

THE FELLOWTARIAN

Newsletter of the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester

December 2023



NOTES FROM REV. DAN

We gathered in our sanctuary, a large circle around the room. There were warm voices and quiet tears. A Transgender Day of Remembrance vigil is always a somber occasion, a hard but necessary reminder of too many lives lost senselessly, but it can also be a time for renewal. As we all shared our reflections on the day, a kind of magic took place. People who had never met one another walked across the room to offer a tissue and a hug. When someone sang a song, and their voice faltered, a stranger took up the lyrics and melody. Together, a gathering of mourners became a community of hope and love and power.

I've seen it before, although this was an especially moving example. It often happens in our congregation, when members and friends check up on the people they know are going through hard times. It happens when we ask for help and find it. It happens when we break bread together, as we did last month. It happens every time we live our mission to "love through care and community."

Congregations, services, and vigils don't create such moments, although

we try to make spaces in which they can happen more easily. The truth is these moments come whenever we reach out to another human being, not because we know them, but simply because they are human. Every time, it's a kind of magic, and it can happen all the time.

As we come into the holiday season, this kind of ordinary human care becomes even more important. For many it's a stressful time to begin

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with, and events in our nation and the world have made this particular year even more difficult for some.

Each of us has the power to lighten that burden. All of us can bring care and joy to others with the simplest acts. It might be a kind word, or an encouraging gesture, or an act of forgiveness, or an act of giving. We may not always see the results firsthand, but when we reach towards others in compassion and care, we create the kind of magic that brings hope. It can even save a life.

There are as many ways to create caring community as there are human beings on Earth. How will we reach out to each other?

In faith, Dan

Our Mission

Our mission is to:

GROW in spirit, heart and mind

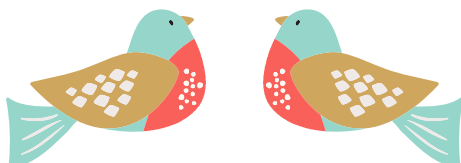
LOVE through care and community

SERVE beyond ourselves



A Welcoming
Congregation

501 South High Street
West Chester PA 19382
610-692-5966
office@ucwc.org
www.ucwc.org



Sunday Services

Religious Education
and Babysitting
Sundays at 10:00 am



*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.*

December 3 10 am

OPENING

Rev. Dan Schatz

Unitarian Universalism is a uniquely pluralistic faith. How do we learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning?

December 10 10 am

**THE RELENTLESS
PUSUIT
OF IMPERFECTION**

Brett Goldman

I've always found slices of good in everything. I've championed the benefit of the doubt. I've focused on others' intentions behind their behavior instead of the behavior itself. But in certain areas, including a recent hobby, I've found my approach to be the opposite, struggling to see past perceived imperfections. Have I suddenly removed my blinders to see the world as it really is? Is this a harbinger of things to come as my age creeps upward? Is it healthy? Dangerous? Can we be optimists and realists simultaneously? Let's explore how our view of the world may clash with our view of ourselves.

December 17 10 am

**PEACE IN THE
DARKNESS**

**Rev. Dan Schatz and
UCWC Musicians**

The Winter Solstice is a time for reflection, togetherness, and peace. In songs and readings, we search for peace of all kinds as we celebrate the solstice together.

December 24 10 am

**ALL AGES
CHRISTMAS EVE
PAGEANT**

**Cassie Lengel,
Rev. Dan Schatz,
and Many Others**

Join us for a very special participatory Christmas Eve service as we tell the age-old story of a birth and the holiness of every child. There will be easy roles for all ages (including very young children), and no rehearsal is required. Please plan to come at 9:30 to get a costume (but you can still have a role even if you don't come early). Very young children who wish to be animals may bring their own costumes as well. This very special service has become a beloved annual tradition, and we hope people of all ages will take part.

Please Note: Because Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, this intergenerational service will be in the morning. There will be no evening intergenerational service, though children are always welcome at the 7pm service.

December 24 7 pm

**CANDLELIGHT
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**

**Rev. Dan Schatz and
the Spirit Singers**

We will gather together for a traditional Christmas Eve service with readings, carols, music from the Spirit Singers, a Christmas reflection from Rev. Dan Schatz, and the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight.

