



The Communicator

the monthly newsletter of the

UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

UUCH: a faith community transforming lives and the world

What's Happening This Month, December, 2014

Advent Vespers will be held Wednesdays, December 3, 10 and 17 at 6 pm. This candle lit service of music, meditation and readings lasts one half hour, and is followed by a simple supper in the Murray Room. All are welcome!

Mind*Body*Spiritual Wellness Support Group meets Fridays, December 5 and 19 at 7 pm.

Choir Rehearsal will be held at 9:15 am on Sundays, December 7 and 14. Come sing with us!

“Shop and Drop” on Sunday, December 7 from 12-4 pm. Leave your children with Religious Education volunteers and enjoy an afternoon of shopping, or whatever...

“A Year to Live” Study Group will meet Sunday, December 7 at 12 pm, and Tuesday, December 9 at 7 pm.

Welcoming Congregation Committee event: “HIV-AIDS Through the Years,” Sunday, December 7 at Noon in the Ladies Parlor. The 60's are behind us, but as World AIDS Day approaches, memories of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic remain. Some memories are about news headlines that conveyed facts, figures or information. For some people, though, there are powerful reminders of significant losses. Many of us have no personal connection to HIV-AIDS and are curious or concerned about it. How have knowledge and responses to it changed? What is our responsibility to separate facts from myths? The WCC will host an informal sharing about this important topic.

Ladies Circle Meets on December 13 at 1 pm. for its annual holiday pot luck. There will be a “grab” gift bag. Hostesses are Pat Feller and Malinda McPhee. All women of the church are welcome to attend; please remember to bring toiletries for donation to Emmaus House.

January Communicator Deadline is December 15 by 9 am. Submissions from committees, groups or individuals are welcome (350 word limit—less if you include a graphic). Articles should be of some spiritual or intellectual depth.

The Merrimack Valley String Orchestra will present its holiday concert on Sunday, December 14 at 2:30 pm. Admission is free and all are welcome. See article on p. 4.

Our popular Living Nativity Service returns on Sunday, December 21 at 10:30 am. All ages are welcome, as we will need kings and cows and stars and babies and lambs and angels and...and...and...

MoonPool Coven Solstice Celebration Sunday, December 21 at 6 pm. All are welcome.

A Service of Lessons and Carols will be held on Christmas Eve at 5:30 pm., followed by a festive pot luck of “Sweets and Savories.” If your surname begins with A-L, please bring sweets (no nuts or nut products, please); if your surname begins with M-Z, please bring savories!

Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity build dates in December for the house at 100 Parker Street in Lawrence are Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 8:15 am – 4 pm. Our UUCH group build date is Saturday, December 20.

Things Seen and Unseen

by Rev. Frank Clarkson

Does it seem to have come on quickly, this time of the year when the days are short and the sun is low in the sky? Only yesterday, it seems, we were in those bright days of early autumn. And now comes December, which holds, to use Robert Frost's line, "the darkest evening of the year."

How do we respond to these dark days? How do we observe the holy days and holidays this month brings? Many of us are taught to speed up, to fill our lives with busyness, to buy things and consume things. This is certainly one way to armor yourself against the dark and cold. But the season, and our souls, beckon us to another way.

There's a saying, "It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." But what if, before you lit that candle, you sat in the darkness for a while? Wouldn't your eyes adjust, and you'd see things that otherwise you might miss? Like the starry winter sky? Or the presence of that holy spirit that is hard to notice when we are too busy? Or the longings and stirrings of your own heart?

If you are one who struggles with the darkness of this season, I hope you know you're not alone. There are many who find the holidays to be challenging; many for whom the onset of winter is sad and difficult. In this season when there's some pressure to be happy, it can help to have a place to share feelings of sadness and struggle. That's why I'm here, so please reach out to me if you're struggling. If you find yourself feeling low, please don't stay away from church--the warmth of community might be just what you need.

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, "I have faith in nights." In this month of growing darkness, may we have faith in the possibilities that lie around us, often unseen, but waiting for us to behold them.



Intern Insights

by Julie Lombard

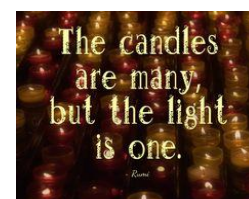
Have you ever attended Advent Vespers at UUCH? Before I arrived here, I had not heard of this kind of worship. It's one of the many reasons why UUCH is a great learning site for ministerial interns.

I know: how could you possibly fit another thing into your busy lives, right? If you are agreeing with me, Vespers may be for you. It offers a break from the busyness and calls us to be at rest for a short while. Following each Wednesday's candle light worship service, a light meal is offered by volunteers in the Murray Room. All are welcome to come to this weekly worship service that has become a beloved tradition for many folks.

