

Newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst
6320 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221
Phone: 716-634-3010



Our Leadership:

Developmental Minister

Rev. Michelle Buhite..... (Office) 634-3010
minister@uamherst.org

Minister Emeritus

Rev. Maureen Q. Thitchener.....585-657-7526

Office Assistant/Newsletter Editor

Jaime Sheridan..... 634-3010
administrator@uamherst.org

Director of Religious Education

dre@uamherst.org

Music Director

Fran Landis.....694-1106

Caretaker

Chris Barry..... 479-4239

**Normal office hours are from
9:30am until 2:30pm, Tuesday through Friday**

SUNDAY SERVICES IN DECEMBER AT 10:30AM

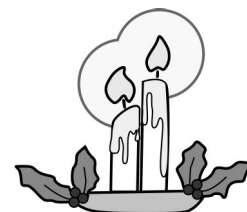
6 *“Hope for the Holidays”* by Rev. Michelle Buhite. As we honor the dark and invoke the light, we recognize that we are all connected.

13 *“Wisdom from World Religions”* by Rev. Michelle Buhite. The third Source that inspires and informs our faith is: wisdom from the world’s religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.

20 *“Following Yonder Star ”* with Rev. Michelle Buhite. This inter-generational service will feature the magi from the Christian nativity story.

27 *“Religion: It’s Not Just About Metaphors ”* by Joe Rautenstrauch
“Your religious beliefs are only metaphors.” Is this a put-down?

Be sure to join with us at 7:00pm on
Christmas Eve (Thursday, December 24th)
for an all-ages candlelight service.



Did something in a sermon grab you?
Do you have questions or concerns that the minister might respond to?
Join a group chat at church on the second Tuesday of the month, (Dec. 8th) 11:00 a.m. in the Reeb Room.



Welcoming New Comers

How can we help new comers (both guests and recent new members) feel welcome? At coffee hour and any gathering, our natural tendency is to gravitate toward our friends and close acquaintances. However, it is so important to reach out to new people so they feel comfortable and want to be a part of our community.

Try to remember how it was when you first joined our church or any new group. How did you feel when you attended your first after service coffee hour? Did you feel comfortable and look forward to returning again? If you did, it was probably because someone made a point to talk with you, about you.

MINISTER'S CORNER



Rev. Michelle Buhite

"All great changes are preceded by chaos." (Deepak Chopra)

I think many of us look at chaos as a destructive force – the dissolution of order and an overwhelming tide of mayhem. But the Genesis creation story points to something different: chaos as

the prerequisite for creativity. Genesis 1 describes a world 'unformed and void' – it was there, it just wasn't ordered. Then G-d goes about remedying the situation, creating categories by which humanity will be able to make sense of the world.

Recently we have been in a chaotic time with the resignations of our office administrator and director of religious education. The church has been in an extended transition since at least 2012 – with key staff and leaders helping to hold things together and offering activities that feel familiar and build community. And although they have been useful, programs, activities, and beloved traditions must not be mistaken for covenant, mission, and vision. This chaotic time is a potent, creative precursor to the great changes in store for this congregation and for the impact of Unitarian Universalism in our region. May we emerge from the chaos with renewed passion for our faith and a commitment to live into it more fully.

See you in church, Rev. Michelle

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 2 OFFERINGS

1. The Hebrew Bible / Old Testament – Thursdays (1-3 or 7-9 PM) through Jan. 21 in the Emerson Room. Our discussion is guided by DVDs from the Old Testament Great Course from the Teaching Company.

2. Poetry As Practice – 1st Sundays, 12-1 PM in the Reeb Room (near the minister's office) Each month a different person will choose poems to discuss from a particular poet. For more information, contact Diane Bofinger (dbofinge@buffalo.edu; 689-8954). All are welcome.

