

The Call

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley

Winter 2016-17
December - February

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Sunday Services 10 AM

Sermon topics may be found on our website, www.uucuv.org, as well as in the Sunday Order of Service.

We are

**A Green Sanctuary,
A Welcoming Congregation,
and A Partner Church**

Branching Out

Rev. Patience Stoddard



The morning after the election I came in early arriving at the door a little after 9:00, surprised to find the parking lot full. (There couldn't be another daylight savings time I missed, I thought.) I walked in to find the kitchen full of people. Sparrow had come in at eight and sent out word that she'd start the coffee and Claudia had arrived with muffin dough in hand. Through the morning people came to find the hands of friends, to digest the news, to share their feelings, to wonder aloud what we should do now. There was one woman there I did not recognize. I later learned that she had burst into tears as she walked in the door and was immediately gathered into someone's arms and offered muffins, coffee, and a safe place to find comfort and community.

This is why we exist, I thought. This is why UUCUV's commitment to invest so much time and money in a new building was and is so important. For we want to ensure that this congregation is here not only now for people like this woman and the LGBTQ community and seekers from all faith backgrounds, but will be here also for the next generation who seek a community in which to renew their spirits and empower them to work for a more just and compassionate world. We can make a difference.

But how? What should we do right now? How should we respond to the growing divide in our nation and the vulnerability so many feel in the wake of this election? What priorities should we reconsider, what new goals should we set?

I then took some time to reflect on the sermons and services of the last few months, on the apples of the tree which was created at the second Path to the Future event, and the results of the survey which Sparrow has been analyzing, and somewhat to my surprise, I realized that we didn't need to change direction as we were already headed there.

- There have been several sermons on the growing divide in our country and how we might begin to be bridge builders.
- The Sunday Service Committee had already requested and

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been granted additional funds to bring in speakers on justice topics.

- We have planned to hold a couple community wide forums on social justice issues--Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience being the first.
- Several people had already stepped forward to lead the effort renew our commitment to be a green sanctuary, Mandy, Neeta and I attended an all day conference on Faith and Climate Change, and a spring book study and programming is planned to focus on protecting the environment.
- Joani, co-president, has offered our support to folks in Rutland who will be welcoming a couple dozen Muslim refugees into their community.
- Bill, our other co-president, has offered to lead a book study and suggested some programming on anti-racist topics.
- Ayesha has offered to coordinate outreach to the Muslim community and several people have already expressed their interest in contributing to that effort.

There are many apples already growing on our tree.

On that Path to the Future Sunday afternoon we began with a tree with six branches – six dimensions of congregational life on which to grow specific ideas and activities. However, in their wisdom, those gathered felt we not only needed new apples, we needed a new branch. That branch was citizenship and witness.

We want to be more engaged in the wider community and support those organizations and congregations who are doing the work of building a civil and responsible society. Since we are a small community of primarily white, privileged individuals who have limited energy and vision, we need to reach out to other sectors of our society and to other organizations which advance our values. One small way to do so will be sharing the collection plate with a social service organization or advocacy group once a month. Another is the decision to offer free space to support groups such as a Gender Group, AA and Al-Anon and NAMI (which supports families and individuals with mental illness).

Over the past four years this community has become a more loving, more empowered and healthy community. It was my hope that this positive energy, this willingness to trust one another and to take risks together, would enable this faith community to reach out effectively into the wider community to better give support and encouragement to those outside its walls. This is what I see is happening and it is none too soon. Our values of diversity and inclusiveness are sorely needed at this time. May we continue to find new ways to learn from others and to make a difference.

Patience

Join us Caroling and Visiting Local Nursing Homes on Christmas Morning!

We will be continuing our annual tradition of visits to two area nursing homes this Christmas Morning. We will be at Brookside Nursing Home in Wilder at 10 AM and at Hanover Terrace at 11 AM. Please join us at either one or both! We will be bringing cheer and companionship to the residents and no singing talent is required! For more details contact Rich Greenlee (802-436-1150 or at hartlandvt@aol.com).



Our Path to the Future?

Joani Nierenberg, Co-President

On September 18 Patience's husband Jim Gruber led our congregation in a workshop "Path to the Future II" to brainstorm how we choose to move from an inward looking mode focused on building our beautiful new home to a more expansive mode. We built (in mural form) a UUCUV Tree, with the limbs being the main areas we believe need attention: Adults and Children; Spiritual Growth; Lay and Professional Leadership; Justice; Physical Space; Engaged Community; Beauty/Arts/Music. Hanging from the limbs were "fruit" representing concrete items and activities.

What was clear from the workshop was that this congregation is filled with eagerness and wonderful ideas! Also clear was the fact that despite this evident energy and enthusiasm, we simply don't have the resources to pursue each and every suggestion. Thus, with much help from Sparrow, we constructed the survey we have asked you to respond to in order to prioritize where you/we wish to commit our energies. The more who participate in filling out this survey, the better able we will be to plan for our future.

What was also clear from discussions at the workshop is the desire for us to create a beloved community not only for our members and friends, but to extend that community beyond our doors. How little did we know how timely those discussions would be! Now more than ever we need to make connections and offer support to those in need in our local and wider communities. The Board had already made the decision, before the results of the election, to "share the plate" once a month starting in January. The beneficiary will be connected either to Patience's sermon or to a guest speaker on the subjects of Islam, racism, ecology, refugees/immigration, and UVIP (United Valley Interfaith Project). As I sit to write this, we are also anticipating strong turnout for the events scheduled for Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience on November 20.

This is just the beginning. We understand how important it is (and will continue to be) for us as Unitarian Universalists to be a concrete beacon of hope and love to those who feel isolated, fearful of discrimina-

tion and economic insecurities in this polarized atmosphere. I know that this UUCUV family will rise to the challenge, together.



Christmas Eve Services

Christmas Pageant

At 4:30 PM, come lambs, shepherds, and angels one and all! In our No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant, we will tell the story of Christmas Eve with a narrated tableau. Everyone has a part to play in this tale - everyone has a song to sing.

