

The Call

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of the Upper Valley

Spring 2018
March - May

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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**

The Way of Transition

Rev. Patience Stoddard

Dreaming, molding, guiding, holding, loving, letting go

These words have been singing in my head for the last few weeks. They are the refrain from a simple song by musician and minister Mary Grigolia.

This will be my last full minister's column, as hopefully you will have called a fulltime minister to accompany this congregation on the next leg of its journey. We have accomplished a lot together – dreaming and building a sanctuary, finding a new sense of unity in community, and growing not only in membership but also in confidence and trust.

Our work this spring will be to bring to conclusion some of the initiatives now moving forward – the formation of a Rights Relations policy and procedure, the establishment of a Social Justice Team or Committee, the welcoming of new members and families, and the preparation of a budget and meeting stewardship goals for the coming year. Our work will also entail saying goodbye to one another and goodbyes are rarely easy or much fun, but they absolutely are necessary. The writer William Bridges has this to say about the way of transitions:

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... 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. ...Change is not only the path ahead, but is also the path behind us, the one which we travelled along to wherever we are now [tempted] to stay.

It was my decision some 15 months ago to “let go” of this minis-

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Search Committee Update

Maureen McNulty

Committee: Joan Nierenberg, Mandy Ruest, Bob Riccio, Maureen McNulty, Kathy Christie, Grace Alden, Leah Goat

The Congregational Record is complete, the private search website is up, eleven Ministerial Records have been read and reread, countless recorded sermons have been viewed, websites have been scoured, six phone interviews were completed, 3 precandidates were selected, and our third precandidate weekend, wherein we host a prospective minister for a full weekend of interviews, tours, casual conversations and Sunday service at a neutral pulpit, is done! It has been quite an undertaking. We learned so much about each of the applicants, and about the diverse ways in which one can bring the spirit of Unitarian Universalism alive. It will be such a pleasure to bring some of this information back to the congregation.

In the coming weeks, Search Committees and prospective ministers will be submitting their prioritized choices to the UUA Transitions Office. On March 29, we will know if we have a match. At the time of this writing, we are optimistic that we will be able to present a truly outstanding candidate to the congregation for consideration. We certainly have done our best to represent the UUCUV as an amazing group of people with which to work and the Upper Valley as a glorious place to live. Hopefully, our choice for candidate will agree!

Members of the congregation began this process alongside the Search Committee in cottage meetings, continued with us in the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop and in filling out the Survey. But the most important part of your participation is during Candidating Week, when everyone will meet and get to know the candidate chosen by the Search Committee. The vote we all take at the end of that week is critical. We need as many members present and voting as possible. Searching ministers need to feel the strong, almost unanimous support of the congregation that chose them, so their ministry can begin on an excellent footing. If the congregation in their collective wisdom does not reach a high percentage vote, the candidate may well decline our invitation. This sometimes happens, and then we would need to consider options

for the next steps. However, we are anticipating that the congregation will be as excited about the candidate as we are and the membership will joyously and overwhelmingly vote in favor of calling the candidate to be our full time minister!

The Way of Transition (cont'd)

try. This decision was based on the fact that we had accomplished together all the goals we set at the beginning of my $\frac{3}{4}$ consulting ministry. The congregation is ready for a new vision and mission and new minister who can help you to see with new eyes the path ahead. My decision was also based on my awareness that I need to re-balance my life -- with more time for friends and family, more time to listen for a new way to serve my local community.

Don't be surprised if there is a bit more tension these next few months. Change, while necessary, is rarely easy and anxiety can lead to more minor disagreements, less energy and enthusiasm. As Unitarian forebear Francis David said some five centuries ago: "we need not think alike to love alike."

The most difficult aspect of this leave-taking will be no longer be seeing or talking to you for some time. When a parish minister leaves a congregation, it is important that they not have direct contact with anyone in their former congregation for at least two years. I know that to many this sounds unfair; however I have come to recognize that this is important -- both for the congregation to bond with their new minister, and for the departing minister to re-connect with friends and family that may have been given short-shrift over the past few years and to discover a new path forward.

I trust the love and wisdom of this community will see us through this time of transition and will provide an inspiring home for your next minister.

Blessed be, *Patience*



New Shades in the Sanctuary

We are happy to announce that we have purchased shades from Gordon's Window Décor and they have been installed in the sanctuary. This will allow us to darken the room to show slides and video in our services. The shades were partially paid for through a grant from the VT Quebec Convention Grant and the balance was taken from our Growth & Development fund. Anne Alford (our Vermont-Quebec Convention delegate) shepherded this process from grant request all the way through installation. Thank you so much, Anne!!

