

## Gratitude

*The greatest gift one can give is thanksgiving.  
In giving gifts, we give what we can spare,  
but in giving thanks, we give ourselves.*

—David Steindl-Rast, Catholic Benedictine monk

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**UUCS  
Annual Auction  
11/17**

**See page 5  
for details!**

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I find with every year that my experience of joy becomes more and more closely aligned with gratitude. As a child, joy was a wild and free emotion. It just happened and flooded my person. As a teen, I yearned for more joy and struggled with the experience of elusive happiness—a gift that could fade and lapse for long spells. As an adult, I am growing into an understanding of joy's utterly interwoven relationship with gratitude. Gratitude wells up as awe or praise and joy accompanies the experience. It's not that joy is easier to come by now, but that it is much more understandable and consistently imminent even if not consistently accessible.

I take a yoga class in a hot room—at least 105 degrees. I love the sensation of greater health and spiritual well being, but there are hours in the steaming room that test my commitment. I remember one class during which my instructor cracked the door, welcoming a burst of cool air. The door was just behind my mat. After he closed the door, he remarked how much fun it was to watch our faces flood with smiles. I hadn't realized

that my face had changed its expression, but it must have. I was utterly grateful for my instructor's gift. My face registered my joy.

Experiencing the tight relationship between joy and gratitude teaches us something elemental about our nature. Gratitude springs not from our strength but our weakness, not

from our independence but our dependence. Gratitude sings from our being when we experience the world, or perhaps the holy, recognizing how each attends us in profound ways—from the air that we breathe to the beauty of a sunset. Gratitude is the recognition that we are not alone, and this—of which we are a part—can be beneficent.

May gratitude attend us all.

### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

*Gratitude and Joy  
Interwoven*



Rev. Anya  
Sammler-Michael

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *Gratitude for Benevolent Knowledge*

The West African symbol Sankofa depicts a mythical bird that is flying forward with its head facing backward. The bird has an egg in its mouth, which dually symbolizes the knowledge of the past, upon which wisdom is based, and the future generations that would benefit from such wisdom. Sankofa represents one taking from the past what is good and bringing it into the present in order to make progress through the benevolent use of knowledge. When I think about how the symbol Sankofa relates to UUCS, I am filled with a sense of gratitude, both for the past and future of this congregation.



*Christopher Houck,  
Board President*

Perhaps you've heard stories about how this congregation was founded and of how it has been sustained. If so, you may have been entertained and enlightened with tales of rogue choir members, early meetings at a church member's farm, congregants being hired as county employees so we could hold services at the community annex, and about a raccoon that once fell through the ceiling of another rented facility. If not, I definitely encourage you to corner one of our long-time members at the next church event and inquire about our past. My own experience does not extend much beyond what we now know as UUCS, but my sense is that our past has instilled within us a very strong sense of community and of what can be accomplished when we come together and work together as Unitarian Universalists.

As we metaphorically fly into the future, we will have experiences that may, at times, challenge our established sense of community. I know that the board of trustees is beginning to think and govern like that of a larger congregation because that is how we envision our future. For instance, we are starting to implement a few policies, are facilitating increased opportunities for leadership development and outreach, and are learning ways to manage growth of the congregation.

Growth will bring about change not only to the board but to all of us. We may make new friends, be astounded by new faces, and occasionally struggle to find a parking spot! I am really excited for the future and for the opportunity to help shepherd our congregation through these changes. As we grow, I will always try to remember Sankofa and look to that benevolent knowledge that will continually serve our present and our future. I hope you will join me in the work of maintaining our heritage so that we can sustain our development for years to come.

## RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

### *Our Many Stories*

As I write this article, I am extremely grateful to be gathering with religious educators from across the United States and Canada. I am grateful for the stories we share as we spend four days exploring Unitarian Universalist history. There are so many stories of the people and moments that help us understand who we are and where we are headed and that provide inspiration and encouragement. Our Unitarian and Universalist foundations reach back to early Christianity, before Unitarianism and universal salvation were declared heresies. Our story continued on to include a 16th century king who issued a decree of religious toleration; signers of the Declaration of Independence; U.S. presidents; scientists, such as Joseph Priestley and Maria Mitchell; artists and poets, such as N. C. Wyeth and e. e. cummings; and civil rights leaders, such as Rev. James Reeb and Whitney Young. Our history continues with individuals and congregations who are living their values and vision in both large and small ways, finding support in one another and in the stories of hope and courage that fill our history. I heard this over and over this weekend as people told stories of a few individuals coming together to form a congregation that grows and does great work together, much like the story Chris Houck shares in this newsletter.