Between the services, will you please join the Alden and Kendall/Morris and Landry families for supper? We're just making chili and cornbread to stay warm. It's good to break bread together.

Candlelight Service

At 6:00 PM, we will observe our Candlelight service. We will have the privilege this year of lighting the Menorah and hearing the Hanukkah tale of hope and courage. The good news of Saint Luke will be told, a perfectly ordinary story of a baby. We will sing all the soft carols, all the old ones. We will join our light to others' all over the world in the birth of hope.

Listening to the Election

Bill Brawley, Co-President

During the summer of 2015, I was in Colorado Springs to visit my ailing mother. She had hospice at that point, in an assist living facility, and we supplemented all of that with 24/7 nursing assistants to help with the basics, like logging her food and water intake and supporting her during overnight visits to the bathrooms.

In Mom's room, the television was tuned either to the Eternal Word Television Network, or Fox News. Fox News was everywhere out west, from the airport in Denver to the Holiday Inn Ex-press where I was staying. I couldn't escape it.

And the news of the day was Donald Trump's entry into the presidential race. I thought it was a joke at first. Watching this orange man descending a golden escalator to a crowd filled mostly with paid actors.

But it slowly dawned on me that he was very serious, that he knew exactly what he was doing even way back then. One of the nurses I got to know was originally from Panama, had emigrated to Venezuela for seven years, before coming to America, legally. She had a car and a house and a mortgage. The American Dream. And to my astonishment, she was ... a Trump supporter. Big time.

Well, what about that business about Mexican rapists and building a wall?

"He's right. The ones that come illegally don't want to work, they want everything for free. They make crime. They should come the right way. They make us all look bad." This was settled fact, not a point to be argued, but gospel. Which left me wondering, how do I talk with someone like this? How do I engage with someone who just does not care that our president-elect is surrounded by white nationalists and Christian supremacists?

I know I'm not the only person struggling with these questions. I don't know that there even is an answer. But I am proud to be part of a community of like-minded advocates for truth and justice. UUs, both nationally and right here in this congregation, have been

at the forefront of the great civil rights battles, from abolition to marriage equality. It appears as though history is about to recruit us into the next great battle.

The timing is remarkable. The election comes right on the heels of our Path to the Future event and the follow-up survey. Both clearly show that members and friends of the UUCUV are ready to turn outward after a few years spent constructing our new home (which officially turns 1 year old this month). I volunteered to lead a group interested in racial justice, thinking it would end up being a book group of maybe a half-dozen people. I'm delighted to announce that at least 20 people indicated interest on the survey, and that is one of the smaller action groups. More to come!

DIVERSITY BOOK GROUPS

This winter and spring there will be a few book groups offered with the intention of bringing greater understanding to our efforts to be a force for justice and compassion in the Upper Valley.

I plan to begin in January with *George*, the story of a 10-year-old girl who has been identified since birth by her parents and society as a boy. The book was suggested by our Welcoming Congregation team. It is an enjoyable short novel aimed at young adults that allows insight into the "inside" experience of a non-cis gendered person. We have several copies of the book to lend to those interested in the reading group. The books will later be donated to school libraries in the region.

Bill Brawley is interested in leading a book group (and perhaps share a movie) on the subject of racism. A couple of other individuals are interested in leading groups on other themes as well.

~Patience

Board Report

Maureen McNulty, Board Secretary

The Board has been spending a good deal of time discussing Strategic Planning. During the Path to the Future meeting in September, the congregation came up with a formidable list of wishes and dreams. The following week, the Board met for a retreat to organize and put into perspective how our members want UUCUV to grow in the future. It was gratifying to recognize that many of the goals are already in the works and some have already been achieved! There seems to be a yearning for lectures, discussions, and support for many different topics. There also is a desire to join forces with other organizations to leverage our social justice work. We would like to start a Champion system to make some of these ideas become reality. If there is at least one Champion who is willing to take on the responsibility of organizing an event or group and two Allies who will commit to doing the labor required for the event to take place, the UUCUV will give them full support and let them run with it. We are reaching out to the organizations brought up at the meeting to assess the feasibility of joining them.

We have been addressing more pragmatic issues as well. In response to some reports of disorder in the kitchen, we authorized creating the position of kitchen czarina. Suzanne Simon has graciously offered to fill the position. She and Claudia Kern have also volunteered to manage the hospitality coordinators, taking the burden off the staff and bringing it back to the congregation.

There have been several other changes in personnel this month. Jeremy Coylewright has stepped down from his position as board member at large due to his move to Hartland. Lori Fortini has filled his place on the board. Babette Hansen is now on the Committee on Ministry.

Our sanctuary has become very popular as a meeting space, not only for our congregational needs, but also for rental to outside groups. There is a board posted in the hallway announcing the schedule. We are having an ongoing discussion on rental policy.

Cappy Nunlist is managing the details of the rentals.

Our neighbors, who so generously allow us to borrow their parking spaces on Sunday mornings and for events, are becoming disgruntled to see their lawns being damaged. We have orange cones which should be placed out to direct parking for any event. Please respect the privilege we have been given and park in the defined, paved parking areas or alongside the Palmer Court road.

We discussed the idea of sharing our Sunday offertory with other nonprofit organizations and elected to give it a trial. Beginning in January, we will share our offertory one Sunday each month. The beneficiary will be different each month, and correspond with the subject of the sermon on that day.

We are currently operating on track for budget, despite uncertainty regarding facility operating costs. Small tweaks will need to be made to the budget to accommodate dropping some of our fundraisers and to finance renewed interest in reaching out to other organizations. We are awaiting the results of the congregational surveys sent out in early November before making any substantial changes. If you haven't filled out your survey, please do and return it to Sparrow. Her box is inside the office door.

The board generally meets on the second Thursday of the month at 6:00p.m. Each meeting begins with an opportunity for congregational input. This is a time to officially bring issues to the board for later consideration. Of course, you may always contact board members with your comments or concerns! Minutes of the meetings are posted on the bulletin board or available in the office.





