

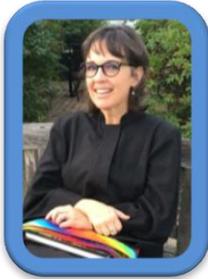


NEW OUTLOOK

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY

A spiritual home where religion and reason meet

DECEMBER 2015



Kindred Spirit

A Story: There once was a couple with two boys, ages 6 and 8. The youngsters were extremely rascally. They got into all kinds of trouble at home, at school and around the town. Shop keepers were on high alert when the boys entered the store. Adults at the gas station guarded the candy when they saw the two mischievous youngsters loitering near the shelves.

The boys' parents were more and more concerned about their children's behavior. They tried everything to entice the boys to behave. It was no use. "We need help," thought their mother. "If we don't get some support soon, my anger is going to consume me," said the father. After much discernment, the couple decided to ask the local clergy person to help.

Rev. Goodbread was concerned when he talked with the parents. He asked to speak to the children individually. The youngest child went to meet the minister first. Rev. Goodbread said to the boy, "Where is God?" The boy was silent. The clergyperson said it again, "Where is God, my child?" Still nothing. Thinking the boy didn't hear his question, he raised his voice. "WHERE IS GOD?" Suddenly, the little boy bolted from the office, ran home and shut himself in his closet. His older brother tapped on the door and asked what the minister said. The younger brother replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time. God is missing and they think we did it."

For some Unitarian Universalists, God is not present. Interactions revolve around being good for no reason other than it is our responsibility as a human being to treat others fairly and with compassion. For other Unitarian Universalists, God exists as a loving presence rather than as a harbinger of retribution for bad behavior. With our actions, people become an extension of God's work in the world.

Regardless of our varied views on a supernatural being, we are unified in our *attempt* to "do the right thing." Discernment is a huge part of being a UU. Most of us wrestle often with questions of an ethical or moral nature. This is how we practice our faith. I find this aspect a beautiful part of being a Unitarian Universalist because it means we are open to learning something that we didn't know before. However, I have to admit, living in ambiguity is not always easy. Many of us struggle with not having quick answers.

We jump to conclusions too quickly. We tell others how they must view a decision and then judge them for not agreeing with us. The occasional result is a strained relationship. We are a faith community. What makes us different than a social organization is that we agree to explore life's difficult questions together. We covenant to love one another, to refrain from making hurtful judgmental statements. Yet when we slip and become less than our better selves, we agree to say "Yeah, we're all human but that doesn't mean we don't belong together."

UUFCC is where we forgive and love one another because we are committed to sharing life's journey.



Dear Ones

This is my second newsletter article as your interim president. So far, the experience of serving in this role has been very positive. Thanks for your continual support, time, talents, creativity, and energy as we engage in nurturing our unique and liberating faith.

I was saddened by the news that our dear member and trustee, Carol Powell, has moved to Sarasota. Carol has been a member since October of 2009. She served as secretary for the Board of Trustees for four years and was just elected last spring to a two year term as a trustee. I became aware of Carol's amazing organizational skills when she directed the creation of a major celebration for Rev. Amy's installation. Carol, on behalf of the Fellowship, I express our deep gratitude for all the many gifts, time, talent, and energy you have so generously given us. You will be greatly missed. Following your knee replacement recovery, we will expect regular visits!

On a much happier note, I am delighted and quite relieved to welcome our new, interim Music Director, Mr. James Boyle. Jim, who frequently attends UUFCC services, is a snow bird from Tennessee and Georgia. He has served as a professional musician, choral director, and music educator for over 30 years. His contract runs through the end of April, 2016. I can hardly wait for choir practice to begin again.

Since I agreed to serve as your Board's interim President, the stack of murder mysteries on the end table next to my recliner has been replaced with copies of UUFCC Bylaws, articles and books on church governance or, as UUs call it, "congregational polity." While my new reading material has never been on the "New York Times Best Seller List", I am learning how and why we do things the way we do.

When the Unitarians and Universalists merged in 1961, a commission was formed to study governance within the two denominations. The commission found three commonalities:

1. Ultimately, the individual is responsible for his/her beliefs and actions.
2. Each local church is autonomous.
3. Autonomous churches need to come together in free but formal association.

I have also learned the importance of being guided by our mission statement and pushing our deliberations toward action. A healthy church is one that struggles through its challenges through intentional learning and impeccable communication.

I conclude with a quote from Governance for Unitarian Universalist Churches.

"No system of governance can long exist without the goodwill of the congregation. Habits of inquiry must preempt habits of judgment. Practices of consultation must underlie decision making, and respect for pathos must be as genuine as that for passion.