IMPORTANT DECEMBER DATES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Sunday, Dec 6th

*K-1 O.W.L./ Play Practice/Set Design 10:30 am
Religious Education Soup and Treat Sale after church*

Sunday, Dec 13th

*RE Committee Meeting 9 a.m.
K-1 O.W.L./ Play Practice/Set Design 10:30 am*

Saturday, Dec. 19th

Final Play Rehearsal in Chapel (TBA)

Sunday, December 20th:

RE Holiday Pageant

Sunday, December 27th:

Holiday/No RE Classes

CHANGE IS ON THE HORIZON

The Nominating Committee is transforming and changing its process for selecting new board members. To select the best leaders for our beloved community we will be inviting members of our congregation to self nominate along with our selection of possible board members. Leadership classes will also be offered for our members. In the past, the committee selected three people without knowing all of their passion, talents or leadership abilities. There are many talented people who possess many skills and we will be offering a way to know about you via an application and participating in a group discussion. Being a board member offers many opportunities to grow and develop along with working with like minded people, who will help our church flourish. Please consider requesting an application or passing one along to someone you think might make a good candidate once they become available. More information coming soon.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS:

Victoria Crago

Half of a decade.

Five years sounds like a long time when I say it like that! That is how long I have been the Director of Religious Education here at UUCA. I have watched so many of our children and youth grow up before my eyes, including my own. We have done so much good work together, and so many changes have come to pass. We have gained and lost church members, family members and friends. My step-father and father both passed away during my time here. Our church staff has transitioned through three ministers, 1 administrator, 1 nursery care professional, 1 music director, and our member service director during the course of my time with you. Not all of these transitions were smooth. Some were not handled or acknowledged in alignment with our principles. My time to move on has come, and I hope to leave you with a sense of closure and the feeling that our time together served this church community and our Unitarian Universalist faith well.

My first RE committee meeting as the Director of Religious Education consisted of myself, the committee chairperson and the minister. The people and program were at a point of burn out and needed renewal and rebuilding. We have done just that over these years together. We have much to be proud of.

There is, of course, still work to be done, and I know the good people of this community will rise to meet whatever comes along. As you look ahead with hope, I think of the latest live action movie version of the classic tale, Cinderella. As Cinderella's mother lay dying, she asks her daughter to promise her to always have courage and be kind.

If you know the story, Cinderella goes on to face cruelty, hardship and injustice. She even comes to a point of hopelessness and despair. It can often feel this way in the madness of this world. Some moments of my time here have included tears and the madness of which I speak. I will never forget coming in to church the Sunday after the Newtown massacre, and leading a Children's chapel on our Unitarian Universalist principles to a room of assembled children. With my voice shaking and my stomach in knots, I did not feel so certain that our world could overcome such pain and loss. And yet we forge on.

This congregation has been through so much, and I hope you will continue to challenge yourselves to listen deeply, forgive more readily, and open your minds, hearts and the doors of this church wider with each passing year. Be kind to yourselves, each other, your staff and leadership, and even those who may grate on your last nerve. We *can* disagree without resorting to manipulations, unkindness, gossip, or abandonment of our church principles and community. We must commit to stay engaged and respect one another enough to work out our conflicts directly and with humility. This is our covenant. It is so important that we hold on to it tightly.

Working at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, and being a religious educator has been fulfilling in ways I can never express in words. The honor and privilege of being entrusted with the children of this community and their spiritual growth is something I will take into all of my future endeavors. I hope that the challenges we have faced together will help to facilitate change for the RE committee and the religious educator who succeeds me.

I will be taking my leave from attendance at this church out of respect for those who will take over my position. As part of my code of ethics as a Religious professional, It is important that I allow our congregation and myself the healing and space we will need in order to move forward to a place of wholeness and future connection.

And finally, to the precious children and youth with whom I have shared so much and have shared so much with me:

Have Courage. Be Kind. I love you always.

In Faith & Service,
Victoria Crago
Director of Religious Education
UUCA





BOARD NOTES:

As I enter my 6th month as Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees I find myself profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve this congregation. This is important work and I deeply appreciate the trust and support I have received from my fellow Board members as well as church members. Over the past 5 years we have been in a constant state of transition. 4 Ministers, 2 Administrators, 2 Music Directors, 2 RE Directors, 1 Director of Member Services... we have before us an excellent opportunity to examine, among others, the way we do things with regard to employees.

One of the ways we are already doing that is by the Covenant Conversations that Rev. Michelle recently held. They were incredibly insightful and provided lots of perspectives to consider. The information gathered in those conversations is being compiled and soon a taskforce will convene to shape a covenant. Having a covenant will put us in a place to be able to build a mission statement (why do we exist?). Having a mission statement will put us in a place to be able to develop a strategic plan (how are we going to accomplish it?). We cannot discern where we are going as a church community without first knowing what our mission is. We cannot know what our mission is without first agreeing upon how we will be together along the way (covenant). All of these things will take time and I am encouraged by the patience, dedication, and thoughtfulness of the congregation as we work to strengthen our beloved community.

