

UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF WEST CHESTER
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the
FELLOWTARIAN

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

February, 2014

February 2

WILL THE REAL JESUS STAND UP

Sam Gugino

UU minister Galen Guengrich says, "Jesus as son of God is a brilliant conceit." In his new best-selling book, *Zealot*, author Reza Aslan writes that much of what we were taught about Jesus, including that he was the messiah and founded Christianity, is myth. So, who was the real Jesus? And does it matter? Mr. Gugino is a member at the Unitarian Society of Germantown.

February 9

HABITS OF THE HEART

Rev. Deborah Mero

On this, the Sunday before Valentine's Day, matters of the heart are often on our minds. I will try again to explore Parker Palmer's five "Habits of the Heart" on which his book *Healing the Heart of Democracy* is based. Parker has been a treasured source of wisdom for educators, clergy, and now, even politicians. There is good reason.

The service will be followed by our wonderful annual Feast of Decadent Chocolate.

February 16

AS THE SPIRIT MOVES...

Rev. Deborah Mero

And it will—I just don't know where it will lead on that morning. Watch our web site and *Connections* to find out.

February 23

THIS IS YOUR CHURCH

Rev. Deborah Mero

As I depart for the second half of my sabbatical, I will be handing the reins back to you. This IS your church to care for and support in every way. In reality, it always has been.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH

“The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry,” is an adapted quote from Robert Burns’ *To a Mouse* — trivia of the day

We hardly ever get past the first four words because it has become a common understanding that no matter how well we plan things, we rarely can anticipate everything we need to.

When we awoke to freezing rain and driveways and streets that were solid ice on Sunday morning January 5, we discovered that the plan we had formulated to notify everyone that the service was to be canceled wasn’t quite ready for prime time. That morning, as I conferred with Shelly, Janine, and Pam, we used a variety of methods to contact people. Some got multiple e-mails and phone calls. Others didn’t hear from us.

By mid-day we had drafted a revised process to let people know when we would be closed. The procedure can be found here on page 6. Even with the best laid plans, though, we need to rely on your judgment. If you think the weather might pose a challenge to safely traveling to services or large events, please check our web site and/or your e-mail to see if there has been a notice posted or sent. When in doubt, check with us. Call the office number if all else fails.

The weather is only one of the things that can force changes in our plans. Life is always presenting new challenges, new discoveries, and new twists and turns in the paths on which our lives travel. How we deal with the stresses, the surprises, and the unexpected is what determines the quality of our days, our relationships, our lives. I have talked at length about the Serenity Prayer—“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” I’ve used my brother’s song, *Holland*, to illustrate how we may think we are going one place and find ourselves someplace completely different.

The choice we have is to focus on, lament the loss of an expectation, or look for the opportunities presented with the change in plans. When presented this way, it almost seems obvious that the better choice is to look for the opportunities. That is easier said than done. But so much of life is about figuring out what we do and do not have the power to control and letting go of the need to control what we cannot.

I have spent a lot of years using the Serenity Prayer to get through challenges, as have many of you. I suspect that won’t change any time soon. I don’t believe that what happens is the will of God, or necessarily meant to happen. Life is filled with choices to make, plans to draft and then adjust as circumstances present themselves.

As we each begin to enter the next chapter of our lives and our stories, may we look for the growth opportunities that present themselves and may we not let rigid plans get in the way of living our lives to the fullest.

—Blessings, Deborah

How we deal with the stresses, the surprises, and the unexpected is what determines the quality of our days...

PASTORAL CARE ANNOUNCEMENT

If you have a major life event—birth in the family, death of a close relative, member with major medical issues—that is time-sensitive or that you want to communicate to other members via the Connections weekly email, contact a member of the Pastoral Care team ([email: pastoral-care](mailto:pastoral-care)).

These occasional messages in Connections should facilitate communication about major life events within our community and help us to support each other.

Members of the Pastoral Care Team are Diane Cohle, Eleahn Kahn, Eileen Kelly-Meyer, John McCormack, Jim MacFadyen, Fatima Patel, Amy Spare, and Sharon Sweitzer.



MLK DAY THANKS

Huge thanks to Shelly Case and Ed Cohle for taking leadership roles in the planning and running of the Martin Luther King Day of Service. Ed has done a magnificent job planning and coordinating the grocery store food drive.

Thanks go as well to Tom Townsend and Bill Crowell who helped and supported the Stop Hunger Now project. The day was a huge success as we made over 20,000 meals to be sent to places where hunger and poverty dominate.

And thanks go to all of you who participated, who contributed, and who helped make the day such a success. It has been one of our best congregational activities. Now if we can heed St. Paul’s Rev. Croft and turn our efforts from social action to social justice, we can have a much broader impact on our community and beyond.

