

The Call

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley

Winter 2017-18
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**

Leaning In to Discomfort, Leaning In to Hope

Rev. Patience Stoddard

Over the past couple of months I have been facilitating two book discussions on the book *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving. These discussions are part of a congregation-wide focus on broadening our understanding of the systemic racism and white supremacy in our culture and to discover the role we are unwittingly playing in its continuance and might play in diminishing it. An early step in this journey is to become more aware of the history we do not know and the barriers we do not see. As the abrupt collapse of the Hartford, VT Committee on Racial Inequality and our own hesitance to decide about putting up a Black Lives Matter sign reveal, this process of “waking up” is not a comfortable one.

I believe that in order for this inner and outer work to occur, we need to become more willing to tolerate, even lean into, discomfort. We need to make room for feelings of anger and defensiveness, for strong differences of opinion, for confusion and the tendency to jump to fix what first needs to be acknowledged and understood.

I am encouraged by the honesty of the conversations in these book discussion groups and the growing awareness of just how much we (mostly) white liberals miss what is happening within us and around us. I find this hopeful at a time when it is increasingly difficult for many of us to hold on to hope.

But hope we must – because without hope there is no call to action and without right action there can be no positive change. And we have just begun to conceive of the injustices that have been done in our names, just begun to recognize the depth of our interconnections with systems of oppression, just begun to imagine the opportunities we have to re-form and re-build that the “*earth may be fair and all her people one.*”

How could we tire of hope?—so much is in bud.

How can desire fail?—we have only begun to imagine justice and mercy,...

there is too much broken that must be mended,

(Continued page 2)

Search Committee Update

Maureen McNulty

Thank you to all our members and friends who have been so active in participating in our search process to find a minister to replace Patience when she retires next summer! We had a marvelous turnout for the Cottage Meetings; lively debate and an opportunity for some soul searching at the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop; and over 70% participation in our survey last month.

The information we gathered from these events has been essential to the first step of finding a minister, which is to write a Congregational Record. This document, 19 pages long, tells prospective ministers who we are as a congregation, what our hopes and dreams are, and what we are looking for in our new minister. We had to be clear and forthcoming about our flaws, because one of the searching ministers reading this document may be sharing our congregational life, hopefully for many years. But of course, we also have been honest about all the good in our congregation and community, to invite ministers to come interview with us. That part was easy! And we have just finished writing it – the Congregational Record went online on December 1!

We now have a month to prepare for the next phase. In January, we will receive a list of ministers interested in pursuing the position. These individuals will be given access to a private website, which we are now creating, that goes into even more detail about the

UUCUV and the Upper Valley. At the same time, we will be given information about them, via their Ministerial Record, and will start researching their websites, references, etc. By February, we will have compiled a list of 3-4 candidates. Each candidate will travel to the Upper Valley to meet with us, view the area, interview, and preach at a neutral pulpit which the Search Committee will attend. All this must be done discreetly, as some of the candidates may not have given notice of their leaving to their congregation, so their privacy and identity must be protected.

At this point in the search, we thank you for your participation in the first phase, and we must now ask for your trust and understanding as we go forward into the second phase of the process. The Search Committee will not be able to share any details about the vetting of candidates or the interview process. Please know that we will always have the needs of the congregation in mind as we go through the process. By nominating and voting for us to represent you in the search, you have placed an enormous trust in us. We are committed to upholding that trust. Thank you!

Leaning In (cont'd)

too much hurt we have done to each other that cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know the power that is in us if we would join our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must complete its gesture, so much is in bud.

~Denise Levertov "Beginners"

Go well into this New Year and may hope go with you.

Love, Patience

Search Committee Members

Joani Nierenberg (chair)

Mandy Ruest

Bob Riccio

Maureen McNulty

Grace Alden

Leah Goat

Kathy Christie

December 17 Solstice Services

10 AM Solstice and Christmas: Radical Images of Equality
with Rev. Patience

6:30 PM Celebrating the Solstice~ Please join Patience and Sparrow for a Winter Solstice observance to turn the Wheel of the Year.

December 24 Christmas Services

10 AM Intergenerational Christmas Service with Pageant – Sparrow and Patience

6 PM Quiet Candlelight Service

(Pick-up choir rehearsing at 5 PM, join us!)



Join us for Caroling and Visits at Area Nursing Homes on Christmas Morning!

