



The Communicator

the monthly newsletter of the

UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

What's Happening This Month, December, 2013

Christmas Choir Rehearsals

The UUCH Christmas Choir will rehearse on Wednesdays, Dec. 4, 11 and 18, from 7-8 PM in the Murray Room. We will prepare music to be sung at our Christmas Eve service. All are welcome; no previous musical experience is necessary, but rather a commitment to attending all three rehearsals. To sign up, contact: Claudia Keyian, 978-462-3405

UUCH Book Series

This year's book series continues with sections Two and Three of A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-first Century, by UU's John A. Buehrens and Rebecca Ann Parker. The Book Group meets second Sundays at 9 am.

UU 102 Film Series

The next film will be shown on Friday, Dec. 13 at 7 pm. We will see a film about Christianity, followed by discussion.

Ladies Circle Program Dec. 14 at 1 pm

The Ladies Circle meets for their annual Christmas pot luck. Don't forget their annual holiday charity donation—this year it is for adult toiletries and diapers/baby wipes. Collection is through Sunday, Dec. 22, to be distributed within the community.

Winter Farmer's Market

The Winter Farmer's Market will be held Saturdays in the Murray Room from 9:30 am-12:30 pm, running through Dec. 21! Get fresh winter vegetables, craft items, honey, jam, jellies, soaps, tea, wine and more!

Merrimack Valley String Orchestra

All are welcome to attend the Winter Concert on Sunday, Dec. 8 at 2:30 pm. Holiday music will be featured.

See article elsewhere in this issue about the Winter "Joy" workshop.

Our Annual Fleece Hat Project, Dec. 8, 9 am.

The downstairs will be transformed into Santa's workshop, as our young folks make colorful, warm fleece hats for those who need warmth this season!

"Remember the Hungry" Coffee Hour Dec. 1

Once a month we "Remember the Hungry" at coffee hour by serving beverages and just a small amount of food. There will be baskets for money donations for Community Meals, and the Giving Chalice will accept non-perishables (and pet food!) for the food pantry.

Christmas Pot Luck and Carol Sing Dec. 15

Following Worship on Dec. 15, we will gather in the Murray Room for a festive holiday meal and carol sing. It is hoped that by offering the carol sing during the daytime hours, more children can participate. There will also be a cookie fundraiser at this event.

Advent Vespers Begins Dec. 4 at 6pm

Every Wednesday evening during Advent, please join us in the sanctuary for this quiet, contemplative candlelit service celebrating the season.

The MoonPool Coven Yule Service Dec. 19, 6 pm

All are welcome at this festive Yule observance. Please see article elsewhere in this issue for a history of the significance of this holiday.

Service of Lessons and Carols, Dec. 24, 5:30 pm

Please join us! Familiar carols, beautiful anthems, and warm candlelight make this one of the most popular services of our church year. Please note that there will be no service at UUCH on Christmas Day.

Church Office Closed Dec. 25 through Jan. 1

It is our custom to close the office following Christmas. Thus, the deadline for submissions for the Jan. Communicator (monthly newsletter) is Tuesday, Dec. 17.

Things Seen and Unseen

by Rev. Frank Clarkson

If you were asked about your church by someone who'd never been here, what words would you use to describe this community? What are the particular attributes of this congregation that you'd want to share? What did you notice when you first came here, and what keeps you in relationship with this congregation?

Coming into a church for the first time is a bit like visiting a foreign country. There may be customs that are unfamiliar and language that you don't recognize. What do all those acronyms stand for anyway? BoT, WCC, LoF, GSC, B&G, UUA, RE, to name a few. We can always do better at staying away from church jargon, and making an effort to be open and welcoming. But my point is, the unique culture and attributes of a church can become invisible to those who have been part of it for a while.

And what is unseen, we tend to take for granted. This church, like any, has a personality and talents. Our Leap of Faith mentors have encouraged us to get clear about our identity here, to be more explicit about who we are as a congregation, including what we value and aspire to. But not just that--we want and need to unearth the intangibles, the often unseen qualities, that make this church what it is.

