

THE FELLOWTARIAN

Newsletter of the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester

January 2022



NOTES FROM REV. DAN

Winter is the quiet season. Sure, it begins with the grand celebrations of Chanukah, Yule, Christmas, and New Years, but very quickly those holidays fade into the gentleness of January and February.

This is the season for hibernation, for keeping warm, for seeds to be nurtured by the rich darkness of the winter's soil. It's a transition time as we prepare ourselves for the abundance of spring. This is the season of rest, renewal, and getting ready.

What that looks like depends on us. For some of us it means warm fires, books to read, and winter naps. For others it could be time spent in the woodshop, or making crafts, or writing in journals. For a high school senior, it's a time to make some decisions about the coming year.

For any of us, it could be the time to contemplate changes in our lives – what are the next steps from here? For those of us who are finding our activities limited more than we expected this winter, due to the newest wave of the pandemic, we may have more “opportunities” than we were

expecting. How will we make use of them?

Winter is a time for getting ready in our congregation, as well, this year especially, as we move back to online services for the next month. We've held together through almost two years of pandemic living remarkably well, but some things that fell away for a while need renewal.

This is the season for hibernation, for keeping warm, for seeds to be nurtured by the rich darkness of the winter's soil.

We have a wonderful group of newcomers – how we will re-invigorate our membership process and our membership team? (Volunteer opportunity alert!) How will we renew and invigorate our hospitality? We have a stewardship drive coming up – how will we work together to move our congregation forward through an “in-between” year? How will we grow, love, and serve together in everything we do?

I don't expect every question to be resolved and every project completed, either in our personal or our congregational lives. But perhaps, allowing time for rest and renewal, we will have prepared just enough to greet the spring with fresh energy and joy.

Now – where did I put that novel I started on?

In faith, Dan



Our Mission

Our mission is to:

GROW in spirit, heart and mind

LOVE through care and community

SERVE beyond ourselves



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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.

Jan 2 10 am

UCWC'S MISSION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social Justice Committee Members

Join in to hear about UCWC's Social Justice Committee as we start a new year with renewed energy. The following folks will share their important ongoing work, status, and how each of us can support these missions: Sandy Schaal (Black Lives Matter), Robin Garrett (Criminal Justice Reform), Tom Buglio (UUJusticePA, Gun Violence Prevention), Gerry Giess (Safe Harbor Meals), and Debby Kern (Diversity Book Group).

Jan 9 10 am

THIS NEW YEAR

Rev. Dan Schatz

In some ways New Year's Day is nothing more than a mark on the calendar – and this year it may feel like not much has changed. But the New Year is a perfect time for reflection on impermanence, change, and hope.

Jan 16 10 am

DREAMS FOR OUR TIME

Rev. Dan Schatz

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke powerfully of a dream of justice and equality between the races. What parts of Dr. King's dreams have yet to be fulfilled, and what new dreams of justice will shape our future?

Jan 23 10 am

TENDING MORAL INJURY

Rev. Dr. Chris Antal

What is Moral Injury and how does it manifest in military veterans? Why should we care? What interventions show promise? How might congregations better respond?

Rev. Dr. Chris Antal is a clinical staff chaplain at the Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia, a former Army chaplain, and Veteran of the U.S. War in Afghanistan. While deployed in 2012 he established a Unitarian congregation at Kandahar Airfield, where he preached a sermon the Army determined was "politically inflammatory" and responded with an official reprimand and release from active duty. His public resignation of his officer commission in protest in 2016 was reported in media outlets around the world. He is a pioneer in addressing military moral injury and has published about his work in several peer reviewed journals.

Jan 30 10 am

REPROACHING GOD

Rev. Dan Schatz

We tend to be uncomfortable with anger in our culture, especially when we have no place to direct it. Anger can be real, legitimate, and healthy, though – even when we are angry at life itself.

A Note on Services



In order to help slow the spread of the Omicron COVID variant and keep the burden on hospitals low, our January services will be online only, livestreamed from the sanctuary on our YouTube channel. We hope that we will be able to safely return to hybrid services after this month. Sunday School families should watch for communications regarding religious education plans for January.

From the President

A question we UUs sometimes get at this time of year is “Why do you celebrate Christmas, if you don’t believe Jesus was the son of God?” The questioners probably don’t realize how “un-Christian” the roots of our big American holiday are. Indeed, if there had been a Fox “News” in 1600s America, it would have had a real reason to complain about a war on Christmas: The Puritans actually banned the celebration.