We will visit Genesis - The Lebanon Center at 10 AM and Hanover Terrace at 11 AM. We will carol and visit with residents. No singing ability required, just a warm heart! For details or to indicate if you are going, contact Rich Greenlee (hartlandvt@aol.com or 802-436-1150)



Winter Solstice Celebration

The cycle of seasons, months, weeks, and days effect me greatly; many of you have read my articles on daily spiritual practice, Sabbath keeping, celebrating the moon's journey, and dancing with the turning Wheel of the Year. Much of my nature-based spiritual practice is fueled by my sensitivity to the changing light as we approach the winter solstice. Will you please join me and Patience on Sunday, December 17th at 6:30 in the evening to honor this benchmark in the natural year?

To me, the holy day of Samhain (Hallowe'en) marks the time that my mind and heart begin a yearly struggle for survival - the darkness outside strikes me in a pre-verbal, irrational, frightening way. Yule (the winter solstice) is my touchstone of hope, an ancient promise that the light - real and metaphorical - will return. Perhaps it is so for you.

For one minister of my acquaintance, the dark of December lifts up silence, a stillness and blessed peace. She observes the solstice with her deepest meditation, and recounts with joy the night that snow began to fall gently on her as she sat in contemplation. The Winter

Solstice is her wellspring of Peace. Perhaps it is so for you.

Please join me and Patience on Sunday, December 17th, at 6:30 to celebrate "the darkest evening of the year". Chants and some gentle movement will honor the sun's standstill and return. If there is snow on the ground, we might go outdoors for a snow labyrinth, so please wear your warm boots. Feel free to bring your own short readings or songs to share.

~ Sparrow

Blue Christmas Meditative Service

Thursday Dec. 14 from 7-8 PM

Patience will lead a special service that recognizes loss, illness, and sadness during the holidays.

President's Message

Lori Fortini

One of the main jobs of the Board this year is to tie up loose ends and to take care of outstanding business at UUCUV before we call our full-time minister. At our Board retreat, we identified our priorities as: (listed in no particular order as all will be worked on simultaneously)

Reviewing our structure of committees/groups/task forces – We moved from having too many committees to having no committees and using more task forces and groups. This served the congregation well for the past couple of years. We are now growing and the structure may not work well into the future.

Over the next month, the Board liaisons will gather information about how we are structured now and where we need to move in the future. We also hope to have a Volunteer Fair to talk about what it takes to run the church this year.

Review and update our staff Personnel issues – Allan Wieman will work with Patience to write new contracts for UUCUV staff and will work with the committee on ministry to conduct a comprehensive performance evaluation of staff positions.

Restructure and find leadership for Building/Meeting House – We have had a few people who work very hard to keep up on Building/Meeting House facility issues. Thank you to Carl Tracy, Dave Nierenberg, and Leah Goat for taking on these pieces of Building and Grounds. However, we are finding that this is a larger task than we anticipated and we need more people involved and a strong charge from the Board. We need special energy to go into shoring up this area.

Move social justice concerns forward – Bill Brawley is starting to develop this area and the Board wants to support that effort any way we can. One of the areas of focus is on racial inequality within the UU faith and another area is supporting advocacy efforts to combat discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

And our final priority identified at the retreat is to **Put a Right Relations Covenant/safety and behavior policy in place** - This has been a goal for many years

and it needs to be completed by the Annual Meeting (see my other column on page 6).

We hope that you feel the Board is focusing on the important issues facing the UUCUV and that our work will better prepare our congregation to welcome a new minister who will help direct us into the next chapter in our story.

Please give us feedback on how we are doing and if you have any suggestions. We are here to work for you.

With gratitude for all you give to me,

Lori



“A solution of the present crisis will not take place unless men and women work for it. Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Even a superficial look at history reveals that no social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals. Without persistent effort, time itself becomes an ally of the insurgent and primitive forces of irrational emotionalism and social destruction. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

~from *Stride Toward Freedom*, by Martin Luther King Jr

Board Report

The Board met on Sunday, November 19th. We moved our meetings from the second Thursday of the month to the third Sunday of the month to accommodate a change in schedule of one of our members.

We welcomed Judy Munger as our new At-large member for the rest of this church year. Judy replaces Karen Watson who stepped down from the Board because of other commitments. We thank Karen for her service.

Members of the Investment Committee (now called the Endowment Advisory Group), Peter Christie and Bill Brawley, attended the meeting to review the parameters of our investments and to offer suggestions for moving forward. It was extremely helpful. We reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Advisory Group, the current investment policies or portfolio parameters, reviewed our current portfolio, and discussed suggestions from the Advisory Group for options for the funds.

