

THE ADIRONDACK COMMUNITARIAN



A Monthly Newsletter of the Adirondack Unitarian Universalist Community

Volume 111

February 2012

February Schedule

February 12

Service by: Karen and Ann
Chalice: Laura Reid
Joys and Sorrows: Carol Scofield
Flowers: Carol Scofield
Coffee Hour: Karen White

February 26

Service by: Lynn Ashley
"Wisdom of the Wobegoners"
Chalice: Glenn Arnold
Joys and Sorrows: Ginger Slater
Coffee: Joyce and Gail

Social Justice Forum

Thursday, February 23
7 PM

A public forum on adoption rights, including a screening of documentary, "Adoption: For the Life of Me" followed by a discussion. Focus is on allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificates, something allowed in very few states.

Winter Whispers

by Gail Brill

They are whispering in my ear.
Can you hear them too?
The ancestors are with us.
The shop keepers, Doctors, tuberculosis patients,
guides, entertainers and athletes.
They watch as we prepare.
They understand our anxious anticipation.
We celebrate the snow, the ice and the fireworks, just
as they did so long ago.

We are the new link in the chain that binds us to the
past.
We are a unique, hearty breed, we Saranac Lakers.
We embrace winter and find joy and beauty
in the frigid cold,
the deep snow,
the thick blue ice.
It is a glory to us.
It means magic is about to happen.
There is indeed magic in the fellowship
that connects us to one another at carnival.
And there is magic in the chain of history
that brings this glorious gift of carnival to us every
year.

Winter Whispers was written by Gail for the Winter
Carnival interfaith service held on Monday, February
6th at St. Luke's.

Congregant Care News

An AUUC church directory is in the making! We're working hard to make certain you are included in this booklet with the correct information. This month we'll be handing out forms and making the current congregation list available at services so you can add your name or make corrections. We're doing our best to keep in personal touch with you especially if you are ill, house-bound or have lost a loved one. We need a call or email to keep us up to date in between services. If you, or if you know someone who would appreciate card, a call or visit, please let us know. Thank you so much.

Emily Warner 891-1947 or ewarner1950@gmail.com, Carrie DeClerque at 891-2207 or cdeckerque@gmail.com, Susan Arnold at 891-3744 or [sarnold 3744@verizon.net](mailto:sarnold3744@verizon.net)

Presidential Letter

Hello Friends!

It is Winter Carnival time here in Saranac Lake. Thankfully we have an ice palace to celebrate! It was touch and go there for a while. Keep your eyes peeled for AUUC members that will be marching in the Winter Carnival Parade. Nancy Murphy has been busy working with Historic Saranac Lake on their float and Gail and I will be marching with the newly formed Canoodlers canoe paddle drill team. By the moons of Meepzor!

I hope you were able to attend Kimberely Bouchard's service on the 22nd. Based on "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz I found it inspiring. It moved me to know that a member of the Canton UU Church felt inspired to join us and share her wonderful sermon. So simple: Tell the truth, worry not about another's opinion, say what you mean, and do your best. That is very sage advice indeed. If only our nations leaders and those that aspire to be those leaders followed that same advice. It is clear that the congregation loves the after service conversations. We will do our best to see that they become a standard part of our services.

I want to thank all who attended our congregational meeting on February 5th. It was very heartening for me and the rest of the AUUC board to see so many of you there. We are a committed group and I feel a great optimism for our future after Sunday's meeting. You will be hearing more about the things that were discussed at the meeting from Ann Mullen, . Ann is the AUUC board VP and will be condensing the information and presenting it to the congregation in the next Communitarian or sooner. Perhaps after an upcoming worship service. First on almost every list was and is beginning the process of looking for a minister. More to come on that. We have research to do about how to go about a search and getting our finances in order to do so.