As historian Stephen Nissenbaum notes in his book, *The Battle for Christmas*, celebrating Christmas was illegal in Massachusetts from 1659 to 1681, punishable by a fine of five shillings. Back then, Christmas was a rowdy celebration, one that allowed the poor and oppressed to demand hospitality from their social and economic betters. Wassailing, going from house to house and demanding food and alcoholic drink, was common.

Fundamentalist preacher Cotton Mather described Christmas this way in 1712, according to Nissenbaum: “The Feast of Christ’s Nativity is spent ... by long Eating, by hard Drinking, by lewd Gaming, by rude Reveling.” “The Puritans were correct,” Nissenbaum writes, “when they pointed out ... that Christmas was nothing but a pagan festival covered with a Christian veneer.”

Cotton Mather realized it wasn’t practical to ban Christmas. He tried and failed to transform the Carnival-style occasion into a purely religious celebration.

What eventually cleaned up Christmas, Nissenbaum writes, was turning it into a commercial extravaganza. With industrialization in the early 1800s, people were moving to cities, where there was more economic opportunity and material goods were more widely available.

Nissenbaum credits elites in New York city, including Clement Moore, author of the iconic *’Twas the Night Before Christmas*, with popularizing the holiday as a gift-giving celebration. Nissenbaum cites an 1850 short story by Harriet Beecher Stowe in which a character says, “every shop and store is glittering with all manner of splendors...There are worlds of money wasted, at this time of year, in getting things that nobody wants, and nobody cares for after they are got.”

Yes, people were questioning the materialistic aspect of the holiday a hundred years before Charlie Brown did so in the classic Christmas special.

I have my qualms about the frenzy and commercialism surrounding Christmas, and I don’t believe Jesus was divine. But given an occasion to brighten the shortest days of the year by gathering with family and friends, sharing a meal, exchanging gifts, and being mindful of those who are less fortunate – well, that’s a celebration I gladly join.

Yes, people were questioning the materialistic aspect of the holiday a hundred years before Charlie Brown did so in the classic Christmas special.

Minister’s Office Hours

Rev. Dan is returning to regular office hours. Because plans are still shifting suddenly, it is a good idea to email or call before coming in.

Monday: 1-3 pm
Tuesday: by appointment
Wednesday: 1-3 pm
Thursday: Minister’s writing day
Friday: Minister’s sabbath

In addition, Dan is available by appointment Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and can be reached by email or cell phone at any time.

Lifespan Faith Development

We strive for attainable goals of community and support, patience, and flexibility.

Changes to RE in January

Due to new developments in the spread of the omicron variant, we are working to be a responsible and safe space for our members and within our West Chester Community.

Our children are still one of our most vulnerable populations, and since we value their safety so highly here at UCWC, we are going to be abundantly cautious in our decisions. While services remain online, we will make our decisions together the best we can for how to meet safely.

Please check your emails so we can make informed decisions together and watch Connections for more information.

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 Christianity on January 18 at 7 pm, via Zoom.

Reflections

I love New Year's Eve with its focus on new beginnings – which is something we all need. You begin this process with reflection. You evaluate your values. You set expectations and goals, and you forgive the past you to give yourself the space to begin again. What a poignant process as we begin a new year in this same place of pandemic and uncertainty.

As the UCWC community, we reflect on where we've been in the past almost two years – remembering the good times, the ways we adapted, the new faces we've welcomed, the online connections we didn't think were possible. As the UCWC community we evaluate our values: promising again, despite being weary and worn down, that we'll do whatever we must to keep one another safe.



In this community we strive for attainable goals of community and support, patience, and flexibility as we lean on this interconnected web. As UCWC, we are holding one another in grace as we smooth those edges frayed by worried hands and many needs, so that we can weave a design where we are all included.

So let us bring these reminders to our RE program as we head into a new year. We remember that we value our children, and that they are one of our vulnerable populations. We love being in our building when it is safe to do it, so we strive to keep it clean and safe for them to meet their mental and spiritual needs. We support our parents by standing as friends to them and teachers for their children, knowing that it will require energy and flexibility on our part. We look at where we've been, and we rise up together to seek a better tomorrow.

– Cassie Lengel
email: **DLFD**



Visualizing Our New Year

Join us on Saturday, January 15, from 2:00 to 3:30 pm as we make some space to creatively imagine our new year in 2022. We have been stuck in a place of uncertainty and indecision because of this pandemic, but there are many aspects of our lives that we can use with intention to refill our cup – from goal setting, to reorganizing priorities, to leaning on community, and deepening spiritual practices.