This is what you will experience... a darkened sanctuary warmly lit with the light of many candles; calm music soothes the soul and invites you to be still; poetry and prayers lift hearts while a light meal with friends nourishes bodies. What more could someone ask from Advent Vespers?

Vespers offers us a break from the craziness of the holiday season, a warm refuge from the winter-like weather, and a delightful way to come together in community midweek. If you miss out on attending one of these evening services in December, Lenten Vespers will be upon us soon enough.

Gautama Buddha said, "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." This is the feeling that comes to mind when I think of Vespers at UUCH. The tranquil candles brighten the darkest corners and burdens are lifted as brief words serenely remind us of the peacefulness needed to exist in a hectic world. Francois Nars said, "Fragrance makes us dream." As we worship by candle light during Vespers, the smells of wax and wicks burning permeate the sacred space. This smell is an invitation for us all to come to dream together. Please join us.



Let's Speak Up and Reach Out

by Bill Taylor

Of all the bad news recently, perhaps the most troubling were the stories of desperate child immigrant refugees at our southern border--and the American public's responses to these stories. As tens of thousands of children from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and elsewhere were detained in overloaded facilities, many politicians and media outlets sought to stoke public fear. They promoted myths about how these children would spread disease, increase crime rates, and perhaps even resort to terrorism. And they inspired thousands across the country to denounce the children and promote xenophobia. Thousands attended an angry anti-immigrant protest right here on Beacon Hill. The crowd shouted hateful things like, "Throw the bums out!" It was, both locally and across the country, an ugly episode in our recent history.

Like taxes or health care, immigration is an extremely complex issues that inspires deep political disagreements that are difficult to reconcile. But apart from our particular opinions about our immigration laws, shouldn't we first and foremost treat all fellow human beings--and in this case, children--with love and respect? Yet, they didn't get much of either.

That news cycle has receded from our attention and others have taken its place: social unrest in Ferguson, MO, the new war effort against the Islamic State, the Ebola scare, and election season. With each cycle, we see the all-too-familiar playbook employed by some who seek to exploit these stories and promote divisiveness--whether it's immigrant-hating, race-baiting, Islamophobia, or dog-whistle politics. Of course, this divisive stuff has always been there, murmuring in the background of our collective consciousness. But lately, those voices have been deliberately amplified, and we must not let them speak for us. We need our good voices to speak up and be heard.

Our UU faith tradition and our particular church both have proud histories of standing on the side of love while speaking up for the marginalized. I hope in the months and years ahead that we'll continue that good work on many fronts--including outreach and support to our friends in local immigrant populations and the community organizations who help them.

Caring Ministries Update

We are so grateful that we were able to demonstrate our prayer of service last month in so many ways. Eight folks from our congregation benefitted from your kindness and support. People were driven to both church activities and to doctor's appointments for medical care. Both pets and children were tended to as last minute needs arose. There were many visits to the ill and homebound as several folks are dealing with health issues. Errands of a wide variety, from picking up groceries to helping move furniture were completed. Meals were provided and the compassionate ears of our community opened to many. We sincerely appreciate all of the other offers of help that haven't been needed yet. Knowing that so many are willing to pitch in ensures our caring into the future. Thank you for all you have done and will do.



Soup on Sundays

by Stacey Sherman

Do you like making soup? If so, please consider signing up to make soup to be sold at our Sunday Coffee Hours during January and February. All proceeds will benefit the operation funds of the church. Last year, our soup chefs made over \$800.00 for our church!

What you need to do: make 6 quart of your favorite soup (containers will be supplied), supply the ingredients and bring the soup to church on the day you are assigned. Soup can be frozen or arrangements may be made to drop off earlier. We would like to offer vegetarian and/or gluten free options, too. Then, sit at the table during Coffee Hour with another soup maker on your assigned day. Contact Stacey Sherman, thesherm@comcast.net or 978-373-1227.

Merrimack Valley String Orchestra Holiday Concert

by Joy Schuetze

The Merrimack Valley String Orchestra, conducted by Joy Schuetze, will present its annual Winter Concert on Sunday December 14 at 2:30 pm in the Sanctuary.

Featured in the concert will be the Chamber Orchestra's performance of Vivaldi's *Concerto Grosso, Op. 3, No. 10* for four violins, cello, strings and continuo, with soloists Connor Wertz, Catherine Sullivan, In Jun Jeon, and Nora-Joy Schuetze, violins, and Aidan Wertz, cello.