UUCUV Receives Net Meter Credits for 2017-18

I am very happy to report that an adult child of one of our members donated Net Metering credits towards our Green Mountain Power bills. UUCUV has not needed to pay anything to GMP for July-December 2017. We paid a partial amount for January and will likely need to continue paying partial until later this spring.

This is a wonderful gift to receive to help offset other line items that ended up being over budget. We are so grateful for the generous donation and we are touched that the family would think of us for this gift.

This is but one step in our process of becoming a Greener Congregation. A task force is continuing the work of the Building Steering Committee to explore possibilities for solar energy to provide more of our energy needs.

Mugs Johnston, Treasurer

President's Message

Lori Fortini

The other day I was so mad at my alarm clock that I nearly threw it across the room. My partner Bruce was concerned and asked where my rage was coming from. I said I didn't know but then later that day, when listening to the news, of course, it hit me. I am filled with so many emotions listening to what is happening to our country - school shootings, gutting the environmental protections, greed, corruption, on and on. The emotions are so raw and just under the surface that it is difficult to keep it together. My anxiety is heightened and I am on edge.

So how do I cope? Well, I usually look to the familiar circles in my faith community to find solace. And although this is still a great source of comfort, there is much unknown in our congregation as well right now. What an exciting time it is, but it is also a roller coaster of emotions!

We are in the middle of planning for our new reality of life without Rev. Patience at the same time that we are in search for a new minister. We are putting out to the universe that we are ready for the future of having a full-time minister to help us be more visible and active in the Upper Valley. Having a foot in both camps is not easy - as Tom Petty said "The waiting is the hardest part." So, since there is no way out but through, let's try to embrace the unknown as we try to tackle it.

Our congregation is strong and we are vibrant and growing, but a challenge I see as the president of the UUCUV Board is that this time of change is shining a light on some areas in our organizational structures that are not as strong as they should and could be.

There are not always clear paths of communication among committees and groups and the congregation. Teams and committees are working on projects that other parts of the community may not be aware of. One group may think a task is being taken care of but it may have fallen off the table. We rely on wonderful individuals who are taking care of tasks for us - Sally taking care of setting up the sanctuary, Claudia taking care of the beautiful flower arrangements each Sun-

day, Leah giving such care and love to our gardens and grounds, the list goes on - but we need to be sure they are not taken for granted.

I am aware that it may not be clear to everyone just how much it takes to run our community. It seems seamless most of the time, but there is much happening behind the scenes. And as we grow, some of these informal or unwritten activities may be lost. This can cause efforts to be duplicated or things to be missed. What we don't want to see happen is that people start to mistrust intentions or feel unappreciated.

For me, one way to assure things are not missed or taken for granted, especially during this time of change, is to have procedures written down and known to the larger congregation. It is slow going, but the Board is trying to identify where there are unwritten procedures and then move to document how things run. With better communication, we can be fully aware of all that it takes to keep the UUCUV going.

Another area to focus on is the need for more coordination and leadership in key areas of responsibility. Recently, work has been done by the congregation to address Social Justice and there is great energy to move forward, which is very exciting and overdue. However, other areas that may not be as compelling as Social Justice, are also critical for our community and also need attention.

I would like to highlight a few areas where we could use some shoring up. Please let us know if you have interest/ability/availability to help in any of these areas.

Building and Grounds: The care of our building and grounds needs a coordinator. We are so grateful to have strong support from Carl Tracy, Dave Nierenberg, Anne Alford, Leah Goat, Gerry Tolman, and Mugs Johnston to take care of things as they crop up. However, having someone identified who will be the point person for the staff and to help us be proactive on maintenance instead of primarily reactive is a

(continued on page 5)

President's Message (cont'd)

key need. At this point, we are looking for someone who loves to tinker and good at communicating and coordination skills to step forward and help us oversee the upkeep of the building.

Membership: Sparrow took over all Membership duties in fall 2012 when Interim Minister Rev. Lee Devoe disbanded all committees. We recently recreated the Membership Committee with Sparrow still tracking and responding to visitors and providing assistance as the staff liaison.

Currently, Membership has a core group of people doing the work to make sure we welcome new comers and provide education opportunities to help people learn about us and hopefully join us.

However, the membership duties that were officially taken over by Sparrow when her time was increased will no longer be her responsibility next year. The Membership Committee will need help from new people to be sure that we can continue to respond to visitors in a timely and welcoming way.