— Rev. Mero

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

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REMARKS — RELIGIOUS EDUCATION UPDATE

“The grown-ups are coming! The grown-ups are coming!”

The children in RE were SO excited to welcome everyone downstairs for Coffee Hour and the RE Open House on January 12. The fever-pitch of their excitement did wear off a bit as more and more adults came through the hallway, but the children’s enthusiasm never flagged, as they greeted people, said goodbye (and “Thanks for coming!”), and re-greeted those folks who went back and forth a few times.

In the years that we’ve hosted Coffee Hour in RE (formerly known as the “Enhanced Coffee hour”), this is the first time that we specifically talked about it with the kids, and invited them to act as greeters. We realized, “This is their space. Let’s help them feel more ownership of it.” You experienced the result: a small horde of children so proud to have the grown-ups come down and visit them.

I’m calling attention to this not just because it was so incredibly cute and heart-warming, but also because the RE Team and I feel it was a successful step in bridging what some people feel is an “upstairs-downstairs” gap at our congregation. When that perceived gap comes up in discussion, it’s usually along the lines of, “We don’t see the kids upstairs enough.” But why should a bridge run in just one direction?

One of the concerns raised at our RE Team Retreat in January is that the children won’t learn our UU hymns if they aren’t part of the Sunday services. But already this year I’ve been introducing singing as part of Spirit Play, and sometimes include it in Children’s Worship as well. For instance, on January 19, the children learned “We Shall Overcome.”

These are just two steps in what we hope becomes a series of integrative experiences and learning, and help build an increased sense of community.

—Pam Baxter, [Director of Religious Education](#)



SPIRITUALITY GROUP FORMING

Restore and rejuvenate your Self by becoming part of a small group of UU’s who are seeking to enhance their spirituality in a safe, enlightening gathering. We will follow a guide book written by a UU minister, while we explore four different topics.

The premise of this group, and the first topic, is, “Listening”. We have preliminary readings, questions and activities which will be supplied in advance each week, and an opportunity to listen to each other as we share our thoughts about the topic at the gathering.

A commitment to the 4-week session with a minimum of six people and a maximum of ten is recommended. It begins in March and is tentatively scheduled for the first and third Tuesdays from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Please reply to [email: soul-to-soul](mailto:soul-to-soul) for any questions or to sign up for this soul-fulfilling opportunity.

— Harriet Singer and Mira Tryon

FOLK SINGING

The next [folk singing](#) get-together is Saturday, February 15, at 8 p.m. at the home of Linda and Steve Sander. 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](mailto:folk-singing).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

During the December Board meeting, we continued our discussions about the search processes for both the interim and settled minister. It was at that time that I became aware (thank you Deborah for persisting with me!) that the time lines for each are so different that we really cannot have the settled minister application process completed in time to have only a 12-month interim. We will need a two-year interim minister.

The links to handbooks that describe each process including timelines are:

- uua.org/documents/mpl/transitions/transitional_ministry.pdf
- uua.org/documents/mpl/transitions/settlement_handbook.pdf

It was my hope to have an interim for only a year, and I admit that I was initially disappointed in the need for a two-year interim. I now view this added time as a gift to the congregation. The time with an interim minister is designed to fulfill the transitional needs of congregations. We can use this time creatively to explore our hopes and dreams as a congregation and can take time to continue our conversations and introspections about what work we as a congregation need to do.

We will then be better prepared to welcome a new minister and open a new chapter of congregational life. During this time, we may need to adjust our mission and vision to more clearly define and express our direction. Our time will be well spent.

The Board plans to confirm the interim search team at the January Board meeting scheduled for January 21, and we will begin to formalize our process to identify members of search team for our settled minister.

Please note: We will talk more about the building and a little about finances at our next town hall meeting tentatively scheduled for February 16 after the service.

STONES IN THE WALL – SOCIAL JUSTICE

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

FIRST SUNDAY FOOD COLLECTION PROJECT

THIS MONTH'S SUGGESTED ITEMS: PERSONAL CARE ITEMS (SHAMPOO, TOOTHPASTE, TOOTHBRUSHES, DEODORANT)

Our [monthly food collection](#) is Sunday, February 2. Look for collection baskets in the lobby. We participate in the "Circle of Giving" program that assures the [West Chester Food Cupboard](#) 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 care 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](mailto:food-cupboard).

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS FOR SAFE HARBOR MEALS

As an important part of our Social Justice program in the West Chester community, [UCWC volunteers prepare and serve dinner](#) at the [Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter](#) every second Sunday of the month.