What's Up in Children's Religious Education?

We continue our exploration of commonality and friendship all over the world by learning about the ways we are diverse. The Elementary class will work with stories of the Rev. Dr. King and the civil rights movement in January. Everyone can get excited for Chinese New Year on January 29th!

In Preschool in February, we'll be talking about families as a place where everyone is loved and cared for. We will talk about many different kinds of families, including the family of Earth.

On Sunday, March 12th, the kids will bring their learning to the whole congregation. We will be cel-

ebrating Children's Sunday this year on March 12th, Holi, the Hindu color festival! There will be songs, kids will share their art, and Sparrow has a guided meditation to share.

After a very intense Junior High OWL program, our 7th - 9th graders will meet in January or so to plan their winter activities. Neeta Shain plans to host an environmentally conscious movie and discussion on January 13th - I have a feeling that the members of this Junior Youth group are going to be movers and shakers!

UU Kids Help The Haven

Every Sunday during the service, the kiddos collect food for The Haven Food Shelf. Griffin (age 4) loves collecting the food with his "big muscles!" He and I then bring the food to The Haven where we weigh it and fill out a little form. Often there is cash in with the food donations too. This gets recorded and handed to a volunteer to put in a secure place. One day in mid-September, a Haven volunteer casually mentioned that the \$13 we donated would be doubled during the month of September due to a generous donor who was matching the cash donations for Hunger Action Month. We announced this everywhere at church over the next 2 weeks and our congregation raised \$614 for the month! The Cool Cats preschool class even donated \$30 from their plant sale. That matched was \$1228 donated to The Haven from all of us! Go UUCUV! Look what we can do when we come together!



~Mandy and Griffin Ruest



*Peace,
Sparrow*

THANK YOU to Ace True Value Hardware for donation of carpet squares to the Rainbow Room. Congregants who frequent that store, will you please say thanks so they know their gift is appreciated?

A huge Thanks and Hooray to Claudia Kern and Suzanne Simon, our new Sunday Hospitality Team Managers. They will support the Team Leaders, integrate new friends into teams, and be a wonderful resource for all.

Helping Kids Process Fear

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE

I stopped watching the news on 9/11. As horrifyingly fascinating as it might have been, I knew that watching it over and over would send the message to the base of my brain that the events on tape were still happening. I didn't let my child, then three years old, see it at all; Daroc still played "rescuing the animals from the squished barn" at preschool.

The base of my brain is a primitive place, the activator of the fight-or-flight response, guardian of respiration and circulation, the survival brain that does not learn or adapt. It breathes; it walks; it perceives. The middle brain can be trained like a puppy and the forebrain can work on Fermat's Theorem, but the hind brain keeps me alive.

We can talk to our kids when they see scary things (of course the scariest thing of all is a parent's fear). As loving parents, we are ready to face tough conversations even if we might feel a little lost at sea. We're pretty good at thinking and talking.

Remember to listen. How long did that lesson take me? Forty years? Be still and listen. A frightened or confused child is not going to give you a front-of-the-brain intellectual list of pros and cons that can be argued with. Listen to the hind brain. Love and accept and comfort it.

Hind brain perceives: show it safety by listening and touching and loving and humming familiar things and by not arguing with it. We realize how good and true is Mister Rogers' advice, "Look for the helpers," and we coach our kids to perceive the goodness.

Hind brain walks: keep it functioning smoothly by going for a walk, a hike, a run; walk a labyrinth. Remember Aunt Dot's advice when your child seems completely emotionally overwhelmed: get down on your hands and knees and crawl together. Take hind brain right back to basics.

Hind brain breathes: practice breathing together. Timing with your own pulse, breathe in for four beats, hold the air in your lungs for four, exhale for four. Singing is an easy way for a child to learn breath control. Ask me sometime about how the song "Freedom" helped one of my kids learn to fall asleep peacefully.

By all means we will talk with our kids about scary news, at their own level. Every parent I know is pretty great at this. But before engaging in creative thought and problem solving, we're going to calm and love their hind brains - and our own.

Book Recommendation

Over twenty five years ago, children's author Eve Bunting wrote *The Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*. We were lucky to add it to our collection this summer, thanks to a sweet children's book gift from two UUCUV members. This story about rabbits closing their eyes to terrible things is recommended for ages six and older - I strongly recommend it for families IF AND ONLY IF the adults read it first, decide that their child is ready for it (I know twelve year olds who aren't), and then read it together. It's a powerful book and beautifully done. In a world where we are suddenly worried about terrible things, I want your family to know this book is available and to handle it with sensitivity. ~Sparrow

The Life of After-death

by Frank Gould, 2016

There are two types of Gene-
Jean, we should all be called
Then we would know a god
which would be our inner self
questions of the universe
only in the realm of inner self
hidden in the cloak of mind
over matter that's immaterial
simply a game of hide and seek
a game adults have stolen
in the name of Protagoras
hidden behind a banner of
forgotten experience matter
where we seek a relative truth
if only it can be twisted in two
what I truly belie and believe
then only if you drag it forth
and place on the intersection
of the cross road-not-taken
to be vilified and venerated
by all those who choose
to arrive within a life span
only to continue their journey
along their own yellow stripe
no passing lane, no shoulder;
where control is only created
by the myth of the created
documented only by a selfie
belying the very existence
of the twisted links we carry

Welcoming Congregation

Ellen Phillips

Hi, folks! A Welcoming Congregation, in the UU sense of the phrase, has done identifiable education, congregational life, and community outreach activities on the human diversity of sexual orientation and gender. After a year or so of consideration, that congregation has voted to support people whose orientations or gender identities have been traditionally marginalized by society and the congregation received the Welcoming Congregation designation.

Since undertaking the W. C. process in 2003, the UUCUV has had sermons on LGBTQ topics as well as Our Whole Lives education for everyone from kindergarten through adults. The process has been a bit scrambled-up: there has not been a group focused on making sure that W. C. events happen; nor has it been easy to think of community outreach activities until our home could host such things comfortably. That time is now!

