

THE FELLOWTARIAN

Newsletter of the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester

December 2021



NOTES FROM REV. DAN

As I write, the last Autumn leaves still cling to the silhouettes of trees. Sycamores and birches stand white against the contours of the hills, and the air begins to feel like winter. For me the turning of Fall to Winter is a wistful time of year. It's busy of course, and a thousand things have to get done — but sometimes, on dark afternoons, I find myself stopping to look, breathe, and take stock.

The day is dark, but far from gloomy.

So much remains unfinished this year. The pandemic isn't quite through with us, though we are surely ready to be through with it. We still have to be patient. The Christmas services we're planning have to be changed a bit for COVID safety, and an extra one has been added so we can fit everyone who wishes to attend. We can't bring back all our favorite traditions, quite yet.

Outside, the sun emerges for just long enough to light the wine-red leaves still holding on to their branches, and it is glorious.

I remember last year's Christmas — dinners shared over Zoom and services pieced together from hundreds of pieces. We managed to find beauty, wonder, and power, despite the challenges. This year will present its own set of issues, and much that we will miss — but it will be so much better.

The afternoon's waning light haloes the cones hanging from the spruce outside my office window. I breathe deeply.

The nature of life is change. Sometimes we notice more than others. In this changing of season, I grieve the losses, celebrate the blessing, and give myself to the new day. May it be love, and blessing, and renewal.

In faith,
Dan

A Note On Services

Our services are currently hybrid, with limited in-person attendance in our sanctuary. If you plan to come in person, please go to ucwc.org/sunday beginning each Wednesday to RSVP. Advance signups will allow us to maintain distancing in the sanctuary, and help keep track of who is in the building in case any contact tracing becomes necessary. We ask that all eligible people who attend in person events be vaccinated, and we require masks to be worn over mouth and nose at all times.

Sunday and Christmas Eve services will also be livestreamed via YouTube. Please watch email and **Connections** for RSVPs for Christmas Eve services. For in-person attendance, vaccinations are required for all eligible people over twelve, and good fitting masks are required for all people over two.

Our Mission

Our mission is to:

*GROW in spirit, heart
and mind*

*LOVE through care
and community*

*SERVE beyond
ourselves*



A Welcoming
Congregation

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Sunday Services



We gather, aspiring to be a thriving, caring, and welcoming community that supports each person's spiritual journey, embraces diversity, challenges us to live responsibly, and is a catalyst for a just and compassionate world.

Deck the Hall! Sunday Dec 5 11 am

Help us decorate our building for the holidays. After the service on December 5, join us for a decoration party, as we make our space beautiful for the celebrations ahead.



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Dec 5 10 am COME DOWN FROM THE HILLS Rev. Dan Schatz

When the war was over and the first Chanukah celebrated, the people came down from hiding and reclaimed their lives. After a struggle, how do we pick up the pieces? Following the service, we will decorate the sanctuary for the upcoming holidays.

Sat Dec 11 3pm "BLUE HOLIDAY" VESPERS SERVICE Cassie Lengel

In-person Only. No RSVP required. The holiday season is often one of enforced good cheer, but many of us struggle in this season, even in the best of times. A "Blue Holiday" service is a chance for us to come together and acknowledge that December isn't always, "the most wonderful time of the year." This simple service will include a chance for us to share personally with one another.

Dec 12 10 am BEYOND BELIEF Rev. Dan Schatz

Unitarian Universalism is a religion without creeds, but each of us have our own sets of beliefs. The spiritual diversity among and around us enriches and enlivens each of our journeys.

Dec 19 10 am GIFTS OF THE DARK Rev. Dan Schatz and UCWC Musicians

The Solstice marks the longest night of the year and the return of the sun. Traditionally, it's a time for hope, song, and celebration. We celebrate the occasion with a special service of music and readings.

Dec 24 4 pm ALL-AGES CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

This year we have redesigned our all-ages pageant for COVID safety. At the end of the service, we will move outdoors to sing "Silent Night."

7 pm CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Our 7 pm service, featuring The Spirit Singers and other musicians as well as a message from Rev. Dan, will conclude with an outdoor singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight.

9 pm CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Our 9 pm candlelight service will be a gentle service with special music, as well as a Christmas message from Rev. Dan. At the end of the service, we will move outdoors to sing "Silent Night" by candlelight.

