

Edited for the Web: Personal information and contacts removed, as well as children's last names. Web viewers needing more information are invited to contact the church office at administrator@fuusalbany.org.

WINDOWS

Newsletter of the First Unitarian
Universalist Society of Albany

December 2012

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Sunday Schedule

9:00 AM

Mindfulness Meditation

9:45 AM

Nursery/Toddler rooms open

10:00 AM

Service

Children's Chapel

(1st Sunday/mo.)

Religious Education

11:00 AM

Coffee Hour

11:45 AM

Forum (2nd and 4th Sundays)

Sundays at FUUSA

Please join us on any Sunday for:

Mindfulness Meditation, Religious Education for children and youth, the Service, Coffee Hour, or any combination thereof. Other programs include Forum (social justice and environmental topics), Children's Chapel, social events, and adult education.

All are welcome!

Services

Dec. 2 "When God Talks Back," the Rev. Sam Trumbore
Making room for a response to directed meditations, thoughts, wishes and/or prayers is compatible with many paths of Unitarian Universalist belief and practice ... including yours?

Dec. 9 "Meeting the Shadow," the Rev. Sam Trumbore
Peace and acceptance can be found through meeting the shadows cast by the clouds that may obscure the enjoyment of this holiday season.

Dec. 16 "Getting What You Don't Deserve," the Rev. Sam Trumbore
What gift would you feel uncomfortable receiving? What gift could you give?

Dec. 23 "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!" the Rev. Sam Trumbore
The title says it all. Come celebrate the joy of the Christmas season as a family.

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve services 6:30 pm and 8:15 pm. (*Sanctuary*)
The 6:30 PM service will be "family friendly". And be sure to plan some time at the reception between the services! Music: Choir

Dec. 30 "We Remember," the Rev. Sam Trumbore
Some very notable people died during 2012. We will remember some and celebrate our connections to them.

Calendar

Events happening every Sunday at FUUSA

9:00 AM	Mindfulness Meditation	Sanctuary	Exceptions:
10:00 AM	Service	Emerson	
10:00 AM	Children's Chapel (1st Sunday/mo.)	Sanctuary	
10:00 AM	Religious Education	Classrooms	
11:00 AM	Coffee Hour	Channing, Emerson	
11:45 AM	Forum (some Sundays)	Emerson	

Events happening every week in December

Tuesdays	10:00 AM	Philosophy Group	B-8	Exceptions:
	1:00 PM	Bridge	B-8	
Wednesdays	10:00 AM	Projects & Quilts	B-8	
	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal	Emerson	

All other events happening in December

1-Dec	8:30 AM	Getting to Know UU	B-7, B-8
2-Dec	11:30 AM	Pageant - selection of parts	Emerson
3-Dec	6:15 PM	RE Council	Channing, Kitchen
4-Dec	1:00 PM	Bridge	B-8
	6:30 PM	Finance Committee Meeting	B-7
	7:00 PM	Wellspring Meeting	B-8
5-Dec	11:30 AM	Blood Drive	Emerson
	5:30 PM	Endowment Trust Meeting	B-8
	5:45 PM	Nominating Committee meeting	Joy Library
	7:00 PM	Choir rehearsal	Emerson
7-Dec	6:00 PM	Circle Dinner	Offsite
	6:00 PM	FUUSA Parent Group	Channing, 24/25, 26
8-Dec	2:00 PM	RE Holiday Crafts Workshop	Channing
	6:00 PM	Circle Dinner	Offsite
9-Dec	11:45 AM	Forum	
	12:00 PM	RE Pageant Rehearsal	Emerson
	12:30 PM	Rite of Passage meeting	B-8
	5:30 PM	Walker Book Club	Kitchen, B-8
10-Dec	10:00 AM	SGM Odell/Patrick	B-5
	3:00 PM	Overflow Shelter Meal Prep	Kitchen
	7:00 PM	Monday Men	B-8
11-Dec	1:00 PM	Bridge	B-8
	7:00 PM	UU Christians	B-7
12-Dec	5:15 PM	RSC	B-8
	7:00 PM	Choir rehearsal	Emerson
13-Dec	7:00 PM	PCC Meeting	
14-Dec	5:00 PM	Parents Night Out	
		Channing, 21, 22, 23, 24/25, 26	
15-Dec	1:00 PM	Parent Time Out	24/25
16-Dec	11:45 AM	Green Sanctuary	B-8
	12:00 PM	RE Pageant Rehearsal	Emerson
18-Dec	1:00 PM	Bridge	B-8
	6:00 PM	Wellspring Meeting	B-8
19-Dec	7:00 PM	Choir rehearsal	Emerson
20-Dec	7:00 PM	Board of Trustees	B-8
21-Dec	7:00 PM	Board of Trustees Meeting	B-8
23-Dec	11:00 AM	Pageant	Emerson
24-Dec	3:00 PM	Overflow Shelter Meal Prep	Kitchen
	6:30 PM	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	Sanctuary
	8:15 PM	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	Sanctuary