- In August, the Schmidts, the Aldens, and Justin Evans went to a gathering of VT and NH Welcoming Congregations in Montpelier to share ideas and have a six-congregation conversation.
- In September on Path to the Future Day, we thought of renewing our commitment to Welcoming Congregation identity and activities now that we have a gorgeous, welcoming place to do them. The folks who were most enthusiastic on the topic of LGBTQ support identified themselves.
- In October, we hosted a community event - a National Coming Out Day ice cream party, which attracted a dozen UUCUVers as well as two people from the community. Being our first public W. C. event in a long time, we count it as sweet success.

- In November, we created and hosted the Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience which was particularly well advertised (thanks, Margo and Bill!), included workshops by invited experts and two of our own (thanks, Mandy and Sparrow!), and featured a keynote by Grace Alden which was covered by the Valley News. The day began and ended with worship services to bring our hearts, minds, and spirits into a thoughtful place of healing.
- In December, Patience will lead a book discussion group on the tween novel *George* about a girl figuring out the complexities of having been called a boy when she was born. [Editor's note: as The Call goes to press, Patience is wrestling with the dates of this discussion - could be postponed to January. Email education@uucuv.org if you'd like to join.]
- Keep your eye on the Weekly Blast and the Announcements to learn what other plans the W. C. group makes for winter and spring.
- At the Annual Meeting in June, the congregation will consider what we have learned in this year of activities and how it felt to be a more public ally to LGBTQ people. We will vote on whether being a Welcoming Congregation will continue to be a central part of our identity, and think about how to keep the effort out and proud going forward.

It has been a real honor to be asked to chair this effort; the W. C. group and supporters are the best to work with.



*There is plenty to do, for each one of us, working on our own hearts, our own, attitudes, in our own neighborhoods....
Love is indeed a harsh and dreadful thing to ask of us, of each of us, but it is the only answer. ~Dorothy Day*

Thoughts on Democracy

These three passages from Parker Palmer's Healing the Heart of Democracy (2011) were used as a reading in one of our Chalice Circles on the theme of listening. I think it speaks both to many of our concerns and helps to point a way forward. Thanks to Leah for bringing this to my attention.

~Patience

Hearing each other's stories, which are often stories of heartbreak, can create an unexpected bond [between those with opposing political views]. When two people discover that parallel experiences led them to contrary conclusions, they are more likely to hold their differences respectfully, knowing that they have experienced similar forms of grief. The more you know about another person's story, the less possible it is to see that person as your enemy.

For those of us who want to see democracy survive and thrive ... the heart is where everything begins: that grounded place in each of us where we can overcome fear, rediscover that we are members of one another, and embrace the conflicts that threaten democracy as openings to new life for us and for our nation.

Full engagement in the movement called democracy requires no less of us than full engagement in the living of our own lives. We carry the past with us, so we must understand its legacy of deep darkness as well as strong light. We can see the future only in imagination, so we must continue to dream of freedom, peace, and justice for everyone. Meanwhile, we live in the present moment, with its tedium and terror, its fears and hopes, its incomprehensible losses and its transcendent joys. It is a moment in which it often feels as if nothing we do will make a difference, and yet so much depends on us.

UUCUV Youth to Host Environmental Film

A few months ago, Neeta Shain, a youth in our congregation, was at conference on "Deep Change for Climate Justice" which took place in White River Junction, VT. There she met Hanna Huber, an organizer for the Vermont Natural Resources Council. Ms. Huber was looking for people to help show the new Josh Fox film, "How to Let Go of the World and Love the Things that Climate Can't Change" in as many places as possible. Neeta thought this was a very cool idea and decided to help. Along with the message of the film, she thought a UUCUV showing would be a good way for UUs to get to know like-minded activists and environmentalists in the larger community.

The Oscar-nominated film provides examples of climate change from around the world. Individual examples are presented by people living with the effects of global environmental abuse. Josh Fox did his best

to present a grim reality while leaving his audience with energy to work for improving the future. There will be time at the end for discussion and a possible presentation on carbon pricing in Vermont by a representative of the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

Friday, January 13th

6:30-9:30pm

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley Meeting House**

Please RSVP by January 6th

neetaenvironmental@gmail.com

Spotlight on Hospitality



A message from the outgoing leader of the Hospitality Team, Lori Fortini

I am writing this on the morning after the election so my whole idea of this article has been changed. My intent was to write up the history of our UUCUV Hospitality Teams and the importance of the teams in our congregation and I will still do that.

However, in light of the election results and of the stark divide in our country, the importance of our congregation being an open, loving, community embracing diversity is more critical than ever. Hospitality has taken on a new sense of urgency for me at this time in our country. I will come back to this but now for a brief history.

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For people new to our congregation, as you may have heard, we moved into our new sanctuary last December. Before that, we were nomadic and had no real home. We had our Meetinghouse, but it was not adequate to hold all of us together on Sundays. So, we held our services in various places – the Marion Cross School multipurpose room for many years, The Lebanon Methodist Church for one year - before moving back to our Meetinghouse and holding two services to accommodate everyone. We had to keep everything in boxes and move them around the valley to set up our sacred space.

It took a lot of energy and was exhausting.

We were also structured with 16 committees to try to run all church activities – Sunday Services, Membership, Music, Social Justice, etc. With only 100 or so members, everyone had to wear at least a couple of committee hats. People felt obligated to help and struggled not to feel resentful that there was so much to do and too few people to do it. We were constantly in need of leadership and worker bee volunteers. I was one of many people who always ran around with clip-boards and sign-up sheets to try to get people to bring food or flowers for Sundays, to set up chairs, to be a greeter, to make coffee, to clean-up....the list seemed endless! My coffee hour was spent on church business instead of welcoming and socializing. And

people would avoid me and not make eye contact so I wouldn't ask them for one more thing! It was lonely.

Again, it took a lot of energy and was exhausting. And we were getting a bit cranky. Something had to give.

