



What's with UUS

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling
A Welcoming Congregation
Sterling, Virginia



Minister's Message



The Hope inherent in our free Faith

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

The No-Hellers were a small scattering of early American Universalist congregations. They met mostly in rural communities throughout the southern states, including Virginia, and had the largest following about 150 years ago. They believed that all the children of earth were held in the hands of a "happy God" who would not forsake anyone to eternal hell and damnation. Their faith grew up in pockets surrounded by fundamentalist strongholds. When the fundamentalist pulpits pronounced our inherent sinfulness and depravity, the No-Hellers proclaimed human potential and eternal love. When fundamentalists rallied against non-believers, No-Hellers assumed that God's message reached all humans, across the panoply of this diverse earth.

One of the most striking of the No-Hellers rituals was the annual foot washing where each member of the congregation would carefully wash the feet of another member. This practice, with scriptural roots, begs a deep humility, but without any semblance of a human hierarchy. Each person that had his or her feet washed reciprocated by washing the feet of another. In this way they shared humility as well as "respect or honor". This practice affirmed what present day Unitarian Universalists hold as their first and seventh principles: 1: "The inherent worth and dignity of all

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President's Message



Space: The Next Frontier

Dave Miller

In this month's column I would like to let you know about what

I think is an exciting possibility for the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling. Many of you are aware that we have been experiencing overcrowding in our worship space, and especially in our Religious Exploration areas. While this can be considered a problem, it is a welcome problem because it indicates that we are a growing and thriving community.

We have recently learned that our next-door neighbor in the building, Capitol Cable, is planning to move to a new facility. Their current plans are to move out of their present location around mid May 2009, but it is expected that this may get delayed by a few months. Consequently, the rental space they currently occupy will become available for lease.

In light of this development, your Board of Trustees is looking into possibly expanding UUS by adding that additional space to what we are currently leasing. The Board has appointed a task force to investigate all of the issues associated with this possibility. The task force is looking at the financial issues involved in such a move, how we might modify the new space and our existing space to meet our needs, as well as other considerations. It is also looking at ensuring that adding this additional space would give us ample room to meet our projected future needs.

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Worship Calendar

January 4th – "A Walk Through the Rooms of our Lives" Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael invites us to consider the New Year as an opportunity for renewal, by first looking back and noting what we have collected, over the days of our lives. An original song by Lori Capps will accompany our annual New Years' fire ceremony. We will begin at 10:20 with a hymn sing and an inquirer's class will follow the service at noon.

January 11th – "Justice in a World Community" We honor January's liturgical theme "Justice" by asking if peace is possible in a world that perpetuates so many divergent definitions of "Justice". Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael will consider case studies and religious tenets with the hope of imagining a world community where justice for one is justice for all.

January 18th – "What Moves us to do the work of Transformation?" Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael and guest musicians invite us to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and reflect on the music, words, faith, and experiences that inspire us to do the work of transforming our world.

January 25th - The Rev. Don Prang from St. James United Church of Christ in Lovettsville will pulpit swap with Rev. Anya and lead our service. Rev. Prang has been a leader on the progressive social justice front working with many prominent Unitarian Universalist and interfaith leaders. His congregation in Lovettsville proclaims this mission: "We are an inclusive, open and affirming faith community, intent on transcending distinctions based on gender, sexual orientation, nationality,

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people” and 7: “The interdependent web of which we are a part.”

The No-Hellers and later Unitarians and Universalists proclaimed: “Give them hope, not hell!” believing that salvation was possible if and only if we believed in our capacity for good and transformation. This message of hope is just as necessary a balm as ever. A recent news article spoke of the practices of the Sterling Calvary Temple, where the pastor Star R. Scott teaches that his fold is scripturally superior to others and lauds the importance of expelling anyone who is not in harmony with its or his message. Many who have left or were shamed and thereby pushed out of his church claim serious emotional abuse and repercussions. Many have found homes in other local congregations. Some are likely still bruised and searching.

I pray that they will find a message of hope – a balm of acceptance, and an opportunity to reconnect with a community that will affirm their inherent worth and dignity. It is not so important to me that our community receive all those hurt by cult-like churches, as I know there are many wonderful religious homes that promote health and acceptance, but it is terribly important that we broadcast a message of hope that is clear and effective, to make certain that anyone who yearns for a community like ours, knows that our doors are open and that they are welcome.