Sunday Services: This is a key committee responsible for creating our services on Sundays. They work closely with the minister to find topics and also find speakers and topics for the lay-led services. This committee needs new people as some people have been doing this work for quite some time and will be coming off the committee.

Also, in the past, we have had more informal services through the summer. The lay-led services have always been wonderful and a great addition to our worship, but as we now are in our larger space, the summer program is really an extension of the rest of the year.

It is a huge undertaking for the Sunday Services Committee to be responsible for all of the summer services. It is time that we adjust our thinking about all aspects of the summer service – worship, hospitality, welcoming, even our picnic at the end of the summer - and face that we are providing full services all year round. And it is too much to expect that this group continue to manage this task alone.

These areas of focus – Building & Grounds, Membership, and Sunday Services – along with Social Justice will have the largest return on our investment and make the most positive changes in our community.

We are in the wonderful position to be growing but, with growth, we have to expect some growing pains.

With better communication paths, more of our day-to-day business written down, and more attention given to key areas of our community life, I have faith that we will continue to stretch and grow into an even greater presence in the community and to be able to give back to help heal a broken world. And to be a place of excitement and joy as we bring in a new minister and take our next steps.

Yours in faith,

Lori Fortini



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

Board Report

Barbara Clapp, Board Secretary

There are many changes occurring in our congregation as we prepare to say farewell to our beloved minister, Patience, and welcome a newcomer. The Board hopes to address some of the emotions that accompany these changes with “Tea with the Board” - a time and space for you to talk about what is on your mind during this transition time - the good and the bad, your fears and your hopes. On Sundays after the services in March and April, Board members will stay in the sanctuary from 11:30 to 1:00 pm to sit with you and listen to what you have to say. We want to be available to provide answers if we have them or to work to find answers if we don't.

In addition to the transition, we are dealing with the normal wrap-up of our church year culminating in the Annual Meeting on June 3rd.

I would just like to highlight a few activities I think you would like to keep attuned to.

During candidating week this Spring, the one candidate the Search Committee has chosen will be invited to preach at UUCUV followed by a full week of diverse activities which is intended to offer the opportunity for both the candidate and members/friends of the church to get to know one another in as many different situations as possible. Everyone is encouraged to send in their ideas to Joani Nierenberg. Then this chosen candidate will preach again at the end of the week. After the service, the members of the congregation will vote on whether or not to Call this person to be our full-time settled minister.

It is becoming a tradition at the UUCUV for the Board to host an Easter Potluck. We plan to invite students from the Vermont Law School Diversity Club and would like for them to be greeted with a hearty welcome. The Board hopes that you will be able to join us on April 1st.

Patience is planning to conduct a pastoral training session later this spring. This workshop has been in the works for a few months as it has been difficult to bring it to fruition with so many changes here at UUCUV.

The training will be a day and a half and will be on a weekend. A pastoral team will be a major step forward and an essential component of our church community.

On February 11 the Board asked the congregation to approve displaying a Black Lives Matter sign on the outside of the Meetinghouse.

Before the vote, the floor was open for comments and conversation. Some of the comments were as follows: One person did not want to decide this issue by consensus. One voice expressed, “If not now, when?” Another “If we do not start now, nothing will change.” What about aesthetics? It was mentioned that the vandalism issue was checked out with the UUCUV insurance company and we were assured that we would be covered if any defacement occurred as a result of hanging the sign. A member immediately expressed her belief that she had come to know people of color through her work with the NAACP and was not concerned with the issue of violence. The need to stand up and take risks was expressed. Another voice expressed her belief that we must learn to engage with people we disagree with. A voice reminded us that our UUCUV congregation has children of color in our Sunday school.

In congregational meetings, discussions, and the recent congregational survey conducted in the course of the ministerial search, social justice comes up again and again as something that members wish we were doing more of as a congregation to address. With that in mind, the Board is particularly delighted to inform you that Suellen Aptman has volunteered to chair a Social Justice Team. This team will work together with the congregation and the wider community to address issues of racial justice, LGBTQ justice, socioeconomic justice, environmental justice, etc. We want to make a difference. Stay tuned for further developments!

BOOK & MUSIC



Saturday, March 24th
at the UUCUV

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of
the Upper Valley

320 Route 5 South, Norwich, VT

8 AM - 2 PM

Come to our Annual Sale of Books,
Record Albums, CD's and DVDs!