So we took a breath and a step back and collectively agreed to try a new way. We would not have so many committees and we would share the work more equitably.

Enter the idea of hospitality teams. Cue the angels singing and playing harps!

Everyone would be assigned to a team that would take on all the tasks of setting up for the Sunday service and hosting coffee hour - but for only one month of the church year! Everyone would pitch in one time in the year and, thus, many hands would make light work. No more clip boards! No more avoiding eye-contact! We tried it and we saw that it was good! Hallelujah!

And guess what? We found that people were more apt to joyfully help when given well defined tasks with a beginning, middle, and end. We found that people were happy to be asked. Some felt most comfortable helping to make the sanctuary ready, or to help with clean-up, others found that greeting people at the door and helping with name tags was most rewarding to them, and others enjoyed bringing food and making coffee in our easy-to-use new kitchen. All enjoyed participating because it gave them an opportunity to feel more a part of our community and provided a way to get to know people at church. And people knew that others would do it for them after their month was over.

I take this time to tell my story for our new folks but also to remind all of us why we moved to this model. Why the hospitality teams are so important. Why we all need to do our part in providing a safe, loving, home.

But we may have strayed from our original model

## Spotlight on Hospitality

*(Continued from p. 11)*

and may be taking the teams for granted. We may not have said enough to each one of you how appreciative we are that you are with us and thank you for helping.

We may be assigning new people to teams too quickly. Without saying we are so glad you joined with us - Welcome!

So we need to slow down. After we have shown our joy of being together and our appreciation for you, then we will ask you, in a gentle loving way, to please take a turn and be the welcoming friendly face with a cup of coffee to anyone new--or someone who has been here forever--who walks in our doors.

