



UUU NEWS

A BIWEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF ONEONTA

Week of December 12, 2018

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MINISTER'S MUSINGS

Back from Sabbatical!

Re-entry has begun after my sabbatical. I've back to semi-regular office hours. I've met with many staff members and UUSO leaders and have more meetings scheduled to check-in and learn about what I missed while away. I'm starting to make calls for pastoral visits and other check-ins. With this being the holiday season, I expect some of these meetings may not take place until the new year, but they will happen. If you haven't heard from me and would like to get together, please drop me a line so we can schedule a time to chat.

My thanks to the congregation and to all the people who took on extra duties and responsibilities while I was away. I know better than to try and list all of you by name, for I would surely miss someone-- but I do want to send special thanks the members of the Sabbatical Committee (John Bagby, Pam Strother, Suzy Beddoe, Evelyn Warren, and Amy Forster Rothbart) for keeping tabs on everything and providing support where needed, the Worship Associates (Cathi Wiltsey, Alex Tolin-Schultz, Keith Willcox, Julian Pecenco, and Rich Stelling) who had extra work to with a new minister and pulpit guests, and our Board President (Karen Palmer) who took on staff supervision and supported the Social Action team. If things went well while I was away, it is because these folks and so many of you pitched in with Rev. Kimberley to support UUSO's shared ministries. Thank you!

Many have asked how my sabbatical went. The short answer is, it went well. The longer answer is, I accomplished very little of what I had planned AND most of what I really needed happened. It reminds me of a favorite quote from Douglas Adams' *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, "I rarely end up where I was intending to go, but often I end up

somewhere I needed to be." My book on storytelling remains a work-in-progress. Turns out writing a book is more difficult than writing sermons or stories. I have honed my understanding of the specific types of stories I wanted to explore and describe in the book, what I am now calling Touchstone Stories and Sideways Stories. Expect to hear more of these types of stories in the coming year. I also plan to lead a storytelling workshop using what I've written so far about these two types of stories. I hope some of you will join me for that workshop (and help me in my writing goal in the process.) I started exploring video creation and discovered that Cheryl was already working in that same area, so we've started collaborating and exploring that new skill together. I don't know if our collaboration will continue to a joint project for the public, but it is making the learning more fun. More importantly, I discovered some things I'd lost or dropped these past few years. Practices that were important sources of spiritual and emotional energy and renewal for me that I had carelessly let slide or slip away. Over time, this affected my own sense of self, my sense of ministry, and my well-being. It is hard to give fully of your heart and spirit when you aren't taking care of both. And so, I've made some adjustments to my life and my daily practices to help me be my best self, or at least my better self. I'm prioritizing my loving relationships, with Cheryl, with close friends, with Spirit and Harmony, our dogs. I'm starting to take better care of my physical body and have plans to increase those practices in the coming year. I've rediscovered my connection to the woods, communing regularly with the trees and the ground beneath their branches.

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I'll explore some of my discoveries and conclusions from my sabbatical at this Sunday's service. As part of what I've discovered, I'm scheduling a weekly time of conversation and connection. Right now, this Parlor Time is every Thursday from 3p – 4p, but that might change as I see how well it is attended. Come join me for an informal chat about whatever strikes our fancy. (There may even be refreshments and nibbles.) As always, I'm always available for visits or conversations throughout the week.

One of the most important reasons to go away, is to realize how good it is to come back.

It was surprisingly difficult to stay away from UUSO these past 4 months. It was hard to not ask what was going on, hard not to get involved. So many times I found myself wanting to share a thought or an idea or a response to what was happening in the world with you all. I wondered how people were doing. I missed your smiles and your laughter and your questions and your quirks, too. I missed being your minister. And that may have been the best gift of the sabbatical-- to be reminded of how much I love you, love UUSO, and love being your minister.

It's good to be back. Now-- what's next for us?

With Gratitude, Love, and Cooperation,

Rev. Craig

WINTER WORSHIP CALENDAR

UUSO's Winter Worship Calendar is now available. You will find the new worship schedule in this newsletter(printed) and posted on the UUSO website. We've got a great winter quarter planned! Highlights include:

—Pulpit Guests – Returning Favorites and Old Friends

Adrienne Martini returns for her traditional start of the year service on December 30th.