I would like to extend my thanks to Judy Monaco for all she has done for us here at UUCA as the Office Administrator and wish her the best of success in her future endeavors. I would also like to thank Victoria for her time and dedication as Director of Religious Education at UUCA. You are a wonderful, delightful person and you brought so much joy to the congregation with your Stories for All Ages and the many, many other things you've shared with us. You have helped us to grow and connect as Unitarian Universalists on deeper levels than I could have imagined. To Will and the Crago children, thank you for being such a wonderful part of UUCA and for sharing Victoria with us. You will all be deeply missed.

In faith and service,
Ivy Yapelli ~ Board Chair, UUCA

ENDOWMENT TRUST

by Endowment Treasurer Doug Funke for Endowment Trustees Dennis Bihl, Nan Cosbey, Jerry Kent, and Lauraine Marcus

Did you know that there is an easy way to contribute to the Endowment Trust (ET) without having to change your will? You can just write a check to the UU Endowment Trust, anytime. UUCA members and friends do this routinely -- often as a way to honor a friend or loved one who has died. So far this year the UU Endowment Trust has received \$885 from small gifts not counting bequests.

There are several advantages of remembering friends and loved ones by making a donation to the Endowment Trust.

1. You help the church (in addition to remembering your loved one).
2. The family of the person being remembered receives a letter from the Endowment Trust Board saying that Trust received a gift in the name of the deceased person.
3. You receive a letter from the ET Board thanking you for your gift. This can be used as documentation for tax purposes.
4. Your gift is officially recorded by the ET Board and recognized in the UUCA Annual Report.

The Endowment Trust is an important funding source for the church. So far this year, the ET has provided \$35,000 to the church for projects and expenses that would have been very difficult to cover out of our normal budget. For example, the Endowment Trust has covered the minister's moving expenses, is temporarily paying the Music Director's salary (until the church budget can again cover this cost), and is paying a portion of the costs of the new chapel roof and parking lot repaving.

It is important to keep the Endowment Trust growing so we can continue to be a financial resource for the church, when needed. We should all consider adding the church in our wills. But in the meantime, smaller, periodic gifts can be a great benefit to the ET and the church, as well as being the perfect gift in memory of friends or loved ones who have died.

The Lion's Club, which takes our used eyewear for recycling has announced that it will now take used hearing aids to send to people in other countries. You may leave them in the box in the first coat closet. ~Marge Marcille

HEALTH AWARENESS DECEMBER 2015

GIFTS FOR THOSE WITH MEMORY LOSS

PROVIDED BY: SUZANNE CHRIST, RN, FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE,
CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Deciding what holiday gifts to give a person with memory loss can be challenging. The following are some tips from the Hospice Buffalo newsletter to share with family members that I thought you might find of interest.

The gift of time:

A special date to share cookies and send holiday cards to others

A time to share and wrap gifts (before the rush)

Attending seasonal music events or caroling together

A person with early-stage memory loss is often still striving to do his or her usual activities. Gifts that provide reminder systems or simplify daily tasks are useful.

A clipboard with attached pen for notes. Attractive stick-on labels for cabinets and drawers. An erasable white board for listing the day's activities.

A push-button wristwatch that will literally "tell the time" out loud.

A cell phone or personal alert system with a single button to request support from anywhere in an emergency.

An automated pill dispenser.

A person with mid- or late-stage dementia thrives with simplicity. Even when words are failing, sensory pleasures can still be enjoyed.

Music is almost always a hit, especially from the era of your loved one's youth.

Easy on/off clothes, such as sweats. Soft fabrics and favorite colors are a plus. Shoes with Velcro straps.

Cozy items for staying warm. A soft throw blanket, a fleece vest, or soft scarf. Even a furry stuffed animal as something to cuddle.

Scented skin lotions for arms and hands.

You might also give family members ideas of gifts to help you:

A collection of nature shows or old-time comedies on DVD to entertain your loved one.

An album with captioned photos of family members and family events.