Tax-Deductible Donations Needed & Accepted

Wednesday and Thursday, 3/21, 3/22 from 4 - 8PM,
and Friday 3/23 from 4 - 7 PM
at the UUCUV Meetinghouse

Tea with the Board

Lori Fortini, Board President

During the Service on Sunday February 18th, Patience answered questions about what it was like to be a UU minister and, more specifically, questions about her ministry and looking ahead to a new minister.

It was a great discussion that just barely gave us time to scratch the surface of what people may be thinking and experiencing as we move through this last year of Patience's ministry with us.

Our work as a congregation this year has been very concentrated on supporting the Search Committee to move us toward calling of a new full-time minister, but important as that is, it is only part of our work.

We also want to be sure that we take time to look back at our years with Patience - to celebrate the joys and memories of our time together and to express our thoughts and concerns about her leaving.

The Board would like to offer "Tea with the Board" as a time and space for you to talk about what is on your mind during this transition time - the good and the bad, your fears and your hopes.

On Sundays after the services in March and April, Board members will stay in the sanctuary from 11:30 to 1:00 pm to sit with you and listen to what you have to say. We want to be available to provide answers if we have them or to work to find answers if we don't have them.

We hope that you will take us up on this offer to talk with us - about the transition, the governance of the UUCUV, the budget, or anything else that is on your mind. Other ways to reach us is through an email to Board members, or you may come to a Board meeting, or set a one-on-one visit. We are open to whatever works best for you.

It is important to find ways for all of us to express our thoughts and feelings as they may unconsciously hold us back from being fully open to a new called minister. It is our hope that we will find support and reassurance through listening and talking together.

In faith,

Lori Fortini



Seeking Summer Speakers

The Sunday Services Committee is brainstorming ideas for our popular lay-led Summer Services. Might you be one of our speakers? Do you have a topic of interest or a life experience to share that you believe would be inspirational to others? Do you know of someone in the wider community that you can recommend as an inspiring speaker? Members of the Committee will be available to support speakers as much as needed to shape each service. If you are interested or know of someone who might be, please contact Claudia Kern or Rev. Patience.

Stewardship Pledges Due April 1

If you have any questions about the stewardship campaign, please contact Patience or Lori Fortini.

minister@uucuv.org

LA14e@outlook.com

Right Relations Covenant Task Force

Lori Fortini, Board President

In December, the Board decided to appoint a task force to create a Right Relations Covenant. This Covenant will identify how we ideally communicate and interact with each other which will include adhering to our principles and using deep listening as practiced through our restorative circle work. Because we know we are all human and not perfect, the covenant will also address how we respond when we are not able to stay in right relations with each other. Again, we will look to the restorative circle model of intervention for guidance as a starting point to try to resolve difference.

In December, we also asked the congregation to vote for two representatives to this task force and we contacted the people who received the highest votes in January. Sally Page has agreed to serve on this task force. We are grateful for the wisdom she will bring to this work.

The three people who received the next highest votes, although honored to be trusted by the congregation, were not able to serve at this time because of other obligations. In order to stick to our timeline we have a plan to move forward.

We are going to convene our current task force: Laura Mitchell, Board Representative and Convener of the group; Judy Munger, Board and Restorative Circle Representative; Grace Alden, Restorative Circle Representative; and Sally Page, Congregational Representative. Once that group has a draft they are satisfied with, we will ask the three people who received the second highest number of votes by the congregation to act as an advisory group to review the covenant before it is finalized.

The hope is to have the Covenant with clear procedures and policy completed and reviewed by the Board and distributed before congregational vote by the Annual Meeting on June 3rd.

We feel this is an important task to complete before calling a new minister. We trust this group to work with compassion to help us find loving ways to work through difference and conflict.

Please contact Laura Mitchell if you have any questions about the task force work.

Laura: LMMDesigns@hotmail.com

Restorative Circles : Shared conflict Resolution

To ask for a Restorative Circle facilitator to help you work on a problem, please contact any RC group member, or education@uucuv.org, or the office.

*To be a warrior is to learn to be genuine
in every moment of your life.*

~Chogyam Trumpa

*When things are breaking up,
something is breaking through.*

~Vivian Pomeroy

Religious Education News & Views

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE



What's coming up in Children's RE?

As we prepare for our worship services to develop with the guidance of our new minister, you may have noticed some changes and experimentation going on. During March, those changes will include me (Sparrow) trying my hand at designing the opening of services. With an eye to children's learning styles and the beauty of shared worship, I'm going to attend to chalice lighting, opening music choices, opening words and stories, and our very important time of working together to collect food and personal care items for our friends and neighbors using The Haven's food pantry each week. The Sunday Services Committee has been very encouraging and supportive of this effort, and I look forward to sharing opening worship with everyone.