The rappin' Rev. LaDana Clark returns with her unabashedly Christian message of love and unity on March 17th.

Beth Hudson-Hankins, former youth of UUSO, will visit our pulpit along with her parents, Chuck and Dotty Hudson on March 3rd.

—January Intersession – Our Relationship with Animals

The R.E. Committee will spend the January intersession exploring our connections with Animals. They will share their discoveries with us at their annual service on January 27th. Rev. Craig will give his take on the topic on January 13th and 20th.

—Music Sunday – Celebrating Tim Horne's 30 years of service!

Tim Horne has been serving as UUSO's Music Director and Choir Director for 30 years! What better time to celebrate his ministry with us than the Music Service on February 24th.

—Geek Service – Seeing Yourself Writ Large

Rev. Craig's annual geek service will explore the power of seeing ourselves in the our heroes. Dressing as your favorite hero is purely optional on March 10th.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This is the time for winter celebration and reflection. We look to candles, fireplaces, and chalices for the light and hope we so dearly need in the dark time of the year.

To reflect our need for community and light, I have changed our RE Children's schedule (Grades K-6) from a class time on December 23 to a Winter Gathering of both Hogwarts and UU Explorers. We'll spend time together contemplating and celebrating this season at the Olympia Brown House. December 23 will also be the last OWL class until Feb 3rd.

Rev. Craig and I are working on a participatory Christmas family service to be held on Christmas Eve at 6:30 PM. (There will also be a meditative late service at 9 PM) Please join us as to welcome and experience our Holidays together in our sanctuary.

Part of UUSO children's traditional Christmas Eve gathering includes bringing something warm for people in need in our greater community. Please consider bringing warm hats, scarves, mittens, and gloves for donation to Oneonta Family Service. These can be left in the basket in the back of the sanctuary. The last day for collection is December 30 and they will be delivered at the start of the new year.

There will be no RE classes on December 30. All are invited to attend the service in the sanctuary. The nursery will also be available for those up to age 10. Look for "Chalice Bags" as you enter the sanctuary. These contain activities for those of any age who are better able to participate in a Sunday service while keeping their hands busy.

We look to the New Year RE January Sessions as a Celebration of Creatures Great and Small. We will have workshops for those in K-12th grade on January 6, 13, and 20. We will invite special guests (including animals) as we explore our relationships with animals in our lives. We will present the Sunday service on January 27th as a reflection of our January experiences. Please save the date of Saturday, January 26, for a pizza party and practice for our service. We will be in the sanctuary from 5:30 until 7pm.

The following was adapted from the Karaniya Metta Sutta (Sunna Nipata 1.8) of the Pali Canon by Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh and Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh. It is a blessing for us as we journey through this winter season.

Breathe in, breathe out, this breath we share with all that breathes. Feel the love of the universe flowing through this community, into you, and out into the universe again. Let the love of all the universe—your love—flow outward, to its height, its depth, its broad extent. You are more than you know, and more beloved than you know. Take up what power is yours to create safe haven, to make of earth a heaven. Give hope to those you encounter, that they may know safety from inner and outer harm, be happy and at peace, healthy and strong, caring and joyful. Be the blessing you already are. That is enough. Blessed Be; Amen.

Susan Ryder
UUSO Director of Religious Education



SAWDUST FROM THE BOARD

The Board met on November 28 at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary. After a chalice lighting, opening words selected by Rev. Kimberley, and a check in with those present, we approved the October minutes and reviewed staff and financial reports. This was Rev. Kimberley's last Board meeting as Sabbatical Minister and we thanked her for the many ways she has served us. She contributed wisdom, good humor and even singing to our meetings!

Finances

Board members have agreed to help the Finance Committee with the collection plate counting and coin rolling. The Profit and Loss report was reviewed and our finances are on track with assets covering our costs during the first third of the fiscal year. The Finance Committee is undergoing a review of our current fiscal practices.