Whatever the issues, sizes, history, or precedents may be, compassion and care have no equal in service to our congregational governance. The willingness of persons to respectfully listen and honor the other's concerns is ever the greatest practice of true governing of self and of our religious community. It is the practice by which we learn to walk together in our religious journey and the practice by which we are transformed."

Hope to see you at our special called congregational meeting after the service on December 6th. At that meeting we will decide on the immediate fate of our "Black Lives Matter" banner.

In faith, Dennis G. Shaw

SUNDAYS

9:15 a.m. Conversation among Friends

9:30 a.m. – Choir Practice

10:30 a.m. – Worship Service

Coffee Hour following Worship

Potluck Lunch on first Sunday



Dec. 6 "Hope for the Journey" Rev. Amy Kindred

Leonard Mason writes, "We affirm a continuing hope." Though trials may be many and the future unknown, life's journey requires a willingness to experience renewal at every bend in the unfamiliar road.



Dec. 12 "Teaching People to Provide for Themselves: The Homeless Coalition"



CEO Angela Hogan from *The Homeless Coalition of Charlotte County* will share information about their many varied life-saving services.

Dec. 20 "Tumbleweed Christmas: A Play"

The children will bring us a play about a little boy and a trip in the desert.



Dec. 24 "Christmas Eve Services" 5:30 pm Rev. Amy Kindred

Find a lightness of heart in the darkness of the winter season. Join us for tales, tunes and tidings of great joy.

Dec. 27 "Kwanzaa – History and Symbols" Ginger Abraham

Come learn about the youngest of the winter holidays and its meaning for the African-Americans who celebrate it.



NARROWING OUR OPTIONS FOR GROWTH

By Robert Taylor, Treasurer

Based on the discussions at last month's Town Hall Meeting, the Steering Committee on Growth is recommending that we narrow our options to two: Expand on Our Present Site or Purchase Another Building. A good case can be made for either choice, but as our UUA consultant, Bill Clontz, has said, we do need to decide. Three questions are critical:



1. **Can we expect our growth to continue and by how much?** As we reported in November's **Outlook**, in five years, we can expect to have a congregation of 190 adult members and friends. While we grow, the demographics and financial capabilities of our congregation will change:
 - While welcoming more retiring baby boomers, we will also have more young families with children.
 - We will lose some of our elderly and most generous benefactors.
 - On average, more of us will have modest financial resources with more living on fixed incomes.
2. **What are the costs associated with each choice?** While still tentative, we've run some numbers. For comparison purposes, we've assumed that our goal is to end up with about 10,000 square feet of building. We estimate that new construction will cost about \$175 per square foot, remodeling about \$75 per square foot, and used property will cost about \$80 per square foot.

Expand on Our Present Site.

 - We currently have about 4,600 square feet of building. Adding 5,400 square feet would cost about \$945,000.
 - \$200,000 more to remodel the existing building.
 - Total cost would be about \$1,165,000.
 - One advantage is we could expand in stages, first adding the most critical classroom and office space and upgrading the restrooms, and adding more later as crowding becomes more acute and financing becomes available.
 - A key disadvantage is that parking and future growth will be constrained by the size of our lot, about 1.8 acres.

Purchase Another Property.

 - Purchasing a church or commercial property would cost about \$800,000.
 - Plus remodeling costs of \$200,000 to \$500,000 to make it our own.
 - Total up-front costs will be \$1 to \$1.3 million. We would then sell our existing property for an estimated \$400,000.
 - The net cost would be from \$600,000 to \$900,000.
 - The advantage would be a larger lot with more parking and room for growth.
 - The disadvantages include leaving sacred ground, changes in travel routes, and finding a suitable property in a reasonable time frame.
3. **What can we afford?** To finance whichever choice we make, we'll need to draw from three sources: the Endowment, gifts from members and friends, and loans. How much we might expect from each source, and over what time frame, may heavily influence which option is most viable. With a larger congregation, we should be able to cover the increased costs of operating a larger building—more staff and higher energy and maintenance costs. But our operating margins may be tight and our ability to pay debt financing costs may be limited.

Over these next few weeks, we intend to add further details to help us choose our best option.

Whatever we decide, our Fellowship is strong and vital and our future is bright.