It may be that some folks arrive late and miss the time that the children are part of the service, and we had a concern about not being together. Then one of the committee wisely pointed out that on some mornings, we just can't get there on time and on some mornings we just don't have the energy to reflect back to active, engaged children. Our decision? Yes. Some folks will mistakenly or deliberately avoid a whole-congregation centered portion of worship, and that's absolutely all right.

The experiment will culminate on March 25th in Children's Sunday, a whole congregation experience in which all congregants get to learn what the children have been learning in religious education and appreciate the pieces of worship which they want to share. On April 1st, Easter Sunday, the experiment will be over and Patience returns to planning the whole service with the thoughtful advice of the committee.

Beginning right after Children's Sunday, the Spirit Play classroom will be exploring stories about creation, beginnings, and endings from the Big Bang to Ragnarok, from The Lorax to Memorial Day. It's our way to talk about the ending of Patience's ministry to the kids

and the beginning of our new minister's time.

Green class - ages 4 through 7ish - please come to Sunday morning prepared to go outside! Beginning right away, we'll be following the UUA's World of Wonder curriculum, which encourages us to learn from being outdoors. The UUCUV's strong emphasis on our Green Sanctuary status encourages me that all adults will be happy to see the kids having their lessons outdoors, hand lens at the ready, gaining direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (our first source of wisdom).

In the Blue Room, as ever, we're going to light a chalice, express our feelings, and share our toys nicely - and wish for the whole world to follow suit.

"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

Religious Education News & Views

Sparrow F. Alden, CRE



Thank You for Your Pledge to Religious Education

As many of you know, the peaceful hour and a half of Sunday morning services are precious to young parents as a respite from a too-busy culture and joyfully active kids. They know their children are cared for, developing habits of kindness and cooperation, and learning about the traditions and values of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

A task has begun to lift from parents. Previously, we had conceived of the RE program as a cooperative school wherein families shared the duties of leading classes, a task to which parents and other adults in the congregation rose fabulously when they could. Volunteer time is precious stuff, however, and we began paying teens to work with tiny people in the mid-2000s and then shouted with joy when Sheena Morris became a paid teacher with our program in 2013. Since then, as the congregation has gently grown, we have expanded the budget to pay for a third teacher for our middle group of kids. Thank you.

When the Board sorts through the 2019 budget with the numbers from everyone's pledges, they will try to fund these three teaching positions at a fair minimum wage for teachers to give two hours to their classes

every Sunday and a slightly higher rate for three hours per week to Sheena, our master teacher.

I have proposed that funds be allocated for a Youth Advisor, so that parents of high school and junior high students are similarly free to entrust their kids to program events without the obligation of joining me to chaperone.

Finally, I have proposed that the budget support one hour of childcare every single Sunday to cover our Membership, Restorative Circle, Adult RE, and other meeting needs, to enable young parents to extend their Sundays with us without planning ahead of time for their children's care. Mugs and I tucked a few extra hours of childcare into the "best possible world" budget for events at different times. Since other departments very rarely plan ahead for childcare support, we have agreed that — while religious education and childcare are different things — the RE budget is the most logical place to put this line item.

Thank you for your generous pledge and your heartfelt support of children and Youth programming at UUCUV.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) for Adults

Using values, communication skills and spirituality as starting points, Our Whole Lives explores sexuality issues for adults of all ages. The material provided encourages understanding of healthy sexual relationships, affirms diversity and helps participants accept and affirm their own sexuality throughout their lives.

The UUCUV is particularly lucky to have Cappy Nunlist, Jeremy Coylewright, and Sparrow Alden as OWL facilitators: the plan is to prepare the curriculum readings and the topics... and let the good discussions flow. Jeremy had a great idea to bring in some movies

to enjoy as well.

The general plan, which could flex a little, is for

- OWL discussion with the covenanted group on Wednesdays: March 14, March 28, April 4, April 11, April 18, April 25
- OWL movies for anyone interested on Fridays, March 16 and 30, April 13 and April 20.

Register right away for the closed and covenanted discussion group through education@UUCUV.org.

In Memoriam

Rev. Patience Stoddard

We lost three members and friends this winter.

BJ Michelsen died this December. We will miss her smile, hugs and radiant optimism. In her friend Beth's words: "One could only marvel at her strength and quiet courage, and the light that sparkled from her."