This is how it works: For each meal, we have one **lead chef** and two **helpers**. The lead plans the menu, contacts the helpers, and provides and cooks the main dish (at home). The helpers assist by providing other parts of the meal. The meals must feed about 20 people. The lead serves the meal at the shelter and the helpers usually do too, but they are not required to do so.

Generally, a person or family signs up to be a lead one time a year and a Helper two times a year. It's fine if you want to do more or less than that, or if you only want to be a lead or only want to be a helper. New volunteers will be put on as helpers at least twice before they are expected to be lead chefs.

Please note that chefs must be at least twelve years old to help serve at Safe Harbor.

To get on the schedule for this year, contact Sharon Mayer-Conroy at [email: safe-harbor](mailto:sharon@ucwc.org) and let her know:

1. Your name, phone number and e-mail address
2. Your availability—e.g., any months you are not available. (The schedule runs from February 2014 to March 2015.) Also, if you prefer to help more or less than three times.

This is a very easy way to make a small contribution to our community. Please feel free to contact Sharon if you have any questions.

Try it—you'll like it. Thank you all so much.

— Sharon Mayer-Conroy

MLK DAY OF SERVICE

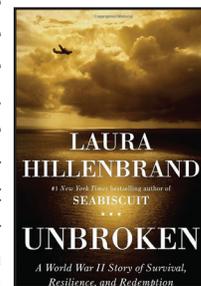
During the last few years, the UCWC sanctuary has been transformed on MLK Day of Service and has become a site for packaging 10,000 dried food meals for Stop Hunger Now. This year we doubled the number.

Each year, we have provided the site and our own volunteers and also have welcomed volunteers from other congregations. This year our social justice committee decided that we should also assist with funding. Thanks to congregational support from the April, 2013 Share the Plate and with funds from the Social Action Trust fund, we met our goal of \$1,250, which covers half of a 10,000-meal project. Thanks to all who donated, both time and finances. It has become a valued service project in our congregation. Hopefully, UCWC can increase our financial contribution in the years to come.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY BOOK GROUP SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9 7-8:30 PM AT UCWC

The February selection for the [Diversity Book Group](#) is *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand.

It's the amazing true story of Louie Zamperini, a juvenile delinquent-turned-Olympic runner-turned-Army hero; a man who lived through a series of incredible catastrophes against all odds. Pam Sapko will lead the discussion. Contact Pam at [email: diversity-book-group](mailto:pam@ucwc.org).



GUN VIOLENCE

For those of you who did not see the video on the *Today Show*, Gabby Giffords decided to mark the third anniversary of the Tucson shooting by jumping out of an airplane, celebrating being alive and vital on January 8. Gabby is an inspiration to all of us, for her heroic recovery from being shot point blank in the head by a deranged gunman who should never have been able to buy a gun. Her determination to become a national spokesperson for common sense gun violence prevention is so admirable, and gives energy to so many of us who take up this cause.

Please join our movement as we decide how best to move the message and actions forward in the new year. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at UCWC. All likeminded people outraged by the continuing scourge of gun violence in our country are welcome.

Tom Buglio, [email: gun-safety](mailto:gun-safety@ucwc.org)
— [UCWC Liaison](#) to Chester County Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence

VEGGIE POTLUCK BRUNCH SPOTLIGHTS LOCAL ANIMAL RESCUE GROUP

Our [Animal Ministry Chapter](#) is hosting a veggie potluck brunch event following service on Sunday, March 2. The event will feature a talk by a representative of [All4Paws](#), a local animal rescue group located in Chester Springs. All4Paws, a foster-based, all-breed, no-kill rescue offers rehabilitation and sanctuary for animals from high-kill shelters and auctions.

If you're interested in supporting this worthy group by adopting a pet, making a donation, or if you just enjoy sharing your favorite vegetarian recipe, please accept this invitation to attend this event. Contact John Gribbin ([email: animal-ministry](mailto:john.gribbin@ucwc.org)), Alan Pittenger or Ralph Mero for more information.

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 February 16 (third Sunday of the month) is [Habitat for Humanity](#).

Habitat for Humanity provides basic, well-built, affordable, owner-occupied homes for people in need in a way that builds hope, dignity and independence, develops partnerships and encourages community. Their primary objective is to eliminate poverty housing in Chester County by building low income, owner-occupied housing which leads to more stable neighborhoods. HFHCC's mission to unite Pennsylvanians around the cause of decent, affordable housing for everyone is inextricably linked to the need to support safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment. HFHCC seeks to be a model green builder in the affordable housing industry and an advocacy leader in the growing green building movement.

We, as a congregation, contributed \$450 to Maternal and Child Health in December 2013.

