

THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

121 North Pleasant Street, P.O. Box 502, Amherst Massachusetts 01004

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Important Information

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01004-0502

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The Rev. Cynthia Frado

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therevfrado@aol.com Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday,
10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. Day off: Friday. Other times by
appointment.

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Judy Mitrolka

413-253-2848 (office) or office@uusocietyamherst.org
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NEWSLETTER

Copy Editor: Janis Gray, 413-259-1584
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Deadline for submissions: 15th of each month.
Please sign submissions, so we may reach you if
we have questions. Submit entries one of two
ways:

1. Email it to jsgray@crocker.com.
2. Mail it to 219 Wendell Road, Shutesbury MA
01072.

Please limit entries to 500 words (100 for the
“For Your Information” section). Submissions
may be edited to save space or to maintain a con-
sistent style. Thank you!

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Schedule of Services

Sunday, January 1, 10:30 A.M. – *A New Day*

The Sunday Services Committee

The new year is a fertile time for vision and revision. On this first Sunday of 2017, let's take a breath and reflect on what this past year has brought us, and invite intention and hope into this still unformed year. With music, singing, and ritual, we will consider what the New Year invites for each of us.

Sunday, January 8, 10:30 A.M. – *Flinging Stars*

The Rev. Cynthia A. Frado and friends

Drawing from the vivid observations of anthropologist Loren Eiseley in his book [The Star Thrower](#), let us begin this New Year with a message of courage, determination and possibility. This is a great Sunday to invite a friend to join us!

Following the service, we are invited to meet with our Ministerial Transition Advocate from the UUA. See notice on page 13.

Sunday, January 15, 10:30 A.M. – *Manifesting the Dream*

The Rev. Cynthia A. Frado preaching

On this Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, we return to his prophetic voice to help lead us from despair toward hope, as we continue to bend the arc of justice. A new world order is upon us, yet our mission has not changed! Let us join together in one strong body.

Today is our Dedicated Offering Sunday.

Sunday, January 22, 10:30 A.M. – *Watch One Hour With Me*

The Rev. Cynthia A. Frado preaching

This being the 44th anniversary for *Roe vs. Wade*, the Rev. Frado will be revisiting and reimagining her sermon by the same title that she preached at General Assembly in Fort Worth, Texas in 2005 as the first-place recipient of the Paul C. Borden Award for Sermonic Excellence in the Unitarian Universalist Tradition. A lot has happened in the 11 intervening years, yet, in many ways, the hard truths have not changed. If you care about women's reproductive rights, this is an important Sunday to be in the meetinghouse.

Sunday, January 29, 10:30 A.M. – *Gathering the Spirit – A Healing for the World*

Jim Scott

We welcome Jim Scott's return to our pulpit this morning. A well-known musician, Jim has a long UU history; many of his songs are included in the *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey* hymnbooks. Today he will mix songs and stories in a message of peace and reconciliation for a wounded world and our struggling American society. Amid wars, cataclysmic weather events, and a divisive politics, any long-term vision of sustainability is obscured if not abandoned. We can generate that renewal of spirit for the work we have before us – nothing less than a job of healing the earth and ourselves.

Most sermons and readings are posted on our website, www.uusocietyamherst.org. Click on the "SERMON ARCHIVE" button on the right side of the home page, and then on the title of the sermon you wish to read.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT WORSHIP AT UUSA FROM THE INTERIM MINISTER

Dear members and friends of UUSA,

A major part of the responsibilities of interim ministry is to prepare a congregation for new changes that will surely come with a new settled ministry. It is like having a consultant's eyes to see what areas need strengthening, streamlining, and support. One of the ways that this is done is by demonstrating different worship, administrative and leadership styles. To that end, there are a few subtle changes that the Sunday Services Committee and I have discussed regarding how we do worship, some of which we have begun to implement. I want to share them with you at this time and explain the genesis of thought that inspired them.

The elimination of announcement inserts in the Order of Service

As a Green Sanctuary congregation, it seemed to me that we were using an inordinate amount of paper each week. The announcements are always emailed on the previous Thursday or Friday. For those who prefer to read a hard copy, we will have a few available each week at the Greeter table in the foyer and on the Welcome

Table in the Social Hall. Our goal is to be good stewards of our resources and more efficiently maximize how we communicate with one another in a *transparent and responsible way*. We are also exploring other ways of disseminating information with the Digital Outreach Committee as well.