I say this because I firmly believe that there *is* a message of hope inherent in our free faith. This hope lives in our refusal to demand credal requirements while asking our willingness to authentically live the beliefs that our consciences demand. It is a faith in the dignity of our differences as well as our unity.

Edward Schemppe, plaintiff in 1963 Supreme Court case that declared mandatory Bible reading in public schools unconstitutional, announced: “Unitarian Universalism is cooperation with a universe that created us. It is a celebration of life. It is being in love with goodness and justice. It is a sense of humor about absolutes. Unitarian Universalism is faith in people, hope for

tomorrow’s child, confidence in a continuity that spans all time. It looks not to a perfect heaven, but toward a good earth. It is respectful of the past, but not limited to it. It is trust in growing.”

Through the month of December we will study the depths of this hopeful message. Than in January we will turn to the topic of Justice. There have never been two better-paired themes – as it is the role of justice to make manifest the potential of hope that we see in this, our great and interconnected universe. And as we share in these themes together, it is our task to vigilantly hold the doors of this faith open for all who yearn.

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Obviously, a decision of this magnitude will require the full participation and support of the congregation. At this point, many more questions remain to be answered; few answers have been developed. This expansion is intended to help us with our current and near-term crowding and does not interfere with our Building Fund and our vision for a permanent place “so that we may have a greater impact on the world.” However, we may need to borrow against the fund in the event of a money shortfall.

If all goes well and we proceed with this expansion plan, we could be in our new space and enjoying extra breathing room by next Thanksgiving. Over the next few months, expect to hear many more announcements, see articles in the newsletter, and participate in discussions at town hall meetings. Please be looking for further information and be ready to be engaged in the process. I think that this is an exciting time for UUS, and that exciting opportunities lie in our future.

(Worship Calendar, continued from page 1)

race or religion.” Rev. Don Prang and Rev. Anya work together on the interfaith group, Loudoun BRIDGES.

Strategic Planning at UUS

Paul Roche

These are exciting times at UUS and we are growing quickly both in numbers and in spirit. The good mood is palpable. It is important that with the excitement and possibilities ahead we prepare a roadmap for where we want to take our church over the next several years. To begin this process, a task force has been appointed by the Board of Trustees. The most important information needed by the committee is the hopes, dreams, and ideas of the UUS congregants. A series of conversations that we are calling “Cottage Conversations” has been scheduled during the months of January and February 2009 to elicit the vision of church members and friends. The conversations will consist of guided questions about the future of UUS in the areas of:

Facilities
Staffing
Worship
Religious Exploration
Music
Social Action
And other areas of importance

To ensure the best discussions and exchange of information, each “Cottage Conversation” session will be limited to 12 people and will require signing up in advance. Please see the giant sign-up sheet at church or email Paul Roche (rochepaul@aol.com) to register for a session. Childcare WILL be provided.

The final result of this process will be a formal plan capturing the vision of UUS and the roadmap for achieving that vision over the next 3-5 years.

Please be thinking about your vision of UUS in 1 year, in 3 years, in 5 years and please sign up to attend one of these important sessions.

Current scheduled dates are:

Sunday Jan 18 9:00 AM
Sunday Jan 25 11:45 AM
Thursday Jan 29 6:00 PM
Sunday Feb 1 9:00 AM
Sunday Feb 8 11:45 AM

Each session will last no longer than 1 ½ hours.

Religious Exploration

Linda Weaver

Season of Hope

"Each night that a child is born is a holy night." - Sophia Lyon Fahs

As Unitarian Universalists many of us join Sophia Lyon Fahs, a leading religious education innovator from the 20th century, in celebrating the birth and development of each child as a miracle and a source of hope. The theme at UUS this month is hope, so it is very appropriate that the December 7th worship service includes a child dedication that all ages will be encouraged to witness.

Hope is also an appropriate theme for the month of December since it is a time for celebrating hope in many cultures. We look forward to the lengthening hours that begin with the Solstice and make plans for the longer days. We may celebrate the miracle of a small lamp of oil lasting for seven days and share the traditions that gave a people hope through thousands of years of hardship. We may rejoice at the birth of a Messiah who has provided hope to many around the world. Some may choose to light Kwanzaa candles signifying principles such as unity, self-determination, cooperation, purpose, creativity, and faith. Doing so, they celebrate the hope that helped people survive despite unfair laws and prejudices and that gives them the courage to work toward an even brighter future. Then, at the end of the month of December we begin contemplating what the New Year will bring.

