

Powerline

First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Niagara

December 2016

639 Main Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14301
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Learn, Love, Build a Better World

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The Powerline is a monthly publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara. It is free online to anyone who wishes to subscribe—members, friends, and anyone else anywhere in the country and beyond.

It's a simple one step process: Just email your request to uuniagara@gmail.com or click the link. Please spread the word.

Many thanks to our contributors Marge Gillies, Betsy Diachun, Judy Bongiovanni, and Susan Frawley.

Sunday Services 11:00am

December 4: "Chosen"

Our American national identity is firmly built on an unquestioned vision of Americans as God's Chosen People, with divinely ordained rights and destiny. Where does this notion of "God's Chosen People" come from, and where does it lead? We also pride ourselves on our personal liberties of choice, from the vending machine all the way up to the voting booth. This is combined with a freedom to blame and punish people for their choices (which, sometimes, were not really a choice at all, or a decision between two disappointments). How much choice do we have, and how much choice should we have?

John Snodgrass

Coffee Hour Host: Paul Brundage

Usher: Joy Rowlinson

December 11: "The Sound of Beauty"

Prior to the election, stressed out Americans were advised to listen to classical music to soothe their troubled souls. We all know that different songs bring back certain memories. If we pay more attention to our sense of hearing, we find that all sound affects our emotions and we find beauty in the world through sound. During the Holiday Season, music is a big part of getting us in the mood, so in addition to talking about the sound of beauty, we will hear some special music and sing some of the traditional carols that help us prepare for Christmas."

Donna Evans-Deyermond

Coffee Hour Host: Teresa Labuszewski

Usher: Susan Diachun

December 18: "The Light Within"

In these darker days of winter, it can be hard to find light. Various faiths and cultures use light to brighten their festivities and to rally against the loss of the daylight. We will examine and rejoice in light."

Susan Frawley

Coffee Hour Host: Stephen Wittkowski

Usher: Pat Velky

December 24, 5:30PM: "Lessons and Carols" a traditional UU approach to the Christmas holiday.

Refreshments in Unity Hall after service

NO Service on Sunday, December 25

Susan Frawley

Minister's Message

I was examining some old readings I have enjoyed. One was “a boring night at home” by Gerda Weismann Klein. Mrs. Klein is a Holocaust survivor, former Buffalo resident and editor of the former children’s page of the Buffalo News, author, activist and a global ambassador for peace. Her book chronicles life prior to the Nazi occupation of her homeland and her internment in a concentration camp. In her acceptance speech for the Oscar she won for the documentation of her life, she said “I lived a life where winning was getting a crust of bread to eat and to live another day” “your realization of your freedom honors their memory” In these dark and sun challenged days, we may forget the freedoms we have. We may take for granted the abilities that our foremothers and forefathers created for us. Our UU forefather, James Luther Adams wrote “When the enemies of freedom come to “rescue” us from the regnant social chaos, they will not come wearing brown shirts and hailing Der Fuehrer; they will come waving our flag and clutching the bible-seemingly innocent symbols of American culture”. You can read more about JLA’s prophetic voice and foreshadowing of our current state in the past UUA World, Winter edition 2010, article “Did James Luther Adams really predict ‘Christian Fascists’?” Like Mrs. Klein’s call to awareness of freedom, JLA cautions us to be stronger UU’s. He states “The trouble with being a Unitarian is often not the power of our enemies, but our own weakness, our liberal laxity”

Our freedom not only grants but also obligates us as Americans to be strong for those who would be oppressed. Our UU faith compels this.

Blessed be, Sue



Photo by Erica Kopp

President's Corner: Marge Gillies

It easy to imagine that many of our members and friends of the First UU Church of Niagara (FUUN) feel bruised and beaten up. I certainly do! Many of our core values that our liberal faith avows are questioned, seemingly more than in many years. Racial and ethnic minorities, women, those with different physical or mental abilities and those whose gender identities have been mocked in social media and out of the mouths of political candidates.

Unfortunately, we've been there before. Because of that, let's remind ourselves that **we** can still be kind. We can still hold onto our Seven Principles and Sources of the Living Traditions.

For now, though, things seem so wrong and overwhelming. FUUN can help.

If you haven't been able to attend First UU church services, consider coming back. We are a welcoming congregation of liberal faiths. It just feels more comfortable to be around those who think-alike sometimes. At FUUN, we have benefitted from having a venue where we can be heard, even if our views don't match another person's thinking. So, at coffee hours, church talk backs and simply being there to hear the ideas expressed by our speakers, the opportunity is there for anyone to experience.

The FUUN Caring Circle, consisting of Judi Bongiovanni, Shelley Baxter, Peter Diachun, Marge Gillies and Susan Frawley, would like to know of any concerns you have. We can't solve all the problems in the world, but **we can listen**. When requested, we may have some suggestions to offer as well. Feel free to contact any one of us.

Another way to get past a difficult time is just to have fun. The Caring Circle set up a game day to just play a board game after church. It's a blast that will likely take away your cares for an hour or so.

You might also consider working this Saturday, December 3rd from 9:30 to noon to decorate the church. During the weeks of advent, please bring plastic wrapped toilet paper rolls for those who are homeless or on social services. It isn't an easy life when one is in need of public assistance. Monies for rent go right to the owners. Food stamps may help, but often average about \$ 4 per day. Toiletries, paper products, and other non-food items are not included and small amounts of cash can be used to purchase such items.

Documentation and certification of clients is an on-going, often frustrating process. You can help by bringing at least one roll of toilet paper roll in a plastic bag for each week of Advent. This year our donation will be given to Heart, Love and Soul.

I know the holidays are difficult for us - so many unresolved issues pop up at these times. You are not alone. Please join us whenever you can. FUUN is always better when you can make it. I can't wait to see you again!