Reflections

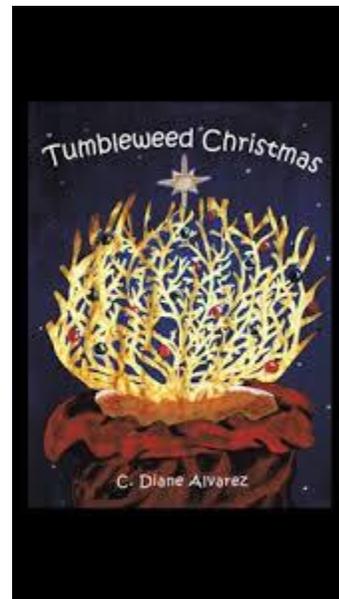
Our RE group seems to be growing. Have you noticed? Parents, if you have not completed a Registration Form yet (which does not commit you to participation), please see Marty Wilmer. We want to gather the information so that we can plan our programs to meet the needs of those in attendance. Thanks!

The November theme was Gratitude. The Elementary group started the month with a lesson on Gratitude for all things that keep us nurtured, healthy, and safe, in preparation for Guest at Your Table. Another week, these children discussed Gratitude for the Six Sources of UUism and are working on a poster of these sources in kid-friendly terms.



December's theme is Hope. The Middle School/High School group will discuss Hanukkah and explore the concept of a soul this month.

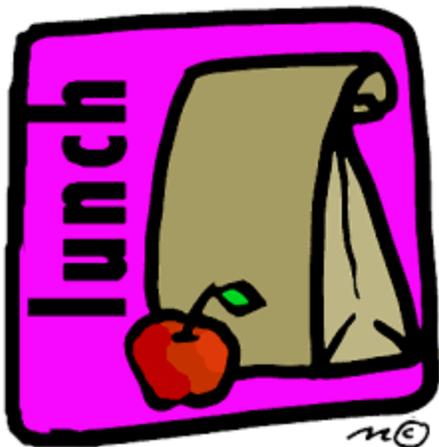
Children who have committed to the practices and performances will be performing a play, "Tumbleweed Christmas", on the third Sunday, December 20, and will be ringing bells for the Christmas Eve service. It should be exciting. For more information, contact Marty Wilmer.



Please note: We will have a post-play celebration on December 20.

Faithfully,
Marty Wilmer, Lifespan Development Coordinator
[941-423-0741](tel:941-423-0741)

Social Justice Committee Supports Homeless Coalition



The Social Justice Committee is strengthening its relationship with the Homeless Coalition of Charlotte County. We are preparing lunches on the second Saturday of each month, and serving dinners before Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. There will be additional dates as we move into 2016. The former requires monetary contributions from our congregation, and both require volunteers. When you see the basket on the snack table each Sunday, would you help out a little? And there are sign-up sheets in the Social Hall for the lunch-making and dinner-serving. Got a little free time? Contact: Herb Levin: engsp1@gmail.com.

Membership News

There will be a New to UU Breakfast at the Fellowship on Saturday, December 5th at 9 am. This is a chance to become better acquainted with Unitarian Universalism and UUFCC. There will be an opportunity to ask questions *and* get answers! If you are considering membership at UUFCC, this is a great event to attend.

If the breakfast helps you make a commitment about membership, on Sunday, December 20th, there will be new member recognition during the service. At this writing, there are five people who will sign the book and become members. Maybe you would like to add your name to the list!

If you are interested in attending the breakfast as a new person or current member to welcome new people, or in becoming a UUFCC member before the end of 2015, please contact joanimountain@gmail.com.



HELP-A-VET SPAGHETTI DINNER Saturday December 12 5:00PM to 7:00PM



A dinner will be held on Saturday December 12 to raise funds to support UUFCC's Help-A-Vet project. The funds will be used to pay for the 2nd and final semester tuition of Nursing School for a worthy veteran.

Please show your support and attend this December Fund Raiser Dinner. Please see Ted Zawistowski, Jack Harkins, or Phil Brown if you wish to contribute to this project.

MEATLESS MEAL December 4th

Do you want good ideas and emotional support to eat healthier over the holidays? Join us for delicious food, and great fellowship.

The monthly meatless meal, hosted by the Climate Action Team, will be held Friday December 4 at 5:30 pm. Participants should bring a vegetarian or vegan dish to share. Copies of the recipe for your dish are appreciated.

After the meal (at 7:00pm) Jack will be presenting the Climate Reality/AI Gore presentation on the current state of climate change and its solutions. All are welcome to attend!

News from the UU Endowment

The Unitarian Universalist Endowment of Charlotte County: **the UUE**. You may have heard about the UU Endowment, an invested fund, a TRUST, which is strongly affiliated with UUFCC. As stated in the UUFCC Bylaws, its purpose is to use the yield on its investments, while preserving the corpus, to assure the financial future of the Fellowship and further the principles and practices of Unitarian Universalism. It serves as the avenue for honoring, in perpetuity, gifts received to honor a special someone, or in memory of deceased members and friends of UUism.