December 31 10 am

**FAREWELL
TO THE OLD YEAR**

**Cheryl Pittenger and
Kathy Beatty**

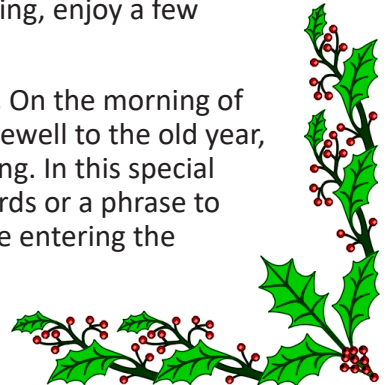
On or near the first Sunday in January, many Unitarian Universalist congregations hold a ritual to bid farewell to the old year and to release it. In the words of Rev. Elizabeth Harding, "The fire communion separates the end of the year from the beginning, helping us to put in perspective the joys and 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." Join UCWC members Cheryl Pittenger & Kathy Beatty as we strive to let go, while setting intentions for new beginnings and possibilities.



December Holidays

at the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester
501 S. High Street in West Chester, PA
and streaming on YouTube

- Fri Dec 1 5 pm Cookies, Choirs, and Cocoa.** Begin West Chester's Old-Fashioned Christmas with cookies, cocoa, and a special concert from the Rustin High School choirs.
- Sun Dec 17 10 am Peace in the Darkness – A Solstice Service.** The Winter Solstice is a time for reflection, togetherness, and peace. In songs and readings, we search for peace of all kinds as we celebrate the solstice together.
- Wed Dec 20 7 pm Blue Holiday Vespers Service.** 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, led by Director of Lifespan Faith Development Cassie Lengel, will include a chance for us to share personally with one another. In person and Zoom.
- Sun Dec 24 10am All Ages Christmas Eve Service.** Join us for a very special participatory all ages Christmas Eve service as we tell the age-old story of a birth and the holiness of every child. There will be easy roles for all ages (including very young children), and no rehearsal is required.
- Sun Dec 24 7pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service.** We will gather for a traditional Christmas Eve service with readings, carols, music from the Spirit Singers, a Christmas reflection from Rev. Dan Schatz, and the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight.
- Mon Dec 25 10 am Carols, Coffee and Conversation.** All are welcome to an informal Christmas morning open house with time to gather together in our sanctuary for Christmas companionship. In-person only, no streaming. Join us to sing, enjoy a few goodies, and share fellowship.
- Sun Dec 31 10 am Fire Communion – The Burning Bowl.** On the morning of New Years Eve, we hold a ritual to bid farewell to the old year, and to release burdens we may be carrying. In this special service, we are invited to write down words or a phrase to symbolize what we wish to release before entering the new year.



From the President



In addition to the honor of serving on the Board for our congregation, I am currently a board member of a non-profit organization in Phoenixville. When I was originally asked to join that board, I refused, saying that I just didn't have enough time. They called me back six months later, and I again refused. I told them to contact me the next year, and maybe my schedule would have more availability. Eighteen months after the original ask, I said yes.

Did I have more time? No. Was I expecting to have more time? No. I concluded that I would never have the time, and my life would be just as busy five or ten years from now. So, I said yes, and somehow, I have found the time.

Maybe it's one of those universal truths that you just must jump into something, and somehow you will find the time. Took me half a lifetime to figure that out so now you don't have to wait that long. If you think to yourself that you will get involved in one of the many opportunities to help at UCWC once the kids have grown, once your job changes, once you retire, once you win the lottery, etc., because you will have the time, it doesn't seem to work that way.

Join a committee, become a committee chair, help with a set-up or clean-up from an event, or volunteer on Sundays to make coffee or greet

people, etc. No need to wait until you think you have the time. You won't – but somehow, some way, you will find the time and strengthen our UCWC community in the process.

Some of you may have attended training, reviewed information, or at least heard about the proposed change to Article II of the UU Association (UUA) bylaws. You will be given multiple chances to learn more, think about the concepts in this document, ponder on what it means to be a UU, and discuss our values in the coming months.

The first Board-sponsored opportunity will take place on Saturday, January 20, from noon-2:00 pm (lunch provided). We hope to engage in conversation that will be helpful in understanding the new Article II proposal and thinking about what it would mean to our UU identity and to our relationship with the UU Association.

The latest version of the proposed Article II of the bylaws was recently made available and includes amendments that were voted on at the General Assembly this past June. Further amendments may be made to this version but must happen by February 1, 2024.

If interested in submitting an amendment, I can direct you to the process which requires some collaboration with other congregations. You can find the most recent revision [here](#).

Ed Cohle

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. If you are interested in joining a group, please write to email: [SGM](#).