Aarne Vesilind died this February. He is mourned not only by his friends and family - Libby and their 6 children - but also by the members of the Town Band he founded and by countless engineering students from around the world.

We were also shocked to hear that **Shawn Donovan** died suddenly late last month. Shawn was one of the early members and Presidents of UUCUV before joining the Friends Meeting in Hanover and was project manager for our building project from start to finish.

In Memoriam by Arnold Compton

*When I have moved beyond you in the adventure of life,
Gather in some pleasant place and there remember me
With music and a few spoken words.
And when you face some crisis with anguish,
When you walk alone with courage,
When you choose your paths of right,
When you give yourself in love,
I shall be very close to you,
For I have known the valleys,
And I have climbed the heights of life.*



News from the Garden

Leah Goat

Veteran orchardist Jenny Wright, of Unity, NH, has cut scions from our two ancient apple trees. When the weather warms she'll be grafting them onto our young trees near the children's garden. She looked over our old trees and said they have many good years left, especially if we prune the tops down to let in more light. She's the author of a great how-to article on pruning apple trees at

<http://www.sullivancountynh.gov/gf/media/pdfs/wrightpruneapple.pdf>

We now have a fenced and fertilized 20' x 20' plot at the Co-op Community Garden, across Route 5 and just north of the Norwich Farmers' Market. Claudia and Leah are looking forward to growing a variety of annuals there to provide flowers for Sunday services.

Before you know it, it will be time for Spring Green Up Day at the UUCUV--watch in late April/early May for news in the Blast. We'll especially need volunteers to work on the Spirit in Nature Path trails. Questions?--see Nick Warren or Leah Goat.

10 Years of Partnership

Claudia Kern



This year we are celebrating 10 years of partnering with the Unitarian Church in Mukhap, India. As part of that celebration Claudia Kern and Polly Gould hosted a Sunday Service in February, helping the congregation to learn more about the intriguing history of Unitarianism in the Khasi/Jaintia Hills of Northeast India and, specifically, of our Partner Church in Mukhap. If you missed this service, the sermon is available on the UUCUV website: <http://uucuv.org/get-involved/community-action/partner-church/>. Later this Spring we will be hosting our Annual India Dinner; so keep an eye out for the date and details.



COMING SOON!
Annual Indian Dinner
Watch for details!

In the past ten years UUCUV members and friends have sponsored 11 Mukhap students, making it possible for them to obtain education beyond the elementary level that is available to them at the Unitarian school in their village. Here are new photos of the students currently be sponsored by members and friends of our congregation (clockwise from left: Baphishem Lamare, Iaphingam-Klet Lamare, Ridakyrmen Shadap, Pynbait Lang Law, Damangkiru Shadap, and Dapnaki Lamare.





Library News

Olive MacGregor

By the time you receive this newsletter, we should have two copies of *Waking up White* by Debby Irving on the UUCUV Library shelves. We ordered one and received the other as a donation.

Imagine! We have had a church library so long that some of the spine labels are badly faded, making it difficult to find and shelve books. We have started the replacing them in the children's collection and will continue as we have time.

We will all be helping out with different phases of the book and music sale.

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



“One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. ...Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change.”

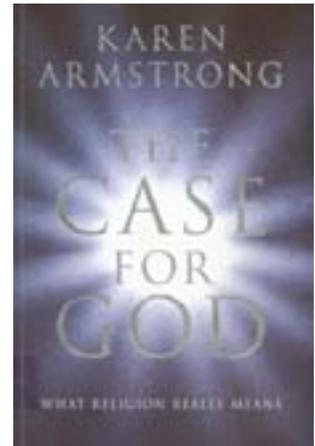
~Martin Luther King Jr.

Book Review

Margo Nutt

***The Case for God: What Religion Really Means*, by Karen Armstrong**

Moving from the Paleolithic age to the present, Karen Armstrong details the great lengths to which humankind has gone in order to experience a sacred reality that it has called by many names. She examines the diminished impulse toward religion in our own time, when a significant number of people either want nothing to do with God or question the efficacy of faith. Her examination as to the history of God and what that simple three-letter word might mean as metaphor rather than simply literal meaning is powerful.



“We have domesticated God’s transcendence. As children, we often learn about God at about the same time as we are learning about Santa Claus; but our ideas about Santa Claus change, mature and become more nuanced, whereas our ideas of God can remain at a rather infantile level.” God as reality can be valid only if we understand “God” to be mean many different ideas.

She says, the task of religion is “to help us live creatively, peacefully, and even joyously with realities for which there are no easy explanations.”

Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

Three Blessings

*by Jan Vickery Knost
(who was Sparrow's minister)*

It was an unaccustomed walk I took
The other day
That placed three blessing
In my way

Unexpectedly and most likely undeserved
They came
To give my spirit lift,
Not shame

The one, a bed of tulips
All in bloom
Were nodding at me silently
Their life attuned

Another, sparkling raiment bright,
A cardinal, he
With black-masked crimson
Flew to me

Than from somewhere sight-unseen
A fragrant scent
That must have been bright lilacs
Giving vent

I thought what blessings I've been giv'n
In such bright time
So natural, sublime and wonder filled
In brief springtime

And as I passed into another phase
Of dull routine
I dared, by blessing them with thanks,
And thus reversed the scene.

Sources of Prayer

by Richard Jeffries

Through every grass-blade
in the thousand, thousand grasses;
Through the million leaves,
veined and edge-cut on bush and tree;
Through the song-notes
and the marked feathers of the birds;
Through the insects hum
and the colour of the butterflies;
Through the soft warm air,
The flecks of clouds dissolving –
I used them all for prayer.

Sunday Morning

by David Rankin

I declare a Sabbath Day –
To walk in the wilderness of enlarged perceptions;

I declare a release from work—
To nourish the stamina to pursue ideals;

I declare a special hour –
To help cherish life's joys
and combat life's sorrows;

I declare a reign of holiness –
To deepen our grounding in the sustaining mystery.

I declare a time for simply being and letting go,
For re-discovering great, forgotten truths,
For basking in the arts of the ages,
And for learning how to live again.

Spiritual Practices and Readings

shared by Rev. Patience Stoddard

On Grief

“Gradually I learned one more thing, quite simple and obvious to many but hidden from me at first: that grief is something not to overcome or escape but to live with. It is always there, as perceptible as a person who will not go away in spite of hints or plain speaking, but one can make room for it, recognize it as a companion instead of an intruder, be aware of it but not possessed by it; one can continue one’s work, one’s occupation, even one’s joys, in its presence... Somehow we must learn not only to meet sorrow with courage, which is comparatively easy, but with a serenity, which is more difficult, being not a single act but a way of living.”

~Elizabeth Gray Vining

“Hope in a spiritual sense acknowledges the darkness at hand and asserts that even if things don’t get better, there is ultimately a light at the core of things, a love that will not let us go. Hope puts our despair on ‘hold’ so that healing can begin and gratitude can take root.”

~Linda Douty

Whenever there is a meeting
that summons us to our better selves, wherever
our lostness is found,
our fragments are united,
or our wounds begin healing,
our spines stiffen and
our muscles grow strong for the task.
There is ministry.

~ Gordon McKeeman

Mud Season

In early spring, so much like late autumn,
Gray stubble and empty trees,
We must contend with an unwieldy earth.
In this rebirth that feels so much like dying,
When the bare patches bleed into raw mud,
In rain, in coarsening ooze, we have grown sluggish,
Cold to the marrow with spring’s non-arrival:
To hold what we must hold is iron-hard,
And strength is needed for mere survival.
By dogged labor we must learn to lift
Ourselves and bring a season in;
No one has ever called child-bearing easy,
And this spring-bearing also asks endurance.
We are strained hard within our own becoming,
Forced to learn ways how to renew, restore.
Though we were dazzled once by perfect snow,
What we have not has made us what we are.
Those surface consolations have to go.
In early spring, so much a fall of will,
We struggle through muds of unreason,
We dig deep into caring and contention;
The cold unwieldy earth resists the spade.
But we contend to bring a difficult birth
Out from the lack of talent, partial scope,
And every failure of imagination.
Science and art and love still be our hope!
What we are not drives us to consummation.

~ May Sarton

Excerpts from Patience's Recent Services

“What is God?” by Edward Frost

from service “The God of My Understanding”

We have heard that God is all the goodness
All the sweetness and light and joy in the morning.
But God is the cries we do not hear
The depth of the hell the other suffers
The darkness and confusion of the permanent night.
God may be the chaos—missed in our neatness and order –
Who shuns the glistening temple
To walk the gray repositories of twisted and divided souls.
God is the one who cries, “Know Me!”
Through the mouths of those we choose not to know.
We have heard that God is love.
But God is the demand to love
A demand unheeded, thus a God undiscovered.
Press through the grown-over path to another's aloneness
And there, with them, the pain and the bearer of pain,
Is God.