Our current portfolio with Wells Fargo includes: two non-managed funds - Maintenance Fund for building repairs - ~\$16,000 and Growth & Develop-

ment Fund - ~\$65,000, and the actively managed Endowment Fund - ~\$217,00. Our discussion centered around the cost of using Wells Fargo and the difference between active vs. passive management of the endowment and if there was any financial advantage to move the G&D fund to a higher interest account. Peter and Bill will gather more information on options and return to the Board in January for further discussion.

The Board received and unanimously approved two proposals from Sparrow – 1. to fund a Nursery/Pre-school leader and 2. to fund child care for Restorative Circle meetings.

Mugs reviewed the current financial report and we continue to be on track with our budget. Allan, as vice president, is working with Patience to update the staff job descriptions and contracts.

The work of the Board for the rest of the year will center on the priorities set at our retreat (see Lori’s President message, page 4) and in creating a Right Relations Covenant by the Annual Meeting (see details of this process on page 6).

How to Stay Informed!

Please read your weekly email blasts for important up-to-date news!

If you do not already receive these 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



CONGRATULATIONS to members Jennifer Ditano and John Hinds in both passing their qualifying exams on their PhD quests - we know how much hard work this moment represents, and we hope you are very proud of yourselves!

WELCOME to our new accompanist, Jennifer Yocom!

Right Relations Covenant

Lori Fortini, President

Part of the work of the Board for this year is to create a Right Relations Covenant for the congregation. This has been on the Board agenda for many years and has not been completed for a number of reasons. Some of the delays were because of other more important work – such as planning for our interim ministry after Rev. Bruce Johnson left, moving back to the Meetinghouse for services, finding Patience as our developmental minister, and then building our new building in 2015.

We now feel ready to focus on this and we feel this is one of the highest priorities for our congregation to put in place to prepare for our new full-time minister.

We are fortunate to have Laura Mitchell on the Board at this time as she completed this process in the UU Fellowship of Athens Ohio. Laura has agreed to share the Athens' documents and help us create similar documents for the UUCUV. The covenant will also have a component of conflict resolution. Therefore, we feel it is important to have input from the Restorative Circles group.

The process we would like to put in place will be to form a Task force made up of 2 members of the Board, 2 members of the Restorative Circles group, and 2 members of the congregation chosen by a congregational vote. The plan is that we will put out the request for nominations from the congregation in December with the highest two names chosen (as we did for the Search Committee). The Board and the Restorative Circles group will choose their representatives.

We would like to have this completed before the Annual Meeting to allow a vote of the congregation before the new minister is called. The group will begin meeting in January by looking at the Athens documents and creating a document for the UUCUV. The document will be presented to the Board and then published to the congregation for the vote of acceptance to be held in June at the Annual Meeting.

If you have any questions or if you would like to be nominated or nominate anyone for this task force, please contact any Board members.

Restorative Circles Group

Sparrow F. Alden

We are thrilled with the positive responses following the October service about Restorative Circles and our vision of how this communication practice can make peace within families, congregations, communities, and nations. Four more folks have stepped forward to become trained facilitators - due to some schedule adventures their training will happen after the new year, so the group has swelled to about ten people for our monthly meetings and practice.

The group is pleased to have been approached by the Board to have a part in this winter's work on covenant and community, about which you will read more elsewhere in this issue. We've not yet chosen our repre-

sentative to that conversation, but we'll let you know in the Weekly Blast.

Here's a feature of Restorative Circles to share: they do not adjourn without a follow up plan and a settled meeting date to discuss progress on that plan. The entire process from first discussion of a concern until that concern is considered settled can take many months - setting dates for all to be present in a Circle with thorough understanding of what will happen and why can take the calendar geniuses a long, long time. But that's OK. Real change takes time, and true peace is on no schedule.

Good Neighbors

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE

In the wake of Rev. Lee Devoe's medical leave in the autumn of 2012, I knew it was vital to the congregation's well-being that I simply notice and get done small tasks that wanted doing. Part of her interim work had included the dissolution of most committees, and there were not specific individuals responsible for, say, making sure the wheelchair ramp was free of snow. I picked up the shovel on the days I came in.

I have been gratified by the hard work that the UUCUV has done to rebuild a highly functional infrastructure for our congregational life. The Board has listened to the priorities of the membership and then turned around and asked individuals to build teams to get our good work done. Rather than relying on single people, we're trying to develop systems so that one person's illness or change of focus doesn't mean chaos — and that's a beautiful and sustainable model.