UUFCC benefits from its contribution to the UUFCC annual operating budget, to memorial services and providing gifts as requested for special projects and the UUFCC growth initiative. It remains a valuable resource for our future and there is current exploration for how the Endowment may support the UUFCC goals for acquiring additional space or building.

What is the structure of the Endowment?

The Endowment is affiliated with UUFCC as a religious organization and gifts are tax deductible for the purpose of Federal Income Taxes. Its accumulation of funds by gifts or investment earnings, are also tax free, as are distributions from the Endowment to the Fellowship. The Endowment has its own Bylaws. The Trust accepts gifts to be held in perpetuity with the earnings thereon applied to the execution of its Purpose. It is governed by its initial founding Trustees and their successors selected by the membership of the Fellowship as prescribed by the UUE and UUFCC Bylaws.

As the end of the tax year approaches, you may want to consider a contribution in honor or in memory of a loved one. Simply write your check to the UUE, include who you are recognizing and drop it in the offering plate.

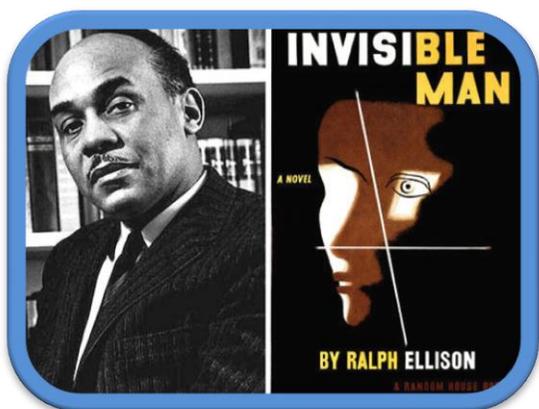
Another way of contributing is through Planned Giving. This can take many forms, from a one sentence bequest in your will, your living trust, life insurance or other estate planning arrangement. All contributions are valued and no contribution is too small!

The Trustees acknowledge and appreciate the following gifts this fall:

MaryHolly Allison & Robert Hansman in memory of Vince and Lore Frighetti's daughter, Kathy
Mary Howard and Richard Burcham in memory of Wayne Green

Your Endowment Trustees: MaryHolly Allison, Robert Hansman and Robert Taylor.
Please speak with one of us if you have questions or require further information.

Come, All Avid Readers -We have a book club for you!

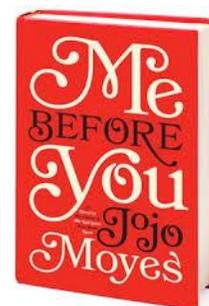


The date of our next meeting is the one exception to our "last Wednesday of the month" rule. Each year we have a combined Nov.-Dec. meeting in early December because of our heavy holiday schedules. Therefore, our next meeting will be Wednesday, December 9th at 1:30pm when we will be talking about "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. This is a novel published in 1952 which describes the exploitation of "Negroes" by many "benevolent" White groups before the Civil Rights Era. It has been called The Greatest American Novel of the 20th Century. I suspect there will be some dissent (perhaps vigorous) at our meeting.

Contact: Mary Wolff at hmwolff9@hotmail.com or 629-0669.

The book for our January 27th meeting is "Me Before You" by Jojo Moyes. Lou is a 26 year old working-class woman who is a "care assistant" to Will, a 35 year old male quadriplegic. This is the basis for what New York Times reviewer Liesl Schillinger describes as a "love story and a family story, but above all a story of the bravery and sustained effort needed to redirect the path of a life once it's been pushed off course." This is only possible because Lou and Will properly listen to each other.

Contact: Marion Menna at maripoetm@aol.com or 941-249-9504



Books for a Good Cause



Copperfish Books and the Charlotte Community Foundation are holding a Book Drive through December 15, 2015. The effort is in support of 500 low-income and at-risk Charlotte County children who are receiving financial aid for child care through the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland (ELCFH).

It's easy to help! The ELCFH has requested specific books focused on helping young children positively express their emotions and behaviors. These books are stocked and available at Copperfish Books. The public can purchase in the store, by phone, or online at www.copperfishbooks.com. Copperfish Books and the Charlotte Community Foundation have book collection bins, and will also accept cash or checks made out to the ELCFH. As an extra benefit, when people buy books for the Book Drive, Copperfish Books will donate 5% of their **total** purchase (for anything in the store) to the ELCFH.

For more information, call Copperfish Books at (941) 205-2560. The bookstore is located at 1205 Elizabeth Street, Punta Gorda, Florida.

