**CIRCLES**

**BOARDS OF TRUSTEES**

**FISCAL YEAR**

**JULY 1, 2015**
**THRU**
**JUNE 30, 2016**

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- **Joel Best**
  Religious Education Council Representative

- **Mary O’Keefe**
  Social Action Council Representative

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**January Worship**

**Sunday, January 3, 10:30 am**

*Squademala 2k15: A Spiritual Journey to Guatemala – Camino Seguro Participants 2015*

The youth of our Capital Region congregations share with us the joy of their service trip to Guatemala last summer to work with the children and families of Camino Seguro (Safe Passage). Camino Seguro works with children and families of the Guatemala City dump, “combating poverty through education.” Be part of the experience!

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**Sunday, January 10, 10:30 am**

*Seeing*

Rev. Margret A. O’Neal

Music: Polina DeCarlo, piano

Near-sighted, far-sighted, perspective or viewpoint – so many of our metaphors about perception relate to our power of vision. We all have some notion of what we see in the future, be it continuity or change, problems or possibilities. As we welcome the newest members into this historic congregation, how does our imagined future shape our actions in the present moment?

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**Sunday, January 17, 10:30 am**

*Standing with the Movement for Black Lives*

Rev. Margret A. O’Neal

Once again, we enter the Thirty Days of Love between Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Valentine’s Day – a time for listening and learning, deep reflection, collective sharing, partnership and collaboration, political education, and support for direct action in our quest for a more justice and compassionate society. Together we learn to stand on the Side of Love, speaking up and stepping out. The service will feature storytelling by Julie Rigano, DLRE.

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**Sunday, January 24, 10:30 am**

*As Above, So Below*

Rev. Margret A. O’Neal

Music: Leah Kidwell-Fernandes, harp

Sometimes it is easier to focus our attention on the tragedies in the news than to reach out to a friend who is struggling with pain or loss. How do we open our hearts and hands to both the cry of the world and the sigh of a child? We begin by knowing ourselves, shifting our attention to the other, and being fully present in each moment.

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**Sunday, January 31, 10:30 am**

*All You Need Is Love*

Rev. Margret A. O’Neal

Music: Joe Gumpper, fiddle and Tony Califano, guitar

The season of Cupid approaches! Anyone can be a target for those divine arrows of love, so be prepared for an overwhelming wave of affection, attraction and desire – and beware the wily snares of chocolate! What is the power of love in the world, and how does it beckon and guide us?
MARGRET’S MUSINGS

Shared Vision

I walk in the door of the Coldstone Creamery, and there behind the glass are dozens of options to make the Creation of my dreams: blueberries and bananas and pineapple, almonds and walnuts, M&Ms and Butterfingers, Oreo, brownies, apple and cherry pie fillings, even peanut butter... an endless array of dreamy ingredients. I choose my flavor of freshly made, smooth, creamy ice cream, and the perfect combination of my selections is blended, stirred, cut and turned on a frozen granite stone until it is all mixed into a splendid concoction of my own designing.

That is how I am finding the process of working with the hundreds of words, phrases and images that were created in your visioning interviews and table conversations on November 8 -- ideas that we will be blending, stirring and mixing so that you may create a shared vision for the future of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady.

Business gurus Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner advise us that “The only visions that take hold are shared visions...” (Harvard Business Review. January 2009) – but with such a diversity of perceptions, opinions and dreams, how does any organization arrive at a shared vision for the future?

A post on the Strategic Business Leader website suggests that the process for creating a shared vision begin by asking everyone, “What is, and more importantly will be, the essence of the organization five years from now if we are extraordinarily successful?”, “What are your aspirations for the success of the organization – who/what is changed, how will it change and what are the results?” and “If the organization is ‘the best it can be,’ what will it look like and be doing in five years?” Those are basically the questions we posed about the future of this congregation to all who participated in the visioning inquiry process on November 8, and the results were stunning.

You have named so many visionary possibilities for a diverse congregation growing and learning together, reaching beyond the walls to engage with the community – visions of laughter and joy, abundance and generosity, such rich and positive images of the future.

Then, the business strategists propose the next step is to “Mash it up – put all the ideas together and look for commonalities and areas of agreement.” The analysis team has listed out the words and phrases, looking at them from all sides, and everyone will have time to talk about it, work on it, mix and fold and shape our amazing ice cream concoction, to “... meld a powerful, transformational common vision and build understanding, respect and commitment along the way.”

The next step will be a working session on Saturday, February 13, when everyone is invited to help shape your creation, integrating the spirit and message from all the individual dreaming and setting out a shared vision for the future of the congregation. Between now and then, you will continue to hear more about the emerging themes and visions for the future of this historic congregation, creating the energy of aspiration as we shape the emerging future – and in the meantime, I will see you in church!

Margret

To Lead, Create a Shared Vision retrieved from https://goo.gl/tde24A
there lived a family that loved to go kayaking.” In order to continue with the story, the next person needs not only to agree with the premise, but also expand on it. “Yes, and one day, the family decided to go on a special kayaking trip for their mother’s birthday.” In order to continue with the story, all participants need to listen to each other. If this family is kayaking, the next storyteller can’t claim they are baking a cake for the mother’s birthday at the same time. An oven isn’t exactly kayak friendly.