Thank you to all of you that signed up to light the chalice, lead Joys and Sorrows and host Coffee Hour. The board will make a committed effort to have our agendas available to the community prior to board meeting and to update you regularly on what we are doing. You will see a different one of us at Sunday Worship Services welcoming and making announcements, this way you can learn who we are. It's important as a community to deepen our connections to one another. Hopefully, these small actions will help that process.

Finally I would like to thank Gail Brill for creating a beautiful chalice artwork to cover Mr. Black's face. It says AUUC loud and clear.

Happy Carnival!



Thoughts From Emily

In Consideration of Tomorrow:

I consider the tomorrows of AUUC; as a church, as a congregation, as a community, as what it means to us as individuals and collectively. If there are tremors of disinterest, rumblings of pessimism, apathy, from where do they come?

What I see and seek in AUUC is something essential to my spirit, to my soul. I could gather with the Quakers who have sustained themselves often with only the gathering of the proverbial two or three. I could restore the confirmation of my young self as an Episcopalian if I could suspend my disbelief. I could begin again and again and again the practices of Buddhism in pursuit of personal enlightenment. Instead I stick with Unitarian Universalism, hoping that this Adirondack version will survive its infancy, the growing pains of its youth and someday, well past my time, become a respected elder in the wider community. I believe this can happen.

But not if we neglect what this type of community means. We are not casual friends drawn together because we met at college or a party or grew up together. We are not a family with a similar genetic pool delighted or obligated to convene at holidays. We have each of us chosen this group of people to meet with twice a month. Do we see our closest friends or family as often? What does this group give us that we are drawn to give to it our time, talent and treasure? Because this is not just a taking from but is also a giving to. The more I give to AUUC, especially of my time, the more I get from it.

I do have concerns. One has to do with rituals, the rites of passage, stages of life. We neglect the sacred when we give but a passing glance or casual mention to these things. How do we honor the birthdays, weddings, deaths among us? How does AUUC help when someone is in need be it physical labor or someone to talk to? Are we easier at giving materially than personally?

As in any organization there are periods of growth and enthusiasm and periods of just slogging along maintaining. If we are just in maintenance mode right now how do we re-inspire ourselves? Or is this an important time for reflection, with careful and steady planning now, maintaining what we have and building up for the next phase. We cannot always expect to be vibrant, energetic, exciting and packing the house. We are at a good point to look at our core, see what we have, where we want to go and using all our talents with consideration, appreciation, and optimism begin the next period of AUUC.

My thoughts,
Emily Warner

Notable UUs born in February

Charles Dickens, February 7, 1812

Charles Darwin, February, 12, 1809

Report on Membership Meeting and Grassroots Brainstorming Session

Twenty-eight members of the AUUC gathered together on Sunday morning, February 4th, for a “grass roots” discussion and brainstorming session on ways to meet the challenges that face our well-loved congregation.

The meeting was designed to stimulate ideas and to cement the members’ commitment to the AUUC. Most of the meeting was spent in discussion, with members breaking down into small groups of four to five members. The format of the meeting was:

- An introduction and brief description of the challenges we face by President Jason Brill,
- Small group sessions that were designed to last about a half hour, but, because of the general enthusiasm, lasted an hour,
- A report back by each group of the results of their group’s discussion,
- A decision on “next steps.”

At the end of the meeting, there was a spirit of lively energy that imbued the room and everyone agreed it was an exciting, valuable, and much-needed meeting!

The following summarizes the ideas and comments that emerged from the group sessions. Similar ideas have been grouped together to avoid duplication. In addition, there is a listing of the next steps that will be taken, along with who’s responsible for taking those steps.