Also to be presented will be Dvorak's *American Rondo*, arrangements from Handel's *Royal Fireworks Music*, Debussy's *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair*, the *Finale* from Beethoven's *Fidelio*, the final movement of Haydn's *Symphony No. 88*, Albinoni's *Concerto a cinque, Op. 7, No. 1* and holiday favorites including the *Wexford Carol* and Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*.

The concert is FREE (no tickets required). For further information, please call 978-372-9158 or see www.mvsostrings.org.



The Soloists: Catherine Sullivan, Connor and Aidan Wertz, Nora-Joy Schuetze and In Jun Jeon

Winter Holiday Raffle and UUCH Shopping

by Abbe Wertz

Don't forget to get your raffle tickets for your chance at one of the beautiful baskets donated by the Board of Trustees, Ladies Circle, and other committees! Tickets are \$5 each, or 3 for \$10, or 7 for \$20. Feel free to sell tickets to friends and families outside the church as well. Contact Taffy Jervey or Abbe Wertz if you'd like some tickets to sell. Also this week we'll be selling t-shirts and other merchandise so you can show your UUCH pride or give them as gifts for the Holidays!



Martin Luther King Breakfast News

by Pat Bowe and Tom Ellis

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Breakfast Committee is looking for folks who are curious about what makes this annual breakfast an a success and are interested in being involved. Folks from both UUCH and Calvary Baptist Church plan on meeting in the near future to review a detailed document that covers every step that makes this event happen. Folks on the committee explain the process and answer any questions. If you are interested in learning what is involved in making this annual breakfast possible and serving in a coordinator role going forward, contact either Tom Ellis (tomellis.lc@gmail.com) (978-372-2284) or Pat Bowe (patrick.bowe@me.com) (978-363-5489). In addition, we will be looking for the usual volunteers to help with set up and cleaning up. Please let us know if you are interested in helping.

What Happens Every Month

This is a list of recurring gatherings in our community. To make changes or add an event, or if you have a question, contact Lisa Compton at office@uuhaverhill.org.

Brown Bag Lunch every Thursday at Noon. Come join us in the Ladies Parlor for an hour of conversation and fellowship. No reservations needed!

Choir Rehearsal (note schedule on p. 1) some Sundays at 9:15 am. All are welcome!

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

Lectio Divina meets fourth Sundays at 9:15 am in the Meditation Chapel. This ancient spiritual practice offers a contemplative way to engage with scripture.

MoonPool Coven gathers on first and third Sundays at 6 pm. Led by Rick Baillargeon and Marylou Johnson, teaching about and experience of pagan spirituality is offered.

Social Justice Committee meets third Sundays following coffee hour.

Finance Committee meets first Wednesdays at 7 pm.

INC (Interfaith Network of Compassion) meets at UUCH on third Thursdays at 12 pm to network about issues surrounding hunger ministries in Haverhill. Representatives from many area food pantries and other agencies attend.

Interfaith Special Needs Worship, led by Rev. Wendy Von Zirpolo, is held in the Murray Room on second Mondays at 6 pm.

Hunger Roundtable meets second Tuesdays, 10 am.

Mindful Meditation Practice is Mondays (except Monday holidays) at 7 pm, led by Betsy Robertson.

Communicator (monthly newsletter) deadline is always the 15th of the preceding month. There is no issue in August.

Alcoholics Anonymous meets in our downstairs hall at 7 pm on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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

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 Schuetze at Joy.Strings@verizon.net

Community Meals

First and third Saturdays, volunteers shop for, cook, serve and clean up after this free meal for the entire community. This rewarding outreach program serves 50-75 folks each week. We encourage family groups or other committees to work together to produce a meal! Contact: Kristie Colton (kenozagals@mac.com) or Abbe Wertz (abbewertz@yahoo.com)

Green Sanctuary Committee meets on second Sundays at Noon.

New Moon Coffeehouse is on third Saturdays at 8 pm (except December).

Membership Committee meets third Mondays at 6 pm.

Caring Ministry meets fourth Sundays at 11:30 am.

Various other committees meet periodically throughout the year. Watch e-News, Sunday announcements and the website calendar for meeting times for: Building & Grounds/Gardens, Leap of Faith, Ministry, Music, Parish Council, Parish Nurses, Permanent Funds, Religious Education, Stewardship, Welcoming Congregation and Worship Committees.

Church Leaders and Staff Contact Information

Board of Trustees Chair: Abbe Wertz: abbewertz@yahoo.com

Board of Trustees Vice Chair: Cori Thurlow: cori.thurlow@gmail.com

Rev. Frank Clarkson: frank@uuhaverhill.org

Ministerial Intern: Julie Lombard: lombardpottery@comcast.net

Director of Religious Education: Sally Liebermann: dre@uuhaverhill.org

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>

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