The RE Mitten Tree

The Religious Education program sponsors an opportunity for children, youth and adults to be generous in our local community. During the month of December, you can decorate the Mitten Tree in Emerson Hall with new hats, gloves, and mit-

tens for children and adults. You can also put new, unwrapped toys under the tree. All will be donated to the Marillac shelter, which offers an emergency housing program for homeless families in the Capital Region. You can learn more about the Marillac Homeless Family Program at http://www.st-cath.org/SCCC_Published/homeless.htm.



Looking Ahead

- Jan. 11 Potluck/Multigen. Event
- Jan. 18-19 Meditation Retreat
- Jan. 26 Circle Dinner

News

Acolytes needed for Christmas Eve services

It has been our tradition to sing Silent Night with everyone holding a lit candle at the Christmas Eve services. And young people – middle schoolers, high school youth and young adults carry the tapers that the people at the end of the pews use to light their candles and pass the flame to the next person. If your child or you--a young adult--would like to be an acolyte at either the 6:30 or 8:15 Christmas Eve service, please contact Leah Purcell at dre@albanyuu.org or call the office at 463-7135.

Blood Drive at FUUSA, Dec. 5

Hurricane Sandy caused the cancellation of Red Cross blood drives in 14 states. The cancellations resulted in more than 9,000 blood and platelet donations lost, according to the Red Cross. In response, the University at Albany School of Criminal Justice Graduate Student Association (SCJGSA) and the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany (FUUSA) will co-sponsor a Red Cross blood drive on Wednesday, December 5 from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The blood drive will be held in Emerson Hall at FUUSA, 405 Washington Avenue.

Welcoming a Guest at Your Table

Each year at during the latter part of November and in December, friends and families in our congregation participate in Guest at Your Table — a UU tradition for decades. By bringing home a beautiful Guest at Your Table box, families and individuals can participate in the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee as it puts our shared values into action in the United States and around the world. Through a potent combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots human-rights leaders, UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis.

In each household, the Guest at Your Table box is placed in a prominent spot, often at the family dinner table. When family and friends gather to enjoy their blessings, they can reflect on the contributions of their “guests” to the movement for universal human rights — and share generously. This year, our guests at our tables are identified at [http://](http://www.uusc.org/guest/2012-2013/myguests)

Flyers in this issue

At the end of this newsletter you will find full page items on:

◆ Parent Time Out

www.uusc.org/guest/2012-2013/myguests. Each week, we can also choose a different story to read, bringing our guests to life and helping celebrate our own rights. These stories can be found in *The Stories of Hope* booklet available in the RE office, or from the UUSC at http://www.uusc.org/files/2012-2013_Stories-of-Hope-Booklet.pdf.

Sharing our blessings through Guest at Your Table ensures that UUSC’s human-rights work continues.



Please consider making a contribution that meets membership levels. Since UUSC is an independent organization that receives no funding from government or the UUA, your

support and membership are vitally important.

If you would prefer not to bring home a box, you can take a donation envelope or support UUSC directly online at <http://www.uusc.org/givetoguest>. Guest at Your Table boxes and envelopes are available in the RE office, and on Sundays at the RE Window.

Thank you for your upcoming participation and generosity from your FUUSA UUSC local representative, Don Odell (drodell31@yahoo.com, 482-4574), and from DRE Leah Purcell, who does so much to make this effort work.

Budget Requests due January 13, 2013

Yes, it’s time once again to figure out how much money your program, committee or group will need in the next fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2013 and ending June 30, 2014. While it may seem far away,

this year once seemed distant also.

The budget form for submission can be found on the FUUSA web site at <http://www.albanyuu.org/budgetform.pdf>, or in the File Cabinet. If necessary, the office can supply you with a printed form.