—Beth Daniels
[Share-The-Plate Coordinator](#)

FEAST OF DECADENT CHOCOLATE "FRIENDSHIP SUNDAY"

The Membership Committee invites all members and friends to consider inviting your neighbors and friends to our Annual Valentine's service and Feast of the Decadent Chocolate, February 9, at 10 a.m. It is always a special pre-Valentine event and—as we all know—features the best chocolate cakes, and cookies in Chester County, many of them homemade. Plus, it is a great social time for folks to get to know one another.



Bring your favorite chocolate treat to share—preferably made from fair-trade chocolate. You can bring a non-chocolate treat for those who aren't chocolate fans, if you wish.

Many congregations call it "Friendship Sunday." The focus is not as much on the service as it is on the social time, so it is a nice way to introduce new folks, via this event. It is a great time for our friends to be able to get out of the house in the midst of cold and dreary winter.

COFFEE HOUSE

Join us Saturday evening, February 8, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. Our featured act is Stephanie Phillips, singer/songwriter. If you're a performer, sign-up for the open mike begins at 6:30.

Refreshments are available; donations are encouraged to help with expenses and to thank our featured acts each month—and this is a fund-raiser for UCWC. Contact [email: coffee-house](mailto:coffee-house@ucwc.org).

LUNCH GROUP

[Lunch group](#) will meet Friday, February 14, 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](mailto:linda.sander@ucwc.org). 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.

CONGREGATIONAL CALENDAR

All email addresses @ucwc.org unless otherwise noted.

Jan 31-Feb 2	Fri-Sun	Women's Retreat. Contact Rev. Mero, email: minister
Feb 2	Sun	First Sunday Food Collection. Lobby. See p. 4.
Feb 7	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: fun
Feb 8	Sat	Crafters Party. 10 a.m. - noon. At UCWC. Coffee House. 7 p.m. Performers may sign up at 6:30. Contact Judy Perri, email: coffee-house . See p. 5.
Feb 9	Sun	Exploring Diversity Book Group. 7-8:30. See p. 4. Annual Feast of Decadent Chocolate. See p. 5. Safe Harbor Dinner. 6 p.m. See p. 4. Choir Sings at Sunday Service.
Feb 11	Tue	Program Council Meeting. 7-9 p.m. Office. Email: program
Feb 12	Wed	Animal Ministry. 7 p.m. Contact John Gribbin. Email: animal-ministry
Feb 14	Fri	Lunch Group. 11:30 a.m. Panera Bread. See p. 5.
Feb 15	Sat	Folk Singing. 8:00 pm. At the home of Linda and Steve Sander. See p. 3.
Feb 16	Sun	Share-the-Plate Sunday. Benefits Habitat for Humanity. See p. 5. Town Hall Meeting (tentatively scheduled). After the service.
Feb 18	Tue	Board Meeting. 7 p.m. Office. All are welcome. Contact Shelly Case, e-mail: president .
Mar 2	Sun	Veggie Potluck Brunch and All4Paws Speaker. After Sunday service. See p. 5.
Groups meeting multiple times in a month:		
Adult Exploration		SpiritWork. Wednesday, Jan 15 – Feb 19. 7 p.m. See January <i>Fellowtarian</i> , p. 2.
Spirit Singers		Practices 7:15-9:15 p.m. Sanctuary. Thursdays, February 6 and 27. Contact Miriam Davidson, email: choir
Youth Group		Meets most Sundays in the James Reeb Rm. at 10 a.m. Email: youth-group .

REVISED CLOSURE NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

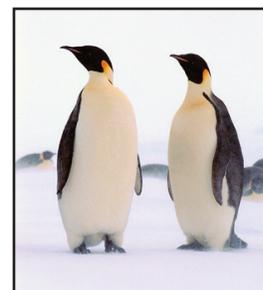
Weather is an unpredictable thing, though there are great resources being expended to try to keep us informed. When conditions are such that we feel it would be hazardous for people to risk coming to church, we will weigh all of the available information at our disposal.

Once the decision has been made we will:

- Send group e-mail to the congregation
- Change the message on the office phone
- Post the closing on the front page of the web site
- Post on Facebook
- If possible, change the sign in front of the building. (only if we know ahead of time)

We will DIRECTLY CONTACT (by phone or text and ask for a reply):

- Pianist
- Guest Speakers or musicians should there be any
- Lay Leader
- Choir members on a Choir Sunday
- Hospitality Team members who signed up for that day
- RE. Teachers for that day
- Youth Group Leaders
- Any attendees who we know do not have access to e-mail or the web



The success of this plan relies on your common sense. We will do our best to notify you, but if you haven't heard from us, or if you are in doubt as to whether or not we will be having services, please consult your e-mail, our web site, or call the office or one another. If there is another way you need to be reached, please let us know.