2. Making it easier to read the words of the Closing Song

For the past few months I have watched newcomers struggle to join hands in the closing circle while trying to read the closing song insert. So, I had a banner made with the beautiful words by Carolyn McDade along with a Rainbow Chalice. It now hangs above the north windows where everyone, old and new, can see the words and join in singing. (I actually had someone tell me that reading the words up on the wall made the meaning of the words feel even more powerful.) At the very least, I hope that it will help everyone who has joined in our circle to feel empowered to lend their voice to our united “choir.”

3. A slight change in the Board’s Welcoming Words

The Sunday Service Committee discussed some feedback that was received regarding newcomers’ levels of comfortability in standing up, saying their name, and announcing where they are from. Obviously some people do it and some people choose not to do it at all. Additional feedback was that it made many new people feel anxious about having the spotlight and focus put on them. It was also very difficult for many in the congregation to hear what was being said. Someone suggested that we try another approach in extending a welcome to visitors. After further discussion with the Board (who, for the most part, expressed how hard it was to hear people), it was decided to discontinue that practice for now. Instead, the folks who will be responsible for the Welcome Table after the service will be introduced and stand up so newcomers can see who they are. Also, we are encouraging current members to pay attention to folks with hand-written name tags and welcome them! *We shall review this again after a few months.*

4. A request for Candles of Joy and Concern

As the predominant worship leader, I am constantly aware of the length of the service, as there are those who really dislike going over an hour. In particular, I never know how long Candles of Joy and Concern will take. For many people, it is an important part of the service, and not-so-much for others. Some have suggested we consider other options to address this weekly ritual, as congregations across the country have established many different ways for congregants to express what they bring in their minds and hearts on any given Sunday. I feel that this is a much larger discussion for another time (and might be included in the Cottage Meetings that will occur in preparing the vision work for a new settled minister). **In the meantime, we will be honoring what is in place and reinforce the request that this element in our worship service be reserved for brief joys and concerns only. It is NOT an appropriate place for announcements.** This is a pastoral invitation where the larger community is invited to “hold the space” for those deeply held joys and concerns that people wish to share. *If you have some announcements that you would like put into the weekly announcements, please send them to Judy in the office by Thursday at 10:00 A.M.*

5. Last, but not least, how we conduct our Closing Circle

Recently we have been reminded of the many nuances that inform what it means to be a Welcoming Congregation for all people. Certainly our new political climate reflects the need for a renewed sensitivity and respect for “the other.” Recognizing the deep-rooted tradition of UUSA’s closing circle and song, the Sunday Services Committee and I have been challenged to find more ways to preserve the sacredness of this ritual while still creating a space for those people who, for whatever reason, choose not to hold hands. It appears that my “stand shoulder-to-shoulder or join hands as you desire” has not gone far enough to make some people feel safe enough or comfortable enough to say, “No, thank you” to enthusiastic hand-holders.

With the help of **Anne Cohen**, we have put together some words of invitation prior to the Circle that we hope will help bridge that discomfort gap for those who prefer, for whatever reason, not to join hands, but whom we welcome equally in our closing circle.

“It is our tradition to gather in a circle for our closing song. But before you rise, we are aware that touch can be comforting for some AND uncomfortable for others. We want everyone here to feel safe and respected. So, if you are comfortable holding hands, we ask you to invite your neighbor to take your hand by holding your hands up. (demonstrate) And we encourage each person to either take the open hand, or just allow your hands to stay down and say, “No, thank you.” These are personal choices and we respect them. So now let us gather, as you are willing and able, and join in singing our closing song together. The words are on the wall.”

So, I hope you can see that the changes are small but thoughtful. They have not been made in a vacuum, nor have they been dismissive of other perspectives. What we choose to create here, embracing the arc of theological belief and the multiplicity of human diversity, requires a willingness to honor the needs of the many, to keep open our minds and our hearts, and to provide a worship experience that is safe, inclusive, and empowering for all.

If you have any questions or thoughts you'd like to share, please feel free to contact me at the meetinghouse.

Peace and good will to all,

Rev. Cindy Frado



Musings from the Interim Minister's Inkwell...

Warriors of the Spirit

As I contemplate this New Year set before us, I admit that it feels less like an unmarred canvass of freshly fallen snow and more like sullied mounds of roadside slush. Not the vision of hopefulness and possibility that I usually associate with the month of January. And so I find myself searching far and wide for that vision of light that will help to dispel the darkness.

