UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF WEST CHESTER 501 S HIGH ST WEST CHESTER PA 19382



Newsletter of the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester

Telephone: 610-692-5966 Web: www.ucwc.org

Our Mission: As a diverse liberal faith congregation, we make a difference in our lives, our children's lives, and the wider community by creating an environment for spiritual growth and fulfillment, for building meaningful connections, and for actively advancing peace and justice in the world.

SUNDAY SERVICES January 2014

January 5 BLESSING THE NEW YEAR Rev. Deborah Mero 10 a.m.

So many religious and cultural traditions have rituals to welcome the new year. As Unitarian Universalists we are free to explore and create our own rituals. And so we will.

January 12 HABITS OF THE HEART Rev. Deborah Mero 10 a.m.

Last Summer I spent 3 days in Wisconsin with Parker Palmer and the staff of the Center for Courage and Renewal exploring Parker's five "Habits of the Heart" on which his book <u>Healing the Heart of Democracy</u> is based. Parker has been treasured source of wisdom for decades Let us explore his latest work together.

January 19 DON'T SLEEP THROUGH THE REVOLUTION Rev. Deborah Mero 10 a.m.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the UUA's General Assembly in 1966. What did he have to say to us? What have we done to respond to his call?

January 26 SPIRITUAL PATHS UCWC Members 10 a.m.

Three UCWC members will share their religious heritage and what brought them to Unitarian Universalism & UCWC.

Services, Religious Education, and Babysitting at 10 a.m.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH MLK DAY OF SERVICE JANUARY 20

I thank all of you

who have embraced

participated over the

this day and have

past several years.

One of the activities I have most enjoyed participating in over the last few years has been the Martin Luther King Day of Service. What used to be an activity that the Youth Group engaged in has now become an important event in the life of the congregation. My first experience was as a one day volunteer. Several of us were sent to Coatesville on a frigid morning to help with sorting

used clothing to be sent overseas. The warehouse we were sent to was not heated and actually seemed colder inside than out. The activity was not well organized, but I met some people through doing it. So I

stepped up to join in the planning process for the next year with the goal of trying to make the day more satisfying for all concerned.

Since then, Ed Cohle has gotten super involved with helping with food collection. Shelly Case has been a regular part of the leadership team as well. Many in the congregation have stepped up. To our great satisfaction, we have grown our participation to about half the congregation. UCWC has consistently been one of the top two or three churches in terms of participation in this day dedicated to the memory of Dr. King and all he contributed to the ethos of this country.

We have undertaken a wide variety of projects which have included food drives, storytelling to young children, singing to elders in nursing homes, making quilts for the veterans' hospital, doing some repair work and painting at the Domestic Violence center and Home of the Sparrow, and so many other things.

For the past two years we have hosted at UCWC a program called "Stop Hunger Now" and have assembled 20,000 meals that have been boxed and shipped to places around the world most in need.

Those who have been involved in this have found it a worthy and fun project, and this year, thanks to the Share the Plate contributions, money from the Social Justice fund, and the enthusiasm of the Crowell family, Bill, Amy, Emma, and Megan, we have met our goal of financing half the project ourselves (the other half comes from St. Paul's Baptist Church.) We have also hosted the

knitting circle for four or five years now as well where caps have been knit for newborn babies.

The tangible projects have been worth doing, but what to me has been as, if not more important, has

been working with the people at St. Paul's and other congregations in the larger community. It has grown our reputation as being caring and concerned citizens, and it has been extremely gratifying to me. I thank all of you who have embraced this day and have participated over the past several years. It is about the connections we make with one another in working together to offer something that will help someone or bring some cheer into their lives.

I look forward to this year's Day of Service, January 20, and seeing many of you get involved. I hope it is a tradition that will continue long after I leave you.

Blessings in the new year. May it be a year that gives you abundant opportunities for generosity and for the giving and receiving of love.

— Deborah

ADULT EXPLORATION WEDNESDAY NIGHTS JANUARY 15 FEBRUARY 19 AT 7 P.M.

SpiritWork. My first real group experience in a UU church was in a lay-led course/workshop called "About Your Spirituality." The name was later changed to SpiritWork, so as not to be confused with the youth AYS course.