The Finance Committee and the Board use the completed form to help determine what your group's planned activities are for next year and how much money will be needed to support your endeavors. It will be assumed that no funds will be needed if a form is not submitted. Regular mail and email submissions will be welcomed.

The form is self-guiding, however, if you have questions or need an alternate method of communication, please contact Steve Moskowitz, Finance Committee chair, at xxxxxxxxxxxx

UUSC Holiday Cards

Yes, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) Holiday Cards are available during coffee hour on Sunday mornings. Look for Maria Joyner for the cards. \$10 a package. Join in compassionate consumption. Share the spirit of the holiday season with beautiful UUSC holiday cards. Sales of these greeting cards will help UUSC protect basic human rights and advance social justice in the United States and around the world.

Thank you to Maria for selling the cards and thank you to all purchasers for buying. --Don Odell

Supporting Our Youth

Six of our youth and Molly Daniels, who served as their youth advisor, attended the recent con (youth conference) in Binghamton, NY. This was a "first" for our group, since none of the current members of our youth group had been to a con before this. When I talked to them the Sunday morning they returned, they were happy but sleepy-eyed, and as I expected, the responses to my questions about their experience were short and sweet. I served as an advisor at cons for several years and I know the value giving of youth from the larger Unitarian Universalist an opportunity to gather together for a weekend. This Face Book post from Tracy Landers, (printed here with her permission) one of the St. Lawrence District Youth-Adult Committee aptly describes the value of cons. One reason I am sharing this with you is that the youth here at

FUUSA have scheduled a con for the 4 local UU congregations of CRUUNY Feb 8-10. They will need a lot of support from you, the adults at FUUSA.

How Do You Measure the Success of a Youth Conference (aka Con)?

- ◆ By the joy one feels from sharing the experience with your sibling for the first time?
- ◆ By the youth who shares her grief over the recent loss of friend only to be immediately surrounded by the hugs of love from dozens of her peers who want to help share the burden for at least a moment?
- ◆ By the painfully shy youth who courageously steps out from behind the protection of the computer to share their thoughts in a small group setting?
- ◆ By the youth who was assaulted and tries to cope with the pain by sharing their poem in front of the community?
- ◆ By the gain of confidence from successfully leading a touch group and receiving words of praise for her efforts?
- ◆ By three youth from three different congregations coming together to share a very moving and beautiful musical piece?
- ◆ By having a space for youth to share music that they have written themselves?
- ◆ By things not going quite according to plan but working as a team to resolve the issue?
- ◆ By the feelings of love and inclusion not felt in other settings?
- ◆ By the smiles and joy seen on people's faces?
- ◆ By the tears at the end when it's time to say goodbye to your best friends that you have just met?

Others may look at a con and just see a bunch of wild and crazy kids goofing off. I see things differently. Thank you to all of the adult volunteers at UUCB (Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton) who helped with this year's con. Without you, these kinds of success stories would not happen!

Lifespan Learning

Workshop Rotation is coming in January!

For the month of January, the elementary school-aged children and the pre-K/Kindergarten groups will be having Workshop Rotation for Sunday school. Our pilot of using this model for Sunday school went well last year and the RE Council and I have ideas to make it even better this year.

The theme this year is embracing the dark time of year. As the days get shorter and the nights get longer, and the temperatures drop, we often "hunker down" at home. So winter can be a time for us to turn inward. The question we'll ask is "What do we value?" We'll have a story on this theme. Each week the children will have Children's Chapel. The Red and Orange groups will have their Children's Chapel and workshops in their rooms upstairs. I'll lead the Children's Chapel for the elementary aged children (the Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet groups) in the Sanctuary. The elementary school children will hear the same story presented in a different way each week. Their activities will be workshops along the theme. A set of workshops with groups doing them in rotation – that's Workshop Rotation! For the elementary aged children we are considering a workshop on ways to be green and conserve energy, and a yoga or meditative movement workshop. Other workshops could be related to music, visual art, writing, or playing games, or constructing things.

The Orange and Yellow groups will have their own Children's Chapel together in room 26 in January. Ideas for their workshops are singing songs and playing games, movement, art and cooking.