Question 1. What do I, as an individual member, want from the AUUC? The collective answers were:

- A permanent minister to lead us and provide ministerial care, whether s/he is shared with another congregation or not.
- A community; like-minded people; friendship – love, trust and support; trust that I can say what I want without judgment – safety.
- Inspiring services, so that I feel inspired, personally touched; so I can open up to the Great Spirit; express spirituality.
- Exploring spirituality, especially in small groups
- Intellectual stimulation.
- UU knowledge and teaching from UUs who know more than I do.
- Different perspectives on beliefs and ideas; I can make my own spiritual decisions and feel comfortable here; have an opportunity to explore and develop perspectives on life and the world.
- Children’s story during services; different types of expression, art, etc. during services.
- Celebrate my values and the things that are important in life
- Tolerance
- Social justice
- Broader knowledge of what’s going on in the world and the UU Community
- A place to sing; music.
- Summary of Board meetings at services; introduction of Board members
- Space for young people; more attention paid to kids
- RE Program.

Question 2. What do I, as an individual member, want the AUUC to be? The collective answers were:

- A place with a professional minister and intellectual thought leaders.
- A sanctuary.
- Greater community involvement; be a social force for good in the community; higher impact and visibility in community; encourage community participation at many levels, enable participation in

events, even if it's not officially on behalf of the congregation.

- A successful place, a beacon of liberalism, open-mindedness.
- Affirm and promote the Seven Principles.
- An RE program for older youth.
- Members to be aware of their responsibilities as members.
- Our own building or a better space.
- Diverse membership, of all kinds.
- Interdenominational contacts and participation in the Interfaith Council is very important.
- More interface with Canton and Plattsburgh.
- Attracting families; becoming a family.
- Doing things together, example, a UU outing club
- Stay at HSL in the John Black Room; not a new building.

Question 3. What am I, as an individual member, willing to do in support of the AUUC? The collective answers were:

- Increase my financial contribution.
- Commit to providing congregant care.
- Be active on a committee.
- Make a personal commitment to attending in summer.
- Create a committee that follows up on today's meeting.
- Serve on the Board.
- Fundraise in general; fundraise – specifically for a building.
- Participate in leading OWL (Our Whole Lives sexuality program for teens).
- Shovel snow; household chores.
- Serve on Stewardship Committee.
- Use this space more; get more value out of the space.
- Help on short-term projects.

Next, each group was asked to brainstorm ideas about how to meet the challenges that Jason described. There were six areas of discussion. Brainstorming means to share and capture all ideas, but not to problem-solve. In other words, no idea is considered a bad idea. This creates an open atmosphere in which creative ideas can emerge.

Concern #1. How to address our membership issues; the collective ideas were:

- “Adopt” casual visitors, people who come more than once but not regularly; sit with them at services, call them between services, etc. Better follow-up.
- The Communitarian needs to be a communication vehicle for current information.
- Ask our members: “What does AUUC really mean to you?”
- Exit interviews with people who stop coming.
- Train the congregation on how to welcome visitors.
- Have a greater presence in the community: block party booth with fliers; continue with our First Night Soup and Sandwich project; be a visible presence at Winter Carnival; establish a committee to generate more ideas.
- Recontact former members and ask them to come back.
- Circulating the refreshments list more frequently.
- Educate members so they are aware of their responsibility to contribute time, treasure, talent (to the

best of their abilities).

- Have a standard song at the beginning of the service as well as at the end.
- Organizing outings together, using “evites”.
- Learn how to describe UUism to others.
- Newspaper article on the history of UUism
- Membership directory.
- More communication from the Board
- Re-allocate the Building Fund for a professional minister.
- Family movie night, stressing family life (monthly).
- Sponsor speakers in the space to raise community visibility.
- A sound system for those with hearing issues.
- More after-service discussions.
- More “Open House” or bring-a-friend services; try more than once.

Concern #2. Financial issues; the collective ideas were:

- We need at least one other fundraising event.
- Focus on raising funds for our own building; “rent-to-own” our own building.
- Ask people to reevaluate their financial commitment; a more visible stewardship campaign.
- Publish information on our financial status in the Communitarian.
- Tithing.
- More advertising.
- We need a professional minister to attract newcomers.
- Identify a place with lower rent.