Intro to Prayer

It was early in my first year of Divinity School; I was walking up the stairs to attend the UU chapel service, when I first noticed it. It stopped me in my track. It was collage, a collage of many faces of many races and many ages from many countries, most, but certainly not all, were the faces of girls and women. I stood there for some time, just gazing at the many-facedness of humanity and Spirit. There in the midst of all these images was a prayer which began:

Our god, who art among us, many are your names.

I could feel its truth in my bones. Then I took out my notebook and copied down the prayer, which I have carried with me to every congregation I have served these past 30 years.

Our god, who art among us, many are your names.

*Our recognition come – your spirit as one within us
as it is around us.*

*We must share our daily bread and empower one another
as we are empowered by you.*

You do not walk with us into temptation,

but you journey with us in our deliverance from evil,

For you are the justice, and the passion, and the very life within us.

Excerpts from Recent Services (cont'd)

Waking Up White

This fall Patience led two book groups on *Waking Up White: Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving. Below are some excerpts from the service on “Waking Up White.”

“For me, reading and having group discussions was both a learning experience and a personal journey. I learned a lot. Some of it surprised me, even shocked me. I guess I never really understood why lifestyles across racial lines looked so terribly different in this country. Now I understand better the significance of White Privilege. ... I had benefitted from social capital. I had a network of people I grew up with, family connections and family funds. And my children have benefitted even more. (Sueellen Aptman)

We have so many luxuries solely by virtue of being white; never mind living and working in a intellectual, engaged, and well-heeled community. As white people, we tend to attribute our lives and our accomplishments to our own talent and hard work, giving little to no weight to everything our culture spreads on a silver platter, at the expense of others...

To start to see it [racism] and recognize that it is a hard problem is only the beginning. Once I said not just that racism is a problem, but that it is my problem, and it is my responsibility to seek out the history, the stories, and the experiences of others that are not featured in the mainstream culture, then I began to feel a minuscule but earth-shaking shift. (Gretchen Stokes)

The GI Bill helped my husband get his MBA at Stanford Univ. after he got out of the Navy. We began our careers in the early 1970s with no educational debt. Debby Irving writes, “The chilling reality is that while the American dream fell into the laps of millions of [white] Americans, Americans of color, including the one million black GIs who’d risked their lives in the war were largely excluded.” Colleges and universities used a quota system for admissions, so only 4% of black GIs were able to access the free education under the GI Bill.

Peter and I moved around and lived in 5 different apartments before arriving in the Upper Valley. Never once were we told an apartment was “not available” to us. We weren’t asking for GI housing funds, but millions of GIs did. If they were black GIs, they ran into FHA policies that “mapped out neighborhoods according to the skin color of the residents. This national housing appraisal system, commonly referred to as ‘redlining’, deemed skin color as much a valuation indicator as a building’s condition. ...America’s largest single investment in its people, through an intertwined structure of housing and banking systems, gave whites a lifestyle and financial boost that would accrue in the decades to come, while driving blacks and other minorities into a downward spiral.” (Kathy Christie)

Some of our discussion of *Waking Up White* focused on a sense that it isn’t fair to be labeled racist just because you were born into white privilege. This misses the point that while we cannot undo our roots, we therefore are all the more obligated to use what privilege we have, and every means available to us, to end racism. It will take intentionality, the courage of our convictions, and active cooperation with others. This is happening in small ways but not anywhere near fast enough or wide enough to make an impact, and now we have a racist administration and an ugly resurgence of white supremacy worsening the picture. We should use them as a motivation, not a roadblock. (Mardy High)

As a congregation I believe we need to talk about racism meaningfully. And in doing so, we need to consider the words of James Baldwin: “I can’t believe what you say, because I see what you do.” I would add —I see what we don’t do. (Suellen Aptman)

We are beginning to “wake up.” There is much that can be done. Let’s continue to learn and take what actions we can to ensure that Martin Luther King’s dream that “*one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men [and women] are created equal*” can become a reality in our time. (Patience)

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 fourth Monday 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 Summer issue is May 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.

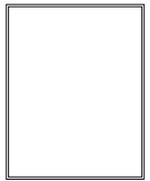
CARES AND CONCERNS: With cares and concerns, please contact the Caring Circle Coordinator of the month (listed in our weekly email news) and/or the Rev. Patience Stoddard or Sparrow Alden (contact information above).

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:

Book & Music Sale March 24

Stewardship Pledges Due April 1

**Watch for candidating week
details to come!**

Annual Meeting June 3

UUCUV March - May

UUCUV Phone: (802) 649-8828

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

E-mail: office@uucuv.org

Spring Issue 2018