Policy approval

We cherish each member and recognize that there are those who for various reasons no longer wish to be members. A membership termination procedure was approved and is published in this newsletter. We welcome input from the congregation on this and all of our policies which can be found on our UUSO website. They will be reviewed and modified as needed.

Plans for the next Assessment of the Ministry

On January 27th, our congregation will again be invited to participate in an assessment process using an appreciative inquiry approach to provide input on the area of Worship at UUSO. Please save the date and stay tuned for more information.

Sounding Board

Concern was expressed regarding providing important messages using all of our avenues of congregant communication at generally the same time. This will be done as much as possible. Kudos to Rev. Kimberley were expressed and a celebratory activity for her was planned by the Board. The hearing loop sometimes has a glitch with some members. This will be individually addressed.

Personnel Committee Appointment

We were happy to appoint Spike Paranya to the Personnel Committee which now has its full complement of three members. Further information about the important work of this committee is provided in a separate article in this newsletter.

Next Board Meeting

The Board will not be meeting in December. Our next BOT meeting will be on January 23, 2019 at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary. Congregants are welcome to observe. We will hold the Sounding Board on January 20 after the service to hear any comments, questions, or concerns to be brought to the Board.

—Karen Palmer, UUSO Board of Trustees President

2018 COOKIES AND CRAFTS

This year's Cookies and Crafts event was a tremendous success! This year's event was a fun, enjoyable and exciting opportunity to enjoy some delectable food and cookies, purchase an assortment of local wares, and mix and mingle with friends and family. With the help of all the committee members, volunteers, bakers and vendors, Cookies and Crafts was able to successfully raise \$4270 for the church this year!

We would like to send out a special thank you to all of the amazing people that made this year's event so incredible. To all the bakers, vendors, cooks, and volunteers: You all went above and beyond making this event such an amazing experience. From all the delicious cookies, beautifully handcrafted items, and to all the time that has been dedicated and volunteered, this event would not be possible without each and every one of you. It is because of you this event continues to grow and become more successful each passing year. To all of the Cookies and Crafts committee members: Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to this incredible event. Each one of you does such an amazing job of putting each of the puzzle pieces together to make this event such an enjoyable and positive experience for everyone involved. It has truly been an amazing experience getting to work alongside and share this experience with each of you.

Thank you again to everyone involved in making this event so incredible! We look forward to working with you again next December!

SEASON'S BLESSINGS

As you celebrate the holiday or holidays, Cheryl and I wish for you love, laughter, good company, and rekindled connections. May the season give you opportunities to gather with friends and family, reflect on the awe and wonder surrounding us, and grant you chances to practice radical generosity and hospitality. And if the hustle and bustle, if the demands and the schedules, become too much -- than take a moment, take several moments to rest and renew. Each holiday has it's rituals. Each holiday has its traditions. Each holiday has its stories. But at the heart of all them is a reminder of what is most meaningful and how we might share those discoveries with those around us-- be they known or unknown to us.

May you be blessed. May you be a blessing.

Happy Holidays.

Rev. Craig & Cheryl



CELEBRATING OUR SHARED MINISTRY—THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The UUSO Personnel Committee works to provide guidance to the Board to insure our Congregation is in right relationship with our UUSO staff in terms of compensation, personnel policies, and general employment practices. The current members are Rosemary Summers (Chair), Kim Yousey-Elsener, and newly appointed member, Spike Paranya. Each serves a staggered term of three years. This committee has worked diligently in the past year to thoroughly review the UUA's fair compensation guidelines and provided a comprehensive well written report to the Board (available to all UUSO congregants upon request) with recommendations for meeting appropriate salary levels and benefits within a three year period. The congregation approved the first year's benchmarks which are being implemented in our 2018-19 budget. The committee is now preparing to do a thorough review of UUSO's personnel policies and recommend to the Board any updates or additional policies accordingly. We are grateful to the three members of the Personnel Committee for devoting their time and talents toward helping us to live out our UU values and principles for fairness and justice concerning our employment practices.