It's my job now to let go of the little things I started doing which are now being handled perfectly well by the folks who have said "Yes!" to joining a task force, team, or committee. For example? On Sunday afternoons in the new sanctuary, I used to clean out the pulpit; I recycled the order of service bulletins, delivered Patience's sermon text to her desk, cleaned out the used matches, and checked the candle for the next week. But I'm not on the Sunday Services committee, I'm only supposed to consult with them on intergenerational services. The SSC is now more organized than ever, assigning a host for each guest speaker and a worship associate, tracking possible split-the-plate partners, and discussing the many functions of the congregation's Sunday morning experience. I am learning to say to myself, "They've got this," and stop clearing out the pulpit. That's how this beautifully organized Sunday Services committee stays so beautifully organized — they know the whole job and get it done with much more efficiency than one person ever could!

I've made it my own work during this transition year to hold myself to the jobs which are clearly assigned to me in my job description— implementing and coordinating all our religious education, family ministry, acting as staff liaison to a good handful of working

groups, doing pastoral care in coordination with Patience, communication, safety work, and family ministry. Doing only what I'm responsible for is my act of faith in the strength of this congregation as a coordinated and cheerful group of hard-working friends.

Next year, my job description will change to coordinate with our new full time minister's talents and gifts. I need to set aside some jobs which I have come to love. For example, from fall 2012 I held the Membership functions - keeping track of new visitors, writing them a friendly letter, inviting them to learn more about our congregation. Three years ago, Patience and I took a long afternoon to adjust my job description so that it described what I actually do, as close as we could articulate it. The responsibility of "Membership Coordinator" was added to the document in that process. Now with a robust six-person Membership Committee led by Mugs Johnston, I get to relax a bit and be "staff liaison" to the group. They are picking my brain and experience for what has worked in the last few years as well as for bumps I have found in the road. Whatever support the staff can offer, I am there to coordinate, such as helping with the curriculum of our new member orientation process. I still write friendly notes to folks who give us their contact information and meet these new friends for coffee! Next year, the full-time minister will have responsibility to be the liaison to Membership, and I will pass on my stack of stationery.

Those are my first transition jobs. I'm keeping what I do from day to day in line with my job description; I'm working with our vice-president, Allan Wieman, on a clean and clear job description for next year which will coordinate logically with the new minister's responsibilities.

Will the plan change as it makes contact with fiscal year 2019? Absolutely. Trust me and my new colleague to shift our duties, adapt to changing situations, and build a relationship whereby the congregation benefits from our strengths.

But I'm starting by tidying up what I do and building nice clear boundaries on my duties. Good fences make good neighbors.

Religious Education News & Views

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE



Children's Religious Ed Programming

In November and December, our Spirit Play and Green Room classes are using stories of light and hope to learn about the world's many faiths. Hopi and Salish stories of peacemaking, Mohammed's birthday, Bodhi Day, Hanukkah, Yule, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Year's are all part of the curriculum. When listening to these tales, we ask, "What do you hear in this story which is like your own life? What do you hear in this story which reminds you of the seven principles?" The context is commonality with people of all faith traditions.

In the new year, we will extend the learning with stories from around the world specifically about

peacemaking and justice. Did you know that Miss Sheena created a Spirit Play story for "Hidden Figures"? The Green Room learning will include practicing using kind words, how to respond to unkindness, and how to stand up for someone who is being made to feel small.

Watch for Children's Sunday in March - date to be clarified as the new year unfolds. After Easter, we will get outdoors for our Stewardship and Spirit curriculum!



"The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;

Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect of peculiar notions;

But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;

Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;

Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment;

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life."

~ William Ellery Channing

RE Roundtable Dec. 10

Second Sundays are one of our best examples of lay-led programming - experienced parents meet after the service to talk about their frustrations, ideas, traditions, and ideals UU parenting. In November, Mandy Ruest led a discussion of *Tending the Flame*, a book for UU parents which we have in our library. Mandy relies on the easily-remembered phrase, "Is that loving and kind?" to help Griffin make choices about how to respond to different situations. May I add that she and Paul model lovingkindness every day as well, rescuing the Alden family during our week-long power-out by welcoming us into their home?

On December 10th, we'll focus on holiday celebrations and weaving our values into the festivities we choose to celebrate. The discussion lasts only one hour and child care is provided - please join us!

Religious Education News & Views

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE



Thank You, Board!

