

# Powerline

First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Niagara

639 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14301  
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March 2019

*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

### **March 3:** Circles

The circle is one of nature's most basic elements. What can this simple shape teach us about religion, community, and the nature of reality? How can envisioning circles, instead of pyramids, help us understand our place in the universe?

**Kristina Church**

*Coffee hour: Shelley Baxter*

*Usher:*

### **March 10:** "Everything All of the Time"

We are related to all objects and life-forms in so many ways, that the whole realm of existence can be seen as a tangled, chaotic web. The more we look at the interconnections between all things, the more we can appreciate how an individual life can be without boundaries, and without limits.

**John Snodgrass**

*Coffee hour: Marge Gillies*

*Usher:*

### **March 17:** "We are marching in the light"

As a faith movement that prays with its feet, as well as our hearts; what we march for is as important as how we do it. Many issues and events call for our attention. How do we know what to side with? Illuminating our call to justice and witness will be the focus of this service.

**Susan Frawley**

*Coffee hour: Susan Diachun*

*Usher: Patty Lisk*

### **March 24:** "A LOOK AT THE BOOK"

How does our singing contribute to our sense of worship?

**Rev Don Reidell**

*Coffee hour: Paul Brundage*

*Usher: Erica Kopp*

### **March 31:** "WE SHALL OVERCOME"

The powerful words of the song inspire us, but we need better communication to attain that end. We Americans live in a culture of white supremacy, and sometimes we lack even a common vocabulary to talk about it or to tell our stories. Let's work on that together.

**Rev. John Rex**

*Coffee hour: Teresa Labuszewski*

*Usher: Jesse Higuera*

## President's Message

This year, I decided to try to see as many of the movies nominated for the Best Picture category of the Academy Awards, before the award ceremony. I wanted to see them before the Academy told me which one was “the best”. I fell short-I have seen only four out of eight at the time I am writing this. All four films I have seen (and this is probably no accident) are not only entertaining but they made me think about the human condition. In that way, they are not unlike our Sunday service when we are challenged to think about something we don't often think about or are asked to look at a topic from a totally new perspective.

The first film I saw was *Green Book*-a fictionalized account of a true story of Dr. Don Shirley, a Black classical pianist born at a time when, because of his race, he could not perform with classical orchestras as his training and talent should have allowed him to do. Instead, he merged classical and jazz to critical acclaim. The movie depicts his choice to make a tour of the southern US, performing for rich white audiences in an effort to convince them that a Black man was their equal. He hires a White bouncer from the Bronx to travel with him as his “tour manager”. Over the time they travel together, the bouncer, Tony, who had never really considered the racial and homophobic slurs he and his friends used regularly, has his eyes opened to what it means to be Black in America, to be Gay in America. They come away as friends, both having learned something about the other's reality. It is a story that demonstrates how learning to listen to those with whom we feel we have nothing in common leads to understanding and greater compassion and the beginnings of solutions to the divisions among us.

The second movie I saw, *Roma*, is in black and white and Spanish with subtitles. The cinematography was both dark and beautiful. This story depicts the lives of two women in Mexico at opposite ends of the social scale-an educated college professor whose husband leaves his family of five for no reason other than to be free to have other women and to not have to support the children he fathered, and an indigenous teen who is a servant in the household. She becomes pregnant by her first sexual encounter and is abandoned by her lover when he discovers she is pregnant. Her female employer stands by her and does her best to help. The movie depicts the reality of women in the 70's and the social divides amongst the well to do and the poor. In many ways, things have changed for the better, but in many ways, they have stayed the same. The women come together and support each other and take care of the children, with no assistance from the men involved. It is at once, sad and uplifting. Women are still expected to be the caretakers and often do not get support from the men who leave. Men still are primarily the ones in power. But that is changing with the help of more empowered women and more enlightened men. #MeToo.

The third movie I saw was Black Panther, the story of the fictional nation of Wakanda which is viewed by the rest of the world as a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, poor and backward. In reality, it is a rich and technologically advanced nation that has a rare mineral in large amounts found nowhere else in the world. They have lived in isolation from the rest of the world, with the citizens leading privileged lives, while other African nations struggle. The tensions in the movie result from fathers who betray their families and inadvertently set into motion the conflicts of isolationism versus globalism, nationalism and tribalism versus sharing knowledge and wealth with the outside world. It is the story of conquest and power versus altruism and compassion. (And it has a kick ass army of women dressed in red.)

The fourth movie, BlacKkKlansman, is a Spike Lee tour de force based on the true improbable story of Ron Stallworth, the first Black policeman in Colorado Springs who goes undercover in the KKK during the early 70's. You'll have to see the movie to see how that works. The movie not only shows the racial unrest of the time with tensions between Blacks and Whites, but also explores the tensions amongst Blacks over their attitudes toward and relationships with Whites and vice versa. Parts are just hilarious and parts are just sad. And like the other movies I have described, it illustrates how things have changed and yet stayed the same.