The Workshop Rotation Committee is looking for volunteers from the congregation to lead the workshops. Do you have a skill or interest you would like

to share with children in a workshop? Their regular Sunday school teachers will be with you and you can count on support from me and the rest of the Workshop Rotation Committee to help you create a workshop. If are interested in leading a workshop for the elementary groups or the Pre-K/Kindergarten groups this January, please contact me at 463-7135 or dre@albanyuu.org. --Leah Purcell

Joy Library Notes

Two new books in Joy Library:

The Distance Between Us: A Memoir by Reyna Grande . Atria Books (2012), [304.687 GRA] *"In this poignant memoir about her childhood in Mexico, Reyna Grande skillfully depicts another side of the immigrant experience - the hardships and heart-breaks of the children who are left behind. Through her brutally honest firsthand account of growing up in Mexico without her parents, Grande sheds light on the often overlooked consequence of immigration – the disintegration of a family."* - SONIA NAZARIO, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of *Enrique's Journey*.

Pedagogy of the Poor (Teaching for Social Justice) by Willie Baptist and Jan Rehmman. Teachers College Press (2011). [362.509 BAP] *The authors present a new kind of interdisciplinary pedagogy that brings together antipoverty grassroots activism and relevant social theories about poverty. This unique book combines the oral history of a renowned antipoverty organizer with accessible introductions to relevant social theories, case studies, in-class student debates, and pedagogical reflections. This multilayered approach makes it useful to both social activists committed to eradicating poverty and educators looking for ways to teach about the struggles for economic and social justice.*

Our Community

Channing Circle Luncheon Ristorante Paradiso, Dec.17

Channing Circle will hold its now annual Holiday Luncheon at noon Monday, December 17th at the nearby Ristorante Paradiso. All members, friends and persons of a certain age(retired) are invited to

attend. Want an excuse to dress up ? Here it is.

Reservations are required by 9.p.m., Wednesday, 12/12 and may be made by contacting Mark Yolles (xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.) The total cost for the family style meal is \$20. Note: If attending please bring an inexpensive wrapped gift.

Holiday greetings to one and all from your compatriots at Channing Circle !!

FUUSA News and Updates

Now you can get your FUUSA News and Updates on a Facebook page of that name! We have set up a 'closed' group where we ALL can share information about happenings here at FUUSA. You can post about an event your committee is hosting, or ask for a volunteer for a specific task, or rave about the upcoming Christmas pageant! All we ask is that you restrain yourself to 100% FUUSA news and events so that this page will become a trusted source of information without clutter! The group will be moderated, inappropriate posts will be removed, and the poster will be reminded of the rules.

Members and friends of FUUSA can join the group by using this address to get to the page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FUUSANewsandUpdates/> and request to join. Alternatively, you can email Stephanie Hayes (shayes@albanyuu.org) to ask to be added to the group. The group's administrators (Owen Devine, Stephanie Hayes, and Amy Lent) have already sent invitations to join the group to all their FUUSA Facebook friends. So, accept the invitation, and tell your FUUSA friends about it, too. Let's get this group as big as possible—as soon as possible—so that it will serve us well in making those all-important connections within the FUUSA community!

Walker Book Club

Join the Walker Book Club for the next book discussion on Sunday, Dec. 9, 2012. Because Channing Hall is rented, we will meet this one time in B-8 at 5:30 PM.

This informal group, which has existed for over 20 years and is named in memory of a treasured, deceased FUUSAn, offers participants the opportunity to search for UU truth and meaning by reading and discussing a wide-range of fiction and nonfiction books. Members greatly expand their reading horizons and develop a deeper sense of community and connections with other FUUSAns. The only rules are that the book must be available in paperback, either through libraries or at low cost, and the person who suggests the book must have read it recently. Newcomers are always welcome and the book club is open to all FUUSA members and friends.

The discussion is preceded by a welcoming potluck supper, followed by a lively discussion of the book of

**Need to talk?
FUUSA Pastoral Care
Associates are here
to listen!**



Our Pastoral Care Associates have been trained in compassionate listening skills and are available to all members and friends of our congregation. To contact a Pastoral Care Associate, email listeners@albanyuu.org, contact Reverend Sam Trumbore, the FUUSA office at 518-463-7135, or one of them personally. They are: Jon Newell, Phil Rich, Sharon Babala, Jan Satin, Randy Rosette, Jerry Deighan, Bruce Rodgers and Sandy Stone.

the month chosen by participants. Bring your favorite dish to share and a small contribution to cover beverages. Use dishes etc. at FUUSA and help with the dishwasher or be green and bring your own.