The gift of respite time. That is, a chance for you, the family caregiver, to get away and have a few hours (days?) with minimal responsibilities.

A gift certificate for a massage or lunch with a friend.

Have an Announcement?

For Order of Service: by 10am Wed prior
Email: administrator@uuamherst.org

For Emerson Room scroll: by Friday prior
Email: joestrauch@me.com

For Newsletter: by 10am on the 14th of month
Email: administrator@uuamherst.org

The **Groat's** share with great joy that we are *adopting from China* again! We expect to travel in February to meet our 5th child, 11 year old Sam. He lives in the same orphanage that Shanna was adopted from and they were there together six years ago.

We are making a **100 Wishes Quilt** for Sam and invite you to contribute a small piece of fabric (12" x 12" square or strip) along with a written "wish" for Sam. We made quilts for Megan and Shanna and they are cherished by each. If you wish to follow along our journey to China, visit our blog www.simply-family.blogspot.com



PRINTS FOR SALE

Ron Palmere will have his mounted and matted photo prints available for sale after the first three Sunday services in December: the 6th, 13th, and 20th. The prints will be of a variety of subjects, and will fit into a standard size 16"x20" frame. He will sell them at or below cost. The entire proceeds from the sale will be donated to our church.

GREEN TIPS



Stop leaky faucets - A dripping faucet may seem harmless, but you'd be surprised at how much water is lost. According to the **U.S. Geological Survey's Water Science School**, one faucet that drips 4 drips per minute wastes 138 gallons of water a year.

An email edition of this newsletter is now being distributed. If you did not receive a copy, please send an email to [Scott Harrigan at Harrigan@me.com](mailto:Harrigan@me.com) Hard copies are available at the Welcome Desk.



CURRENT EVENTS DISCUSSION/LUNCH

Tuesday, December 8th -

12:30 p.m. - We will be discussing the events in the news as we lunch together in the Emerson Room.

Women's Lunch

Tuesday, December 15th - 12:30 p.m. - There is no agenda today, just chatting and laughing with like-minded women. Bring your lunch to the Emerson Room for this time of community.



DOMINOES

We meet, play, bring something edible to share, chat and just have fun! This is a very relaxing time, although we do discuss issues (we're Unitarians!) We've gotten to know each other which is another way to group cohesiveness. You may join us at any time on Mondays at 1:30pm in the Emerson Room.

MEN'S LUNCHEON

On the first Thursday of every month, all men are invited to get together for lunch at Buffalo Brewpub, 6861 Main Street (at Transit Road). The ROMEOs (Retired Old Men Eating Out) have great conversations over lunch. There is no agenda, but we are never at a loss for words. Come join in our sharing of ideas; neither retirement nor old age is a strict requirement for participation!



We will be selling coffee, tea, hot chocolate and candy bars on Sunday, December 6th after the service. Stop by the table and help support the farmers in various parts of Central America.

~ Jim & Doreen Park

Women's Afternoon Study Group

Tuesday, December 1st - 1:30 p.m. - We will finish our discussion of the book "Good Without God."

Tuesday, December 22nd - 1:30 p.m. - Following the discussion of our last book, Ruth would like us to talk about the way we DO talk about God with our friends from other religions. What pronouns do we use? Do we have other powerful words we use to talk about God? Ruth's creative writing class essay is quite thought-provoking and she will share it with us today as a start to our conversation.

Tuesday, December 29th - 1:30 p.m. - Today we will talk about books we have read recently. If you bring title and author, a list will be provided for you soon after the meeting via e-mail.

In January, we will watch "Merchants of Doubt" with the Green Sanctuary Group and we will read the UU World Winter Edition. Please save it until then.

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Our committee accepts requests to provide assistance for our church community. We have a group of dedicated volunteers who are willing, ready and able to serve their church community by:

- Visiting hospitals, nursing homes, and individual homes; or doing phone check-ins
- Sending cards.
- Providing rides to Sunday church services.
- Providing Caring Health Awareness information by our Faith Community Nurse
- Transportation to Special Events at Church
- Pet Therapy

You may call us or ask on behalf of another member by contacting Suzanne Christ at 716-632-6920 or email magicalme1@verizon.net, or co-chair Ivy Yapelli, 254-338-8248 or email ivyapelli@gmail.com. Our next committee meeting will be **Thursday, December 3rd, 2015** at 11am in the Emerson Room for all members and newly interested persons.