I have come to realize that the guiding star which I seek is not a celestial orb traveling light years to illuminate the path before me. Instead the glimmering sparks that are beckoning me to walk bravely into the murkiness of the great unknown can be found in all of your eyes. You are what motivates me forward. You are what reminds me that living the principles of our faith is what brings meaning to my life. You are what inspires me to walk the talk, no matter what. It is **your** light that beckons me to *never give up, give in, or give away* all that I believe to be the true power of my humanity...of our humanity. We are the living stars that bring light into this world. May we never forget that!

We can mourn for the past, dread the future, or combine our individual sparks in the moment of NOW, that we might become one strong flame to stand-up to whatever darkness the world might have to offer. Perhaps we will draw into our circle of compassion and hope others who so desperately need our light to strengthen their own.

Let us be fearless in embracing those truths that empower us. Let us recognize ourselves in each other, be present to one another's pain and sorrow, rejoice in all of our joys and triumphs, listen deeply to the stories of our lives, and sing and dance around the eternal flame like the true warriors of the spirit that we are. Bring it on, 2017. Bring it on...and may we all bring our best selves to the potential of this New Year.

In peace and hope... Rev. Cindy

Dedicated Offerings

Dedicated Offerings provide a way for our Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst community to recognize and financially support worthy organizations engaged in projects that reflect our guiding Unitarian-Universalist principles.

On one Sunday every month (except for June, July, and August) we schedule a Dedicated Offering (DO), recognizing that our Society needs our support on the other Sundays of the month. Dedicated Offerings are suggested by both individuals and committees of the Society, and the program is managed by the Minister and the Dedicated Offering Committee.

A form for you to suggest a Dedicated Offering recipient is available in the office. Our goal is to cover a wide range of areas of need in our area and in the larger world, including these categories: local, regional, national, international, environmental, medical, educational, animal rights, arts/music/culture, and different ages and genders.

Thank you for showing your support for the Dedicated Offering program, not only with your contributions to the DO recipients themselves, but also with your contributions to the Society on other Sundays when our budget counts on those receipts. Remember that no one is required to contribute to our Dedicated Offering recipients – this is a voluntary initiative.

On December 18 we collected \$865.57 for the **Standing Rock Water Protection Struggle** (see related story on page 9).

On January 15 the UUSA will receive a dedicated offering for the Amherst program for **A Better Chance**.

For more than 50 years, “A Better Chance” (ABC) has transformed the lives of young people of color through education, and has prepared thousands of students to take positions of leadership in American society. (Deval Patrick was an ABC student from Chicago, who became Governor of Massachusetts – a success story from the program!)

Since its founding, A Better Chance has grown greatly, from 55 students enrolled at nine schools to now more than 2,000 students enrolled at nearly 350 of the best private and public schools.

The Amherst program has been in existence almost as long, and has been amazingly successful through the years. Eight to 10 boys, mainly from inner city schools, come to Amherst to live together with house parents in a big house on North Prospect Street and attend Amherst Regional High School. They are provided with tutors if needed to help them adjust to a more challenging academic program, but they need no help in adjusting to sports, music and social activities of the school. Although the Amherst ABC is supported in part by Amherst College, fund raising is always an issue for the program. The Dedicated Offering Committee hopes that you'll be generous in giving to this very important local program.

Our UU Society recently received letters of thanks from recipients of two Dedicated Offerings this fall:

Dear Members of the Unitarian Community of Amherst,

We are so grateful and touched by your generosity of spirit and donation. We will use your gift in supporting the important work of NELCWIT, which is needed now more than ever!

We are always looking to build our Board of Directors with newly energized folks to do this important work. If anyone is interested, please email me at: mjkorfhage@gmail.com.

Mary Jo Korfhage*

for

all Board members

Rob Okun

Cyndy Von Flatern

Susan Manatt

Denise Schwartz

*President

Dear Robert [H. Romer, of the Dedicated Offering Committee],

On behalf of Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM), I want to express our deep gratitude for the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst's generous gift of \$1,707.10. Please pass these thanks on to the congregation.

In these uncertain times, your support is vital and directly benefits the 30,000 women, men and young people PPLM serves each year and positions us as the largest, most trusted sexual and reproductive health care provider in Massachusetts.

One hundred years ago, Planned Parenthood was founded on the visionary idea that access to sexual and reproductive health care could transform people's lives. We see this every day, and are grateful for your partnership in the work we do.