People often tell me, "This church has a good feel to it," and I know what they mean. But that's a pretty general statement. What specific words would you use to describe this church? Will you share them with me, so I can bring them to our Leap of Faith conversation about our identity? Please tell the truth--if there are words that have a negative connotation, we need to hear them too. You could also share images and stories that come to you. I see this process as one of discovery, and I hope you'll want to be part of it, by telling us what this community looks like, from your perspective.

December is a great month to be part of a church. Our sanctuary feels particularly special during Vespers, and Living Nativity, and on Christmas Eve. I am ever grateful to be your minister. Thank you for being part of this community.

Intern Insights

By Julie Lombard

As a seminarian who prefers serving a church while studying, this has availed me some opportunities to see the various ways other churches address the subjects of Advent and Christmas. UUCH has some distinct rituals that set it apart from the other places I have served. I have never attended Advent Vespers, so I am excited to learn about a new way to worship.

My first year of leading worship on Christmas took me into the unknown territory of leading a Lessons and Carols Christmas Eve Service. In my home church, we integrated a shorter Lessons and Carols service with a larger focus on a special candle lighting ritual which honored many members of the church.

Imagine a chancel table arranged with a pyramid structure of five rows of candles. One large candle on top; with each layer the size of the candles grew smaller and more numerous. Each candle was assigned to an individual member to light and every name was listed in the order of service. The smallest candles were for the younger members, mainly children. The next level was for the adults who were lay-leaders and Board members, the next for church elders, the next layer for the Minister and the Director of Religious Education, and the final candle was for the family with the youngest infant to light. Each year different people would participate in this ritual; my son was the youngest infant once. Another year I was one of the adults and I carried my toddler daughter, Annie, on my hip and together we light the candle.

The darkened sanctuary burned brightly with light from these many candles and it reflected the greater glow of church community. At the end of the service, all passed the candlelight while each congregant held a candle while we sang "Silent Night." There was no coffee hour that night. We left the sanctuary in peace and with the glow from that community remaining in our hearts. There is no one correct way to celebrate during this time of year. The value is that we come together to celebrate as a community.



Notes from Your Music Director

by Claudia Keyian

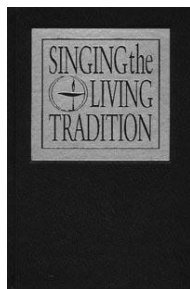
The first hymn in a hymnal for any given denomination says a great deal about what is important to them. The first hymn in the Episcopal hymnal is “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus.” Their hymnal starts at the beginning of the liturgical year, Advent, so it makes sense that an advent hymn would be number 1.

I sit here at my computer with a stack of hymnals on the floor beside me. The first hymn in the Presbyterian hymnal is “Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty.” First for the Lutherans it is “Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty.” For the Methodists, the first hymn is #57 (oddly) “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.”

In “Hymns for the Celebration of Life,” the Unitarian Universalist hymnal published in 1964, the first hymn is “The Morning Hangs a Signal.” Hymn number 1 in “Singing the Living Tradition,” our gray hymnal, is “May Nothing Evil Cross This Door.”

So, I pause here for a moment in my litany of hymn titles. The creators of our beloved gray hymnal chose “May Nothing Evil Cross This Door” as the first hymn. Why? Maybe because of the lines “Peace shall walk softly through these rooms,” or “By faith made strong, the rafters will withstand the battling of the storm,” or the last line “May they (the walls) be strong to keep hate out and hold love in.”

First in the teal hymnal (“Singing the Journey”) is number 1000. The teal hymnal is a supplement to the gray hymnal. And hymn number 1000 is “Morning Has Come,” an exuberant piece of music best sung loudly with piano and percussion, if at all possible. Among my favorite words in this hymn are the lines “The light of love here shines upon each face. May it bring faith to guide our journey home.”



