

# Powerline

First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Niagara

December 2018

639 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14301  
716-285-8381

*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.

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Many thanks to our contributors Teresa Labuszewski, Erica Kopp, and Betsy Diachun.

## Sunday Programs

### **December 2:** "A Wise and Active Hope"

Hope in the face of possible despair is the theme of so many of our winter holidays. What is the source of our faith amidst life's most difficult moments? How can it light our way through a dark December?

Kristina Church

*Coffee hour: Teresa Labuszewski*

*Usher: Kathy McCunn*

### **December 9:** "How to Have Better Political Conversations"

Video by Robb Willer

We are in a dangerous and ugly polarized society which threatens its very fabric. We need to overcome this with empathy and respect for each other.

Peter Diachun

*Coffee hour: Pam Smith and Judy Bongiovanni*

*Usher: Betsy Diachun*

### **December 16:** "Stretching Towards the Light"

"Mortal creatures turn inward in this deep long season of darkness. What gifts does it hold for us?"

Sally Hamlin

*Coffee hour: Susan Diachun*

*Usher: Marge Gillies*

### **December 23:** "A Mood of Expectancy"

What meanings shall we make of the Christmas Story?

Rev Don Reidell

*Coffee hour: Linda Hurley*

*Usher:*



**December 24:** Christmas Eve Service at 5:30 PM

Patty Calback will lead us in a Christmas Eve Service. It will be filled with carol singing so bring your family, friends and neighbors to sing along with Patty and us.

There will be refreshments afterwards.

**December 30:**

John Snodgrass

*Coffee hour: Marie Howard  
Usher:*

### President's Message

Heading toward a new year, I have been thinking about the future a lot lately. Many of us call our young people the future. What a heavy burden we place on them by doing that. And how do we help them if they are our future? Have we been good models for them? Wages have been stagnant for years-but do we do anything to change that? The gap between the very wealthy and very poor is huge-yet we buy the argument that we should not tax the wealthy too much because that might be us someday. Or that we have no power because we are not wealthy. We have told our youth that they need a college education for the jobs of tomorrow and perpetuate the fantasy that the name of the school they go to and the grades that they get there will make or break their future. Yet we have allowed the cost of that education to skyrocket and put them in terrible debt that many of them can never overcome. College debt is not wiped out if one declares

personal bankruptcy. It follows you forever. And we have defined success for them as making lots of money and having lots of stuff. This is the life goal we set for them.

But recently, I listened to a Chinese AI (Artificial Intelligence) entrepreneur on a radio program on NPR. He said more and more jobs will be automated and that the degrees we are promoting will be obsolete before the student has graduated. He used computer programming as an example. Computers are better at writing code than people are. Already, radiologists are being replaced by algorithms that are much better at picking up subtle changes in an x ray than a board certified radiologist. And computers can run through a list of possible diagnoses faster and more completely than a person. Assembly lines, shipping facilities like Amazon's, checkout counters are all automated. We are encouraged to bank online, use ATMs, shop from the comfort of our couch at home online. Just this week, GM announced the closing of 5 plants with the loss of around 14,000 jobs-many of them engineers with advanced degrees. This AI millionaire said we are lying to our young people about the jobs of the future. He said that we should be valuing and training people to do jobs AI cannot do-professions where empathy, compassion and human interaction are important. He said we are paying people all wrong. We need doctors, not to make diagnoses, but as guides to bring the patient through a health crisis. We should pay nursing home workers, social workers, teachers more and value how hard and important their jobs are.

"There will never be a substitute for human touch or relationship." This from a millionaire on the cutting edge of technology.

I think we also need to rethink how we reward work. I think we need to redefine what makes a successful life. I think we need to learn how to be in relationship with one another again. More and more schools are going to online classes where you never have a discussion about what you are learning. Often, I learned the most from a question or comment from a fellow student. I have taken online classes and they are OK, but no substitute for being in a room together. I hear people use the word friend or buddy to describe someone they have only a passing acquaintance with. We "like" each other on Facebook and are "friends" with thousands of people we have never met. How many of us have taught our youth what a friend really is by being one to someone else? To me, a friend is someone you can call when you are sad, need help, want to celebrate or share something interesting you have heard. A friend is part of a community that works and builds something together and does that in the same space with you. Physical presence is important for connection.

I started out by saying that I have been thinking about the future a lot lately. I think about the lovely community we have and how it is in danger of disappearing if we do not share it with others and work together to make it have a future.

