

THE ADIRONDACK COMMUNITARIAN



A Monthly Newsletter of the Adirondack Unitarian Universalist Community

Volume 109

December 2011

Upcoming Services

December 11

Rev. Dave Weissbard
The House and Lineage of David

December 21

Winter Solstice Service
7PM details inside

December 24

Christmas Carol sing-along
5:30PM

*"The blossoms of today draw strength from the
roots of a thousand years ago."*

-Japanese Poem

Message from Dan Berggren on Occupy

I've been sending a new song, Occupy This Moment, out to lots of folks around the country, fellow musicians, UUs, (via my newsletter, Facebook pages, etc.) and thought that my UU friends in the Saranac Lake area might enjoy singing it, too. A bit of background:

What Does It Mean to Occupy? Recently, I spent an evening singing for a dozen St. Lawrence University students who live in yurts in the woods for a semester: no cell phones, iPods, computers, or TV. This Adirondack Semester is a great way to study the environment, but it also helps them be present, be in the moment, have real conversations and build real community. The day after my visit I finished writing a song that views the "occupy movement" through the lens of these students. Here's a [link to Occupy This Moment, Occupy This World](http://www.berggrenfolk.com/albums_details.cfm?aid=44). You're welcome to share the song with others.

(http://www.berggrenfolk.com/albums_details.cfm?aid=44)

All the best,
Dan

Family Champions in Tupper Lake is seeking stocking stuffer items.

We have supported this organization in the past. They do great things with dedicated volunteers and very little cash. They are looking for kids stuff: Pj's, outfits, hats, mittens, scarves, coloring books, crayons, reading books, toothbrushes and stuffed animals. Also for families they need hygiene items: toothpaste, soap, shampoo.

Items can be collected at AUUC on Sunday or dropped off at 46 Pine St. Tupper Lake. The info number is 359-9110. I can deliver anything we collect by December 17th. Let me know if you need things picked up. Emily 891-1947

Family in Need

Our AUUC congregation has a family in need of food preparation and clothing items. Joe and Barb Fuller have given me permission to share their names with you. You will remember them as the young family with two young sons who live at the Algonquin Apartments. They attended on a regular basis until the driving and arriving at 10:00 a.m. became too much. Life is getting somewhat easier for them now that their sons are in day care and Barb can stay home during the day and rest. Joe is working fulltime at Advanced Auto and providing care for his family. They are hoping to return to services soon.

They are in need of the following items:

Food:

- homemade frozen dinners like lasagne
- frozen chicken/vegie dishes and casseroles
- holiday treats

Clothing for Barbara:

- XL sweatpants with elastic waistbands (cannot cling to skin)
- XL pullover cotton shirts – long sleeve style that look nice with beading on front

Clothing for Joe:

- Men's XXL cotton polo shirts and tees for work
- Men's XXL sweatpants in any color, not florescent!

Would you be willing to help out? Please contact Susan Arnold at 891-3744 (sarnold3744@verizon.net). They will be ever so thankful for our help which will go a long way in getting them set up for 2012. Their children's needs have been taken care of by many kind agencies and neighbors.

Thoughts from Emily

December Thoughts

Yes I missed a November write and hope this gets out in time for the December newsletter. Many thanks to Courtney for her patience.

I am wondering where the snow is and still happy not to be too bundled up for walking outside.

I love seeing the snowfall. It is beautiful. Sorry to the folks who have a hard time with winter but you have to admit it is picture perfect here in the Adirondacks.

In the midst of the holiday season, Thanksgiving thru New Year's Eve I hope that we can seek out those we have neglected during the year. It can be a busy stressful time but it's also a good excuse for reconnecting with others. My thoughts go out especially to those who are ill or have moved away. I miss your presence at AUUC.

Besides our upcoming service with Dave Weissbard and the Solstice Service I invite everyone who loves to sing to come to the Christmas Eve Singalong. I love Christmas carols, maybe because I can remember the words. Or that the tunes are deeply rooted from my childhood. In any case singing with others is fun and a joyful way to relieve some of the holiday stress. No sermons. No structure. Just singing...and hot chocolate.

May your holidays be blessed.

My thoughts,

Emily

Once you have helped another human being, you

will never again be lonely.

Robert Henry Holmes

Letter From the President

My friends,

It's hard to believe that it is December already. The weather sure isn't telling us in the way it usually does but it's here and that's what matters.

It is the season of giving thanks and of giving of one's self. It is a time when we consider those whose lives are less fortunate than our own and a time to think about what we have received from this UU community of ours.

During this past Sunday's service I felt extremely proud to be a Unitarian Universalist. Your words made me proud of each and every one who spoke. You all were eloquent and positive. I will have to say with some parental pride that I was most proud of my six foot four little boy. Being raised as a UU has given him such a firm footing in the world. It was a good choice. And it was a choice.

So back to giving thanks. I am so thankful for this community and for all of the people who have given their time and talent and treasure to keep us alive and moving forward. If you are reading this, then I know that this community is very important to you. I know it is important that we are here and can give voice to liberal religious views here in the Adirondacks.

Now is the time for us to give to make this community we love grow. We can just chug along cobbling together services, meeting twice a month or we can have a bigger vision that includes our own minister, a thriving membership, and a vibrant presence and maybe even a place of our own. This larger vision will require that we all give more than we have in the past. I know that times are hard and you can only do what you can do but I urge you to do just a little more.

In faith,
Jason

Celebrate the Winter Solstice!

At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 21, we will gather for our fifth annual celebration of the winter solstice – the hopeful time that marks the beginning of longer days, the return of the sun, the warming that leads into spring and rebirth.