This time will involve some reflection and meditation, as well as sharing, and even creativity by making vision boards through collage. RSVP to email: **Adult-RE** if you are interested. It will be a small group in-person or a Zoom gathering depending on health concerns.

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Team contact for this month is **Pam Seres**



Moving On from Loss: Skills for Helping Yourself and Others

Please join UCWC member Paul Heck on January 20 at 7 pm via Zoom 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.



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 email: **Adult-RE** or join us for any session. We are currently in Season 3. We can loan the DVDs to help you catch up.

Men's Group: What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

On Tuesday, January 4, Paul Heck and Michael Werner will lead a discussion on our individual and collective response to the concept of retirement.

They've both known men who seemed to struggle every day with being retired, and they've also known those who have made a seamless transition into a new and positive situation. In some cases, there has been an entirely new fear: that retirement will not be possible at all. What can we learn from these men? Which cohort do you see yourself in?



All men are welcome. The Zoom link will be sent out directly via email. 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**.

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, please write to email: **SGM**.

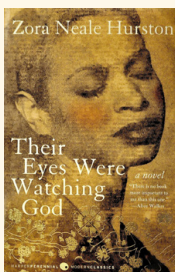
Stones in the Wall: Social Justice

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

Diversity Book Group

Jan 9 7:00-8:30 pm on Zoom Leader: Sandy Schaal

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston



Hurston's classic of the Harlem Renaissance is the beautiful, haunting story of a woman's search for love, independence and, ultimately, self-discovery. Re-issued in 1978 after 30 years out of print, it is now one of the most widely read and highly acclaimed novels in the canon of African-American literature:

A deeply soulful novel that comprehends love and cruelty and separates the big people from the small of heart, without ever losing sympathy for those unfortunates who don't know how to live properly.

—Zadie Smith

UUSC Update

UUSC's Pandemic Response. Message from Mary Katherine Morn, UUSC President:

As we reflect on what we've accomplished together this year — and the work we have yet to do in the coming one — all of us at UUSC are incredibly grateful for your support.

In the first year of the pandemic, UUSC made 38 additional emergency grants in addition to our regularly planned grantmaking budget. The availability of that funding was the direct result of the generosity of our members.



It translated into 13 water tanks installed throughout Solomon Island communities to ensure clean water for drinking and washing. It provided people in Guatemala the tools to start household gardens that helped to alleviate widespread hunger stemming from the pandemic. It meant Burmese children received school supplies and a free education from qualified Rohingya teachers while living in refugee camps. And so much more.

In ways large and small this year, these vital resources have increased the safety measures and protections for people during the pandemic — making a real difference for families rebuilding their lives, repairing damaged homes, and defending ways of life.

Guest at Your Table

Whether or not you collected money in a Guest at Your Table box over the holidays, please donate to support UUSC's work. Please convert GAYT box cash into a check or donate it online. Any donation will make you a UUSC member. Donations of \$150 or more are eligible to be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock. Thank you!

Ways to Donate:

- Write a check to UCWC with UUSC in the memo line, and mail to UCWC, or put it in the collection plate.
- Online GAYT donations click [here](#).*
- Checks can also be mailed to UUSC, PO Box 808, Newark, NJ 07101-0808.*

*When donating directly to UUSC, please say you are from UCWC. Couples should list both names so you can both be members.

Thank you.

First Sunday Food Collection

In this time of social distancing, we are not collecting food on the first Sunday of each month. However, as always, you can still make a financial donation — with no personal contact on your part. We will buy grocery store gift cards and give them to the Food Cupboard.

Please make your check out to "UCWC" and write "Food Cupboard" in the memo line. Mail your check to:



Unitarian Congregation of West Chester
501 South High Street
West Chester, PA 19382

You can also donate to the Food Cupboard on the UCWC donation web page — click [here](#).

Jubilee Three Anti-Racism Training Online from Fri, Jan 14, 6:00 pm to Sun, Jan 16, 7:00 pm

You are invited to participate in Jubilee Three Anti-Racism Training: Learning Together About Systemic Racism. At least seven members of UCWC have participated in Jubilee sessions, and they heartily recommend this training for members and friends of UCWC. Another session will be offered in March.