A Brief History of Yule

by Shirleyann Soltys, MoonPool Coven

Yule is the Pagan celebration of the Winter Solstice, an astronomical event which occurs in the Northern Hemisphere between December 20 and 23 depending upon the Gregorian calendar. The Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year, which also signifies the shortest day. On this night, we celebrate the return of the sun, the giver of life that warms the Earth.

It is a time of rebirth and renewal; a time to celebrate the return of the light; a time for thanksgiving. We thank the God and Goddess for seeing us through the dark, cold months of winter. The mythological background for Yule is that the Goddess has just given birth to the God/son/sun. The God, the sun, is just an infant at this time. The Goddess, who brings us fertility and great harvests, is tired from childbirth, so the crops and trees sleep. Over the months of winter, the God/sun grows in strength. He is able to spend more time in the sky each day to shine his warmth and love over the earth.

Traditionally, bonfires were lit in homage to the sun. Mulled cider, or wassail, was used to toast the sleeping crops and trees. Evergreens were used as decorations and offerings because they were thought to never die. Holly and Ivy were also used as decoration and as an invitation for Nature sprites to feel welcomed to the celebration. Mistletoe was harvested from deep in the woods since it represented the seed of the Divine, the waiting birth of the sun. A Yule log was lit and decorated and allowed to continue to smolder for 12 days until being ceremonially extinguished and the end held onto to light the following year's Yule log.

Over the centuries, many of the traditional celebrations of Yule have been adopted by other faith traditions. In all faiths it is a time of celebration and joy. It is a time for families to gather and share. It is a time for all to come together and celebrate our connection to the Divine.

Winter “Joy” Workshop

by Sally Liebermann

This series of four seasonal workshops is part of our adult Spiritual Exploration programming. Join us Wednesday, December 18 at 7:30pm (after Vespers and dinner) in the Minister’s Study for a candle-lit reflection on the joys of winter. We will share treasured memories of the season. Participants will be asked to bring a short poem or reading to share. There will be festive lighting, music and the creation of a holiday craft. Kindly RSVP to Sally Liebermann, dre@uuhaverhill.org, by December 15.

“Soup on Sundays” Fundraiser

by Stacey Sherman

This fundraiser will benefit the operating funds of the church. It will put good, homemade, warm food in our tummies this winter! If you like to make soup, please consider signing up to make soup for our community to be sold at our Sunday coffee hours during January and February. What you need to do: 1) make 6 quarts of your favorite soup (quart containers will be supplied, and were donated by a local merchant), 2) supply the ingredients, 3) bring the soup to church on the day you are assigned, and 4) sit at the table during Coffee Hour with another soup maker on your assigned day to sell soup (each order will include oyster crackers, which were donated by the manufacturer). Soup can be frozen or arrangements may be made for drop-off at the church prior to Sunday. We need to ensure a variety and therefore would like to offer a vegetarian and/or gluten free soup as an option each week. We also need to stay clear of tree nuts, so check your oils, flours, etc. Contact: Stacey Sherman, thesherm@comcast.net, or 978-373-1227.



Trivia Tidbit

by Lisa Compton

Ever since the Essex Street Gateway Mural was installed, I had wanted to stop and take the cell phone tour. Lack of parking with a good vantage point precluded this. I then discovered that one can take the tour on-line.

Many of you will remember our former member, Renay Allen, who was one of the leaders of our successful Green Sanctuary movement and certification. Last year, Renay moved to Exeter, NH to be closer to her job (as Office Manager at the Congregational Church in Exeter, UCC), and so we no longer see her on a regular basis.

Imagine my surprise when I found our very own Renay in the Mural!

For a fascinating tour of the mural, and a romp through Haverhill history, visit: <http://teamhaverhill.org/projects/arts/esgm/> and click on “Mural Design Key.”

Fair Trade Holiday Gifts

by Richard Smyth

Fair Trade gift items from Central and South America will be available for sale during the four Sundays before Christmas. Plan to get some holiday shopping done, while aiding women in the Colores del Pueblo collective to earn a living wage.

What Happens Every Month

This is a list of recurring gatherings in our community. To make changes, or to add a meeting or event, contact Lisa Compton in the office at office@uuhaverhill.org.