*Linda Weaver,  
Director of  
Religious Exploration*

Our Unitarian Universalist history is a living history, a history that touches all of our lives and that touches the world in many ways. It is important to be reminded that our lives are part of a long path that has gone before us and that will continue long after we have finished walking along it. With the vision that the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling has developed, this congregation can be an important part of determining where the path leads and what stories will be told in the future. If you have already joined us at UUCS, help your family feel a part of this amazing path by sharing stories of Unitarian Universalism, the congregation, and your own religious journey. If you have not yet visited, we would be delighted to welcome you and we encourage you to explore.

*Children's Religious Education topics and a list of programs and events for children and families is on the calendar at the UUCS website, [www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org).*

## SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

### Updates From the Social Justice Council



Shelley Tamres  
Co-Chair, Social  
Justice Council

Our 2012 Congregational Retreat was held on Saturday, October 13. More than 40 members and friends gathered at the UU Church in Reston (our “parent” church) to spend time contemplating together the direction of our social justice program. The retreat was facilitated by Louise Green, former Social Justice Minister of All Souls Unitarian in D.C. It was a very energizing and enriching session. But it is only the

beginning of a process that we hope will involve all of you in the near future.

Last year, our congregation formally adopted new vision and mission statements that specifically call us to justice making. The new vision statement is:

*We are building the world we dream about, where all souls thrive in a diverse and loving community that acts daily on its commitment to justice.*

The new mission statement for social justice is:

*In justice making we put our faith in action through comprehensive and sustained programs.*

Our goal is to create an intergenerational social justice program that involves every member and friend of UUCS in ongoing efforts to improve the lives of the needier residents of Loudoun County. We began by brainstorming ways of doing social action in relation to five possible areas suggested by Rev. Anya: immigrant issues, welcoming congregation, green congregation, public education, and access to resources. The attendees concluded there was a lot of overlap among these, and selecting any one would still allow us to address the others. Public education and immigrant issues generated the most interest, and immigrant issues was the winner for our first efforts.

Thirteen of the retreat attendees expressed an interest in forming a task force to carry on the work we began at the retreat. You will hear more from them very soon.

In light of this effort, the regular monthly meetings of the Social Justice Council have been suspended. So there will *Not* be a meeting on November 4.



Kim Cleland,  
Co-Chair, Social  
Justice Council

In other news, in September we collected \$497.65 for Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES, the recipient of half of our collection plate offerings.

Finally, the Adopt-a-Highway cleanup along Davis Drive has been scheduled for November 4 from noon until 1:30 pm. Please note that this is a different date than previously discussed, to avoid a conflict with a congregational meeting. Please RSVP to Shelley Tamres at ShelleyTam@aol.com if you are willing and able to help—if we are unable to get at least 12 people, we will have to discontinue this effort. The last one was fun and rewarding, so please pitch in!

## JUBILEE CONCERT AT ALL SOULS CHURCH IN DC

You are invited to the All Souls Jubilee Singers’ Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Concert. The event will take place on Sunday, November 4, 2012, at 4:00 p.m. at All Souls Church, Unitarian. The program will feature music by the All Souls Jubilee Singers plus special guests Dr. Ysaye Maria Barnwell and the Urban Nation H.I.P.-H.O.P. Choir of DC. Your spirits will be lifted and your personal calling to service will be renewed by this afternoon of music to make a better world. Location: 1500 Harvard Street NW, Washington, DC, 20009. The nearest metro stop is the Columbia Heights station on the Green/Yellow Line.

### Want to share something in the December newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the December liturgical theme, *Peace*.
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in December and the first two weeks of January)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what’s planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUS or during UUS events

Please send anything you’d like to include to [newsletter@uusterling.org](mailto:newsletter@uusterling.org) by November 15th.