Concern #3. Minister and Worship issues; the collective ideas were:

- We need a professional minister (shared with another congregation, if necessary); we need to establish a Ministerial Search Committee.
- Support from the UUA and the St. Lawrence District.
- Worship services need to be of consistently high quality; we need quality standards for services, otherwise some members don’t feel motivated to attend.
- More identification with UUA events, themes, for example, UN Month, the annual Anniversary celebration/recognition, etc.
- Benchmark with other small UU congregations on what works for them.
- Drop the Christmas service and concentrate on a big Solstice Service and advertise it widely.
- Guest commentaries several times a year: “What the heck is a UU?”
- A much better Web presence.

Concern #4. The lack of ongoing, long-term participation; the collective ideas were:

- Obtain commitments from people to serve on the Board; more rotation of Board members. (Note: three people volunteered for Board service).
- Re-establish or expand all of the committees: Stewardship; Fundraising; Membership; Congregant Care; Community Outreach. (We already have a Social Justice Committee and Worship Committee.)
- Have a congregational retreat to establish goals and aims for the congregation; empower the congregation.
- Visit other religious organizations in Saranac Lake and learn what works for them.

- Advertising that promotes specific topics; flyers with a positive bent.
- Host an AA 12 step program.

Concern #5. Committees (lack of); the collective ideas were:

- The Board needs to establish some kind of way to regularly report to the congregation: some of the ideas were: publish minutes in Communitarian; report to the congregation before the service or during announcements
- Publish the date and time of the Board meetings and the agenda so that members of the congregation can attend.
- The committees need to be accountable to the congregation for their goals, their activities, etc., and report to the congregation regularly.
- Committee reports in the Communitarian.
- Monthly business meeting, perhaps before the services at monthly intervals

After the group sessions concluded, each group chose a spokesperson who presented their results to the whole group. There was a brief discussion, and the following were the agreed-upon next steps:

Next Steps

1. All 28 attendees agreed that we needed a professional minister, and that we needed to identify the financial resources to fund this. So, a Ministerial Search Committee will be formed. Ann Mullen volunteered to research the UUA website for information on this kind of committee (see related article).
2. Define each committee: its activities, scope and roles and responsibilities.
3. Volunteers to serve on the Board are: Karen White, Gary Alexander, Joyce Henklein.
4. Survey the membership on priorities and other questions – the Board.
5. The Board will deliver a strategic plan to address the output from today, and will communicate this to the congregation.
6. Jason Brill will ask the St. Lawrence District for its help in finding solutions to these concerns.
7. The Board will review what restrictions have been placed on the Building Fund.



Our January 26th service was given by guest minister Kim Bouchard on the subject of “The Four Agreements”. Our music for that morning was by pianist Jack Woulfe

Professional Minister Search Committee

A very hot topic at the Congregational Meeting this past Sunday was the need for a permanent minister to serve the AUUC. Indeed, all 28 of the members attending the meeting signaled their approval of seeking a permanent minister.

Of course, for us, this means a part-time minister, but we all agreed that a permanent minister was critical for building membership, increasing our visibility in the community and for meeting our intellectual and spiritual needs.

As a follow-up to the decision to form a ministerial search committee, I agreed to research the background of this type of committee using the UUA website. Much of what I found is relevant to much larger congregations than ours, congregations that are seeking full-time, “settled” ministers. However, there was some valuable information that was pertinent to the AUUC.

First, in terms of the process for selecting the Search Committee: although we’re not required to do so, most of the material on the UUA site recommends (and even assumes) that the congregation will elect the members of the Search Committee. There are many factors to consider, such as the Committee’s overall makeup, eligibility to run for a spot on the Committee, the qualifications expected or required, and the amount of commitment required by the members. In addition, there was an example of a nomination application for membership on the committee that we can adapt to our own purposes.