Returning full circle to those roots, I will offer to you an updated and revised curriculum that will include elements of some of my favorite other curricula as well. We will explore our own unique UU spirituality. All are welcome.



GETTING TO KNOW UU'S COFFEE

Recent visitors, we are delighted that you have visited with us. Are you intrigued with what you have experienced? Would you like to chat informally about who we are?

You are invited to join several members for coffee in the upstairs office on January 12, following services, at 11:15 a.m. Following our visit together, if you are interested, we will join the Open House for the Religious Education in their classrooms.

The Fellowtarian is the monthly newsletter of the **Unitarian Congregation of West Chester**

501 South High StreetWeb: www.ucwc.orgWest Chester, PA 19382All email addresses @ucwc.orgRev. Deborah Mero, Minister610-692-4043email: ministerOffice Administrator610-692-5966email: officeShelly Case, Presidentemail: presidentPam Baxter, Director of Religious Edemail: dreSteve and Linda Sander, Editorsemail: fellowtarian

REMARKS — RELIGIOUS EDUCATION UPDATE

On January 10-11, the members of the RE Team will be attending the 11th annual RE Team Retreat. We use this time each year to work on a specific goal or concern; but

RE OPEN HOUSE /

COFFEE HOUR

JANUARY 12

the

Education Team for Coffee

Hour downstairs after the

service, and see where the

children of our congregation

hang out while you're upstairs

at the service. Get your coffee

or other beverage upstairs,

then bring it downstairs

and enjoy delicious muffins,

coffee cake, fruit and some

brunch-v treats while vou

browse the classrooms and

our new Spirit Play area. Learn

more about the RE Program,

and what the children and

teachers are doing on Sunday

mornings. Thanks to the

Northern Lights hospitality

team for providing most of

the food. See you in RE!

our

wonderful volunteer

Religious

Join

equally important is how this dedicated time together strengthens our bonds as a team. Friday evening is primarily social time. Then, on Saturday, we go to work on our chosen topic.

For both these things, it helps to go offsite. This will be our second year at the retreat center at Mariawald, near Reading. (Thanks to Rev. Deborah for finding this facility; especially since our favorite B&B in Phoenixville no longer exists.)

Over the years, the Team has done a lot of important work. We've created a rotation schedule for Curricula, developed Vision Mission and Statements, explored how to articulate our UU faith, how to

develop spirituality in children, the roles and responsibilities of the RE Team and DRE, created a safe congregation policy, envisioned radical hospitality in RE, and prepared for filling in for the DRE while I was on sabbatical this past spring.

This year, our focus is "The Changing Face of RE" at UCWC. If you've been downstairs during RE on a Sunday morning this year, you've probably noticed something

different: the curtains at the entrance to our Worship area; art materials laid out on the large table, and young children sitting in a circle on the floor, watching a story unfold.

This is Spirit Play, which represents the first major change in how we "do" RE at our congregation; at least in the 12 years that I've been the director of the program.

Part of the reason for beginning Spirit Play was our changing demographics. In order to get good class groupings, we realized that we needed to take a completely new look at what we do. We realized that we needed a program flexible enough to accommodate a wider age-range.

Along with evaluating the basic elements of the RE program, and deciding if there are other things we want to change, we'll also talk about communication: how well do we inform the congregation about the program?

For instance, do you know:

- The three "pillars" of our RE program?
- At what age a young person may join the congregation?
- The main areas of learning that our curricula present?
- Why a full-year course in human sexuality is part of our RE offering for 8th/9th graders?
- That our middle-schoolers not only learn about other faith traditions, but also experience a

- worship service of each faith they explore?
- That our children engage in social action projects?

Of course, one of the main ways we communicate is through our church website. Go to www.ucwc.org, and click on "Children and Youth." There, you can read about the specific classes being offered this year, along with our mission statement, and information for parents.

Also, plan to come downstairs on Sunday, January 12, for our annual RE Open House. (See announcement this page.) If you would like to visit a class, please contact me: dre at ucwc dot org.

— Pam Baxter Director of Religious Education

ANNUAL NEW MEMBER POT-LUCK DINNER SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 AT 6 P.M

Our UCWC community is looking forward to a great tradition on Sunday, January 26. The Annual New Member Pot-Luck is a time where we honor our newest members, invite recent visitors, and celebrate being together. It is a perfect time and place to introduce the folks who have signed our historic Membership Book over the past year. This amazing book contains all the names of people who believed in us and in themselves and chose to be part of this loving community since 1954.