Dec 26 10 am FIRE COMMUNION OF THE BURNING BOWL Cheryl Pittenger and Kathy Beatty

On or near the first Sunday in January, many Unitarian Universalist congregations hold a ritual to bid farewell to the old year, and to release it. In the words of Rev. Elizabeth Harding, "The fire communion separates the end of the year from the beginning, helping us to put in perspective the joys and sorrows, the changes and transitions, the ups and downs of the year. It's a half-way point in our church year, but a celebration of the outside calendar's year's end and year's beginning." In a ceremony of the burning bowl, we are invited to write down words, or a phrase, to sum up what we wish to release before entering the new year.

From the President

As the COVID pandemic drags on — and we resume in-person activities — what are we hoping to accomplish at UCWC this year?



At our board meeting in November, your trustees considered that question and finalized a set of goals for this congregational year.

Our top priority is to rebuild and expand our connections. We want to bring us all back together, rebuild our circle of care, and restore a sense of belonging in our faith community. To do so, we will make special efforts to understand the experiences people have been through, while inviting, welcoming, and integrating newcomers and re-engaging members who have drifted away. Vaccinations will be required to attend all gatherings, provided the person is eligible.

Other important goals include:

- We want to sustain current staff and level of operations despite the significant gap we are projected to face in the 2022-23 budget. Our budget will strive to ensure that our compensation honors the skills, experience, and time that our staff devotes to their work.
- We will launch an effort to grow our endowment and encourage planned giving. (Thanks to a member's bequest, we just added \$5,000 to the endowment.)

- We will fill key leadership vacancies and begin the longer-term work needed to produce a culture where leadership is a rewarding way of serving our faith community, rather than a burden that ends in burnout.
- We will hold in-person services as safely as possible with live-streaming for remote attendees. By the end of the congregational year, we will be offering two services on Sunday morning.
- We will rebuild our capacity to offer religious education to our youth and continue to offer a wide variety of programming for adults, both in-person and virtual.
- We will look for social justice projects and community service projects that can help build our internal sense of community. A bequest from one of our members will fund a special social justice project, to be determined when the stresses of the pandemic have lessened.

In setting those goals, your Board was guided by our newly adopted mission statement, which is a touchstone for all we do at UCWC:

*Grow in spirit, heart and mind
Love through care and community and
Serve beyond ourselves.*

May it ever be so.

— Matt Zencey



Fun & Fellowship

Fun and Fellowship Committee Needs Your Input

We have begun in-person services, and that means it's time for some fun. The Fun and Fellowship Committee is planning indoor activities such as Crafting Together and Game Night.

Let us know what kind of activities you would like to take part in. Better yet, join the committee. We are looking for active volunteers. Contact us at email: [fun](mailto:fun@ucwc.org).

New This Month: Game Night Returns

Join us Friday, December 3, for the return of Game Night. All ages welcome. We will meet in the sanctuary starting at 7:00 pm. Bring your favorite games or learn a new one. A few Covid restrictions will apply: Masks must be worn indoors at all times, adults should be vaccinated, and no food is permitted indoors for now. We plan to host Game Night the first Friday of every month. Join us!



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Lifespan Faith Development

Ethical Discussion Group Based on "The Good Place"



This Adult RE discussion group will meet the first and third Wednesday of each month to watch and discuss an episode(s) of the hit TV show on NBC, "The Good Place" and discuss its ethical questions.

This show is hilarious, and it offers a fun way to discuss and explore our morals and values. RSVP to **Adult-RE**, or join us for any session. We are currently in Season 3. We can lend you the DVDs to help you catch up.

Reflections: Religious Education Update

December is the month of preparation. Children wait with bated breath for presents, youth prepare for school tests and time to rest, parents juggle traditions and responsibilities, and we all prepare for time with family and friends. The retail world is working hard to prepare us as we spend time, energy, and money on gifts and food. Our families are preparing with decorations and traditions, travelling and cleaning.

But December is also a time of spiritual preparation. We prepare our Menorahs with candles to celebrate Hannukah, we read scriptures to prepare through Advent, we sing songs, and count blessings, and support charities.

We delve into our preparations with excitement and anxiety, with love and exhaustion — with no small amount of hustle and bustle. But as the days grow longer, we are reminded of the gifts the darkness brings us — reminders to rest, to prepare our hearts, to breathe, and to sink deep new roots for the upcoming new year.

This December brings many preparations for our congregation as well, as we continue to ramp back up into in-person services, RE classes, and events. We come with excitement to see one another's smiling eyes again, we come with exhaustion from the countless hours of behind-the-scenes preparations, and we come with gratitude as we share our abundance in a Harvest of Hope.