As we commemorate the first 100 years of the Planned Parenthood movement, we reflect proudly on PPLM's own history of empowering people to lead healthy and productive lives here in Massachusetts. PPLM will continue to lead the way through high-quality health care services, groundbreaking education programs, strategic advocacy initiatives, and acclaimed research programs.

Your contribution makes it possible for PPLM to continue our legacy of service to our communities – and to be there for all the people who rely on us every day. With your help, our doors will stay open – today and for the next 100 years.

Thank you for standing with PPLM.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Childs-Roshak, MD, MBA
President and Chief Executive Officer

Music Notes

UUSA Choir is going strong!! Thanks to all who are dedicating their time and talents to this group, whose goal is to enhance the spirituality of each service with relevant and meaningful music. We are very happy to still be growing! Please stay tuned for more Open Choir Sundays, your chance to join in and sing with very little time or sweat!

Fundraising



May 6 Talent and Treasures Auction! Please put Saturday evening May 6, 2017 @ 6:00 pm on your social calendars. Consider how you can help:

- 1) Donate your time or treasures: A home-cooked lasagna dinner, a rosemary plant, game night at your home, handyman services, chainsaw work, a weekend at your vacation home? Imaginations run wild. . . .
- 2) Come to the auction (and bring others!), to socialize and bid.
- 3) Sign up now to help.

Contact auction coordinator Carol Johnson @ our auction email UUSAuction@gmail.com for more info.

We have a core group of auction veterans signed up to help, but “many hands make for light work,” and everyone is welcome – and needed.

Help with big and smaller tasks: gather donations for the silent and live auction, publicity, decorations, food and drinks, set-up, helping during the auction, clean-up, and thank yous.

Another FANTASTIC Stone Soup Bazaar & Cafe!

On December 3 the Meetinghouse was filled with creativity, color, music, good food, fellowship and fun. By all accounts our Stone Soup Bazaar & Cafe was once again a huge success. Very positive feedback was given by vendors:

I just want to thank you all for your kindness and hard work. It is such a wonderful fair, each and every one of your volunteers bend over backwards to go the extra mile. I have done many fairs over the years but yours will hold a special place in my heart. — Jane Murray

Thanks again for all your hard work. It was so festive with such good energy and many wonderful people. It was like being surrounded by love all day. I loved it. — Tracy Vernon

I just wanted to drop you a quick thank you note for putting together such a well-organized and comfortable Craft Show! The homemade bread and soup lunch was an awesome surprise and delish.— BJ Simmonz



Visitors appreciated the variety of arts and crafts available, loved the homemade soups and enjoyed the gift basket and quilt raffles. We heard these comments as people came and went:

“Oh, this is a nice event, they have great vendors!” or, “See, they have really good artisans at this one,” or “That soup was really good.”

On top of all that, we exceeded our fundraising goal! We raised:

Vendors - \$1820

Cafe - \$639

Gift Basket Raffle - \$887 (double last year’s total)

Quilt Raffle - \$1375.20

TOTAL (gross) - \$4721.45

(We have learned over time that there are recurring expenses associated with the Stone Soup event, some that we reimburse and more significantly, those that have been most generously donated by our membership and volunteers. This is an issue we need to address in our annual budgeting process.)

And what can we say about our volunteers! It takes many hands to make this event such a success, including the people who make soup and bake, put together gift baskets, the organizer and players of the music, the set-up and clean-up crews, those who assist vendors, bring an extra card table from home, cut greens for the cafe tables, find and set-up the microphone for the raffle winner announcements, bring their families to the event, tell their friends and neighbors about it, bring a few donuts in the morning, run signs to the corner and put out the sandwich boards, hand out flyers during the Merry Maple lighting the night before, those who sell (and buy) raffle tickets, top notch team leaders, and so many more! It truly is a congregational fundraiser —and those are the very best kind!

Finally, we had a surprise visit by the town health inspector during the event. She could not have been nicer and gave us an excellent report! And **Judy Mitrolka**, our Congregational Administrator, gave us equally high marks for leaving the Meetinghouse clean, neat and put back together the way we found it. A success on all counts.

An easy UUSA Fundraiser! Calling all those who grocery shop! Here's a way to help the UUSA earn money just by buying your groceries. We are selling Big Y and Stop & Shop gift cards at social hour. The grocery stores sell gift cards to the Society at a small discount and then we sell them to you at face value. Because we buy the cards at a discount we earn the difference between what we buy them for and what we sell them for.

The hardest part for you will be forming the habit of bringing your checkbook to services! There you can buy \$50 or \$100 gift cards for either store and use them like cash. You don't have to use the whole value at once.