On Dec. 9 we will discuss "The Other Side of the Bridge," by Mary Lawson. Set in Canada in the 1930's, this novel interweaves the stories of two families and the consequences of jealousy, rivalry and the dangerous power of obsession.

The first book next year, on January 13, 2013, is "The Places In Between," by Scottish Author Rory Stewart, is a nonfictional travel narrative which describes his walk across Afghanistan in 2002.

Contact Linda Hunt at xxxxxxxxxxxx with any questions about the group, if you want to have your name added to the Walker Book Club mailing list or to find out what books we are considering reading in 2013.

Yuletide Revels

"Medieval Merry Making to Welcome the Sun"

Friday, Dec. 14, 7:30 PM

Sunday, Dec. 16, 10:30 AM

at the First Unitarian Society of Schenectady,

All are invited as once again the Great Hall of the Unitarian Society is transformed into a medieval Manor Hall for this wondrous event. Come in costume if you like and help us celebrate with centuries-old traditions plus modern fun! Festivities include: A Mummer's Play, The Lords & Ladies of the Society Choir, The Pokingbrook Morris Dancers, The Berkshire Brass Quartet. Followed by a Wassail Bolle &

Cookyes .Suggested Donation: \$15 adult, \$5 child.
Go to fussonline.org for photos & directions.

Part-time Custodian position available

FUUSA is hiring a part time Custodian for 10 hours per week of basic cleaning, snow removal, and event set up and breakdown. On occasion there could be additional hours if needed for large events. Days include Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. For more information see Amy Lent in the church office. Application form is also available at www.albanyuu.org.

If you need the services of the Caring Network, please call the office during regular hours at 463-7135.

Items of personal joy or caring may be submitted during the service on the yellow cards provided, or directly to Mary Ann Randall (mabrandall@gmail.com.)

Social Justice

Opportunity to help children

The Social Responsibilities Council has initiated a project to make a difference in the lives of students attending Sheridan Preparatory Academy, a kindergarten through fifth grade public school. Sheridan Prep is just a few blocks from FUUSA and the majority of its students come from low-income families.

Two FUUSAns began volunteering at Sheridan Prep this week. They found the experience both fun and rewarding. The children are very eager for the individual attention that volunteers can give. Each class has children with a range of skills, including some who are not yet proficient in English. In parts of the day, teachers work with small groups of students on a particular skill. Volunteers are needed to help engage the remaining students in learning activities.

We urge you to consider volunteering. The only qualifications for volunteering are loving children and being able to sound out words. I think you will find it very rewarding.

You can find more information about Sheridan Prep on the bulletin board in Channing Hall. Volunteers must submit an application authorizing a background check. Here is the link to the volunteer page, where the application can be downloaded: <http://www.albanyschools.org/district/AtoZ/volunteering.html>.

After your application is approved, the school will contact you to set a date and time. If you have questions, please contact Martha Musser at xxxxxx or Lois Griffin at xxxxxx.

Green Sanctuary

Come to our Green Christmas potluck on Friday, Nov. 30 at 6 PM. Besides good food and company we will be offering a program called 'Christmas in a Jar' for adults. In addition there will be a program for young people making Christmas cards with recycled materials.

On Dec. 9 at 11:45 the GSC Forum will sponsor Scott Kellogg from the Radix Ecological Sustainability Center here in Albany. Mr. Kellogg is the author of the book Toolbox for Sustainable City Living. This is a reference we can all learn from. Please join us in welcoming Scott.

The Green Sanctuary Committee regularly holds its meetings on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 11:45. The GSC Forums are usually held on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 11:45. Keep your eyes on this column for our exciting January events. Contact Sandy at ssteub@gmail.com for more info. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

Social Witness activities from the UUA

Congregational action is essential in developing a FUUSA position and response to a UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) on **Reproductive Justice**, and to a proposed Statement of Conscience (SOC) on **Immigration as a Moral Issue**. Continue reading for additional details.

Reproductive Justice: Expanding our Social Justice Calling. There are two areas of action in this Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) that was approved by the 2012 Justice General Assembly: commenting on the development of the CSAI, and a multi-generational curriculum.