GIRL'S NIGHT OUT IS ENDING

But something new is beginning! Introducing "**Cocktails & Conversation!**" On the first Friday of every month all members and friends of UUCA (age 21+) are invited to come relax, unwind, and connect with fellow UU's for a casual night out. We will select a new place each month and gather for fun and fellowship.

The first meeting will be held at 7PM on December 4th at Penny Lane Cafe located at **10255 Main St. Clarence, NY 14031.**

Do you have a favorite place? Somewhere you'd like to try? Contact Ivy Yapelli at (254) 338-8248 with your suggestions.

December 2015 Fundraising News

Barbara Gauger Kent



We are half way through the church year and the Holidays are upon us. Fundraising is going strong at the UUCA and we are grateful for all the support given to us.

The Fall Auction on November 8th did really well (over \$3,500) and there are still some open offers. Thank you to Carol Joyce and her helpers. Open offers will be posted in the church lobby.

You can also sponsor a *Dining for Dollars event*. Talk to me or pick up a sign up sheet near the TOPS cards desk or the church lobby desk.

The RE/Coming of Age group had their first monthly *soup and bake sale* on November 15. Delicious soup and decadent desserts were enjoyed after the service. Thank you to everyone who cooked and purchased food for this event. Proceeds will benefit the youth of the UUCA.

Marge Marcille sold *needle-crafts* (thank you Marge for donating your beautiful work), and *Lucinda Pins* were also sold in the Emerson Room in October. Lucinda Pins will again be available for sale early in December (all proceeds to benefit the UUCA).

TOPS cards continue to provide a steady \$50+ to the church each month. Many people tell me they like to shop at Wegmans. That's OK. But if you are thinking of giving gift cards for the holidays, consider buying TOPS cards from us and using them to buy your gift cards at TOPS. They can be exchanged for all sorts of gift cards, even Southwest Airline cards (going someplace WARM for the holidays?).

Goodsearch and Goodshop are great ways to help the UUCA without spending extra from your budget. Not only do they have the most powerful coupons on earth from every online store you could ever want (like Amazon, Gap, and Target), but they also donate a percentage of each eligible purchase to charity!

For those of you not already signed up, you can sign up using my personal referral link:

www.goodsearch.com/goodshop-invite/barbara-gauger-211925 and Goodshop will donate an extra \$5 to the cause you choose to support (and an extra \$5 to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst) when you complete your first \$25 purchase. Joe R. and I are making a You Tube video showing how to sign up. You should soon be able to access the video through the UUCA website.

It is the middle of the church fiscal year but the end of the calendar year. Please think of us if you want to make a year- end charitable contribution. *We are still accepting donations to the roof fund, the parking lot fund, or even the operating fund.* Just put which fund you would like to donate to on the memo line of your check. **Thanks to everyone for supporting our church. We can work together to reach our budget goals. Let's keep the FUN in FUNdraising!**

SOUPER SUPPER

You missed the auction? It's OK. You're invited to join us for the popular **Souper Supper** on Friday, Dec. 11 in the Emerson Room. Come anytime between 5:00pm and 7:30pm. Enjoy a choice of three soups, bread, beverage and dessert. Call the church office to reserve your place or come on Dec. 11 and pay at the door: \$10 adults, \$6 children.



6320 Main Street
Williamsville, NY 14221

UUCA
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF AMHERST

we are a welcoming community

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE PAID

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Holiday Events

Holiday Decorating

Saturday, December 5th, 10 am-2 pm

Refreshments will be provided.

Holiday Potluck and Christmas Caroling

Sunday December 13th, 5 pm

Roast Beef and Pizza provided.

\$5 per person; \$10 for family

Bring dish to share.

Fran Landis will join us
after 6 to accompany our caroling.

*Sign up at the Welcome Desk on Sundays or contact
Lauraine Marcus.*

Together, let us celebrate the spirit of the season

Sponsored by Church Life and Membership Committees.



END OF YEAR GENEROSITY

At this time of reflection, please think about all we have shared during the past few months.

It is also a time of giving. If you are making special donations as the year closes, please consider contributing to our roof or driveway funds or even to our general operations.

Visit our website at www.uuamherst.org