We expect to be selling cards by the time you read this article or shortly after, so please plan to participate in this painless fundraiser. Get in the habit of buying all your Stop & Shop and Big Y purchases using gift cards you buy at the UUSA.

Thanks!



Religious Education Ministry

Happy New Year!

May this new year bring new light, love and happiness into our lives. We have half a year left of the UUSA service schedule, which means we have a lot of learning and fun and worship to do. RE will start the year with a project which will include the elementary children designing and "building" their own chapel in their RE space. There are many things to think about when creating a worship space – symbols, artwork, music, and seating. I can't wait to see how they handle the challenge. At the same time we will continue to talk about the UU sources. I am excited to announce that **Jacy** now has a full pre-school classroom – welcome new little ones and parents! Jacy will work on helping the children build relationships with each other and an understanding of how we can learn together in our UU space. Youth will continue to meet twice a month to talk and do different things together – sounds vague? Our youth form a flexible group. Finally, it is the RE Ministry's hope that we will fit in a few social action projects and family events that will strengthen our community.

YoUUrS,

Rebecca Fricke, DRE

Mindfulness Group: UUSA member **Jessica Murphy** offers mindfulness classes to our UUSA congregation. This month the dates and times are Tuesday, January 10 and Tuesday, January 24, 7:00-8:00 P.M. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jess at 413-575-1963 or jessica.mindfulness@gmail.com for details.

Dig out your dancing shoes and SAVE THE DATE - Saturday, April 8, 2017. Our own **Ron and Louise Grosslein** and daughter **Anna** will play the music and **Anne Louise White** will do the calling for this fun family contradance to be held in our Willie Eaton Social Hall. No experience necessary. Keep watching for details.

Green Sanctuary

Monthly Green Sanctuary table at Social Hour Starting in January the GS Committee will have an Action Table in the Social Hall on the second Sunday of every month. We will provide information on an environmental issue and a way for members of the congregation to contact legislators or other key people. We want to make it easy for you to take action on critical issues. Please look for us!

The Green Sanctuary Committee will meet on Thursday, January 26, 7:00 P.M., at the home of **Mary and Gordon Wyse** (219 Lincoln Ave., Amherst).

Social Action



Just One Thing On **January 8**, the second Sunday of the month, the **Just One Thing** basket will be placed in the foyer for a collection for the **Survival Center**. At this time of year when people struggle to pay for both food and heat, food contributions are especially needed. The items specifically needed will be listed in the Sunday Bulletin beforehand. For additional information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, 413-253-0894, mbsem@comcast.net.

Wednesday Community Breakfast Service work at UUSA is very important and our Wednesday Community Breakfast gives everyone an opportunity to serve. Recent volunteers included **Sophie Rogers, Sue Alexander, Gabriela Horvay, Karen Fisk, Bijan Zojaji, Fran Plumer, Vicki Hinson-Smith, Anne Perkins, Clare Cunningham, Lisa Harvey, Anna Stanforth, Polly Peterson, Darcy Dumont, Kate Rice, Chas Stevenson, Elizabeth Dumont-McCaffrey**. Sign up online and join us. <http://signup.com/go/83M6sv> or email clarebertrand@gmail.com.

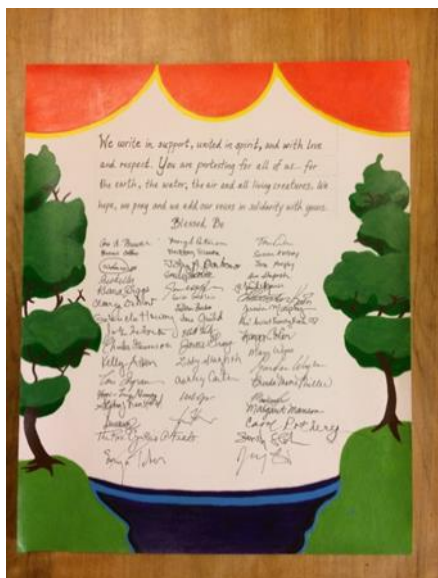
A call from North Dakota In October members of the UUSA signed a petition of support for those protesting the pipeline project in North Dakota. The petition was decorated with a beautiful border painted by **Rosie Dinsmore** (9th grade) and sent to The Rev. Karen Van Fossan, the minister at the Bismarck-Mandan Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Bismarck, North Dakota. A few weeks later I received a call from The Rev. Fossan, who let me know that it was delivered to the elders in charge of the protests and that they intended to hang it in the yurt that the Bismarck UU had helped fund. As I understand it, this yurt is serving as a shelter and an organizing space.