We ask everyone, except for our honored new member guests, to bring a dish, either a main dish, a vegetable, or a dessert. The array of foods is always a big hit. The Membership Committee cordially invites all to attend and encourages RSVP's (email: membership), so we can plan accordingly. Also, if you have children and need child care, we ask that you let us know ahead of time at the above email.

Come and celebrate with us.

SPEAKERS PREPARING FOR OUR MINISTERIAL SEARCH

From October 7 till November 17, acting on crowd approval from our first town meeting, we implemented a survey system so that the congregation could tell us what they liked about each visiting speaker while Rev. Mero was on sabbatical. Each week we had responses from an average of 25% of attendees, a high response rate in the world of surveys.

hoping that the information gathered will be enlightening as our ministerial search begins.

compassion.

There were
many recurring
themes of appreciation that people
were moved to comment about.
Congregation members liked it
when their thinking and feelings
were challenged. They appreciated
hearing new ideas and insights. They
reacted to a feeling of warmth and

Many people expressed for references to appreciation spirituality. Other characteristics folks enjoved were openness to other beliefs including nature religions, a balance of intellectual and spiritual/emotional components, the speaker's positivity, story-telling, hearing about our UU history, and themes of social justice. The one quality that folks mentioned most often was a sense of humor (one speaker had nine comments appreciating his sense of humor, although one person defined him as "glib").

Definitely worth noting is the fact that we like who we have, too. Several surveys mentioned support for Deborah and missing having her here. Also, when Pam spoke, she said aloud that these surveys weren't

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thanks to all who recently attended our second town hall meeting. The Board is hoping to share the information gathered from both town hall meetings sometime in the new year. Feel free to approach any of the Board members to ask questions or make comments at any time.

We spent part of the town hall meeting discussing the interim ministry process. (You can read the UUA's information about the interim at uua.org/careers/ministers/interim.) We discussed the application process for the interim minister and talked about three questions that must be answered:

- What areas of focus are needed for the interim ministry? (What needs attention, where is there conflict, and what are the challenges?)
- What are the desired strengths of an interim minister?
- What current areas of momentum should not lose steam during the interim time?

Feel free to approach any of the Board members to ask questions or make comments at any time.

The Board would like to hear from as many people as possible. Feel free to answer these at <u>email: board</u> or on paper found near green box/cylinder on the table inside the sanctuary door, opposite to coffee and tea table.

Though there are several people who have already expressed interest in being on the interim search team, the Board would love to hear from you if you are interested in being considered. Be aware that you cannot serve on both search teams. If you are on interim search team, you cannot be part of the search team for the settled minister. And if you participate in the interim search team, you may also be asked to be on the Committee on Ministry during that interim minister's time with us.

Please let us know your thoughts in answering the questions listed above, and please let us know if you would like to be considered for the interim search team. It is a very important part of our transition to a new settled minister following Deborah's retirement.

— Shelly Case President of the Board of Trustees

really meant for our present staff. Nevertheless, seven people turned in surveys of great praise for the personal nature, strong spirituality, and incredible artwork presented as part of her sermon.

There were big differences in the responses to the "Personal Exchange" section of the survey. Most speakers had only two or three folks who mentioned personal exchanges, but two speakers had seven and nine mentions of this.

We also gleaned a common thread of appreciation for elements within the service that encouraged movement and group participation. For example, hand signing to a prayer and holding hands and singing at the end ("What if we knew we'd be the last person to touch someone.") It must be noted that not all agreed here. There were also a couple detractors on that subject.

Thanks to Debby Kern, Janet Hutchison, Rick London, and Cheryl Pittenger for creating this idea and taking care of the details along the way. Feel free to contact Janet if you would like to see the compiled statistics or Debby Kern if you would like to see the compiled comments for any of the individual speakers.