Art on the Wall

Marcello Navarro Ruiz, a gifted Nicaraguan artist, will be displaying his work on our Art wall from December 2 to December 30. On December 13, from 12-12:30, UUFCC member Lorrie Douglas will discuss Ruiz' work and her connection to him and to Nicaragua. She will explain how she came to work for a non-profit here in the U.S., "Capital to Bridge the Divide", and its counterpart, "Fundación El Puente" in Nicaragua. An opening reception will follow from 12:30-1:30.



Douglas' deep connection to Nicaragua developed as she travelled back and forth over the past fifteen years. Today, she considers Nicaragua a second home. Her connection to the artist is visceral. "Marcello's talent is remarkable," she says. "I love his work and want to share it with others."

Marcello Navarro Ruiz lives in the village of Catarina, one of five pueblos in the "county" of Masaya, an area known for its artisans. The work from this region reflects traditional pre-Columbian designs coupled with contemporary Nicaraguan motifs. Marcello's work reveals the history of his country and his hopes for its future. His work is unusual, colorful and exciting. "Experiencing Marcello's modest grandeur is a privilege," Douglas says.

Along with Senor Marcello Navarro Ruiz's paintings, Ilene Sternal's beautiful gem stone jewelry will be on display, Ginger Abraham and Carolyn Hansman will exhibit holiday earrings galore, and Debbie Conrad will show handmade holiday cards. All items will be for sale and make excellent holiday gifts.

CONTACT US - OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday

9 am – 2 pm

1532 Forrest Nelson Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33952

941.627.4303

www.uufcc.org, www.facebook.com/uufcc

Rev. Amy Kindred, minister@uufcc.org 941.916.0957

Minister's hours: Tues. morning and Thurs, afternoon. It's best to call for an appointment.

Chris McCoy, Office Assistant , office@uufcc.org

Dennis Shaw, President@uufcc.org

Joani Mountain, Membership Coordinator, joanimountain@gmail.com

Ginger Abraham, Newsletter Editor, newsletter@uufcc.org

Article Deadline: 20th of the month

Myrna Charry, Communications Chair, mcharry@earthlink.net

WEEKLY EVENTS

Wed., Dec. 2, 9, (Mon. 14), 23 – Choir Practice 6:00 pm

Thurs., Dec. 3, 10, 17, 31 – Meditation 5:15 pm

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| Dec. 1 NAMI Group 6 pm | Dec. 12 Sandwich Making for Homeless Coalition 10 am |
| 2 Cakes for the Queen of Heaven 2 pm
Gulf Coast Acoustic Guitar Society 7pm | Chalice Circles 2 pm |
| 4 Meatless Meal 4 pm (See p. 6) | Help-A-Vet Fundraiser 5 pm (see p 6.) |
| 5 New to UU Q&A Breakfast 9 am | 14 Citizen's Climate Lobby 6:30 pm |
| 6 Congregational Meeting 12:30 pm | 15 Local UU Ministers' Gathering 10:30 am |
| 8 NAMI Group 6 pm | 16 Healing Oasis 6 pm |
| 9 Caring and Hospitality 10 am
Book Group 1:30 pm | 18 Peer Writing Group 1:30 pm |
| 10 SJC: Discussion on Class 4:30 pm | 19 Retreat on Growth |
| 11 UUFCC Executive Board Meeting 9:30 am
Karaoke Night 5:30 pm
Serendipity Revue – Benefit Concert for Mary Kirgis 7 pm | 20 Mystical Experiences Group 12 pm |
| | 21 Yule Labyrinth 7 pm |
| | 24 Christmas Eve Services 5:30 pm |
| | 25 UUFCC Christmas Dinner |
| | 26 Chalice Circles 2 pm |

Second Service Returns in January!

We will add an additional service on Saturday afternoons at 4:30 PM beginning January 2nd through March 26th. These services will focus on theme related readings, meditation, poetry, and music. Traditional Sunday morning services will continue at 10:30 AM.

"Theism, as a way of defining God, is dead."

Those were the opening words of the first of twelve theses that Bishop John Shelby Spong drew from his 1998 book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. The rest of his first thesis was "God can no longer be understood with credibility as a Being, supernatural in power, dwelling above the sky and prepared to invade human history periodically to enforce the divine will. So, most theological God-talk today is meaningless unless we find a new way to speak of God."

Curious about his meaning and the reactions? Ask him! Bishop Spong will speak at the Unitarian Church of Sarasota on February 12 and 13. See the UUCS website:

<http://www.uucsarasota.com/spong.html>
for details, fee, and registration info.