The petition reads as follows:

*To our brothers and sisters of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation
 We write in support, united in spirit, and with love and respect.
 You are protesting for all of us...for the earth, the water, the air, and all
 living creatures. We hope, we pray, and we add our voices in solidarity with yours.*

Blessed Be

Thank you to all who signed the
 eral hours to the art project,



petition and to Rosie, who dedicated sev-

Our Caring Ministries



Dear Friends – Rev. Cindy’s pre-election service included this meditation by Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we celebrate this month. Such deep food for thought, ongoing contemplation, and preparation for decision-making and action.

Courage and Conscience

Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles;

Cowardice is submissive surrender to circumstances.

Courage breeds creativity; Cowardice represses fear and is mastered by it.

Cowardice asks the question, is it safe?

Expediency asks the question, is it politic?

Vanity asks the question, is it popular?

But conscience asks the question, is it right? And there comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right.

Please know that our **Caring Circle** meets monthly to review the needs of our UUSA friends. **Carolyn Cave** and **Clare Bertrand** are coordinators for the Caring Circle. If you are unable to get in touch with your Caring Circle Person for contact, rides, food and simple needs, please call Clare 413-253-7814, or Carolyn 413-549-0321 for assistance.

Warmly, **Clare Bertrand, Linda Callahan, Carolyn Cave, Sue Kelly, Karen Mack, Margaret Manson, Martha Nelson, Susan Rice, Chas Stevenson, Lynn Sussman** and **Gordon Wyse**.

Call someone on our **Pastoral Care Team**, which also meets monthly, for more complex or personal needs: **The Rev. Elizabeth Alcaide, Bo Mack, Fran Plumer, Pete Rogers, Libby Walton-Stanforth** or **Mary Wyse**. For all who are traveling on life's journey, through good times full of grace, out through the rocky valleys we experience along the way, know that you never need to walk on your path alone.

We extend our deep condolences to the family and friends of **Luanne ("Lu") B. Knox**, a longtime member who passed away at home on November 30 at the age of 87. A memorial service will be conducted at a later date and time to be announced.

Social Events

The Women's Lunch Group meets every other Thursday at noon for spirited conversation over local, inexpensive cuisine. Part of our mission is to support new local restaurants. Our first luncheon in 2017 will be on January 12 at a place still to be determined. We welcome every woman, whether she is new to our Society or a longer-time member or friend. It is not necessary to RSVP, but if you have questions or want to be on the e-notification list, contact **Janis Gray** (filling in for coordinator **Sophie Rogers**) at jgray@crocker.com or 413-259-1584.

The Men's Breakfast Group is meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 A.M. at Kelly's Restaurant (314 College Street, Amherst). Contact **Michael Sussman** at msussma@music.umass.edu for details.

Our January Social Supper will be held on Saturday, January 21, at the home of **Mary** and **Gordon Wyse**, 219 Lincoln Ave., Amherst. Please call them at 413-549-5406 to let them know what you will be bringing to this potluck meal.

In keeping with our Eating Locally project, we encourage the use of local foods at our gatherings. Although it's by no means a requirement, consider using even one local ingredient in whatever dish you prepare. And, if you bring a dish containing shell-fish or nuts, please label your dish. Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you at the supper!

CALLING ALL WRITERS, THINKERS, DREAMERS, PONDERERS, POETS, AND STORYTELLERS...

This year we are embarking upon a creative exercise for our own spiritual edification! Rev. Cindy will be putting together an inspired collection of your thoughts for a 40-day meditation booklet. Here is how it will work:

You will choose one of the words from the next page (a sheet will be available next to the table just inside the sanctuary). Put your name next to the word and write it down and stuff it in your pocket (but take it out before you wash your clothes!).

2. Think about the word. Let it speak to you! Write a poem, a brief reflection, or a short story NO MORE THAN 300 words in 12pt. font, single spaced, on a half-sheet of paper. (Divide your horizontal sheet into 2 columns and type on one side.)
3. Drop off your completed tome in the office or put in the minister's mailbox outside of her study.

Easy-peasy. Everything is due by February 5th. Questions? Contact Rev. Cindy.