We are all our future, regardless of our age. We are all mentors to each other. Let us reach out to friends and acquaintances and invite them into our church community-send them to our website, invite them to come to a Sunday Service. Explain that our religion is about this world, what it is now and what it will be in the future. To paraphrase Walt Kelly's Pogo, "I have seen the future and it is us."

I believe in You  
Teresa Labuszewski

## Announcements

### Thank You!!

Thanks to the elves who put up holiday decorations including a working train! Thanks to the big elf who fixed the toilet in the newer bathroom. Thanks be for live music each Sunday this month!

### Build a Wall



We're building a WALL to make Niagara Falls great again! Your donation of non-perishable foods will be most helpful and gratefully received. To make this work you must remember to bring your cans to church on Sunday! Accepting items through December 16. Everything will then be donated to Community Missions.

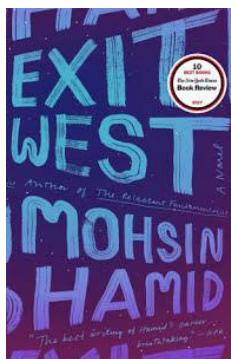


## TOPS Gift Cards



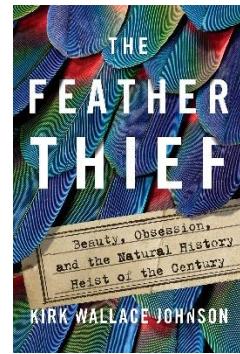
TOPS gift cards can be used for holiday giving. \$25 or \$50 cards make good little gifts for service people.

## Book Group now meeting Wednesdays



Book Group will meet at 4:30 on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. That means our next meeting will be on Wednesday December 19, at 4:30 PM in Unity Hall.

At that time we will discuss the November book: Exit West by Mohsin Hamid (fiction) and the December book: The Feather Thief by Kirk Wallace (non-fiction)



## Church Secretary

The church will have a position open as church secretary. It is a part time position. For any inquiries, email [uuniagara@gmail.com](mailto:uuniagara@gmail.com).

## UUA

### To Break Our Hearts Open

"Go ahead, push your luck/Find out how much love the world can hold."

—Dar Williams, "After All"

I wonder what exactly we're doing, we human beings, when we invite non-human animals into our homes.

When our last cat died, my spouse and I thought that maybe it was time for a break from cats. Why add to our already hectic lives, already full with the care of two small humans and the maintenance of two adults? Why deal with the hassle of having to put away dinner leftovers right away, lest they be eaten by a roaming pet? Perhaps our lives were better without extra fur.

Our daughters disagreed. They felt, in fact, that a cat was integral to our family's continued happiness—more specifically, littermates that would curl up together and lick each other's ears. Our daughters would feed them! They would take care of the litter box! We need never do anything again, if only we would get some kittens for our family to love.

We now have two kittens. They're ridiculous: they attack my toes and jump on the table and I can already tell that they're going to scratch the furniture.

It's basically a disaster. I love them so much. Love is like that, you know? It's like kittens: somewhat destructive; definitely annoying; and completely irresistible.

I mean *all* the kinds of love: family love and friend love and world love. I mean all the ways we're asked to break our hearts open, to let the world claw its way into our orderly ideas of how Things Are Supposed To Go. Love makes us clean up litter boxes even when we swore we were done with that forever. Love is so often a surprise, upending our expectations, and it's almost never convenient.

What, exactly, are we doing when we invite love into our lives? Surely we know that it's much tidier without it, when things stay at a distance. And yet: I'm sucked in every time, seduced by the possibility of an expanded heart. I hope that never changes. I hope every tiny, fuzzy, combative, ridiculous kitten asks me to open my heart just a tiny bit more. I know myself well enough: I'll say yes.

### Prayer

Spirit of life and love, help us say yes to love. Open our hearts: a crack, a little more, a chasm pulled apart so that love may seep in. Let the love run right across our orderly expectations. And when we think our hearts are full enough... open them a bit more. May it be so, and amen.

### About the Author

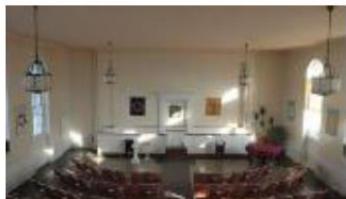


Rev. Amanda Poppei is a Unitarian Universalist minister serving as clergy at the Washington Ethical Society, a humanist congregation with roots in the Ethical Culture movement (which is also affiliated with the UUA). She lives in Maryland with her husband, Peter, and their two...

<https://www.uua.org;braverwiser/break-our-hearts-open>

# 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

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*If you have comments or articles you may submit them to*  
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