May we spend this holiday season together with peace, grace, and patience, as we grant our hearts and minds rest to embrace the new year as a congregation with renewed commitment.

— Cassie Lengel
Email: **DLFD**



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Religious Education Opportunities for Children and Youth 2021-22

This December we will have our normal RE classes on December 5 and December 19 for Pre-K through seventh grade, and we will welcome back Chalice and Chat for our eighth through twelfth graders as well. There will be no RE on December 12 or December 26, but our families are welcome to attend services if you'd like.

Since vaccinations for children ages 5-11 are still rolling out, and to protect everyone involved in our classes, we are still requiring masks, social distancing, and vaccinations (for those able to receive them). We also have new air filters to help mitigate any safety concerns.

Our OWL youth in eighth and ninth grades will continue to meet on Sunday evenings on December 5, 12, and 19 at 7 pm.

We look forward to when our children can be fully vaccinated as our next turning point on this ramp up to RE. For now, we ask that our parents please fill out our **registration page** on our website.

Adult RE: An Exploration of World Religions

This year we will meet each month to explore a different religion and how we engage them as UUs. This curriculum is based on Stephen Prothero's book, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World*, and the podcast "Interfaith Voices."

So RSVP to email: **Adult-RE** for our next session, as we continue learning about Islam on December 7 at 7:00 pm, via Zoom. We will not meet for our usual discussion on the third Tuesday as we will all be getting ready for the holidays. We will join back together to begin a discussion of Christianity in January, so in the meantime, check out **Connections** for a video about Prothero.

UU History and Theologies Tuesday, November 30

What's the difference between a Unitarian and a Universalist? Who were the Socinians? What does Count Dracula have in common with Unitarianism? Who was Pete Seeger's favorite circuit riding Universalist preacher? What does it mean to be a religious liberal? Could it be that UUs actually have a theological tradition of our own?

We'll cover this and more in Rev. Dan Schatz's Zoom class on Unitarian Universalist History and Theologies on Tuesday, November 30, from 6:30-8:30 pm. There will be stories, new perspectives, and some mind-blowing theology.

Bring your questions and invite a friend if you know someone who is interested in learning more about our "Faith of the Free." The class is open to all — newcomers as well as those who would like to grow in their understanding of Unitarian Universalism. "Walk-ins" are welcome, but it is extra helpful to RSVP in advance to email: **minister**.

Mindful Meditation Using the Creative Arts

Join us on Saturday, December 18, at 2:00 pm for a step away from the hectic holiday season to reconnect with your mind and spirit as we destress together. Use this time to find your center and invite some peace into this season.

We will have various art supplies and media to use — from crayons and coloring books to paints and canvases, though, if you have a medium you prefer (crochet, felting, etc.), feel free to bring it with you. RSVP to **Adult-RE** if you are interested.

Adult RE: Moving On from Loss Coming in January

Please join UCWC member Paul Heck for a presentation entitled "Moving on from Loss: Skills for Helping Yourself and Others." This workshop will focus primarily on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in our lives, but the skills taught can be used for any experience of loss one may be struggling to overcome. There will be a discussion/Q&A period following the presentation.

Paul Heck is a retired mental health professional whose 35-year career was spent in corporate settings as a clinical manager of Employee Assistance Programs and Wellness Services. This topic has been an area of specific interest and expertise for him throughout his career.

Small Group Ministry

Small Group Ministry is a way to gather with other Unitarian Universalists twice a month for community, conversation, and connection. Each session is organized around a theme and includes a chalice lighting, readings, and questions to spark discussion. Groups are led by trained facilitators who meet regularly with Rev. Dan.

Currently, our congregation has six groups which meet at different times and places. If you are interested in joining a group, please contact email: **SGM**.



Minister's Office Hours

Dan's office hours are by appointment this December. He can be reached by cell phone at 484-653-5011, or at email: **minister**.

Stones in the Wall: Social Justice

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

Diversity Book Group

Instead of reading a book for this busy month, we'll be watching the film "In the Heights" (music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda). You can buy it, but not stream it these days, but it's also available at most libraries.

Since we're still discouraged from large in-person group meetings, we decided we would coordinate among ourselves and invite a friend or two to our house to watch with us. Members of the group are asked to let Debby know when you will be showing it, and she will send out an email to the Diversity Book Group bunch listing the various showings so you can call each other and plan. Then we'll all meet at our regular second Sunday, December 12, at 7:00 pm, to discuss.