Don't make me bring back the clip boards!

~~~

Moving forward from November 8, 2016 seems impossible to me on the morning of November 9th,

but I know we must. I believe that the principles of Unitarian Universalism are more critical than ever to healing our troubled country. Our community must be a welcome sanctuary for ALL people to be able to rest and find hope. Our hospitality teams are the face of our congregation on Sunday mornings, first to provide that welcome and assurance that there is still some love in the world.

Please help us stay strong and to be a harbor in this stormy sea.

With gratitude and love,

Lori

Please note: As of this writing, Suzanne Simon and Claudia Kern will be the Hospitality Team Leaders. If you have any questions about which team you are on, would like to join a team, or anything else please contact Suzanne or Claudia.

Our Incomparable Eva Smith

as interviewed by Carmen Fletcher in August '16

Eva Smith lives not far from the Meetinghouse. Inside her lovely home are many works of stained glass, a beautiful framed entry mirror, a large hanging lamp and many other pieces that show her skills as an artist and craftsperson. Born in Los Angeles in 1921 her family later moved just outside of New York City in what was then still rural countryside. She remembers taking long bike rides on the country roads and climbing up in a tree with a book to read. Her family, like most families then, had an icebox rather than the refrigerators now common. Large blocks of ice were delivered regularly, put in the insulated box, and the ice kept perishables fresh until it melted and had to be refreshed with a new delivery of ice. Eva believes she may have invented the first frozen Mars Bar; she would put her candy directly on the ice until it froze into a cold treat. She and her mother made most of her clothes.

After high school she went to New York City and

lived at first in the YWCA, which had rooms for young women. She studied at the Art Students League. Then she married and became the mother of seven children. Following a divorce she moved to New Hampshire. Her family is a close one and they stay in touch regularly.

Eva likes to read, she cooks for herself, and enjoys word puzzles. She no longer drives but is able to secure transportation through various programs designed to help seniors. She likes to read cookbooks and enjoys good food. Her favorite dish is sauerbraten, but she finds it hard to come by now.

She is rarely bored and if she feels down in the dumps she will call a friend or write a letter.

She would like to ask our community a favor; please remember to notify long time friends when a loved one dies. She finds it very painful to become aware of these events much after the fact. She thinks of her friends often.

Taizé-Evensong Services

Claudia Kern

Imagine walking into our sanctuary on a mid-week winter evening. The sanctuary is hushed with quiet music playing. The room is darkened and lit only by candles. Quietly we sit and begin to sing simple, repeated chant-like songs led by our minister or another. As we sing, some come forward to light a candle in silence. In a spirit of meditation we listen to a poem or inspirational reading and then return to our quiet chanting. As quietly as we came, now more centered, surrounded by peace and love, we leave.

Beginning Wednesday evening, January 11, Rev. Stoddard will be leading a monthly Taizé Evensong

service. These services on the second Wednesday of each month will offer a time to pause and to nurture our spirits with meditation, very simple songs, brief words or inspiration, and silence.

This style of service originated in a Christian Taizé community. Grateful for that inspiration, our Taizé Evensongs will be welcoming to all in the Upper Valley community who seek peace, transformation, and quiet, love-centered moments.

Results of the Activities Questionnaire

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE

On the Path to the Future day (in my notes it's "Apple Day"), we had one beautiful boatload of ideas to work with! My task has been to organize the activity-related thoughts and make it easy for folks to identify themselves as a Champion or Advocate for an activity, or as a cheerful supporter and participant. Thank you to Mugs Johnston who loves data and databases as much as I do who has shared the hands-on-keyboard job with me.

The questionnaire identified folks to be back up help on Trans Day, people who would like to become involved in Pods, and participants in Patience's Lessons of Loss group and her book discussion group. More lists are being generated, more wonderful things will be happening - I thought readers of The Call might like to hear about some trends we found.

- What's most popular? Ways and Means events. Everyone knows how much fun our fundraisers are, and that many hands make light work. We are first and foremost a group of people who truly like working together and getting to know one another. I can't wait for the January Soupathon!

- What about justice events? Second most popular category with a very robust response. A racism study

and action group will be gearing up over the next months thanks to self-identified leader Bill Brawley, a half dozen folks ready to help him, and a dozen ready to attend events. The current UUA Actions of Immediate Witness have strong support and leadership as well: Build Solidarity with Our Muslim Neighbors and Protect and Support our Transgender Brothers and Sisters. I predict from looking at the questionnaires that our efforts to assist The Haven in their work will deepen this year and that the Rutland congregation will receive our help in supporting Rutland's new population of refugees.

- Any other interesting trends? My goodness, we appreciate one another's cooking! From the Indian Dinner to Circle Suppers, we want to break bread together and bridge those tiny gaps between individuals. When we come together, we are refreshed and renewed to go out into the world.

Did you miss the blue paper questionnaire or the on-line form? It's never too late to join in. Call me (I work Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays) or chat with me in person and get ready for new adventures at the UUCUV.



Library News

We have discovered a number of books missing from the UUCUV Library. Will you please check around your house and see if you have any of them? Please return them to the basket in the Library. Thank you to those who have already returned overdue books.

We invite you to check out items for a month and update your registration information (or register, if you haven't already). If you have questions, please ask us. Thank you!

The Library Committee --Olive Macgregor, Margo Nutt, Polly Gould

Adult Books

Frost, Edward A. (editor) *With Purpose and Principle*

McDonald, Colleen *What If Nobody Forgave?*

Goodall, Jane *Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating*

Louv, Richard *The Nature Principle*

Wilson, Edward O. *The Future of Life*

Nhat Hanh, Thich *The Miracle of Mindfulness*

Kurcinka, Mary Sheedy *Kids, Parents and Power Struggles*

Durrall, Michael *Creating Congregations of Generous People*

Goleman, Daniel *Emotional Intelligence*

Children's Books

Sturges, Philemon *Sacred Places*

Dearborn, Abrina *A Child's Book of Blessings*

Patterson, Lillie *Martin Luther King*

Faks, Sophia & Proerl, Dorothy *Beginnings of Life and Death*

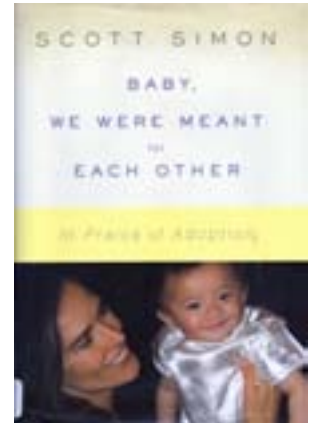
Book Review

By Margo Nutt

Baby, We Were Meant for Each Other

By Scott Simon

As an adoptee myself, this book particularly intrigued me, and knowing we have a number of adoptees in the congregation, I thought it should be in the UUCUV library.



National Public Radio's Scott Simon tells the story of how he and his wife, Caroline, adopted two little girls from China. He animatedly relates the journey that they took to parenthood: falling in love with the thumbnail photo of the infant who became their daughter, Elise; meeting her in Nanchang; bringing her home to join a French-Irish-Catholic-Jewish extended family in Chicago; and returning to China to adopt Paulina, their second daughter.

Woven into the tale of Scott, Caroline, and the two little girls who changed their lives are the stories of other adoptive families. Some are famous and some are not, but each family's saga captures facets of the miracle of adoption.