Warm wishes and blessings!

Marge

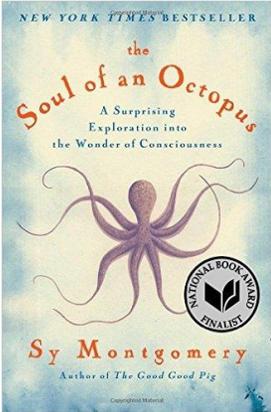
Photo: Erica Kopp

Marge Gillies

UU Announcements

ATTENTION:

Book Discussion Group



Our readers and talkers will meet December 20 at 7pm in Unity Hall. We will be discussing *The Soul of an Octopus*.

Everyone is welcome so come and add your opinions and thoughts

Our group tends to talk about ideas presented in our books so it is not necessary to have read the book to attend and share your opinions (although it helps). Everyone is welcome so join us for a chat.

Judy Bongiovanni Lewiston, NY USA

Holidays

We plan to decorate for the holidays – inside and out - on Saturday, Dec. 3. from about 9:30 to noon. We would appreciate any help we can get.

During December we are having a reverse Advent calendar. On each Sunday of the month we'd like people to bring at least one roll of toilet paper to create our T.P. holiday tree which will be donated to Heart, Love and Soul in January. In keeping with this theme, there will be a green Christmas tree, the decorations of which will be made from T.P. cardboard rolls. Thus we hope to have not only a fun display but a useful gift for others.

Sustainable Church

Please mark on your calendars Saturday, Feb. 4, for a congregation workshop at which we'll do an assessment of our many talents and work on how they can be put to use for building a sustainable church.

Attention all artists “Do you have a painting, photograph, a poem, or a brief reflection to share for the online version of the Powerline. It’s really easy to do and free. Just email your submission to the Powerline at the church address: uuniagara@gmail.com

Visual artwork is the property of the artist. For reproduction, please inquire with the artist by their email contact below.

Reflections

CHRISTMAS COMES WHETHER YOU'RE READY OR NOT

By [Cynthia Frado](#)

I am always in a bit of a shock when December 1st arrives on the calendar. I always feel like there should be at least another week beyond Thanksgiving before I can even contemplate the next holiday. I think, however, that beyond the incredible demands of the season, the hardest part to reconcile is that the heart is not always in sync with angels, presents, babes in a manger and the *ho, ho, ho* that is Christmas. Sometimes it feels like you just go through the motions because that's what is expected. Sometimes I wish Christmas would take a vacation and return mid-winter...next year.

Yet, there is something compelling about the fact that Christmas comes, no matter what. The celebration of the birth of Jesus comes, no matter the season of your heart. The Prince of Peace, the baby that would bring a message of universal equality, compassion, forgiveness, and love is reborn again and again and again, no matter our state-of-mind or being...indeed, in spite of it. Perhaps that is the real miracle of the season, that hope and possibility cannot be denied.

As I contemplate the state of the world at this moment in time, I cannot think of anything more needed than a reminder of our potential to bring peace and healing and possibility into our lives. We don't always feel it or see it or think it is there. But then there comes Christmas, even when we aren't ready to receive it. A reminder that no matter what season of the heart that we are in, no matter what struggles or grief are consuming us, Christmas will not let us forget the light that was born in us...even on the darkest night of our souls.

So, even if you can't deal with all the razzle, dazzle, and expense of this holiday, at the very least open the Inn door and prepare the manger of your heart for the gentle but powerful message that is seeking to be reborn in you. Never forget that you are a child of the Universe, and where there is life, there is light and love and hope waiting to be reborn, again and again and again. So turn on some twinkling lights, pour yourself a glass of eggnog (or not), and wait for that angel chorus to announce your heart's rebirth.

About the Author

[Cynthia Frado](#) <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/christmas-comes-whether-youre-ready-or-not>

Meditation

Winter Meditation

By Tess Baumberger

Something has changed in me this winter.
In the past I've focused on how long winter is,
How miserable I find it, and how it seems so interminable.

This winter, I find myself thinking instead
That every day, every hour, every minute
Brings us just that much closer to spring.

We all experience wintry times,
When things seem harsh and frozen,
Or muffled by layered shrouds of snow.

It is helpful to remember that each day that dawns bleakly,
Each night that wraps its cold cloak around our hearts,
Brings us closer to that time of warm and vibrant sun.

It is perhaps helpful to consider that turning toward spring is an active thing,
The earth which seems so stable in fact flies quickly through space,
On its path that tilts us ever towards the Source.

So, too, each memory we lay to rest,
Each truth in ourselves that we encounter and accept,
Each wrong act that we forgive, ushers us on towards our renewal.

About the Author

Tess Baumberger

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-meditation>

Community

Tops Gift Cards are available. They make great Christmas gifts. Let us Betsy or Erica know which denominations you need. \$250, \$100, \$50, and \$25 cards.



First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara
Facilities available for Wedding Services,
Receptions, and Celebrations



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"Singles Social Club" established over 36 years ago. We are a friendly group that welcomes newcomers to our activities, game nights, dances, picnics, restaurants and much more....come join us! (Ages ranging 50 to 80 years old now, but all welcome) Call for more info 716-550-1232. Find us on facebook: Singles Social

If you have comments or articles you may submit them to ericakopp@yahoo.com with the subject "Powerline



First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara
 639 Main Street
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 Return Service Requested
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UU Niagara Activities December 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27 Don Reidell	28	29	30	1	2	3
4 John Snodgrass 8am - Recycle	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Donna Evans-	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Susan Frawley 8am - Recycle 12:30pm - Board	19	20 7pm - Book Group @	21	22	23	24 5:30pm - Christmas
25 No Sunday Service	26	27	28	29	30	31