First is the **timetable for congregational participation** in the development of an eventual Statement of Conscience. During the winter and spring of 2012-2013, congregations are to begin the study of the CSAI and to get their comments to the UU Commission on Social Witness (CSW) by **March 1, 2013**. These comments will help the CSW prepare for the workshops at the 2013 General Assembly. For additional information, please go to: <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/calling/209024.shtml>.

Second, there is a **six session multi-generational curriculum** on Reproductive Justice, which can be found at <http://www.uua.org/reproductive/calling/curriculum/index.shtml>. This has been developed

to answer the chilling political debate on reproductive rights with calls for reproductive 'justice' and respect for the fullness of every person's reproductive and sexual life. The election of this 2012-2016 Congregational Study/Action Issue is a milestone opportunity for Unitarian Universalists to live with this call.

Immigration as a Moral Issue. The UUA Commission on Social Witness has published its draft Statement of Conscience (SOC) for this Congregational Study Action Issue. It can be found at: <http://www.uua.org/immigration/re/moral/152647.shtml>.

Columns

Sam's Outlook

Communicating with a Greater Source

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

Most of us don't talk to angels, or at least don't have conscious awareness of such communications. Who knows, maybe they prefer to talk to us in our dreams. Still, because these kind of very anoma-

This draft statement and a ballot to place the SOC on the agenda of GA 2013 will be included in the congregational poll. The deadline for congregational poll ballots is **February 1, 2013** (a quorum of 25% participation of all congregations is required).

There is also a **February 1, 2013** deadline for submission of comments on the draft SOC to the CSW. The CSW takes congregational comments very seriously, and uses them to prepare a revised draft of the SOC on the Final GA 2013 Agenda. --Don Odell

lous reports do not yield to scientific analysis, and who knows what kind of elaboration and/or fictionalization occurred in the retelling, we can't approach this central Christian foundational scripture rationally. We can, however, engage it imaginatively and perhaps find meaning independent of the truth value of the story.

Mary always impresses me. Given she is an unmarried virgin, who is going to believe her pregnancy is legitimate? Parthenogenesis just doesn't happen very often. And while carrying and giving birth to the spawn of God made sense in Greek culture, it certainly didn't make sense in the Jewish tradition. The Bible has no record of God-woman "overshadowing" beside this account. Yet she communicates with a greater angelic being and accepts what she hears - "let it be with me according to your word." I think a little protesting and hysterics got edited out. I would have been interested in reading an account of how she explained all this to her mother and to Joseph.

People have been communicating with beings they perceive to be divine messengers and intermediaries, even with God directly, for a long time. Recently I've been reading about evangelical Christian churches that actually encourage this kind of communication. They give people instructions training them how to have a conversation with God, just like sharing a cup of coffee across the kitchen table. I personally would want that kind of communication on the summit of a mountain with a beam of light shining on my face, and a booming voice coming out of the clouds. Something about chatting with Jesus in the passenger seat of one's car seems to cheapen such communication. Yet many Christians

sense Jesus as their companion always at their side.

Being the spawn of a scientist and a librarian, I am both curious and interested in learning about such unusual reports. I avoid labeling reports of such human experiences as “supernatural” since they could be natural experiences that very few people actually have, or know how to have. Thus I was fascinated to learn that there are churches that train people in such communication. Not only are people being trained but they report subjective experiences of being communicated with. Is this wishful thinking or is there something more substantial happening?

I began working with a Catholic Jungian spiritual director to deepen my spiritual practice as part of the Wellspring program. He probes my dreams looking for communication from a higher source. We agree to not name the higher source since I doubt we'd use the same one. Yet I'm realizing by doing Buddhist mindfulness meditation, I may be neglecting the content in the thoughts and feelings that pass through my consciousness. Could there be messages from a higher source in my dreams guiding me?

Sufis use a Humanist friendly term for this kind of communication, “spirit of guidance.” That kind of leaves a gap for a natural explanation such as intuition from the recesses of the mind. Whatever is going on metaphysically, for me the test is looking for value in the communication.

We don't need to know if Jesus was born of a virgin or not. Sophia Fahs puts it beautifully this way, “Each night a child is born is a holy night.” Whether a higher source directs us or not, we all have the potential for great acts of kindness, generosity, compassion and goodwill. May this holiday season be a time for that potential to come to life.

Chuck's Chat

Being at Our Best

This past spring, I participated in a Community Conversation as part of the national Gathered Here process designed to “Claim the Best of our Faith”. This Conversation was a part of a nationwide effort initiated by the Unitarian Universalist Association. The stated purpose of the effort, which started in 2010, was to “discover our shared aspirations and unleash the power of our faith”.