This is a beautiful book about becoming a family. What makes a parent? Is it just giving birth? Or is it providing a home, food, education, medicine, and an enormous dose of love, through good times and bad? Can we love a child who does not carry our genes? As Scott Simon writes, adoption can help us understand what really makes families, and how and why we fall in love. Read it, laugh, cry, and see that what connects us as humans goes far beyond blood ties.

Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

The Snow Drifts Down

by Robert Weston

Across the hill and dell, valley and upland,
Smooth as a blanket across the world,
Softly falling, falling,
Quietly, gently as a mother's kiss
On the face of her sleeping child,
The snow drifts down, touches, settles,
Lies on tree and shrub, on field and woodland,
Like a soft mantle,
Making all things new.
So be my heart this day:
The pain of things done and injuries unended,
The fear of things unseen and long dreaded,
The ache of failures and mistakes of times past,
The sudden angry passion and the bitter regret,
And strength ebbing away with the inexorable beat of
time,
All forgotten, or restored to innocence,
Clothed in purity,
The universal forgiveness which whispers to me,
"Behold, I make all things new!"



The Way We Are

by Jerome D. Lamb, an editor from North Dakota

I have learned that in spite of my frequent and sound advice, the world has not become a noticeably more peaceable kingdom. Folly abounds, incompetence waxeth, integrity waneth, nonsense prevails, thieves multiply, power corrupts. And my bones creak in the morning.

Still, spectacular things go on in the sky; forms and colors and movements, cloud shapes and sunscapes so awesome I ought to end every day clapping and calling for more....Slowly I learn bits of what there is to see, and then forget and learn again.

And learn too that mortality is the stuff of life; learn how soon the young get old, how short a while forever is. It's sad to stand on the hill, and, one by one, see the lights go out around you...to realize there won't be enough time to get it all done—



But there's something reassuring too in understanding that it—death—is nature's, life's, God's way of letting us know that we were never meant to save the world singlehandedly, to keep the sun aloft and the old globe spinning.

What we're meant to do, I hope, is fill some small temporary slot, to give off a little light for a little while and then lie down. I'm comfortable with that, with the notion of being a small voice yapping away at the edge of the prairie in the northern half of a small planet. One of many voices, neither the wisest nor the best, but mine, and fairly close to as good as I can make it.

Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

Candle Lighting

by Rev. Charles Flagg

Stars are brightest this time of year,
Time of winter, time of cold,
Of reminiscence and anticipation.
We light our candles,
Fragments of stars and sun,
To light our hopes and dreams,
Make way for peace and love...
Hope, made flesh in each of us.
Not shadows or reflections,
But incandescent spirit, alive in us,
When stars are brightest
This midnight of the year,
And life burns deep in us.



Opus Peace Prayer

by Deborah Grassman

Cultivate in me, Oh God [of my understanding],
The willingness to re-own and re-home
scattered pieces of myself
so that I might be restored to Your wholeness.
Grow in my honesty, courage, and humility
To release my fears of who I am and who I am not.
Fuel me with your Grace. Amen.

*from Patience's sermon "Restoring the Soul"
on Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience*

How to Remember a Loved One at the Holidays

The holidays can be a challenging time when a loved one has died (or there has been a breach in an important relationship). Several members of this congregation have lost family members or close friends this year. Here are some suggestions of what you might do from the New England Center for Loss and Transition.

- Wrap a favorite keepsake of your loved one, and give it as a gift to another grieving family member.
- Make a donation to a favorite charity in the person's honor.
- Encourage grieving children to draw pictures and create gifts inspired by their memories of the deceased to share.
- Decorate or make a candle and light it at mealtime in memory of the absent loved one.
- Create a special time to share stories and memories about the person who has died or who is no longer willing or able to be present.

Epitaph

by Merrit Malloy

When I die give what's left of me away...

You can love me most
By letting hands touch hands,
By letting bodies touch bodies,
And by letting go of children
That need to be free.

Love doesn't die, people do.
So, when all that's left of me is love,
Give me away.

Ongoing Opportunities for Involvement!

Sunday Teams

Anyone who would like to participate in hosting Sunday Services as part of a team, who has not already been assigned to one, please email Claudia Kern claudia.anne.kern@gmail.com or Suzanne Simon knitrmom@gmail.com. This is a good way to meet people and have a lot of fun--and help the congregation as well. The teams take responsibility for one month of services. They set up for the service, provide refreshments, welcome people as they arrive, and put things back in order afterwards.

Caring Circle

The Caring Circle is our way of matching up people who need a hand in some way (rides, cards, visits, meals, etc.) with people in the congregation willing to help when able. Each month a different Monthly Coordinator is informed of needs and calls Circle members to see if they can help out. If you would like to be part of the Caring Circle in some way *or have needs that could be met through the Circle*, please email or talk to Patience or Sparrow or email Lori Fortini at LA14E@outlook.com. (Lori organizes the monthly coordinators). The more willing hands we have listed for various needs, the better we can take care of each other when those needs arise.

If you'd like to step up to drive someone to an appointment or make a meal or show your caring in similar ways, please fill in the quick questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUPXHZ1EYvWrgv4h0exU145fgD_1YThhrc5Q3wcaENTxP8nA/viewform

Sing in the Choir

The UUCUV choir sings September through June. We rehearse at a once-a-month potluck and on Sunday morning when we sing (twice a month). Whenever possible, music and listening links are made available

in advance. The choir is open to all who wish to sing regardless of experience or ability. Contact our Music Director, Linda Hoover if you would like to sing with the choir.

Open Choir Sundays. Starting at 9:00 am on certain Sundays, with whomever shows up, Linda will warm up the group, and we will learn and prepare a piece to be sung in the service. If you love to sing but can't do choir regularly, give this a try. There are also opportunities to provide special music throughout the year.



Chalice Circles

Chalice Circles are intentional lay-led small groups that deepen and expand the ministry of a congregation. They help build community and provide opportunities for deeper relationships – intimacy — and opportunity for deeper spiritual exploration and search for meaning—ultimacy.

Chalice Circles are both structured and open. The sessions are always confidential. Sharing of the space, attention, and time are respected. Although we all will speak to our own experiences of the topics, we will not try to advise or fix one another. A format guides the process for entering community, introducing and addressing a topic deeply. The topics vary wildly, depending on the will of the group, as do the groups' behavioral covenants.

These circles of trust are facilitated by UUCUVers who have gone through a training session and who are in covenant as a group to support and assist one another as appropriate. If you have questions about joining a chalice circle, please contact Sparrow:

education@uucuv.org.

“Living Fully with Limits”

How does one live fully and happily despite having to adjust to limits on our activities and abilities? Patience is facilitating an open and on-going bi-weekly group for those for whom aging or illness have changed the patterns and choices of daily life. We share readings, personal frustrations, lessons learned, and spiritual practices in our continuing search for personal growth. Announcements of time and place will be found in the Weekly Blast. If you are interested, but haven't yet contacted our minister, Patience, please email her at minister@uucuv.org.

Women's Group

The Women's Group gathers at Sally Page's (visit the church website or contact Sally for directions) on the third Thursday of each month. For those who want to sup together we meet by 5:30 (eat at 6) for a simple pot luck salad meal. Just bring some ingredient(s) to add to a pot luck salad. Those choosing not to eat will come at 6:30.