As we experience the hope of the winter season, it is good to remember that to Unitarian Universalists hope is not just a passive emotion. It must be acted on and at times even created. This year an energetic and imaginative set of Religious Exploration (RE) volunteers are doing their part to spread hope at UUS. Each Sunday they make sure that the children and youth are engaged in building community with their peers and in developing a greater understanding of Unitarian Universalism, themselves, and their world. Please make sure to thank these volunteers. Their time and talent

Inclement Weather Policy

If snow, ice, or other weather conditions necessitate the cancellation of a UUS event, the information will be sent out by the uus-announce email list and the website. The church answering machine message will also announce the cancellation at (703)406-3068. Decisions about Sunday morning service are made by 8:00 am. Weekday events will be cancelled with at least two hours notice.

are truly important gifts to the congregation and to the children of UUS.

RE Committee: Kim Fitzgerald, Nikki George, Deb Rose, and Karen Saifer-Ward.

Nursery: Michelle James, Wendi Manuel-Scott, Karen Saifer-Ward and Ken Ward, Karen and Chris Houck, and Mary Stafford.

Elementary: Celinda Chandler, Sonya Connors, Nikki George, Alyssa Lum, Mike Masiak, Nancy McCormick, and Kaari Baluja.

5th-8th Grade: Joan Confoy, Gus Douoguih, Kim Fitzgerald, Judy Gruner, Suzi McMullen, Diana Menefee, Bill Roman, and James Stafford.

High School Youth Advisors: Bob Brown, Allie Roche, and Dave Scher.

High School Youth Parent: Susan Rose

Yes, that is 30 volunteers! My apologies if I missed anyone. Their work and the work of others who have stepped in at times have been crucial to the program. Without substitutes the nursery or an RE class would not have been available on a Sunday or needed childcare would not be available during a meeting or event. Do not forget to thank all volunteers you see working in Religious Exploration.

The best gesture of appreciation and a great way to get to know more about Unitarian Universalism and Religious Exploration is to help out. If you would like to lend a hand once or twice this year or if you would like to do even more, let Linda Weaver or a member of the RE Committee know.

Religious Exploration Schedule

Kindergarten-4th Grade:

Jan. 4 – Intergenerational Service

Jan. 11- Search for God

Jan. 18 – Justice and Service

Jan. 25 – Used-to-Thinks

Feb. 1 – Valentines for Vets (combined class)

Feb. 8 – Intergenerational Service

Feb. 15 – Unitarianism & Universalism

Feb. 22 – The Two Become One

Middle School Youth:

Jan. 4 – Intergenerational Service

Jan. 11 – Transitions

Jan. 18 – The Final Destination

Jan. 25 – Life is What We Make of It

Feb. 1 – Valentines for Vets (combined class)

Feb. 8 – Intergenerational Service

Feb. 15 – From Protestors to Pilgrims

Feb. 22 – From Calvinism to Channing

To find the names of the leaders and assistants for each session, go to the calendar at <http://www.uusterling.org/>, find the correct month, and then click on the RE class session you would like to view.

To find out more about the RE program, contact Linda Weaver at redirector@uusterling.org.



UUS Board Meeting Highlights

December 3, 2008

Denominational Affairs (Bonnie Lepoff)

Greater Washington Area Growth Committee and the Baltimore/DC Marketing Campaign.

I attended an area meeting on Nov 8th and hosted (with Rev Anya acting as my ventriloquist) the Town Hall meeting on the 9th. I put this information into an 'announce' email with information about opting out of the marketing team mailing. I submitted this information as an article for the newsletter.

Facilitators (Scott Findley)

The Facilitators met for the second time on November 24. We discussed the following.

- discussed the Facilitators mission
- discussed visitor parking signage and reported to the membership committee (still investigating options)
- purchasing additional partitions to hide the music equipment
- discussing "transparency" of various small group roles
- reviewed submissions to Writes of Passage and discussed the possibility of coordinating with other churches
- discussed the upcoming brainstorm meeting with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
- discussed the marketing of Writes of Passage

Membership (Jeff Chandler)

We discussed extensive revision of the blue Membership brochure. Changes will be sent to Lori Stevens soon.

We would like finance committee attention to the need for new chairs for the sanctuary. With increased attendance

on Sunday mornings, visitors often have to sit on the metal chairs. A suggestion that perhaps 20 chairs could be purchased in the short term, with more to be purchased later. Another suggestion is that if UUS has a 15th Birthday Party in February, perhaps each family could pay for a chair as a UUS birthday gift.