Men's Group

The UCWC Men's Group will meet in-person on Tuesday, December 5, at 7:00 pm, in the sanctuary – no Zoom this time. Bob and Gerry will lead the discussion on "Memories of your childhood – bad, good, indifferent." All men are welcome. If you are interested in participating but are not yet on the email distribution list, please reach out to Mark and Dirk at email: [mens-group](#).



Minister's Office Hours

Rev. Dan is available for appointments on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. He can be reached by email at email: [minister](#) or by cell phone.

Pastoral Care

The [Pastoral Care Team](#) contact for this month is **Pam Seres**



Lifespan Faith Development

Christmas No-Rehearsal Pageant

Every year on Christmas Eve we hold a pageant retelling the story of the nativity — the birth of Jesus — as we honor the sacredness of the Christian story while embracing its meaning in myth and wonder as Unitarian Universalists.

As we recount the story, we will need a grand cast of friends to join us in acting out this tale — from kings and angels to shepherds and a motley crew of animals. You come to the service, and we provide costumes, script, and tons of entertainment. While this pageant is an inclusive opportunity to EVERYONE who wants a part to have one, we would love to know if you can play a part or help as one of our guiding elves.

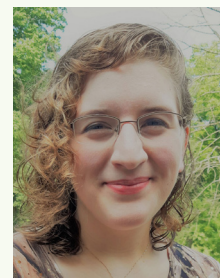
This year Christmas Eve, December 24, falls on a Sunday, so we will have our pageant at our 10 am service. Please RSVP to email: DLFD for more information or to volunteer.

REflections: Religious Education Update

As we come into this early winter season filled with holidays, I find myself reflecting on family. As the dark creeps back and the cold seeps in this season, we go from spending so much of our time out and about and we retreat back into ourselves and our homes. We light up the darkness with trees and candles and decorations, we eat warm filling foods, and we all have memories of spending these times with family — be it biological or your chosen family.

I almost feel like this, above all others, is a perfect time for this idea of “chosen family.” Each year on Christmas Eve we tell the story of the nativity, of Jesus’ birth, and while we often focus on the beauty of the birth or the welcome for immigrants, I can’t help but be reminded of how blended this family was. As the story goes, Mary became with child without Joseph, but even with the struggle and unconventionality of this, he stayed with her. They created a family that they chose in spite of what everyone around them might have thought.

This season I want to encourage you to leave behind your expectations and to choose joy with the people you love. Open your circle to meet and welcome new folks into your chosen family, and always remember you are a beloved part of our UCWC family.



Cassie Lengel, Email: DLFD



Blue Holiday Vespers Service December 20 at 7:00 pm Zoom Only

It is the best of times; it is the worst of times; but nonetheless it is holiday time. The holidays can be a challenge for some folks. Facing difficult family members, the stress of perfection and responsibilities, grief over the loss of a loved one, feelings of depression, and so much more can leave us feeling blue. This service is a time to step out of our busy schedules, an opportunity to breathe. We acknowledge all the feelings we bring to the holidays, make space to meet our grief, and affirm that we are worthy of care, especially during this time.

This vespers service allows us to gather together with readings and prayer, while also giving us a safe space to share more personally with one another. With no shame and no expectation of answers, this is a space just to bear witness and be.

RSVP to email: DLFD in advance if you are able, to let us know if you will be attending in person or online.

Stones in the Wall: Social Justice

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

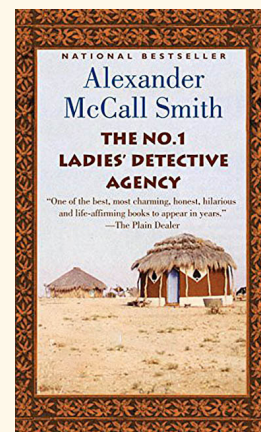
Diversity Book Group

Sun, Dec 10 7:00-8:30 pm on Zoom
Led by Pam Sapko

The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency: Book 1 by Alexander McCall Smith

Sleuth Precious Ramotswe, who works in Gaborone, Botswana, investigates several local mysteries, including a search for a missing boy and the case of the clinic doctor with different personalities for different days of the week.

No.1 Ladies Detective Agency fans around the world adore this best-selling book series and its heroine, Precious Ramotswe. Precious, Botswana's premier lady detective, navigates her cases and her personal life with wisdom, caring, and good humor, giving the reader a deep dive into the culture of Botswana.



Our Columbian Refugees Have Arrived

The West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project welcomed two Columbian refugees, Roberto and Michel, to West Chester on November 7. Committee members, including UCWC members Shelly Case and Pam Sapko, have been busy preparing for their arrival by securing an apartment and furnishings and providing them with a huge range of supportive services: food, clothing, cell phones, ESL lessons, health care and SNAP benefits. UCWC Social Justice Committee contributed \$1,400 to the project. Contact Shelly or Pam at email: refugee-resettlement if you'd like to know more.