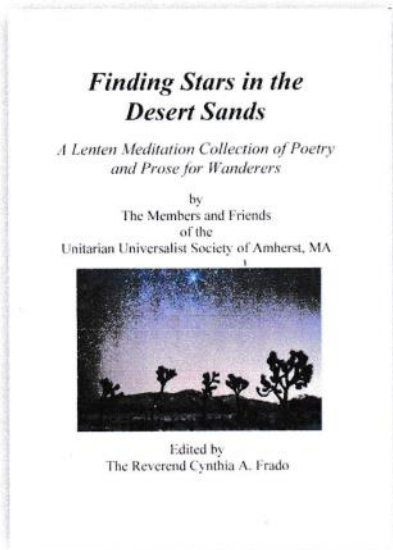
You **do not** need to be an accomplished or published writer to do this! Have fun, get creative, do something from the heart, s...t...r...e...t...c...h yourself. For those who would like to write with others, we will have a gathering after services on January 15th to help get the creative juices flowing. Nothing negative, please!

Rev. Cindy

See next page for the 40 words and a preview of the booklet's cover and introduction!

Here are the words for your perusal:

emptiness hunger thirst abundance purpose despair possibility grief equality respect gratitude
beauty joy happiness forgiveness health unicorns spirituality courage brokenness healing
wholeness acceptance mindfulness wonderment camel kindness hope funny peace awakening
blessing community synchronicity authenticity humility illumination nature miracle sacred



Introduction

One late night, long ago now, I was sitting on a hilltop on the edge of the desert outside of the old city of Fez, Morocco. There was very little ambient light coming from the sleepy residential market district below. Aside from the occasional cry of a few restless camels, a peacefulness and calm had blanketed the region. It was not like any western city I had ever known.

The moon was full and covered with kisses that I was sending to my expectant son back in the States. It was our visual connection with one another while we were separated. All these years later I am reminded of this every time there is a full moon, albeit with a tear in my eye.

When my sight moved into the periphery of the moon's glow, the sky was amass with a spectacular celestial display. Stars and planets twinkled everywhere! It was breathtaking. Then I noticed something even more amazing.

The sand around me sparkled beneath the heavenly light. It was as if stardust diamonds had fallen to earth. Light above, light below, surrounded by the otherwise impenetrable blackness of an African night. An interesting visual contradiction, to be sure.

As I turned toward the vastness of the desert, I tried to follow a moonbeam across the undulating waves of sand. Surely there were stardust diamonds to be found on either side of that ray of light, if only I could direct it to go where I

willed it. Intuitively I knew that those small gems were there, just waiting for something (or someone) to shine a light to reflect their brilliance.

With that in mind, I would like to introduce *Finding Stars in the Desert Sands*, the title of our 2017 *Lenten Meditation Collection for Wanderers*. In this season which is inspired by the Christian tradition, when Jesus spent 40 days and nights in the desert searching for discernment on his life's journey, we, too, are called to seek out those higher truths that illuminate our own life's path.

Forty words have been chosen...words that evoke contemplation of the mundane to the ethereal, from serious reflection to humorous playfulness, from tender grief to inexplicable joy. This human journey that we share is littered with such gems waiting to be found in the sands of time and experience.

These poems, reflections, and short stories come from the minds, hearts, and creative genius of our UUSA members and friends. May you find them to be poignant stardust diamonds that you might gather unto yourself as you wander thru your own sands of discernment.

Blessings for the journey...

Cindy

The Reverend Cynthia A. Frado
Interim Minister

WORDS FROM OUR BLACK LIVES MATTER AND RAINBOW FLAG DEDICATION CEREMONY

In case you missed the ceremony in November, here is a portion of our presentation:

We are here today because we can no longer **not see** the divisions by circumstance and experience that exist within our country, fueled by the fear of “otherness.” This new world order that has ushered in and normalized unacceptable language and behavior, demeans far more than it could possibly uplift, seeks to institutionalize more segregation than unity, and threatens human rights and the very planet that sustains us. This abomination to the very foundational principles of our Republic and our faith cannot be tolerated, and we who believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people must boldly stand on the side of love.