A hearty “Thank you!” to the UUCUV Board who are helping the children’s Sunday morning program perform at a much deeper level! Over the summer, with the plan of running two RE classrooms, I searched for a Blue Room teacher to lead the younger group. By great good fortune, we found Julianna McGonigle, a former second grade teacher who missed having some time with small kids in her life - but the very same week that she was interviewing, the registration numbers shifted and it became clear that a special group of students needed their own classrooms! We had enough Kindergarteners, first graders, and kinesthetic second-graders to open up the Green Room! With her experience and energy, Miss Julianna cheerfully green to be our Green Room teacher, and she has taken those kids outdoors every Sunday and led them on adventures relating to the seven principles ever since!

Well, that left no one in the Blue Room for our littlest parishioners. Sometimes that room is empty and sometimes I am physically capable of covering it myself, but those conditions are very far from ideal. First, a consistently staffed, welcoming room for babies and toddlers is the single most effective way to let young families know that they are expected, welcome, and embraced by our community - a place is already waiting for them! Second - why can’t I, Sparrow, cover it? I have a different job to do, as director of the program and safety officer of the congregation. The best possible practice is to have two adults in every children’s gathering room to cover emergencies and be witnesses; in the awful event that one of our children reports being harmed, our witness assures us that the transgression did not happen at the UUCUV, and other areas of the child’s life will be examined to eliminate the threat. Our budget does not yet extend to funding two grown ups per room, so we engage in the next-most efficient safety protocol - my own fluid travel from room to room, witnessing, assisting, and handling little

logistics as they arise.

What to do in the Blue Room, then? Board to the rescue. They have flexed the budget to allow us to hire one of our qualified teens each week to teach in the Blue Room from 9:45 to 11:45! Izzy Coylewright, Emma McGonigle, and Val Alden will be staffing the program for little ones. Between them, they have Red Cross first aid, CPR, choking, AED, lifeguarding, babysitting, and child care credentials as well as camp counselor training and experience - and they’re kind, silly, and fun! I have complete confidence in their ability to handle the gentle curriculum of chalice, blocks of joy and concern, sharing, activities, songs, and clean-up.

So thanks to the Board and to all of you who support the work of this congregation - Blue Room staffing is just one concrete way that your gift is helping to make this a welcoming place for young families.



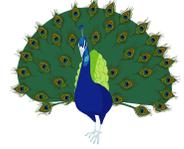
*Peace,
Sparrow*

A Wrinkle in Time!

Are you planning on re-reading this fabulous novel with your family this winter? If you and the kids in your life would like to help Sparrow pilot-test a Wrinkle in Time based program during February vacation, please contact her at education@uucuv.org. The program will be aimed at grades 5 - 8, but all kids over 6 are welcome in February.

Exciting Partner Church News!

Claudia Kern and Polly Gould



There are exciting new things happening to take our partnership with the Unitarian Church in Mukhap, India to a new level!

JOIN US FOR A VIDEO CALL WITH MUKHAP ON DECEMBER 10 AT 8:30 AM. The young adults and others from the Mukhap church have taken the initiative to organize a second video conference call with us! We hope some of the students we sponsor will attend and their sponsors will have the chance to greet them. The Partner Church group will be providing a continental breakfast, and everyone is invited to come and share the powerful sense of connection that comes when our two congregations see one another's faces and hear each other's voices. It is like touching hands across the world.

UPDATE ON STUDENT SPONSORSHIPS. We are currently supporting six students, and we have two sponsors on a waiting list for new students. For the new school year in January, we have been asked to craft our own agreement with the leaders of the Mukhap church regarding future sponsorships. The UU Partner Church Council will continue to manage financial transfers, but all other details of sponsorships are now to be decided between the two churches. We have begun work on this with the help of Rangdajied Lapasam and Leiki Suchiang who has become an associate minister for the Mukhap church.

LAPTOP PURCHASE To greatly improve communication with our Mukhap liaison, Rangdajied Lapasam, we have used some Partner Church funds and a generous donation from a member of our congregation to purchase a laptop computer for Rangdajied. This will allow much higher quality in video conferencing. We are beyond grateful to Claudia and Phil's friend, Mahesh Upadhyaya, for his assistance in making this international purchase.

SUPPORTING RANGDAJIED FOR UNITARIAN MINISTRY

The UUCUV Partner Church group has been in conversation with the UUCUV Board, the UU Partner

Church Council, leadership in the Unitarian Union of Northeast India (UUNEI), and Rangdajied, himself, about providing the financial and other support necessary for him to achieve his dream of becoming a Unitarian minister.