## A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### November: Gratitude

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

#### November 1— 4

##### From Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer, Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidic Judaism

*Whenever feeling downcast, each person should vitally remember, "For my sake, the entire world was created."*

#### November 5 —11

##### By ETTY HILLESUM, Dutch Jewish writer known for her diaries and correspondence from Westerbork concentration camp

*As life becomes harder and more threatening, it also becomes richer, because the fewer expectations we have, the more good things of life become unexpected gifts that we accept with gratitude.*

#### November 12—18

##### From Albert Schweitzer

*To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted... Nothing that is done for you is a matter of course. Everything originates in a will for the good, which is directed at you. Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude.*

#### November 19 — 25

##### "On Receiving" from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran

*And you receivers—and you are all receivers—assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives. Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings. For to be over-mindful of your debt, is to doubt his generosity who has the free-hearted earth for mother, and God for father.*

#### November 26 — 30

##### From Gary Kowalski

*Religion, according to Alfred North Whitehead, is a phenomenon that begins in wonder and ends in wonder. Feelings of awe, reverence, and gratitude are primary, and these can never be learned from books. We gain them from sitting high on a cliff side, gazing at the sea, lost in reverie and listening to the laughter of children.*

## UUCS POETRY SLAM

The joint was jumping at UUCS on Friday night, October 26, for the first-ever poetry slam. More than 75 folks enjoyed the George Mason University Jazz Band accompanying the readings of 25 poets as they read their original works. Regie Cabico and Sarah Lawson from Busboys and Poets in D.C. were the MCs for the evening, which was sponsored by the Journey Toward Wholeness Team at UUCS. More than \$350 in cash prizes was awarded to winners from both the youth and adult categories.



*Poetry and music light up the darkness at the first annual UUCS Poetry Slam*

## SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

### *Androcles and the Lion: A Greek Tale Retold by Aesop*

A slave named Androcles once escaped from his master and fled to the forest. As he was wandering about there, he came upon a Lion lying down moaning and groaning.

At first he turned to flee, but finding that the Lion did not pursue him, he turned back and went up to him. As he came near, the Lion put out his paw, which was all swollen and bleeding, and Androcles found that a huge thorn had got into it, and was causing all the pain. He pulled out the thorn and bound up the paw of the Lion, who was soon able to rise and lick the hand of Androcles like a dog. Then the Lion took Androcles to his cave, and every day used to bring him meat from which to live.

But shortly afterwards both Androcles and the Lion were captured, and the slave was sentenced to be thrown to the Lion, after the latter had been kept without food for several days. The Emperor and all his Court came to see the spectacle, and Androcles was led out into the middle of the arena.

Soon the Lion was let loose from his den, and rushed bounding and roaring towards his victim. But as soon as he came near to Androcles he recognized his friend, and fawned upon him, and licked his hands like a friendly dog. The Emperor, surprised at this, summoned Androcles to him, who told him the whole story. Whereupon the slave was pardoned and freed, and the Lion let loose to his native forest.

### *Family Discussion*

To whom are you grateful? Consider thanking this person in some way.

Is there someone who has been especially kind or helpful to you? If so, is there something you can do to show that you care about that person or a way that you can use a skill you have to help her or him?

For what are you grateful? Consider helping each family member write his or her own gratitude prayer. It might be as simple as a number of sentences that begin with the words "Thank you for..."

Consider sharing these gratitude prayers at dinner or before bedtime each night. After several days of reflecting on the things for which you are thankful, do you notice any changes in how you view your day or the world?

## 16TH ANNUAL GALA AND AUCTION

Come enjoy the company of friends, a fabulous auction, and a catered Italian buffet dinner complete with wine, beer and soft drinks, all while raising funds for UUCS. There will be something for everyone to bid on—distinctive dinners, family-friendly events, vacation rentals, and many unique and interesting items. Recommended donation: \$15; adults and youth only.

### *UUCS AUCTION FEATURED ITEMS!*

### Bethany Beach House



View of pond in front of the townhouse. The pond is home to interesting birds, ducks, turtles, and fish.



Sleeps Eight! Donated by Judy Gruner



### New Orleans Mother's Day Brunch



Hosted by Reverends Anya and Scott Sammler-Michael

### Mechoui – African Lamb Roast



Hosted by Clarice & Gus Douoguih

## NOTES FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Alyssa Lum, Finance Committee Chair*

Believe it or not, the holiday gift-giving season is right around the corner. If you do any of your gift shopping online, don't forget to first go to our website ([www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org)), then click on the Amazon widget at the bottom of the homepage to access Amazon.com. UUCS gets a percentage of all Amazon orders placed through this widget. It's an easy way to raise a little extra money for our church.

As the end of the calendar year approaches, you might be thinking about making charitable donations that can be deducted on your 2012 tax return.