Minister (Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael)

Pastoral Care Associates:

When I depart for a Christmas holiday I will invest the Pastoral Care Associates with the responsibility of responding to emergency situations. I will provide them with a list of local ministers, prepared to assist, if they are needed.

Holidays:

On December 6th we will have a forum entitled "The Holidays for US" at 12:00 (with a potluck) and the "Alternative Gift Fair" will be available for purchases from 1-4PM. On the 21st, Linda and I will present the holiday pageant (with a lot of help) entitled "The Trees of the Dancing Goats." Then on Christmas Eve, we will have two services with a hospitality half-hour in between. The first service will be a half-hour family service of Lessons and Carols, then the second will be a contemplative candle light service.

Music (Scott Findley Mary Matheny)

Things seem to be going well.

There was a music committee meeting in November which was attended by Clarice D., Judy Gruner, Kris Rector and myself. Options for Christmas service music were discussed.

Clarice D. (worship associates) indicated that the church might be interested in retaining Tom Teasley to perform for the Martin Luther King service. I have since emailed the Teasleys of this and that we could pay them \$200. Tom is available, but needs to know specifically the time and date.

Partner Church (Linda Reeder)

During November, the Partner Church Circle raised a total of \$1525 from 27 donors for the school sponsorship program in Kut. Our target was \$1500 (\$50 each for 30 estimated students, to cover a full year of school). An additional \$625 was raised from a donation match that took place on November 23. Many thanks to all our generous supporters! Next steps are to complete the student matches and send out information about writing to partner students.

Treasurer (Paul Roche Alyssa Lum)

Our financial outlook remains strong. We are ahead of our budget for pledge income so far this fiscal year, again, because some of our biggest pledges have come in early. Expenses continue to stay below budget.



JANUARY 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10:30 AM Worship Service 12 Inquirer's Class 12 RE Volunteer Workshop	7 Membership Committee Meeting	12 Chandler Covenant Group	6 Strategic Planning Meeting 7 Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 Church and State 7:30 Choir Rehearsal		12 New to UU 6 Ethics at the Movies
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
8:30 Elder Care Breakfast 10:30 AM Worship Service	7 Rose Covenant Group	7 Berger Covenant Group	7 Building Your Own Theology I	7:30 Choir Rehearsal		10 Living By Heart 12 Membership Database Maintenance
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:15 Cottage Conversations 10:30 AM Worship Service			7 The Spirituality of Food	6:30 Church and State 7:30 Choir Rehearsal		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10:30 AM Worship Service 11:45 Cottage Conversations				6 Cottage Conversations 7:30 Choir Rehearsal		



Please visit uusterling.org for current and additional calendar information.

Unitarian Universalists of Sterling
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<http://uusterling.org>



Your Church Leadership

Minister: Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

Director of Religious Exploration: Linda Weaver; **Music Director:** Kris Rector

Board of Trustees: President - Dave Miller; Vice President - Bonnie Lepoff; Secretary - Jeff Chandler;
Co-Treasurers - Alyssa Lum and Paul Roche; At-large - Scott Findley, Ken Ward, Linda Reeder, Belinda Bullock

UUS Mission Covenant Statement

The Unitarian Universalists of Sterling offer a place where reason and spirituality converge. We welcome members of the community who are seeking such a religious home. Our mission is to make the community a better place to live by promoting a variety of religious expressions, working toward social justice, and fostering diversity. In order to carry out this mission, we covenant to listen to each other, encourage the exchange of creative thought, and respect our differences.

UUS Sunday Services 10:30 a.m.

Unitarian Universalists of Sterling meets at the Sterling Oaks Commerce Center Sterling, a handicapped-accessible 24-7 facility, located on 22135 Davis Drive near Route 28 and Church Road in Sterling, Virginia. Child care and children's religious education are both provided during worship services. Dress is casual. Children are encouraged to wear play clothes.

From Northbound Route 28: Take Route 28 North exit from the Dulles Toll Road. Turn right at Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Southbound Route 28: Take Route 28 south from Route 7. Turn left at Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Westbound Route 7: Turn left at Sterling Boulevard. Turn right at Church Road. Go three miles. Turn left on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

What's with UUS

Communications Committee Chair: Terry Dick; **Editor:** Linda Reeder

Production: Jeff Chandler, Susan Miller

Board Liaison: Jeff Chandler

To submit material for publication, send by email to newsletter@uusterling.org

Submission Deadlines

1/23 for February

2/20 for March

3/20 for April

4/17 for May