— Debby Kern

RADICAL HOSPITALITY FOR 2014

In a neighboring county, a prospective interim minister tells the story about when she and her husband attended a church as a visitor and not one person greeted them other than a casual nod by the usher. She relayed this experience to the congregation of that church in one of her first sermons. They were shocked, surprised and embarrassed, since one of the top priorities for that year was Radical Hospitality, which means intentional friendliness. She consoled her new congregation with the words that sometimes as we get so caught up with each other, we often fail to notice guests. Here are her suggestions which we may want to incorporate also:

- When you see someone you have never met, say, "My name is ______.
 I don't know if I've met you yet."
- At the end of the service each week, take 30 seconds to specifically search out people whom you have never met. If everyone did this, imagine how new guests might be welcomed.
- Go beyond "Good-morning" with guests, but at a very minimum, do say, "Good-morning!"
- When you have met someone new, end the conversation by saying, "I'm glad you stopped in with us this morning. I hope to see you again."

As we intentionally set out to be a warm and friendly community, let's all remember these thoughts. Hospitality Team Greeters and Ushers, you are the very first impression that a visitor has of us. Your time on any given Sunday is crucial to extending a warm greeting, not just to visitors, but to all who come through our doors. In the new year, Program Council will be sharing a humorous skit on how to welcome or not welcome our guests properly. It will make us all chuckle and reflect on how we at UCWC want to be remembered. Hopefully, our visitors will all walk away with a warm feeling about us.

— <u>Barbara Long</u> Membership Committee

CLOSURE NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Winter is upon us. This is a reminder to our members and friends about our closure notification procedure. The process is in place to help everyone be informed if we need to cancel Sunday Services or any other big event due to either inclement weather, power loss, or something unforeseen.

- An announcement will be placed on the Congregation's voice mail recording (610-692-5966) if services are cancelled.
- The following radio and TV stations will be notified about Sunday services cancellation due to inclement weather:

Radio: KYW 1060 AM

TV: CBS3 NBC10 FOX 29

- You will get an email about cancellation of Sunday services. or you may be directly contacted by phone.
- If possible, a notice on the first page of our <u>web-site</u> will show a cancellation of services.

We hope, by using all types of media, everyone will be informed and most of all safe. If in doubt, call or check the web site. Also, we urge everyone to always keep one "old fashioned" telephone—one that is not wireless or does not require electricity to work—plugged into a telephone outlet somewhere in your house. Should there be a power outage or the cell network becomes overwhelmed, you may want to be able to make or receive phone calls.

"LET IT BE A DANCE" PART 2

DANCE PARTY AT UCWC Saturday, January 18 5 - 9 p.m.



If you missed the first "Let it Be a Dance" party, you won't want to miss this one. Come and bring a hearty finger food/hors d'oeuvres to share and celebrate the new year with fellowship and dancing.

This intergenerational event features our resident 60's and 70's rock band, "Who Needs Nigel" who will provide the entertainment so we can kick off our new exciting year and dance the night away—until the West Chester noise curfew, of course.

"Let it be a dance" is one of our treasured hymns and a mantra for our lives. The new year will be filled with some exciting changes, and we look forward with rekindled enthusiasm and great hope for our continued community, fellowship, and social action as we dance together through life with joy.

SAFETY POLICY

Are you interested and available to help a couple of folks review our current safety related policies and a possible upgrade? If so, please contact Cheryl Pittenger.



STONES IN THE WALL - SOCIAL JUSTICE

Each event, each action is another stone in the wall of social justice.

SHARE-THE-PLATE GENEROSITY

The Social Justice Committee's Share-the-Plate program raises money to give to local non-profit organizations who are trying to improve life for Chester County residents. We are pleased to announce the share-the-plate recipient for January 19 (third Sunday of the month) is The Domestic Violence Center of Chester County.

The Domestic Violence Center addresses of the major problems in modern societyviolent and sexual abuse of women and children. This organization has been operating in West Chester since 1976 and has helped over 30,000 survivors of domestic abuse, usually on a shoestring budget.

It provides food and shelter to families in danger and helps them transition to a safe place, as well as providing education, advocacy and programs for prevention and reduction of domestic abuse. It remains visibly hidden to protect the families. There is no organization providing a more urgent and important service in our community.

In November, \$395 was collected for Share-the-Plate recipient, Open Hearth.

-- Beth Daniels.



GUEST AT YOUR TABLE COLLECTION UUSC UPDATE

Guest At Your Table, our annual membership and donation drive for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), wraps up in January. Please make a generous donation. Renew your membership or become a new member if you can, but smaller donations also help further UUSC's good work and are much appreciated.