The final report of the project was provided to the UUA Board in October and you can read it at:

http://www.uua.org/documents/gatheredhere/121010_board_rpt.pdf

It is a terrific, riveting, and inspiring document. It blends personal stories of our faith in action with discussions of how these stories blend into, and are supported by what we believe. The stories were elicited during the Community Conversations by posing a number of statements of the form:

“We are at our best when we practice spiritual justice grounded in faith and worship”

One of the stories told in response to the statement resonated with me since I had participated in the Tent City Witness outside the Maricopa County jail in Phoenix this past June.

The Phoenix Policeman

I participated in the 2010 civil disobedience activity in Phoenix. My job was to ensure that my partner, who was being arrested, was safe. So I was positioned on the front row of the sidewalk, directly opposite a young policeman. As I stood there watching, a woman behind me became very agitated and started to yell at the police officer. I tried to calm her, but my efforts only seemed to upset her more. “Who are you to tell me to calm down?!” she vehemently responded.

The situation was clearly escalating, so I began to sing. “When I breathe in, I breathe in peace. When I breathe out I breathe out love...” Several of those who had been arrested, along with other UU protesters, took up the song and it began to diffuse the tension.

When I noticed that the woman behind me had left, I looked into the eyes of the policeman and asked if he was OK. With tears running down his face, he said “Yes, and thank you.”

The Reverend Elaine Peresluha
Interim Minister, First Parish of Concord

An example of our work in spiritual justice was our recent collection for the Sandy Relief Fund created by the Central East Regional Group of UU congregations. The other UU Congregations in the Capital Region Unitarian Universalist of New York (CRUUNY) participated in this collection as well. Peggy Clark (our Racial and Social Justice Consultant) learned about our contributions to the Re-

lief Fund. She lives in the area affected by Sandy. She spoke to her congregation in Westchester. When she announced during the service that people were sending money, people were sobbing with gratitude. They said what has helped during this traumatic time is knowing that they were not alone. It showed that people were already sending help before those in need knew how to ask for it.

As CRUUNY and as FUUSA, we will have many more ways to help with the relief effort. At the Board meeting in November, Karen Kaufmann reported on her trip to Long Island with the relief supplies we had collected. Karen and a group of Board members will be continuing to learn about and publicize opportunities for us to help. They will be coordinating with CRUUNY. Please look for these opportunities and participate any way you can.

Responding to these types of crises and events has defined UUs throughout our history. At our best, the world has recognized this by saying “Here come the UUs.”

The Gathered Here report recognized this and concluded with the distilled vision of who we are and who we wish to become:

We Unitarian Universalists envision a life filled with compassion for all,

Shared in beloved community, and lived in a just world.

We commit ourselves to pursuing this vision faithfully, passionately, and humbly.

We invite all who share our vision to join us in this spiritual journey.

Religious Exploration

Christmas and Stuff

The one holiday movie I watch every year is – the 1947 version of *Miracle on 34th Street*. In it, a young store custodian bemoans the state of Christmas. “There is a lot of bad ism’s floating around this world and one of the worst is commercialism. Just make a buck, make a buck...”

So many bucks are still made off of parents trying to ensure their children’s happiness on Christmas morning. Parents are often torn between wanting

to buy the plastic toys that have been so successfully marketed to their children and trying to live out their Unitarian Universalist values. Our fourth and seventh Principles come to mind – A free and responsible search for truth and meaning and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. At a recent gathering of UU DRE’s, one of my colleagues shared her tactic for instilling resiliency and fostering compassion for the environment in her 7-year-old daughter. They have a way of evaluating toys; some are deemed “Garbage Patch Toys”.

This mom went on line with her daughter to look at images of the massive swirl of garbage in the Pacific Ocean called The Great Garbage Patch. You can Google it. Here is one site with easy to understand explanations and descriptions. <http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/conservation/issues/great-pacific-garbage-patch-explained.htm>. The mom and her daughter talked about the toys her daughter had received and how many of them had been thrown away. The daughter easily made the connection that some of her toys may end up in the Garbage Patch. Now when the daughter starts to ask for a toy, she and her mom stop and consider if this particular toy is a Garbage Patch toy. A compromise is that if the daughter finds the toy in a second hand store, she may buy it.

