Was it meaningful and worthwhile to the participants, and to the church?

These and whatever else jumps out at the Process Observer are what (s)he lifts up to the rest of the group for examination, in a serious, direct, kind manner. The process observation report could spark a long and helpful discussion, or it could be a quick “bullet point” report, depending on the need. Taking a little time in each meeting for process observation can yield major improvements over time. After all, everyone wants meetings to go well, be effective and be fun.

Why not try having a Process Observer at your next meeting? Give it several meetings, so everyone gets the hang of it, and different people get to be the Observer. It could become your regular practice.

*Myron Andes, Interim Minister*

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### NEW YEAR, NEW DECADE...NEW E-MAIL?

To streamline communications, we are introducing new e-mail addresses for several committee chairs, officers, staff, and the minister. In the past, all of the e-mail traffic for church business was channeled through the office, and Diana was responsible for routing messages to the appropriate party. We are hopeful that by establishing separate accounts, communication will not only be more direct and efficient, but we will help take some pressure off the office computer and give Diana more time for her many other duties. Please take a moment to update your address books with the following.

Minister (Myron Andes)	minister@uucantonny.org
Director of Religious Education (Jan Hutslar)	dre@uucantonny.org
Administrative Assistant (Diana Richardson)	office@uucantonny.org
President (Margaret Harloe)	councilpres@uucantonny.org
Treasurer (Dick Morrow)	treasurer@uucantonny.org
Stewardship Committee Chair (Scott Shipley)	stewardship@uucantonny.org
Worship Committee Chair (Galen Pletcher)	worship@uucantonny.org
Budget & Finance Committee Chair (Pat Glover)	budget&finance@uucantonny.org
UShare (Jan DeWaters)	ushare@uucantonny.org

### WHAT IS THE SEARCH COMMITTEE UP TO?

We are meeting twice a week on Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings. Between meetings, we are reviewing packets, reading (and sometimes listening to and watching) sermons, and studying the answers to the questions on ministerial records. You may be interested to know the kinds of disclosure required of ministerial candidates. In addition to the standard education, publication, and work experience information, ministers in search must also answer questions about:

- Why they are seeking ministry now and the new ministry they hope for.
- Their personal and family situation.
- Important events in life experience from their late teens forward and the context in which they felt called to ministry.
- What they bring to their new ministry from each of their past ministries.
- What their current development needs are and how a congregation might assist them in addressing those needs.
- Mistakes made in the past and how addressed.
- How they function...or wish to function...with lay leadership, paid church staff, a ministry team, and in the communities beyond the local congregation.

- Their experience in leading organizational change in multicultural settings.
- Their approach to religious education of children, youth and adults.
- The role of music and arts in the life of a congregation.
- The involvement they desire in the stewardship of a congregation and its financial affairs.
- Their dominant theology and how they deal with other UU theologies with which they are not in sympathy.

Very interesting reading and lots of it! By the end of January, we hope to have settled on three or four pre-candidates who are equally interested in us. That's a lot to do in a few short weeks, but we're very excited and hopeful. We hope you are, too.

Thank you for your steady support and for keeping the church a warm, welcoming, inspiring, and effective beacon of liberal religion in the North Country community while we search for a new settled minister

### Settled Minister Search Committee

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