This moment in the course of our nation’s history is about our collective lives! Complacency is not an option. Ignorance is not an option. Silence is not an option! Hatred and retribution are not an option! We do not live in a homogenous society, where white privilege should be the rule. We live in a diversely rich country that represents the entire arc of our human expressions. **This reality demands our collective efforts to defend.** Today we proudly proclaim that we stand with our sisters and brothers of color; we stand with those members of our human family who are LGBTQ; we stand with those immigrants who are suffering and have sought refuge in the land of the free, however they have arrived; *we stand with those among us who are disabled in body, mind or spirit*; we stand with our brothers and sisters who are of the Muslim faith; **we stand with all those who feel marginalized and who seek to be welcomed on equal terms to the fullness of our humanity.**

A favorite Unitarian Universalist mantra is *we do not need to think alike, in order to love alike.* I would like to expand that quote to say: **We do not need to think alike, look alike, pray alike, speak alike, or vote alike, in order to love alike.** To stand on the side of love, we must see ourselves in each other’s humanity. We must be that voice for those whose right to justice is constantly being challenged, and we dedicate and raise our Black Lives banner and our Rainbow flag and say, “We will stand with you. We will join our voices with yours, until that day when we can all sit down at our common table and say, “We are finally one strong body. AMEN.” ~Rev. Cindy Frado

Denominational Affairs



Summer Employment on Star Island! The Star Island Corporation is currently accepting applications for our summer staff. If you are not already familiar with Star Island, we run a seasonal religious and educational conference center off the New Hampshire coast and hire approximately 100 college-aged people to work from mid-June to mid-September. As our roots are linked to the UU and UCC faiths, working on Star offers a unique employment opportunity for **UU and UCC young adults (age 18 and older)** as *Pelicans* in a beautiful location.

Our application deadline is January 23.

Kitchen, wait staff, and housekeeping positions are available, as well as positions requiring strong customer service and cash handling skills. Residency on Star Island is required six days per week. The general employment period is mid-June through late-August with earlier or later dates available, too.

Working on Star Island can be extremely rewarding. Indeed, many lives have been positively influenced, and even careers determined, by spending a summer working on Star Island. But it’s more than just getting a job on Star Island for the summer – it is about joining a community of interesting, talented and hardworking individuals. The powerful *Pelican* community that arises each summer is an outgrowth of common goals, hard work and mutual support.

Seeking a job on Star means you are willing to commit to working hard and to contributing to the whole island community. Including guests and other staff, you are part of a meaningful experience. In return, you will be presented with a unique opportunity and one that could be of lifetime importance to you.

We encourage you to apply online or to contact us with any questions you might have about working and living on Star Island. For more information about working on Star Island, please visit our website, <http://starisland.org/working/> or feel free to contact me with questions.

Thank you for your assistance,

Kate Brady

Office Manager

Star Island Corporation, 30 Middle Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801. (603) 430-6272; (603) 430-6270 fax.

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, WhaleCoast Alaska 2017 is for you! Four Alaska UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program next summer! See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Seward, and Sitka, with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, seals, and otters. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships – our program is the best way to visit Alaska! Programs led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime before our tours sell out! Visit www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org, or call 907-322-4966. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

Interdenominational Affairs



ION Corner At the December 7 meeting of ION (Interfaith Opportunity Network), the guest speaker was Sara Weinberg of the Syrian Relief Organization. She reported that the local “Soup for Syria” events this past year were a huge success in educating people about the Syrian situation and raising money. She said that March will mark the sixth year since the war in Syria began and that a number of events are in planning stages for that month.

It was decided that ION would give the Joan Lindeman Interfaith Opportunities award to Religious Verism Assoc., a UMass graduate group which has promoted interfaith activities during the past five years at an upcoming spring concert they are planning.

We also discussed the need for sanctuary to undocumented immigrants and noted that Northampton was the only city in Western Mass to provide this. The Friends Meetinghouse in Leverett is considering this.

The Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH), VNA Hospice Interfaith Panel is providing a public forum on January 17 at 10 a.m. at 168 Industrial Dr., Northampton on “Interfaith Perspectives on End of Life Care.” Interfaith people interested in working with this group can contact Ben Tousley at 413-581-1060, ext 202. Mr. Tousley had presented information about this forum at an earlier ION meeting, as well as at an interfaith clergy meeting.

For additional information about ION, contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, our ION representative (413-253-0894, mbsem@comcast.net).

Ministerial Search

Our UU Society has been offered assistance from the Unitarian Universalist Association. Debby Bergh will be joining us on January 8 to support the beginning of our Ministerial Search process. I invite you to come with questions in hopes you gain more insight into the process as it unfolds over the next 18-20 months. Debby, a UUA Ministerial Transition Advocate, will also be meeting with the Board of Trustees and will be available throughout the process for support. Look for details in an announcement in your Sunday Bulletin.
Joe Flueckiger

President, Board of Trustees