Weekend training includes presentations, discussions, videos, exercises, and small group work. This 2½ day workshop is open to anyone who wants to journey toward making a stand against racism. Congregation members and leaders of any faith, as well as non-members are all welcome.

Goals:

- Develop a shared analysis of racism and its individual, institutional, and cultural manifestations
- Begin to apply this common understanding to the history, culture, and institutional structure of our society
- Envision the next steps in taking action

Agenda Topics Include:

- The history of racism and resistance to racism in the Americas
- Defining racism
- The effects of racism on people of color and on white people
- Dismantling racism
- Claiming and shaping an anti-racist identity

Trainers:

- Paula Cole Jones
- Dr Leon Spencer
- Lutricia Callair

Enrollment is limited to 70 participants, so sign up today [here](#). For more information contact Paula Cole Jones at pcolejones@gmail.com.

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 January 16 (third Sunday of the month), **The Chester County Food Bank**.

The Chester County Food Bank is the central hunger relief organization serving more than 120 partner agencies in Chester County. Through their network of food cupboards, hot meal sites, shelters, and other social service organizations, they distribute over three million pounds of food to residents with limited access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. The Chester County Food Bank is much more than a food distribution center. They also sponsor a number of programs to address food insecurity, including Fresh2You Mobile Market, Raised Bed Gardens, and Eat Fresh.



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 Chester County Food Bank".
- 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 the November recipient, Baby Food Fund, in the amount of \$725.

Criminal Justice Reform

The Criminal Justice Reform team invites you to join us on Zoom on Tuesday, January 4, at 4:30 pm for the team's monthly general discussion and planning meeting.

If you cannot make this meeting but want to learn more about current CJ reform issues in Pennsylvania, or if you want to get involved in our team's efforts to assist people in our community impacted by incarceration, contact email: criminal-justice to get connected.

UCWC



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM Team

The CJ Reform Team's program on Zoom is on Monday, January 17, at 7:30 pm, when we will talk about UUA's Worthy Now Prison Ministry under the auspices of the Church of the Larger Fellowship. More information about this work can be found [here](#).

Calendar

All email addresses @ucwc.org

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

Fun and Fellowship

Looking for some fun? Let us know what kind of activities you would like to take part in. Better yet, join our committee. We are looking for active volunteers. Contact us at email: [fun](#).

New This Month: Crafting. In-person crafting sessions are in the planning stages. We would meet in the sanctuary with plenty of social distancing and room for all attendees to bring whatever crafts they like: knitting, cross stitch – or just come and be social. (Same Covid restrictions as Game Night). Watch the weekly *Connections* for more details.



Game Night. Pssst...Did you hear about Game Night's return? In-person games were enjoyed by the attendees. If you missed out, plan to join us on Friday, January 7, for the next session. We will meet in the sanctuary at 7 p.m. Bring your favorite games or learn a new one. All ages are welcome.

A few Covid restrictions will apply: Masks must be worn indoors at all times, adults should be vaccinated, and no food indoors for now.



Jan 2	Sun	First Sunday Food Collection. See p.6.
Jan 3	Mon	Executive Team. 7:00 pm. Email: executive-team .
Jan 4	Tue	Criminal Justice Reform Team. 4:30 pm. See p. 7.
Jan 5	Wed	Men's Group. 7:00 pm. Zoom. See p. 5. Small Group Facilitators Meeting. 7:00 am. Adult RE: The Good Place. 7:00 pm. See p. 5.
Jan 7	Fri	Game Night. 7:00 pm. Sanctuary. See left.
Jan 9	Sun	Diversity Book Group. 7 pm. Zoom. See p. 6.
Jan 10	Mon	Religious Services Committee. 6:30 pm.
Jan 11	Tue	Program Council. 7:00 pm.
Jan 14-16	Fri-Sun	Jubilee Three Anti-Racism Training. See p. 7.
Jan 15	Sat	Visualizing Our New Year. 2:00-3:00 pm. Zoom. See p. 4.
Jan 16	Sun	Share-the-Plate Sunday. Benefits Chester County Food Bank. See p. 7. Racial Justice Discussion. 7 pm. Zoom. Contact email: black-lives-matter .
Jan 17	Mon	Criminal Justice Reform Team Program. 7:30 pm. Zoom. See p. 7.
Jan 18	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. 4.
Jan 19	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. 5.
Jan 20	Thu	Moving On from Loss. 7 pm. Zoom. See p. 5.
Jan 25	Tue	Religious Education Committee. 7:00 pm. 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](#).

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

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