Gathering of UUs in Harrisburg Advocate for Gun Violence Reduction

Thirty UUs from around the state gathered in Harrisburg on Wednesday, November 15, to advocate for passage of gun safety bills being considered, as well as ceremonies that commemorated the victims of gun violence across Pennsylvania. This was a convening of fifteen different interfaith groups as diverse as Hindu, Bahai, Jewish, Lutheran, Quaker, and more, led by the Episcopal Archdiocese and Heeding God's Call.

UUJusticePA was happy to participate in the effort. From our own UCWC, Tom Buglio, Chris Beatty, Matt Zencey, Edith Templeton, Lucy Demitrak, and Susan Batchelor, joined the activities. Many broke off into groups of five, doing drop-bys of Pennsylvania House and Senate members, as well as planned meetings to advocate for passage of gun safety bills that have a chance to pass in this legislative session. They include Universal Background Checks and a Red Flag Bill currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the new Safe Storage bill that just passed the House Judiciary Committee.

Tom Buglio was able to secure a seat at the table with six other faith leaders in the most important meeting with the top aide of Senator Lisa Baker, who is key to bringing these bills up for a vote in the Senate. Tom also gave a short speech at the Press Conference.

For those who would like to join the fight for gun violence prevention, please join our monthly Zoom meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm, with one scheduled for November 28 but none in December. Contact Tom at email: gun-safety.



Calendar

All email addresses
@ucwc.org

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



Dec 1	Fri	Cookies, Choirs and Cocoa. 5:00 pm. See p. 3.
Dec 3	Sun	NAACP Membership Drive. After the service. See below.
Dec 4	Mon	Racial Justice Ministry. 5:00 pm. Zoom. Contact email: racial-justice for more information. Executive Committee Meeting. 7:00 pm.
Dec 5	Tue	Men's Group. 7:00 pm. Sanctuary. See p. 4.
Dec 6	Wed	Small Group Ministry Leaders. 7:00 pm.
Dec 10	Sun	Diversity Book Group. 7:00-8:30 pm. Zoom. See p. 6.
Dec 11	Mon	Religious Services Committee. 7:00 pm.
Dec 12	Tue	Council Meeting. 7:00 pm.
Dec 17	Sun	Share the Plate Sunday. Recipient TBA.
Dec 18	Mon	Racial Justice Ministry. 5:00 pm. Zoom. Contact email: racial-justice for more information.
Dec 19	Tue	Board Meeting. 6:30 pm.
Dec 20	Wed	Solstice Ritual/Ceremony. 6:30 pm. Blue Holiday Vespers Service. 7:00 pm. See p. 5. UUJusticePA Reproductive Justice Meeting. 7:30 pm. Zoom.
Dec 25	Mon	Carols, Coffee, and Conversation. 10:00 am. See p. 3.
EVENTS OCCURRING REGULARLY:		
Most Thursdays		Spirit Singers Practice. at 7:30 pm. For specific dates, contact Miriam Davidson, email: choir .
Various Dates		Small Group Ministry (Several Active Groups). See web calendar for dates. Contact email: SGM for availability. See p. 4.

Racial Justice Ministry • NAACP Membership Drive • Sunday, December 3

After the December 3 Sunday service you can chat with NAACP members from UCWC and others from the larger West Chester area community and, we hope, join this worthy organization.

What members of UCWC say about why they belong to the NAACP:

- *It offers me the opportunity to contribute in a small way to the struggle for racial justice in our local community.*
- *I have the opportunity to be part of an amazing group of life-long activists from whom I learn continuously.*
- *I belong to the NAACP because it is a national organization that has a long and impressive track record and effectively applies pressure to effect positive change. It is one organization to which politicians must be/should*

be accountable. Also, I appreciate their weekly "in the news" emails.

Annual membership is a very affordable — \$30.00 per year. If you are not able to attend the December 3 service, go our local chapter's website ([wcpnaacp.org](#)) where you will find an astonishing array of resources and information related to the struggle for racial justice locally and beyond as well as "how to join" details.

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

501 South High Street
West Chester, PA 19382

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All email addresses @ucwc.org

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Cassie Lengel, Director of Lifespan Faith Development email: [DLFD](#)
Steve and Linda Sander, The Fellowtarian Editors email: [fellowtarian](#)