The laptop is a first step in providing this support. Currently Rangdajied is enrolled in an online course to obtain a credential in elementary education. To obtain this he must successfully answer 81 questions in online testing and write 15 assignments by early January. Now he is doing all the work for this online course using his cell phone! If he obtains this credential, this could become a future adequate source of income for him to support himself and his two sisters, one of whom has two children, while doing ministry. In Meghalaya, most ministers are not paid for their services.

Currently, Rangdajied is attending monthly leadership trainings offered by UUNEI they have said that if he continues to improve his English and passes an interview process that they will assist him with University admission. Rangdajied had to quit school this year when he became the sole support for his two sisters. With UUCUV support of \$55-\$75 per month, he would be able to quit his job driving a taxi and focus full-time on preparing himself for ministry. This support would be reviewed and renewed on a year-to-year basis.

Polly Gould, Claudia Kern, and the Partner Church Board liaison, Nick Warren, would love to hear your thoughts on this major opportunity. It would help us judge the level of support in the congregation for this undertaking. In addition, we would welcome hearing from those of you who would be willing to help with an annual fundraising event for this purpose and/or with the increasing level of activity involved in outreach to our fellow Unitarians in India. The connections with Mukhap are deepening, and we are sure that you would find this aspect of our congregational life as rewarding as we do.



Library News

Olive MacGregor

Since their last report, the library committee has processed the following eight books and put them on the shelves:

Alzheimer's through the looking glass, by Dana Walrath 616.8 WAL

Breathe! You are alive 294.3 BRE

Church do's and don'ts: tips for success, pitfalls to avoid, by Michael Durall 254 DUR

Just because I am: a child's book of affirmation, by Lauren Murphy Payne J 305 PAY

Ruby Bridges goes to school, my true story, by Ruby Bridges J B BRI

Sharing nature with children: the classic parents' and teachers' nature awareness guide, by Joseph Cornell 508 COR(in the green section)

Skeptics and true believers: the exhilarating connection between science and religion, by Chet Raymo 215 RAY

War and peace, illustrated by Toni Goffe, no author J 303.6 WAR

We have also slightly rearranged the children's section to make it more attractive and accessible.

Our thoughts are with Margo as she recovers from a fall.

Library Committee: Olive MacGregor, Chair, Polly Gould and Margo Nutt

Biography/History Book Group

Phil Kinsler is starting a Biography/History book group. The group will begin meeting on Tuesday, January 9th, 2018, at UUCUV, from 7-9PM. The group is limited to the first 12 participants expressing interest to ensure everyone can have adequate time to share. We will begin with the biography "Grant" by Ron Chernow, so you might want to add this to your holiday list.

The format will be member determined, but at the beginning we will meet for two straight Tuesday nights, the 9th and the 16th, which will give us time for extended and thoughtful discussion. While there will be no formal 'leader,' Phil will prepare perhaps 5 discussion questions to get things started.

It's anticipated that we will have the first two meetings, then have the group decide on the next work to read, give ourselves a month or 6 weeks to read it, and resume meeting for two sessions of 2 hours each.

Some folks have already expressed interest but Phil would appreciate an e-mail to:

psyfil@icloud.net

with your name and contact info to help keep track of interested participants.



Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

When I rise up
let me rise up joyful
like a bird

When I fall
let me fall without regret
like a leaf

~Wendell Berry

Winter Trees

by William Carlos Williams

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

The Work of Christmas

by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the kings and the princes are home
When the shepherds are back with their flock
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost
To heal the broken
To feed the hungry
To release the prisoner
To rebuild the nations
To bring peace among us
To make music in the heart.

In a Dark Time the Eye Begins to See

“In a dark time the eye begins to see. And this is the paradox: that darkness is the mother of beauty, that the extinction of light is the a revelation...

Perhaps it is only in the dark times that the pale light of intelligence, going out from the eye, can make its way in the world without being washed away by the fierce light of the sun. Perhaps it is only in the dark times that the eye and the mind, turning to each other, can cooperate in the delicate and impassioned art of seeing.”