Donations to UUCS are tax deductible, assuming you itemize your deductions. In January you will receive an itemized list of the donations you made to UUCS in 2012. Donations by check and credit card will show up automatically. If you want your cash donations to be included on this statement as well, please use the cash giving envelopes located at the welcome table. Be sure to get your donations in by December 31st if you want to deduct them from your 2012 taxes.

### Free Money for UUCS

Don't forget to use the Amazon.com widget on our website ([www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org)) to access Amazon.com. UUCS gets a percentage of all orders placed on Amazon through this widget. We've raised more than \$300 already this year. No extra work for you; free money for us. It's easy and it works!

## CALENDAR

### *Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events*

NOVEMBER	////////////////////
<b>Sunday, 11/4</b>	<p><b>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service: "Gratitude and Conflict"</i></b> Rev. Anya addresses election season stress by reflecting on the capacity of gratitude to bridge the chasm of conflict. Andy Johnson shares the gift of his Appalachian style a capella singing.</p> <p><b>Noon — <i>Inquirer's Class in Rev. Anya's office</i></b></p> <p><b>Noon — <i>Adopt-a-Highway cleanup along Davis Drive.</i></b> Please RSVP to Shelley Tamres at <a href="mailto:ShelleyTam@aol.com">ShelleyTam@aol.com</a>: at least 12 people are needed.</p> <p>(Please note that the first-Sunday Social Justice Council meetings have been suspended.)</p>
<b>Friday, 11/9</b>	<p><b>7:00 pm — <i>COEXIST Concert</i></b> Woven Green graces us with Funk/Rock/Folk ballads that address spiritual and creative subjects in a poetic and powerful way. Listen to their tunes at <a href="http://www.wovengreenmusic.com">www.wovengreenmusic.com</a>. Bring cans of gravy to donate to our local food pantry, Loudoun Interfaith Relief. Kids of all ages will be invited to help us build a Gravy Train. All ages welcome!</p>
<b>Sunday, 11/11</b>	<p><b>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service: "Our Wars"</i></b> In this Veterans' Day service, our choir will offer an American Anthem and Rev. Anya will reflect on the changing nature of war and the way that we Americans avoid and embrace the reality of war.</p> <p><b>11:45 am — <i>1st-6th Grade Parent Meeting</i></b> Meet the RE leaders and other parents and find out about the RE program this year. This is an opportunity for leaders and parents to share information and for families to build community within UUCS. Childcare will be provided.</p>

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<p><b>Saturday, 11/17</b></p>	<p><b>6:00 pm — 16th Annual UUCS Auction</b>                  Come enjoy the company of friends, a fabulous auction and a catered Italian buffet dinner complete with wine, beer, and soft drinks, all while raising funds for UUCS. There will be something for everyone to bid on—distinctive dinners, family-friendly events, vacation rentals, and many unique and interesting items. Recommended donation is \$15; adults and youth only.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 11/18</b></p>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Around the Table”</b>                  In this intergenerational, family-friendly service, Rev. Anya will reflect on Thanksgiving traditions and trials. We will share a “cornbread communion” and will be graced by the gifts of a guest musician.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 11/26</b></p>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship service: “Hymns of Gratitude”</b>                  Worship Associate Rosalie Clavez and members of our choir lead this post-Thanksgiving tribute to the poetry and music of praise.</p>
<p><b>D E C E M B E R</b></p>	<p>////////////////////////////////////</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 12/2</b></p>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service</b>   <b>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</b>                   (Please note that the first-Sunday Social Justice Council meetings have been suspended.)</p>
<p><b>Friday, 12/7</b></p>	<p><b>6:00 pm — Holiday Decorating Party and Potluck</b>                  Bring a dish to share and a beverage of your choice. Hot apple cider will be provided. After dinner, decorate UUCS for the holidays and make your own ornaments to take home.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 12/9</b></p>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service</b></p>
<p><b>Saturday, 12/15</b></p>	<p><b>Madrigal Dinner</b>                  Mark your calendars: the madrigal dinner is back this year! It will be held at the Wingler House. Step back in time to the Middle Ages for a family-friendly evening of Christmas festivities, including song, sword fights, and jesters. And of course food! The traditional ham dinner (with a boar’s head presentation) will be accompanied by vegetarian dishes. The Wingler House is at 20900 Runnymede Terrace in Ashburn. Additional information will follow in December.</p>