Once we are fed, and others have arrived, we move to the living room and take time for brief check-ins to share how our lives are going. Here, and throughout the evening, the right to reticence will be honored and confidentiality respected. We then have a discussion generated from suggestions from the group. The evening generally includes a good belly laugh, and though we don't try to resolve each other's problems they seem lightened by sharing.

We break up by 8:30.

Sally Page baciquail@comcast.net



Sunday Music & Readings

The Sunday Services committee is always looking for people to share special music, provide accompaniment on Linda's off weeks, suggest readings or themes to Rev. Patience Stoddard, or offer to lead or take part in a service. They are very interested in adding other voices, speakers and musical diversity to our services.

Volunteer at a Special Event

The church has numerous events throughout the year, and volunteers are hugely appreciated for set up, cooking and baking, planning, serving tables, sorting donated items, cleaning up, crafting, helping with children's activities, carpentry, taking pictures, gardening...you never know what might be needed! Watch for opportunities in the Weekly Blasts. New members and friends are encouraged to fill out our Activity Survey by getting in touch with Sparrow, who will email you a copy.



How to Stay Informed!

Please read your Weekly Email Blasts for important up-to-date news!

If you do not already receive our Weekly Blasts and wish to be added to the list, email Rachel at office@uucuv.org and let her know.

Church Calendar

Our up-to-date online calendar can be found by clicking on “Calendar of Events” on our home page at

www.uucuv.org

Our Social Action In the Wider Community

LISTEN Community Dinners

It is easy to overlook the hidden poverty of our scenic and affluent region. Our UUCUV cook team is one of more than 40 teams who prepare and serve hot, nutritious meals for the LISTEN Program. Upwards of 20,000 meals are served annually, at no cost, and as you might imagine, the need increases each year. We currently cook for up to 100 guests at each dinner. Seniors and families with children make up the majority of our guests.

Participating in the LISTEN Dinner Program is just one of the ways our congregation gives back to the Upper Valley community. All are welcome to join our team - no experience is necessary, and you are not required to work at every dinner; only sign up for the ones that fit your schedule. We offer 2 shifts: prep & cook from 3:00 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. and serve & cleanup from 4:45 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and you may choose to work one or both shifts. Please call me at 603-643-7494 or send an email to knitrmom@gmail.com if you would like to sign up or have questions.

Stay tuned to the Weekly Blasts for our schedule. I hope you will consider joining us: work at a dinner, donate fresh produce or a homemade dessert, or offer funds to purchase such items to supplement the meal. We have a good time together doing meaningful work for our Upper Valley neighbors. I find this work deeply gratifying, and I hope you will, too.

Suzanne Simon



Supporting the Work of The Haven

We collect food and personal care items at Sunday services to be delivered to The Upper Valley Haven. We also support them financially through a portion of the minister's discretionary fund to help families in need of emergency housing or support. In 2015 the Haven's food shelf served 11,403 people, and the shelter housed 233 people. Our congregation provided 950 pounds of food and personal items and \$2298 this past fiscal year.

Partner Church

Our congregation has a partnership with the Mukhap Unitarian Church in the Khasi Hills of Northeast India. Our two churches communicate regularly and find ways to enrich each other's lives through our common spiritual aims and different heritages. This year members of our congregation are sponsoring seven students in high school (including one supported by our Youth Group) and two in college. Please talk to Claudia Kern or Polly Gould if you are interested in being part of this important on-going endeavor.

claudia.anne.kern@gmail.com

polly1gould@yahoo.com

Coming Soon: A column featuring the social justice work of individual members, who work with so many great organizations!

Board of Directors

Bill Brawley and Joani Nierenberg,
Co-Presidents
Mugs Johnston, Treasurer
Maureen McNulty, Secretary
Bob Riccio, Member-at-Large
Mary Sayward, Member-at-Large
Lori Fortini, Member-at-Large

Staff

The Rev. Patience Stoddard, Minister
Sparrow F. Alden, CRE--
Credentialed Religious Educator
Linda Hoover, Music Director
Rachel Clark, Office Administrator

Committee/ Task Force Chairs

Caring Circle Coordinator (Overall):
Lori Fortini
Committee on Ministry: *Babette Hansen, Phil Kern, Suzanne Simon*
Hospitality Teams: *Claudia Kern and Suzanne Simon*
Library: *Olive MacGregor*
Meetinghouse Team: *Carl Tracy, Bill Brawley*
Newsletter Help Team: *Margo Nutt, Mardy High, Claudia Kern*
Nominating Committee: *Suzanne Simon, Paul Schmidt, Cappy Nunlist*
Partner Church: *Polly Gould, Claudia Kern*
Sunday Services: *Paul Schmidt*
Ways and Means: *Lori Fortini*

About the UUCUV



OUR MISSION: We strive to be a joyful, inclusive congregation that nurtures spiritual and intellectual growth for everyone while encouraging lives of service and integrity.

OUR VISION: We, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley, unite: to provide diverse gatherings with music, ceremony, dialogue, and joy in support of each other's spiritual well-being;

to maintain an active program of religious education for adults and children;
to find ways for each of us to participate in activities that will provide fellowship, be intergenerational, and serve the wider community;
to sustain our vitality toward building a sanctuary and increasing our membership;
to fulfill our commitment to be environmentally responsible;
to fulfill our commitment to be a Welcoming Congregation;
to be a positive influence in the world;
to welcome all who share our mission and covenant.

OUR COVENANT: We covenant with each other to speak and act with thoughtful intentions, compassionate truthfulness, and constructive encouragement, in order to build and nurture a loving and supportive environment where all will feel safe to explore our spiritual truths.

SUNDAY SERVICES: Services are held at 10 AM at the Meetinghouse at 320 Route 5 South, in Norwich, VT. Child care is available. Religious education classes are provided during the service.

MEETINGHOUSE: Our newly-built sanctuary adjoins our original Greek Revival farmhouse that continues to serve as meeting and office space.

MINISTER: You may contact Rev. Patience Stoddard at minister@uucuv.org, at her home phone (603) 756-9260, or if urgent, (603) 313-1169 (cell).

CREDENTIALLED RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR: Email Sparrow F. Alden at education@uucuv.org.

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Email Linda Hoover at music@uucuv.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE: Rachel's regular hours are Tuesday through Friday 10-1, unless otherwise posted. Contact her at (802) 649-8828, or email office@uucuv.org.

CARES AND CONCERNS: With cares and concerns, please contact the Caring Circle Coordinator of the month (listed in our weekly email news) and/or the Rev. Patience Stoddard or Sparrow Alden (contact information above).

NEWS: To receive our weekly email news "blasts" and/or The Call, our quarterly e-newsletter, email Rachel at the office (above) and ask to be added to our list. Hard copies of The Call are available on Sundays for those who need them.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

The submissions deadline for the Spring issue is Feb 15.
Please send your submissions to Rachel: office@uucuv.org

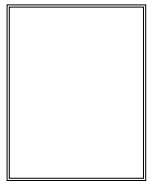
"WEEKLY BLAST" DEADLINE:

Send news items to Rachel by 9 AM Wednesdays for inclusion in the weekly news email.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley

PO Box 1110

Norwich, VT 05055



Some Dates to Remember:

Dec 18 Solstice Celebration

**Dec 24 Christmas Pageant and
Candlelight Service**

Jan 13 Climate Film

Watch weekly blasts for more!

UUCUV Dec.-Feb.

UUCUV Phone: (802) 649-8828

Web: <http://www.uucuv.org>

E-mail: office@uucuv.org

Winter Issue 2016-17