~Chet Raymo

Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

Grief and the Holidays

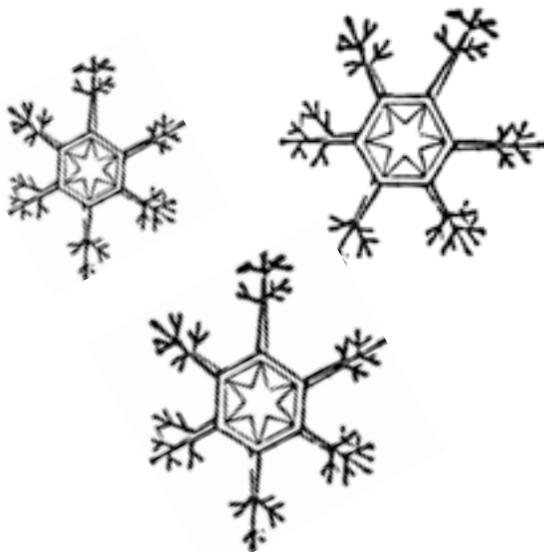
1. Accept that the holidays are difficult for grieving people. Don't "should" yourself. Let others know what may be hard for you. Plan an exit strategy if the "celebration" feels overwhelming.

2. Be compassionate and take care of yourself. Try to lower your expectations of yourself. Make a list of activities that bring comfort and try to schedule one such activity a day, e.g., listen to music, buy some flowers, take a warm bath, walk in a beautiful place.

3. Start a new ritual or tradition. Place a lighted candle or a picture on the dinner table; hang a stocking and have family members write down good memories and place them there; give money to their favorite charity; buy the gift you wish you could give to the one you've lost and give it to someone else.

4. Help someone else. Find a way to volunteer your time, whether to a shelter, community dinner or visiting a local nursing home or hospital. Service can be healing.

5. Share your feelings with someone. It's important to have at least one person who knows that your insides don't match the cheerful decor of the season. Let others know what you need; often people want to do something but have no idea what would be helpful.



Blue Christmas

Meditative Service

Thursday Dec. 14 from 7-8 PM

Patience will lead a special service that recognizes loss, illness, and sadness during the holidays.

Selections from Patience's Sunday Services

“A Meditation for the Advent Season”

by Sara Moores Campbell



Spirit of Joy, Come in.
For there is much in our lives pushing you away.
Some of us have lost someone dear in the year past.
The season punctuates our loss.
Pressure mounts with the countdown
..so many things to do.
Touch our hearts.
Touch us with the wonder of a child.
Touch us with the magic of this season.

Spirit of Love, Come in.
For there is much in our lives keeping you out.
Our own concerns consume us and turn us inward;
There is tension in our imperfect families;
Open our eyes.
Give us the eyes of love.
Open us to the needs of others.

Spirit of Hope, Come in.
For the days darken and grow cold,
And we sometimes wonder if our work is for nought.
Wounded souls in a wounded world, we need you.
Heal our souls.
Fill us with the light of the season,
So that we can brighten the lives of others.

Spirit of Peace, Come in.
For in our world and in our selves there is conflict.
Too many lives form the battleground of the struggle for goods and power.
Help us to be peaceful.
Fill us with peace.
Give us a common dream.
So that we may help make a more just and peaceful world.

Amen.

Reading from Our Chosen Faith

by John Buehrens & Forester Church

For most of us, our faith did not choose us, we chose it. Born Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, or into a secular or “mixed” household, when it came time for us to affiliate with a religious institution we sought one that fit our own thinking, not one that imposed its thinking on us. This is even true for individuals born into Unitarian Universalist families. In our religious education programs, though we place special emphasis on liberal religious traditions and values, we also introduce our children to many different religious and theological approaches, encouraging them to formulate their own beliefs and make their own commitments.

UUs are neither a chosen people, nor a people whose choices are made for them by theological authorities—ancient or otherwise. We are a people who choose.



Reading from “The Way of Transitions” by William Bridges

It’s a paradox. To achieve continuity, we have to be willing to change.

Change is, in fact, the only way to protect what exists, for without continuous readjustment the present cannot continue. Even the great conservative, Edmond Burke, realized this, for he said that “a state without the means of some change is without the means of continuation.”

The refusal to change will not guarantee that whatever we care about stays the same. It only assures that whatever we care about has been deprived of the very thing it needs in order to survive. A marriage, a career, a dream for the future, even a picture of the past: Each of these things is being primed for destruction if it does not change over time.

Here is another paradox: The very things we now wish we could hold onto and keep safe from change were themselves originally produced by changes. And many of those changes, in their day, looked just as daunting as any in the present do. No matter how comfortable and necessary the status quo feels today, it was once new, untried and uncomfortable. Change is not only the path ahead, but it is also the path behind us, the one which we travelled along to wherever we are now trying to stay.