Understanding and then putting a name to something can help children understand it better. In this case, it was understanding and naming the effect of buying an alluring plastic toy. With that understanding, the child was better able to resist the temptation to beg her mom to buy the toy.

I admire my colleague for taking on this challenge. Showing a 7-year-old a trash vortex the size of Texas must have taken compassion and thoughtfulness and messages of reassurance. This is an example of why parents are their children’s primary religious educators. Some things are difficult to present in a group setting, like Sunday school. Every child has a different level of sensitivity. And parents have their own values based on among other things, their own understanding of Unitarian Universalism.

What Sunday school can do, is to give the children

opportunities to practice compassion and to learn about our Unitarian Universalist Principles and the values they embody. Sunday school can make challenging, but important, conversations between parents and children easier to have because Sunday school helps provide the children with the groundwork to be able to wrestle with the challenges in their lives. It can help them understand, for example, that having more stuff doesn't really make you happier. Many sessions in Sunday school explain that the things we do have consequences. These

are two things we will be exploring in our Workshop Rotation in January.

Until then, I leave you with another quote from *Miracle on 34th Street*. "Look Doris, someday you're going to find that your way of facing this realistic world just doesn't work. And when you do, don't overlook those lovely intangibles. You'll discover those are the only things that are worthwhile."

Wishing you lovely intangibles and joyful holidays,
Leah



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Regular meeting days

Check current calendar for time and location

Board of Trustees, 3rd Thursday

Program Coordinating Council, 2nd Thursday

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany

Phone: 518.463.7135

Address: 405 Washington Avenue, between Robin Street and Lake Avenue, Albany, New York 12206

Main entrance is on Washington Avenue. Rear entrance is on West St. Both have ramp access. The building is fully handicapped accessible.

Parking: Parking is available on the street. On Sundays (and for some special events) FUUSA has permission to use the University at Albany's downtown campus parking lots: the Hawley Lot on Robin Street at Washington Avenue and the Thurlow Terrace Lot on Western Avenue.

Office hours

September-June: Monday-Friday, 9:00-3:30

July-August: Monday–Thursday 9:00-12:00

Website

www.albanyuu.org

Building use

To **reserve a room** for a FUUSA activity, contact Office Administrator Stephanie Hayes (463-7135 or administrator@albanyuu.org).

To **rent classroom space** for a personal or non-FUUSA activity, contact Office Administrator Stephanie Hayes (463-7135 or administrator@albanyuu.org).

To **rent one of the large halls** or plan for an event that will use both halls and classrooms for a personal or non-FUUSA activity, contact Rental Agent Lynne Lekakis (427-7386 or kaneandlekakis@gmail.com)

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Editors: Amy Lent, Jaye Holly

Send submissions for all publications to:
Windows@albanyuu.org or to the church office.

Publication deadlines

FUUSA Preview email: 9:00 a.m. Wednesdays

Order of Service: 9:00 a.m. Thursdays

Windows: 9:00 a.m. 3rd Friday of the month



December 2012

Holiday Events

at FUUSA

The RE Mitten Tree

Emerson Community Hall

During the month of December you can decorate the Mitten Tree in Emerson Hall with new hats, gloves, and mittens for children and adults. You can also put new, unwrapped toys under the tree. All will be donated to the Marillac shelter, which offers an emergency housing program for homeless families in the Capital Region.

Come, trim the Christmas tree!

Holiday crafts workshop and party

Saturday, Dec. 8, 2:00-4:00 PM

Channing Hall

Food—Fun—Holiday Music—Wreath Making!

Your favorite holiday crafts – gingerbread houses, origami boxes – and new ones: A great opportunity for children to make presents.

Sign up in Channing Hall. Walk-ins are also welcome! Freewill donation for craft supplies; Wreaths \$5. Sponsored by the Religious Education Council



“The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!”

Sunday, Dec. 23, 10:00 AM

Emerson Community Hall

The title says it all. Come celebrate the joy of the Christmas season as a family.



Christmas Caroling

Sunday, Dec. 16

Caravan starts at FUUSA at 1:00 PM

Singing locations TBA! Families are encouraged to attend.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Monday, Dec. 24, 6:30 and 8:15 p.m.

Sanctuary

The 6:30 PM service will be “family friendly”. And be sure to plan some time at the reception between the services!

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