Please help increase our membership percentage this year. Memberships are \$10 student, \$20 senior, \$40 individual, \$75 dual. Unrestricted gifts of \$100 or more will be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock.

There are three ways to give:

- Donate online at UUSC.org. Click <u>here</u>.
- Mail a check. (Envelopes to fill out and mail are in the back of the sanctuary.)
- Return your Guest At Your Table box with your check inside. Please replace cash with a check made out to "UCWC", and put "UUSC" in the memo line. Look for a tub and the UUSC banner in the corner by the bathroom in the sanctuary and drop in your box.

Remember to include the name of our congregation when you donate. UCWC has always been an exceptionally strong supporter of UUSC.

Visit <u>UUSC.org</u> to learn more about our UU human rights organization. We empower people.

Thank you.

Linda Sander and Tom Townsend
 UUSC Co-representatives

FIRST SUNDAY FOOD COLLECTION PROJECT THIS MONTH'S SUGGESTED ITEMS: CANNED FRUIT

Our <u>monthly food collection</u> is Sunday, January 5. Look for collection baskets in the lobby. We participate in the *Circle of Giving* program that assures the <u>West Chester Food Cupboard</u> of specific items on any given

month according to a schedule provided by the Food Cupboard. For this month's needs, see the above headline—of course, other items are appreciated as well.

Please be sure that food items have not passed their expiration date. The food cupboard accepts paper items, such as paper towels and toilet paper, in addition to food items. Unopened personal items such as shampoo and soap are also welcome.

We encourage members to bring in items the first Sunday of each month, but we will happily accept non-perishables at any time. You can also put a check in the collection plate, payable to "UCWC" with "WC Food Cupboard" in the memo line on any Sunday.

Thank you for participating in this project and helping neighbors in our community. Contact Kimberly Ellerthorpe at email: food-cupboard.



DIVERSITY BOOK GROUP

The January selection for the <u>Diversity Book Club</u> is <u>My Life in France</u> by Julia Child. The chef who changed America's culinary habits writes about the years after World War II that she spent in France. Julia Child recalls the difficulty of being an American in a French cooking school and the hard-won publication of her book on French cooking for Americans. Fred Frayer will lead the discussion.

The meeting this month will be held Sunday, January 12 from 2 to 5 p.m. at The Kitchen Workshop in Paoli for a hands-on French cooking class. Registration is limited and is \$45 per person. You can register online at: www.kitchen-workshop.com. Located in the Paoli Depot Shops, 21 Plank Ave., Suite 204 in Paoli.

Contact us at email: diversity-book-group.

REMEMBERING SANDY HOOK

This past month was a difficult one for all involved in the gun violence prevention movement. The one year anniversary brought back some horrible memories of that fateful day when 20 innocent young children and six brave

educators were gunned down in a spray of bullets. Sandy Hook is seared into the national consciousness, and there were many events marking this terrible anniversary all over the country.

The <u>Chester County</u> <u>Coalition to Prevent Gun</u> <u>Violence</u> participated in two of them:



- On December 7 in Villanova
 University, working with nine suburban coalition partners, there was a public event of speakers, videos, music, and a candlelight vigil past the T-shirt crosses representing the dead. Ed Rendell was the keynote speaker.
- On December 14, the actual anniversary date of Sandy Hook, CCCPGV participated in a candlelight vigil with music and talks at the courthouse. Tom Buglio and State Senator Andy Dinniman spoke. There was a raging snowstorm at the time, and 30 brave souls showed up anyway, demonstrating the importance of commemorating the tragedy at Sandy Hook, and keeping the issue of gun violence prevention alive in the eyes of the public.

— <u>Tom Bugio, UCWC Liaison</u> to CCCPGV

LUNCH GROUP

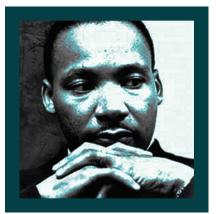


Lunch group will meet Friday, January 24, at 11:30 a.m. at Panera Bread, 1103 West Chester Pike, near ShopRite. Newcomers are welcome. To be added to the email reminder list, contact Linda Sander at email: Lunch-group. The reminders are an easy way to RSVP, so we can save enough seats for everyone. If you don't have email, or you change your mind at the last minute, come anyway. Everyone is welcome.