Second, in terms of the makeup of the Search Committee: There is a UUA document named “The Settlement Handbook,” which is a comprehensive guide to choosing a minister. The following is from the section of the Handbook that addresses Search Committees:

“All members of the search committee should be known and respected by others in the congregation; more strongly committed to the congregation as a whole than to any subgroup; well informed about the demands and time requirements of the search committee membership. Members should promise to attend every meeting, and to give [substantial time during the search]. [The Committee should be] balanced by sex, age, interests, and tenure of membership to reflect the diversity of the congregation. Major areas of church life such as religious education, social action, property management, finance, and music should be represented by participants, not partisans. [The Committee should be] balanced by attributes: organizational ability, broad theological awareness, computer skills. [The Committee should be] pledged to conduct a search that is fair and nondiscriminatory with respect to race, color, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, and national origin.”

We will be discussing the Search Committee at our next Board meeting; we welcome your thoughts, ideas and concerns about this important topic.

“Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.” -Tennyson

When Someone is Sick or Dying

Recently a dear friend asked me to pray for her daughter who was undergoing surgery for brain cancer. What does a Unitarian do in such a circumstance?

An article on the UUA website edited by Catherine Bowers includes brief statements by Unitarians about prayer, reflecting the wide variety of approaches to prayer among Unitarian Universalists. I find this one by Nick Page to be especially meaningful to me.

“I composed a piece of music called "Healing Prayer," to be sung by combined choirs and congregations. I wrote it because a dear friend had been diagnosed with leukemia. He asked that his friends neither visit him nor call him, but rather that we simply pray for him. And people prayed—even many who had never before given prayer a thought. My friend is now well on his way to recovery. I am far too scientific to say that our prayer healed him, but I know that those of us who prayed found a deeper connection to him, to each other, and to the world we live in—and I know that my friend also found that connection between self and all things. I also know that this connection was more than mere thoughts—it was tangible—as tangible as the medical treatment he also received.

Growing up in the Unitarian Universalist faith has been a wonderful evolution for me. The words from Psalm 42 have become very meaningful: "As the deer longs for the stream, so my soul longs for Thee, O God." My longing is for the elation of compassionate connectedness—that incredible feeling of being a part of all actions—God or Creation as a verb—a self-organized interdependent event. I composed the "Healing Prayer," not because I believe in a higher power, but because I believe in a living universe with energies both powerful and subtle—all mysterious. At the end of "Healing Prayer," members of the congregation may offer the names of those in need of healing. It is a powerful moment—an emotional moment—a spiritual moment. We touch that which we long for—the living spirit of Creation.”

I told my friend that I would pray for her daughter. And, as a hospice volunteer, I have held the hand of the dying and prayed: “May you be at rest. May you be calm. May you be at peace.” Over and over. I seek “the elation of compassionate connectedness.”

Nancy Murphy

Humorous Excerpts from Church Bulletins

Don't let worry kill you - let the church help!

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday in the church meeting hall. Music will follow.

Our next song is, “Angels we have heard Get High”.

The Senior Choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

The church will offer an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment and gracious hostility.

Contact Numbers

www.adkuu.org

President:	Jason Brill	891-7230
Vice President	Ann Mullen	891-5735
Secretary:	Vanessa Houghtlin	
Treasurer:	Karen Graff	891-5735
Trustees:	Sue Grimm	891-0455
	Adrian Vlach	946-7465
	Laura Reid	359-2019
Worship Committee:	Nancy Murphy	891-6602
	Emily Warner	891-1047
	Karen Graff	891-5735
	Elizabeth Phillips	354-8218
Children's Programming:	Gail Brill	891-7230
Communitarian:	Courtney Miller (starrypoetics@gmail.com)	
Community Outreach:	Joyce Henklein	891-7761
Congregant Care:	Susan Arnold Carrie DeClerque	
Flower Power Program:	Nancy Murphy	891-6602
	Elaine Holmlund	891-6717
Place:	Randall Swanson	891-3512
	Stanley Ingeson	946-7465



**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
89 Church Street
Saranac Lake, NY 12983**