I find it hopeful that at least these four of the nominated films are shining light on the big issues of the day: Racism, Feminism and Populism/anti immigrantism, if there is such a word. These movies made me realize how grateful I am for our Beloved Community. We are welcoming. Everyone who walks through the church doors is welcomed in. We try not to judge another's appearance or circumstance. We support and care for one another and have learned to truly hear each other. Sometimes I feel sad that we are so small and struggle to stay afloat. But large institutions are often less agile and more unforgiving than we are. I was so gratified last week that many of you stepped up and out of your comfort zone to take on a month as worship associate. What each of these movies taught me was that to be complacent and let someone else do the hard work results in failure and in a world that is not a very nice place. It is when we stand up and take responsibility and work together that the work gets lighter and we have better outcomes. So let us move forward in the spirit of these movies and in the spirit of helping one another to keep our Beloved Community a vibrant and growing institution. I thank all of you for your help.

I think you all deserve an Academy Award. I believe in you.  
Teresa Labuszewski

## **Our People**

**Jean Speck** has new contact information:

Elderwood Senior Care

2600 Niagara Falls Blvd. Room 317

Niagara Falls, NY 14303

716-216-8935

**Judy Bongiovanni** has new contact information:

68 Crosslands Drive

Kennett Square, PA 19348

## **Announcements**

### **BAZAAR NEWS** **CHRISTMAS IN JULY**

We are going to have our Christmas Bazaar on Saturday, July 20, 2019.

Any and all help will be needed.

I'm hoping our gardeners will provide plants for a plant sale. I should be able to provide some pots to help. Hoping our bakers will provide breads, cookies, and other wonderful edible items. Hoping our musicians will provide some fun (or FUUN) music on the front porch. We'll have a basket auction, and hot dog sale. An Artists' corner...with beautiful handmade art and antiques. Of course a yard sale.

Please read your Powerlines and weekly announcements for more information as July gets closer. 716-550-1438. Thanx, Marie

### **PRIDE**

On Thursday, March 14, the PRIDE group which meets in Unity Hall will be hosting an LGBT health fair from 6:30 to 8:30. All are invited to attend. Medical professionals who offer LGBT specific health care will be handing out information. Please share this information with those who may be interested in attending.

### **Book Group**

Our small, but loyal book group is going to take a break in March but meet on April 17, (we usually meet on the 3rd Wednesdays of the month) after reading "The Library Book" by Susan Orlean. It is a non-fiction book which is quite popular now and a very good read. We will meet in the Founders room from 4:30 to 5:30. We are open to suggestions from anyone who may be interested in joining us – even to changing the time or date to accommodate new members. Talk to Kathy McCunn, Peter Diachun, Erica Kopp or Betsy Diachun if you have questions or need us to consider a change – or if you wish to read a certain book and just join us then, let us know. Don't feel you HAVE to have read the book completely. We have been known to only read or listen to part of our assignment. Non-readers are welcome too since we get into philosophical discussions which stray from the actual reading. Do plan on joining us on Wednesday, APRIL 17.

## UUA

### Here. Now. You.

By Kat Liu

February 6, 2019

“Breathing in, there is only the present moment. Breathing out, it is a wonderful moment.”  
—Thich Nhat Hanh

When I heard the Venerable’s robes rustle at what I estimated to be about forty minutes and yet she did not give the signal that our sitting meditation had ended, that’s when I knew she would take us to the full hour. But my knees were complaining and my mind was bored with counting breaths. What to do in the time remaining? Suddenly a stray thought entered: *What if this were your last breath?*

Funny thing, I immediately began to breathe slower. Drawing in the air to fill every crevice of my lungs and then slowly pushing it out until there was nothing left to expel. “Well,” I thought, “I must want to live.”

Of course, when I got to the end of that “last” breath I was still there. So I began another breath, still asking, *What if this were your last breath?* There were flashes of regret—unfinished projects, loved ones grieving—but one breath isn’t enough time to do anything about regrets. There was only enough time to experience the moment, to know that I was there, breathing.

Inhalation. Exhalation. When the moment passed, there was the next moment, and the next. In this way, I spent the remaining twenty minutes entirely in the present.

Outside of the meditation hall, we still plan for the future and think of the past. But so often we replay past regrets and worry about future events to the point where we’re no longer present in the present. As the Venerable says, “We forget that we are breathing.”

#### Meditation

When stuck in traffic, waiting in line, or anytime there’s nothing to do other than be present, find a comfortable position in which you can breathe freely.

What if this were your last breath?

Just for this moment, believe that this is all you have. No time to worry about the future or the past. Just enough time to know that you are breathing.

Draw it in.

Savor the sensation of your lungs filling.

Savor your heart beating.

Savor the sensation of your chest relaxing as you exhale.

Inhalation.

Exhalation.

Here. Now. You.



**Kat Liu**

Kat Liu is a former biologist, former UUA staff member, and currently aspiring stained glass and ceramics artist who lives in San Francisco. She runs the website *wizdUUm.net*.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/here-now-you>

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"Singles Social Club" established over 40 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 Club

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