Share-the-Plate Generosity

The Social Justice Committee's Share-the-Plate program raises money to give to local non-profit organizations working to improve life for Chester County residents. We are pleased to announce the share-the-plate recipient for December 19 (third Sunday of the month), **Safe Harbor**.

Safe Harbor is a non-profit charitable organization whose mission is to provide housing, food, and access to support services in a structured environment for homeless single men and women in Chester County. Safe Harbor's goal reaches beyond just feeding the homeless and providing housing. They seek to understand each person's background, define short term action plans designed to address his or her challenges and needs, and monitor his or her progress. Their goal is to help rebuild lives and life skills, reestablish self-esteem, and help people overcome the issues that prevent them from leading independent, productive lives.



Please note the following as you prepare your donation:

- All checks should be payable to "UCWC".
- Checks with memo "All to charity" or similar go to the charity. Clearest is "All to Safe Harbor".
- Checks with memo "plate", "donation", "STP", or "share the plate" are split 50/50. Clearest is "STP 50/50".
- All other checks go 100% to UCWC, unless otherwise indicated.

Thank you for your generosity to October recipient, Act in Faith, in the amount of \$600.



UCWC



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM Team

In place of a Zoom based program in December, the UCWC CJ Reform team encourages you to take time to read this concise **two-page summary** of the recently released report from PA FAMM, entitled, "Time for Justice; The Urgent Need for Second Chances in Pennsylvania's Sentencing System." Check upcoming **Connections** for details on action steps you can take to help rectify the harsh sentencing policies in our state, policies which are among some of the most severe in the nation.

For more information on this and other issues of importance as well as information about other groups in addition to FAMM with whom we can collaborate, contact us at email: **criminal-justice**.

Calendar

All email addresses
@ucwc.org

Click [HERE](#) to access our
website main calendar,
which includes late
November events.

Pastoral Care

The **Pastoral Care**
Team contact for
this month is
Barbara Dallara



Nov 30	Tue	UU History and Theologies. 6:30 pm. See p. 5.
Dec 1	Wed	Small Group Facilitators Meeting. 7:00 am. Adult RE: The Good Place. 7:00 pm. See p. 4.
Dec 3	Fri	Game Night. 7:00 pm. UCWC sanctuary. See p. 3.
Dec 5	Sun	First Sunday Food Collection. Deck the Halls. After the service. See p. 2.
Dec 6	Mon	Executive Team. 7:00 pm. Email: executive-team .
Dec 7	Tue	Criminal Justice Reform Team. 4:30 pm. See p. 6. Men's Group. 7:00 pm. See left. Adult RE: Exploration of World Religions. 7:00 pm. See p. 5.
Dec 12	Sun	Diversity Book Group. 7:00 pm. See p. 6.
Dec 13	Mon	Religious Services Committee. 6:30 pm.
Dec 14	Tue	Program Council. 7:00 pm.
Dec 15	Wed	Black Lives Matter Committee. 3:00 pm. Contact Sandra Schaal, email: black-lives-matter . Adult RE: The Good Place. 7:00 pm. See p. 4.
Dec 16	Thu	Religious Education Committee. 7:00 pm.
Dec 18	Sat	Mindful Meditation Using the Creative Arts. 2:00 pm. See p. 5.
Dec 19	Sun	Share-the-Plate Sunday. Benefits Safe Harbor. See p. 6.
Dec 21	Tue	Adult RE Committee. 4:30 pm. Email: adult-re . Board Meeting. 6:30 pm. All are welcome. Adult RE: Exploration of World Religions. 7:00 pm. See p. 5.
Dec 28	Tue	Committee on Ministry. 6:30 pm. Email: COM .

EVENTS OCCURRING REGULARLY:

Most Thursdays	Spirit Singers Practice. at 7:00 pm. For specific dates, contact Miriam Davidson, email: choir .
Saturdays	Open Zoom Session. 7:00 pm.
Various Dates	Small Group Ministry (Several Active Groups). See web calendar or contact email: SGM .

Men's Group

The UCWC men's group will meet on December 7 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. Tilo Stahl and Gerry Giess will lead a discussion: "The false discussion about the Teaching of Critical Race Theory in Schools". The Zoom link will be sent out directly via email.



All men are welcome.
If you are interested in participating but are not yet on the email distribution list, please reach out to Mark or Dirk at email: [mens-group](#).



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

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