Drumming Circle gathers the first Sunday of the month at 12:45 pm in the Meditation Chapel.

Choir Rehearsal

The choir meets every Sunday morning at 9 am to rehearse, and sings periodically at Sunday Worship Services. All are welcome; ability to read music is a plus, but not required.

Bag Lunch with the Minister happens every Tuesday from noon to 1 pm in the Ladies Parlor. Join Rev. Frank and others for conversation and connection.

Ladies Circle meets the second Saturday of the month at 1 pm. All women of the church are invited to be part of this group that serves the church and knows how to have fun!

UUCH Book Group meets on the second Sunday of the month at 9 am in the Meditation Chapel.

Lectio Divina is offered on the fourth Sunday of the month at 9:15 am in the Meditation Chapel. This ancient spiritual practice offers a contemplative way to engage with scripture.

Community Meals happen on the first and third Saturdays, beginning at 2 pm. This is a primary way we serve the needy in our community. Sign up in the Murray Room or contact leaders Abbe Wertz abbewertz@yahoo.com or 978-914-01015 or Kristie Colton kenozagals@me.com

MoonPool Coven gathers on the first and third Sundays of the month at 6 pm. Led by Rick Baillargeon rick@lifetyme.com and Marylou Johnson mldiz109@verizon.net, the Coven offers teaching about and experience of pagan spirituality.

Mindful Meditation Practice is held Mondays at 7 pm, led by Betsy Robertson. Contact: bets.robertson04@gmail.com

Board of Trustees meets the second Wednesday of the month at 7 pm. Meetings are always open to visitors; however if there is an item that needs discussion, it must be placed on the agenda in advance. Contact Board Chair Sarina Ryan.

Wednesday Night Singers meets (isn't it obvious?) at 6:30 pm every week, and sing in worship about one Sunday a month. This choir depends on a steady attendance commitment. Ability to read music is preferred, but not required.

Alcoholics Anonymous meets in our downstairs hall at 7 pm on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday nights.

Interfaith Special Needs Worship, led by UU minister Rev. Wendy Von Zirpolo, is held in the Murray Room the second Monday of the month at 6 pm.

Welcoming Congregation Committee works to make sure our church is open to all people, especially gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender folks. Watch the e-News and Sunday announcements for meeting times.

Merrimack Valley String Orchestra meets every Thursday at 5:45 pm while school is in session for rehearsal in the Murray Room. Two public concerts take place here every year. The orchestra is open to all string players. Contact: Joy Scheutze at Joy.Strings@verizon.net.

Social Justice Committee meets the third Sunday of the month, following coffee hour. All are welcome.

INC (Interfaith Network of Compassion)

Meets at UUCH on third Thursdays at 12 pm to network about issues surrounding hunger in Haverhill. Representatives from many area food pantries and other agencies attend.

Various other committees meet periodically throughout the year. Watch the e-News and Sunday announcements for meeting times for the following committees: Building & Grounds/Gardens, Committee on Ministry, Green Sanctuary, Music, Membership, Parish Nurses, Permanent Funds, Stewardship, Finance and Worship.

Church Leaders and Staff Contact Information

Board of Trustees Chair: Sarina Ryan smrtilton@yahoo.com
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Rev. Frank Clarkson: frank@uuhaverhill.org
Intern Minister Julie Lombard: lombardpottery@comcast.net
Director of Religious Education Sally Liebermann: dre@uuhaverhill.org
Music Director Claudia Keyian: claudia@claudiamusic.com
Office Administrator Lisa Compton: office@uuhaverhill.org

Or call us on the telephone: 978-372-5173

Website: www.uuhaverhill.org

To view the church calendar, please visit
www.uuhaverhill.org/events/calendar

Facebook folks: please visit our new church Facebook page at www.facebook.com/uuhaverhill, and “like” us so church news and pictures show up in your news feed!

And if you’re on Instagram, follow us there so you see photos of our congregational life:
<http://instagram.com/uuhaverhill>