

# THE ADIRONDACK COMMUNITARIAN



A Monthly Newsletter of the Adirondack Unitarian Universalist Community

**Volume 129**

**August 2013**

## **August Service Schedule**

### **August 4**

Wayne Walder  
Paradox  
Social Justice Committee Meeting 11:15  
RE Room

### **August 11**

David Weissbard  
Topic TBA  
Board Meeting

### **August 18**

Service TBA  
Social Justice Committee Meeting 11:15  
RE Room

### **August 25**

Steve DeHond  
Topic TBA  
Board Meeting 11:30

## **Greetings from Rochester!**

It feels like a total whirlwind, but I am here and settling in. Rochester has been amazing so far. I'm a hop, skip, and jump from the downtown, so I'm in an ideal location. The level of diversity in the city is quite different from Saranac Lake, but I'm too refreshed by it to have any culture shock.

I attended service at First Unitarian this past Sunday. Things are kind of low-key there at the moment with summer, but everyone there is so nice. I should be getting in touch with the director of their social justice department sometime in the near future.

If anyone wants to snail mail me my new address is:

Courtney Miller  
201 Griffith Street. Apt 1  
Rochester, NY 14607

Feel free to email me or friend me on Facebook, LinkedIn or Google+

## **Fun with the Caring Committee**

The July Huutenanny was cancelled by the Canton U.U. community due to the weather. Knowing how busy most of us are in the summer, it's difficult to find a time to get together for some fun. Here are some ideas.

1. Glenn and I are planning to attend the Timbuctoo concert at Lake Placid Center for the Arts at 7:30 on August 18<sup>th</sup>. Under the direction of Helen Demong, this north country chorus performed for this year's celebration of John Brown's life and received rave reviews. The tickets are \$18 and \$16.50 for seniors. Call 523-2512 to make reservations (there is a \$3 fee for ordering tickets by phone and \$5 fee for ordering online). Would you like to join us? We can meet at our AUUC parking lot and car pool at 7:00 p.m.
2. Call Susan at 891-3744 or email [sarnold3744@verizon.net](mailto:sarnold3744@verizon.net) if you would be interested in a paddling adventure, luncheon or potluck picnic at our home at 62 Petrova Ave.

Looking forward to seeing you soon, Susan Arnold for the Caring Committee.

## President's Letters

This month we have not one, but two letters regarding AUUC and its future.

Dear Friends,

It is with gratitude for the fine work of departing board members Ann Mullen, Karen Graff, Gary Alexander, and Jason Brill, that I look to the year ahead. There is much to be done, there is a solid foundation in place, and we have a good crew, ready to rise to the year's challenges.

As Ann detailed in her recent letter, providing a vibrant congregational home to religious liberals and spiritual seekers is no small task. We lack an economy of scale that larger congregations enjoy--there's no money in the budget to pay someone else to sweep the floors, no wealth of congregants to share committee work. Still, we do a great job, even as we strive to do better.

I have some ideas for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our little nonprofit. Churches are, after all, just that.

1. **Write it down.** We are not without the basics (articles, bylaws, a few spreadsheets), but our church is thin by way of policies and procedures. Now, before you wrinkle your nose and imagine bureaucracy, ask yourself this: How will I know what to do when it's my turn to...? Whether that sentence ends with "make the coffee", "teach Sunday school", or "take on the accounting", the difference between anxiety and efficiency may be as simple as a short set of written instructions.
2. **Borrow liberally.** We are not the *first* UU congregation. We are not the *only* small UU congregation. And we do *not* need to reinvent the wheel. Let's plug into the existing regional and national networks; let's access the resources that are there for us; and let's pretend we're bandits, if that suits us.
3. **Get out there.** I launched the Social Justice Committee with double intentions: 1) to organizationally put our liberal religious practice in motion; and 2) to make social justice a primary association that local non-Unitarians have of Unitarian Universalism. The more we get out there and do our thing (social justice and otherwise), the more our congregation will grow, and the easier it will be for us to do what we do.
4. **Cultivate participation and leadership.** We don't train anyone to do anything--that's a fact. Either things happen or they don't. Either people get asked, or they don't. Whether I wind up sweeping the floors and locking up, or someone else does, is largely a matter of chance. We're getting more organized all the time, but there is still room to improve. Involved members are invested members. I want to start with board training, but I'd also be happy to show you where the brooms are kept.
5. **Fundraise like we mean it.** Annually there is a pledge campaign, but it always sneaks up on us, and execution...? Well, you could probably guess from our execution that nobody likes begging for donations. It's time for that to change! What is our goal? Where's our iconic fundraising thermometer? Who's updating the congregation on our progress? What about planned giving options? Can I sign up to have a fixed amount auto-drafted from my checking account? We don't need to be fundraising professionals to professionalize our financial stewardship.

That's five; I have more. How much of this will we implement? I don't know. A year passes quickly. I look forward to seeing how much low-hanging fruit we can find in a year.

Yours in service,  
Adrien

Dear Friends,

About a month ago Unitarian Universalist congregational leadership from across the country gathered in Louisville, Kentucky, for GA (General Assembly). GA is the big annual conference for UU's—it's chock full of resources and inspiration.

The year I attended GA (2007), I was a delegate from my congregation in East Lansing, Michigan, and the conference was in Portland, Oregon. Even for a larger congregation it was a lift to send several of us across the country to participate. I think about half a dozen of us were there. The congregation split expenses with attendees; members were expected to pay registration and lodging, and the church reimbursed travel. I managed costs on my end by volunteering in return for a full registration waiver and lodging for free with a friend.

Aspects of that conference have stayed with me for six years and counting. I remember best the things stirred me: social justice, music, worship and strippers. Well, the strippers were less stirring than they were distracting, but that's a story for another time.

Born in 1975, I was unfamiliar with the Pentagon Papers, but I went to a panel discussion about them because Amy Goodman was moderating. You can probably imagine how hearing Daniel Ellsberg tell his story at GA on a panel with Amy Goodman, Senator Mike Gravel, and Reverend Robert West came to inform my views of recent whistleblowers, like Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. Honestly, I don't even remember Goodman, who went to see, or West; I just remember Ellsberg telling a story fit for a Dan Brown novel and Senator Gravel there with him, chiming in. It was amazing!

I remember that we took a stance, as a religious body, on the enforcement of immigration laws, a process that often circumvents due process, rips apart families, and endangers people, including children. It was my first introduction to the term "ICE", to ICE raids, and to a more nuanced understanding of immigration in America.

I remember volunteering with the stage manager and getting a first hand view from the control deck of how the UUA coordinated with a professional production company to create an incredibly effective and well organized series of programs for a huge audience, many of which were recorded for later viewing.

I remember worship, and especially music, that nearly brought tears to my smiling face. Completely unexpected, I found that a family friend from my hometown was directing the choir. And I remember that there is a music director from a congregation in the Atlanta area who is simply amazing!

It turned out to be a heck of an education and a wonderful free vacation. Next year GA will be in Providence, Rhode Island. It's not too far from here, and I hope that our congregation sends at least a couple of people to represent us and to enrich those members of our community.

It may seem counter intuitive to use limited resources on something like attendance at district, regional, or national conferences, but I firmly believe that the bang for the buck, so to speak, is very high. Leadership development, networking, and inspiration are foundational elements to congregational growth and healthy change.

Investing people is seldom a waste of resources.

Yours in service,

Adrien Vlach

***“The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains jagged and broken.”***  
***-Walt Whitman***

## Contact Numbers

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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  
89 Church Street  
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