MLK DAY

Martin Luther King Day of Service is right around the corner on Monday, January 20. Now is the time to think about ways that you might join in to volunteer. This is a wonderful way to build relationships in the community and work side by side other people of faith.

This year we are proud and pleased to be partially financing the Stop Hunger Project that takes place in our building. Thank you, members and friends for your kind and caring donations. Please read Rev. Mero's article on page 2, as it is filled with details, and look in upcoming Connections and on the website for details about the day itself.



FOLK SINGING

The next <u>folk singing</u> gettogether is Friday—not the usual Saturday—January 17, at 8 p.m. at the home of Linda and Steve Sander. All are welcome. No singing talent or experience is necessary, just a desire to have fun.

Capable musicians should bring instruments. Bring a munchie, if you wish. Maps are in the foyer. Contact Steve at email: folk-singing.



		CONGREGATIONAL CALENDAR All email addresses @ucwc.org unless otherwise noted.
Jan 3	Fri	Potluck and Game Night. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Games start a little after 7 p.m. Sanctuary. Contact Lauren Kelly, email: <u>fun</u>
Jan 5	Sun	First Sunday Food Collection. Lobby. See p. 6.
Jan 8	Wed	Animal Ministry. 7 p.m. Contact John Gribbin. Email: animal-ministry
Jan 10-11	Fri-Sat	RE Team Annual Retreat. Contact Pam Baxter, email: DRE. See p. 3.
Jan 11	Sat	Crafters Party. 10 a.m. – noon. At UCWC. See below.
		Coffee House. 7 p.m. Performers may sign up at 6:30. Contact Judy Perri, email: coffee-house
Jan 12	Sun	Getting to Know UUs Coffee. After the service. See p. 2.
		RE Open House Coffee Hour. After the Service. See p. 3.
		Exploring Diversity Book Group. 2-5 p.m. offsite. See p. 7.
		Safe Harbor Dinner. 6 p.m. Provided by the Fellowship the second Sunday of the month. To help, contact Sharon Mayer-Conroy, email: <u>safe-harbor</u> .
Jan 14	Tue	Program Council Meeting. 7-9 p.m. Office. Email: program
Jan 15	Wed	Adult Exploration - SpiritWorks Begins. See p. 2.
Jan 17	Fri	Folk Singing. 8:00 pm. At the home of Linda and Steve Sander. See p. 7.
Jan 18	Sat	Let It Be A Dance, Pt. 2. 5-9 p.m. Sanctuary. See p. 5.
Jan 19	Sun	Share the Plate Sunday. Benefits Domestic Violence Center. See p. 6.
		Choir Sings at Sunday Servcies.
Jan 20	Mon	MLK Day of Service. See. pp. 2 and 7.
Jan 21	Tue	Board Meeting. 7 p.m. Office. All are welcome. Contact Shelly Case, e-mail: president .
Jan 24	Fri	Lunch Group. 11:30 a.m. Panera Bread. See p. 7.
Jan 24-26	Fri-Sun	Youth Group Winter CON. Email youth-group
Jan 26	Sun	Annual New Member Potluck Dinner. 6 p.m. Sanctuary. See p. 3.
Jan 31-Feb 2	Fri-Sun	Women's Retreat. Contact Rev. Mero, email: minister
Groups meeti	ng multiple ti	mes in a month:
Adult Exploration		SpiritWork. Wednesdays, Jan 15 – Feb 19. 7 p.m. See p. 2.
Spirit Singers		Practices 7:15-9:15 p.m. Sanctuary. Thursdays, January 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 Contact Miriam Davidson, email: choir
Youth Group		Meets most Sundays in the James Reeb Rm at 10 a.m. Email: youth-group.

CALLING ALL CRAFTERS

Starting in January, our monthly craft meetings will be on the second Saturday of the month, 10 a.m.- noon at our UCWC building. (January 11, February 8)

As always, bring your own supplies and ideas and share as you like. We've had a great variety so far — from knitting and crocheting to beading to paper creations to fine art on a needlepoint pillow. We'll have coffee and tea available. Chatting encouraged.

Contact Debby Kern at email: crafters.