—The Board of Trustees

OFFICE NOTES



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! We'd like you to know that the last day the church office will be open before the holidays is Friday, December 21st, and we'll reopen on Friday, January 4th. This means we will be skipping the Christmas week newsletter, and that announcements for the Dec. 23 & Dec 30 Orders of Service are due **TUESDAY**, Dec. 18. There are no printed announcements for our Christmas Eve services.

MEMBERSHIP REVIEW AND TERMINATION PROCEDURE

(Board Approval – 11.28.18)

1. The Minister, Office Administrator, and one UUSO Member will review the current membership list and will compile a list of those who have not affirmed their membership as outlined in the current Affirmation of Membership Policy.
2. In September, the list of lapsed members will be submitted to the Board for review.
3. The Board President will send a letter to those lapsed members asking whether they wish to maintain their membership and letting them know how to maintain membership.
4. In November, the Office Administrator will bring to the Board meeting the final list of lapsed members who have not responded to the letter advising them of how to continue membership. The Board will vote whether to terminate their membership, at which time their names will be crossed off in the membership book, noting the date of termination.
- 5.. The Office Administrator will notify the UUA and all relevant committees of all terminations, and will update all pertinent records regarding member terminations, including the directory database.

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE - THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE

Shortly before Thanksgiving, the Social Action Team launched the **Guest at Your Table** campaign, a program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) to raise funds and awareness about its work at home and around the world. The UUSC's projects include direct services as well as advocacy for change.

The RE children were given **Guest at Your Table** boxes to put on a kitchen table at home as an extra "Guest" who needs our help. Adults were given brochures and donation envelopes.

Between now and January 6 donations are being collected during coffee hour at the Social Action Team table in the back of the sanctuary.

- Use the envelope provided and make your donation in the form of a check payable to UUSC, or use a credit card. Envelopes are also available at the Social Action table.
- Please convert any cash or coins from the Guest at Your Table box to a check or credit card donation.
- Please do not put checks for UUSC in the collection plate or make them out to UUSO. Thanks!
- If you prefer, you may mail your envelope directly to UUSC on your own.

Thank you for your support of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the wonderful work it is doing to advance our UU principles.

—UUSO Social Action Team

MALI MARKET FOR YOUCHAU'S SCHOOL DEC. 16TH AND DEC. 23RD

More delicious muffins for sale for the next two Sundays along with African handicrafts and jewelry to benefit Youchaou's School in Mali, West Africa. Stop by our Mali Market after the service and help make a difference in the lives of African children. Thanks!

—Mali Education Group

NEW FIREPLACE SPACE HEATER IN OBH LIVINGROOM

Now you can have warm meetings in the living room of the Olympia Brown House! We've purchased a new fireplace space heater that you can use when you meet there. The instructions for using the space heater are posted below the mantle of the fireplace. In addition to keeping the room warm, there is a "picture" of a fire that comes on when you use the unit which will give a little atmosphere. The space heater has a timer, but be sure to shut it off when your meeting is over if it has not timed out.

Keep warm!!

—Kathy Paranya for the Aesthetics Committee

UUSO UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 10:30AM



What makes a house a home?
What makes a church a sanctuary?
Having been away, it is time to return
to my, to our, religious home.

**Children to Classrooms at 10:30*
With music provided by Music Director Tim Horne.
Worship Associate: Julian Pecenco

Coffee Hour Hosts: Kim Elsener & Rosemary Summers
Ushers: Bob Brzozowski & Rosalind Thomas
Chancel Table: Sheila Beemer
Sound System: Julian Pecenco



In this time of twinkling lights and cheerful tidings, some are struggling with loss and grief.
As we celebrate the joys of the season,
we must also acknowledge the sorrows.