If you wish, you may bring an item for the solstice altar that for you symbolizes regeneration and renewal of mind and spirit, such as pine cones, evergreens, candles, or images of the sun.

In recent years, we have provided an opportunity for everyone to make a written wish, promise, or blessing for themselves or others in the spirit of hope and renewed energy. These wishes, written on little orange suns, were gathered and placed on the altar. They stated many lovely thoughts, including:

Harmony 'til the end
Peace, love

Find the right path
Enjoy each moment

Health and wellness for my family
Make a joyful noise
Learn, grow, heal
Relief from fear and worry
Calm, grateful, forgive
New friendships
Heal, hope, trust the future

May I go forth with love and gratitude
May your heart and mind be renewed
Family happy, be safe
Patience and acceptance, strength
Reach your goals
Laughter
Grow in my life and love

May there be courage in my heart to speak my thoughts without anger or regret
May I find friends that will help me learn new things
Around and around and around she goes, never stopping, always grows
May I never take my health for granted
May humans learn to respect and appreciate Mother Earth
Less self-scrutiny, more self affirmation, less fear, more forgiveness

You will have an opportunity to write on your own little orange sun again this year.

This is a service, inspired by ancient customs, that can inspire and be relevant to persons of all faiths, and is particularly meaningful to those of us living through many days of limited light, both literally and figuratively. Please welcome friends and extended family to celebrate with us.

Open House Sunday Speech

Here is a copy of the speech Spencer Brill made during November's Open House Sunday service on what it means to be a UU.

My parents will often recall a story of my childhood to me, every once in awhile, when talk of why I was raised Unitarian Universalist comes up in conversation. The story goes as follows: “when you were little (they would say – which is fairly hard to imagine now), before we decided which faith, if any, we were going to raise you in, you asked us a valid, concerned question – “When I die, will I have a cross on my grave?” This simple question was the cue my parents required to figure out a good community in which to enrich my sense of self and understanding, and my place in the world, as they knew I would have many more questions along the way, including: What/Who/Where is God? Is there a heaven and a hell? And why are we here?

These questions and more laid the basis for my exploration into science and the natural wonders of the world. My parents had raised me to question everything, to which others might reply with a snarky, “why?” and this led me down a road of self-discovery. I knew, over the years, that I would not be satisfied with having all of the answers to life’s questions found in a single book (or several revised, updated, translated, and revised again versions of a single book). The funny thing about UUs is that we don’t have the answers; we just ask the questions. Many of the answers abound in the relationships we form with our friends and loved ones, many are found in the stardust that we are comprised of, and many more are found in nature. The common theme that resides within these answers is that of relationships: the relationships that work within us, our relationships to one other, and to the

world around us, or as we like to call it “the interconnected web of life.” Once an understanding of this interconnectedness is present in your mind, your worldview changes. Suddenly, we are not black, white, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, gay, straight, man, woman or child, but we are all human. That, in and of itself is enough to push for positive change in a world filled with so much disdain for fellow human beings. I love other people: I see the universe in them, because it was what we are made of. There are those of us in the world that live for the life after this one, and those that live for the now, and are present in understanding the needs of those around them. Unitarian Universalism teaches us that the boundaries between us are imaginary and I believe that this humanistic approach is one of the most fundamental ideas that we, as human beings, should possess.

I am thankful to be a UU. I am thankful that I am able to be part of a spiritual community that has not only allowed me, but also pushed me, to think outside of the box in every context. Back in 2002, a study was done on SAT scores associated with religious affiliation and found that UUs had the highest average score of any major religion. I am thankful that my sense of morality has not been crafted from the guilt or anxiety related to possibly going to hell post-mortem, and that my ideas of what are right and wrong were established by my own experiences and reinforced by my parents. I am thankful I was granted a top-notch, open-minded sex education that benefitted me tremendously through the years by helping me not be afraid

or ashamed of sexual openness. I am thankful that I can be a “practicing atheist” and continue to evolve my spirituality as I see fit, without judgment from those within the religion and a mutual “wink and a nod” from those who do the same. I am thankful that the communities I have been fortunate enough to be a part of over the years have helped me develop my sense of self and helped me build strong ties to people all over the world.

As far as I can tell, I’ve been a Unitarian Universalist all of my life. I’ve also been an atheist, a humanist, a moral individual, without fear: fear of sin, fear of hell, or fear of the unknown. I, as I’m sure many of you, have been asked over the years, “how can you be a part of a religion with no belief in God and no holy book?” And for now, I’d like to answer that with a quote from Arthur Powell Davies, a Unitarian minister of the All Souls Church of Washington, D.C. in the 40s and 50s:

When someone asks where now is thy God, we can answer that the sacred is where it always was: in the struggle. In the pain of our hearts, in the growing clearness of our minds, in the sharpening edge of conscience, in the welling up of courage, in the purpose we cannot forsake and never shall.

Share Your Stories!

If you want to share your personal story on being a UU please send it to Courtney at starrypoetics@gmail.com Other contributions are welcome as well.

Contact Numbers

www.adkuu.org

President:	Jason Brill	891-7230
Vice President	Ann Mullen	891-5735
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Treasurer:	Karen Graff	891-5735
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**We the member congregations of the Unitarian
Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and
promote**

-The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

-Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

*-Acceptance of one another and encouragement to
spiritual growth in our congregations.*

-A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

*-The right of conscience and the use of democratic
process within our congregations and in society at
large.*

*-The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and
justice for all.*

*-Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of
which we are a part.*



From the "Church of the open mind, loving heart, and helping hand" to

**Adirondack Unitarian Universalist Community
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