All Soul’s Day ~ Reflection on “Invisible Losses”

Lately the news has been full of images of loss – homes in Houston...full of water - no longer inhabitable, entire neighborhoods in parts of California nothing but charred ruins, Virgin Island so recently the idyllic destination of so many vacationers, no longer to even sustain their own populations, and Puerto Ricans living for weeks without water or power and too many without any place to call home. Lives lost, but also livelihoods, and homes and countless treasured objects and images, never to be recovered.

Perhaps you, like I, have found yourselves wondering, “What would I take if my home were threatening by flood, or wind or fire.” A favorite painting or heirloom, photos of loved ones, my son’s first hand print, a lock of my daughters hair? But what if there are no pictures, no stories. What of the invisible losses that no fire can touch because they leave no trace, except upon the heart.

What of the unborn child, the one we wished for but couldn’t conceive, or the one miscarried, or aborted, or born way to soon? How do we commemorate or share the significance of such invisible losses?

(Continued p. 16)

Selections from Patience's Services (cont'd)

Society, even doctors and close friends, often overlook or try to cover over the significance of such losses. "Oh it is for the best." "It's Nature's way of dealing with mistakes." "At least you can go on with your life now. You can always have another." "How can you really grieve a child that you never really had?" Well we can, and we do. We mourn not only for what was, but for what might have been. And too often we do it alone.

Many years ago I acknowledged such a loss at a service I was leading at a Senior Home in Vermont. I was unprepared for the response. There was one woman whose only daughter died at six weeks for no apparent reason. As she told me her grief and the years of self-recrimination, she cried for the first time in 60 years. Woman after woman came up to me to share her story and to offer comfort and support.

Far from being alone in this grief, I felt deeply connected, part of a tribe of countless women who continued to grieve both that which was lost and that which would never be and continued courageously to carry on living and loving. I realized that the sharing of a loss could be a gift to another, and a gift to oneself... That by sharing, even invisible losses could be honored and valued.

A colleague of mine, Sylvia Howe, speaks of the sharing of joys and sorrows, as one way of living out our theology of relationship. Let this be a time to honor and respect all losses, both visible and invisible, both great and small. Losses of what we had, or were never able to have. And realize once again, that we are not alone.



More 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_1YThrc5Q3wcaENtxP8nA/viewform

Sing in the Choir

The UUCUV choir sings September through June. We rehearse at a once-a-month potluck and on Sunday mornings 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. music@uucuv.org

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 widely, 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.

Sunday Music & Readings

The Sunday Services committee is always looking for people to share special music, 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.

“Living Fully with Limits” Group

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

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. 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

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. education@uucuv.org

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 60 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



Board of Directors

Lori Fortini, President
Allan Wieman, Vice President
Mugs Johnston, Treasurer
Barbara Clapp, Secretary
Nick Warren, Member-at-Large
Laura Mitchell, Member-at-Large
Judy Munger, Member-at-Large

Staff

The Rev. Patience Stoddard, Minister
Sparrow F. Alden, CRE--
Credentialed Religious Educator
Sheena Morris, RE Teacher
Julianna McGonigle, RE Teacher
Linda Hoover, Music Director
Jennifer Yocom, Accompanist
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: *Suzanne Simon, Claudia Kern*
Library: *Olive MacGregor*
Newsletter Help Team: *Margo Nutt, Mardy High*
Nominating Committee: *Cappy Nunlist, Paul Schmidt, Margaret Robinson*
Partner Church: *Polly Gould, Claudia Kern*
Sunday Services: *Claudia Kern*
Ways and Means: *Lori Fortini*
Search Committee: *Grace Alden, Kathy Christie, Leah Goat, Maureen McNulty, Joani Nierenberg, Bob Riccio, Mandy Ruest*

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

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). You may also leave a message at the church office phone (802) 649-8828.

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. In summer she may normally not work Thursdays.

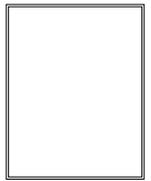
CARES AND CONCERNS: With cares and concerns, please contact the Caring Circle Coordinator of the month (listed in our weekly email news) and/or the Rev. Patience Stoddard or Sparrow Alden (contact information above).

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.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley

PO Box 1110

Norwich, VT 05055



Some Dates to Remember:

- Dec 10 RE Roundtable**
- Dec 14 Blue Christmas Service**
- Dec 16 Carol Sing @ UUCUV**
- Dec 17 Solstice Services**
- Dec 24 Christmas Services**
- Dec 25 Caroling @ Nursing Homes**
- Feb 23 Soupathon**

UUCUV Dec.-Feb.

UUCUV Phone: (802) 649-8828

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

E-mail: office@uucuv.org

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