**Children to Classrooms at 10:30*
With music provided by Music Director Tim Horne.
Worship Associate: Keith Willcox

Coffee Hour Hosts: Pam Strother & Cathi Wiltsey
Ushers: Meg & Dave Ainsworth
Chancel Table: Dawn Kilts
Sound System: Patrick Rost

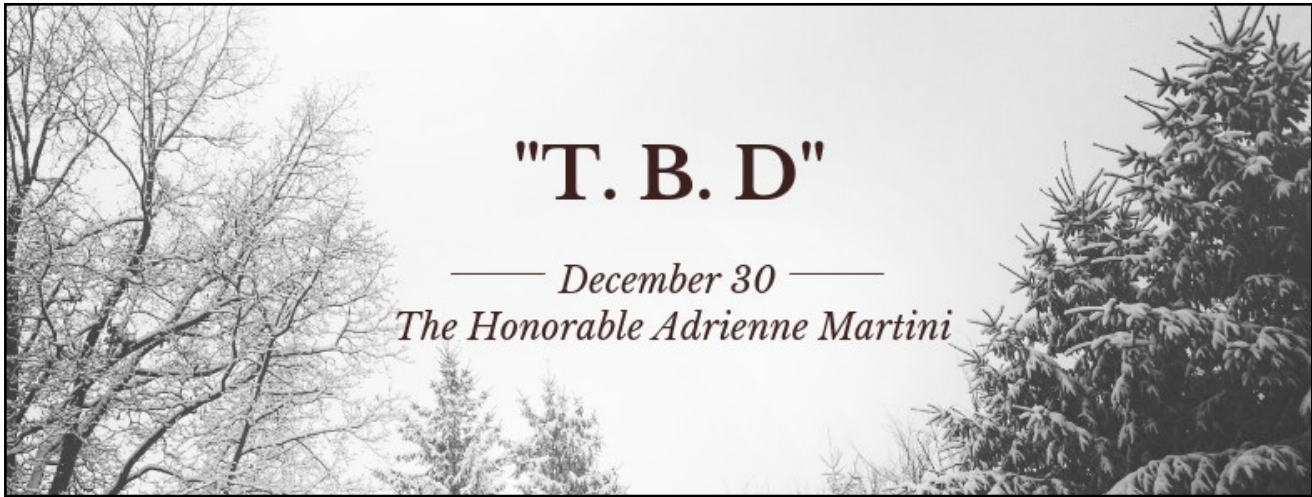
UUSO UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES
SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 10:30AM



@ 6:30 PM Family Christmas Service
Rev. Craig Schwalenberg
Join us for our traditional family-friendly celebration of Christmas.

**No Religious Education or Childcare*
With musician to be announced.
Ushers: Sallie Han (6:30PM) Julian Pecenco (9PM)
Chancel Table: Suzanne Miller

@ 9:00PM Christmas Candlelight Service
Rev. Craig Schwalenberg
All are welcome to attend this contemplative, candlelight service in celebration of Christmas.



The future is always To Be Determined.
Who are you right now?
And who do you strive to be?

**No Religious Education*
With musician to be announced.
Worship Associate: Cathi Wiltsey

Coffee Hour Hosts: Pam Strother & Joe Stillman
Ushers: Elayne Mosher-Campoli & Rosalind Thomas
Chancel Table: Carl O'Shea
Sound System: Scott Segar

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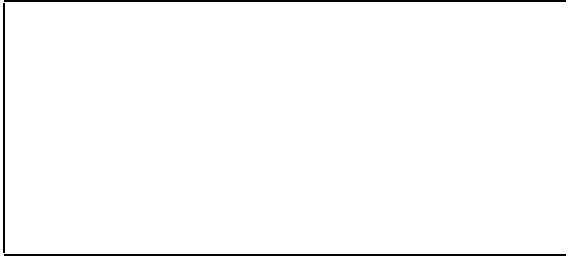
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UUSO DEADLINES:

UU News Articles: Deadline for the week of January 9th issue is January 7th, by 9AM.

Order of Service Announcements:
Wednesday a.m. before the Sunday Service

Verbal Announcements:
Contact Worship Associate by Friday before Service

Green Sanctuary Corner

From OCCA's Dec. Eco bulletin email:

For a comprehensive list of 'How Do I Get Rid Of?' in Otsego County, visit:

<http://occainfo.org/item-specific-recycling-compiled-resources/> or
<http://www.otsegocounty.com/depts/sw/HowdoIgetridof.htm>