Any performer will tell you that the most important part of telling stories together is listening. The same is true as we converge our life stories and begin a new one together. The congregation’s story shows your love of the beloved community and programs you have created here. My part is to listen to the congregation and to help continue the loving work you have already begun.

Julie

Our Stories

I have thoroughly enjoyed telling stories in the worship services these past few months. It brings me back to my roots storytelling with my family growing up. Performing is a type of spiritual practice for me and I enjoy telling the stories as a way of connecting deeply and sharing our lives with each other. Through our stories we share and learn in new ways.

Besides my storytelling, there has been another type of storytelling added to the worship this year- the Connections from members of the congregation. I love hearing the memories of rituals and traditions in this congregation- hearing about a dramatic death in a Revels performance, or light bulb moments people had while volunteering with the congregation. The members of this congregation have such a love for its traditions and it shows when you relive the memories in stories. I enjoy hearing your stories as much as I enjoy telling my own.

There is an exercise storytellers use called, “Yes, and...” to warm up when crafting a story together. Someone begins the story with a basic premise. “Once upon a time, there lived a family that loved to go kayaking.” In order to continue with the story, the next person needs not only to agree with the premise, but also expand on it. “Yes, and one day, the family decided to go on a special kayaking trip for their mother’s birthday.” In order to continue with the story, all participants need to listen to each other. If this family is kayaking, the next storyteller can’t claim they are baking a cake for the mother’s birthday at the same time. An oven isn’t exactly kayak friendly.

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Once upon a time... (That's my favorite part. Can I do it again?)

Once upon a time, there was a congregation that filled their religious education center with warmth, love, and learning for their children and youth. They spent years filling the rooms with furniture and filling the children and youth with curiosity, wonder, and kindness. They were very proud of this work, and they should be. They had done very hard work and it resulted in a beautiful program for their children and youth.

One day, a new person, let's call her Copperlocks, was invited to work with the congregation. Unlike her more famous relative, Goldilocks, Copperlocks took care to notice what was beloved in this place, and she was impressed with the work the congregation had already done. She listened to what the congregation liked about their program and what more they wanted for their children, youth, and adults. Copperlocks was excited by the congregation’s goals of stewardship and membership outreach, governance and an effort to be a more multigenerational community.

From the moment she walked in the door, Copperlocks set to work with congregants to honor their traditions, and to make their new dreams for their programs a reality. Yes, and, in order to create the spiritual home of which the congregation can be proud, they worked covenantally ever after.

Julie Rigano,
Director of Lifespan Religious Education

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PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

Intentionality

As we enter into a new year and the midpoint of our planned time of transition, I am compelled to reflect on where we have come and where we have yet to go. When we began, we set goals for the transition and are moving forward aggressively on all of them. Member engagement seems to be stronger than it has been in years with so many of us involved in so many aspects of our community and ministry. Our work on governance change is now shifting into high gear with the Board working intensively each month with our incredible Governance Task Force to redefine what we do and how we do it. And our goal to achieve financial stability is making great strides under the leadership of our highly energized Stewardship Committee. We have begun defining a vision for our future and have also started the process of selecting the ministerial search committee that will help us to find the right individual to lead us as we realize that vision.

One of the words that Reverend Margret introduced us to, early in her ministry with us, was “intentionality.” As I reflect on where we have come in the past year and a half, we have indeed done it all with intention and purpose: to move as a community and an institution into our future, one that will be characterized by strength, dedication and wellbeing.

I reflect on all of this because I, too, am in a time of transition. 2016 will be the year in which I will finally complete a multi-year goal of retiring—or to be more precise, transitioning my personal mission in new directions. What a wonderful role model UUSS has been. So this year, in addition to the usual New Year’s resolutions like losing weight, getting more exercise, etc., etc., I resolve to practice more intentionality. That intentionality will surely carve out more time for family and relaxation, but it will also define how I will rededicate my life’s work going forward.

So if you are feeling stuck in your life in any way, I recommend that you follow the good example being set by UUSS — practicing intentionality. It is just one of the many gifts that we receive being a part of UUSS. Thank you, all.

Peace,

John Reschovsky
Board of Trustees President
COME CAMP-IN WITH UUSS!

The annual multi-generational camp-in, formerly known as the RE-APC camp-in, will take place the weekend of January 16-17. On Saturday, there will be a hike led by Green Sanctuary, some indoor activities at the church, a hot dinner served in the dining room, a campfire on the patio; on Sunday morning, breakfast and more. Details are still coming together, so stay tuned, but plan to participate in some or all of the fun events.

WE NEED HELP! FOR CUPID’S CABARET JANUARY 31ST

Sponsors: Like Revels, we are asking for UUSS members to sponsor the cabaret as “Cupid’s Comrades.” You’ll earn free admission and plenty of praise from our performers. See the sponsorship form in this issue of Circles or contact Christy Multer at cmulter12@gmail.com.

Bakers: We need plenty of bakers of all abilities. Whether you have a favorite cookie recipe or a spectacular cake, we need tasty cookies, bars and slices to serve at the Cabaret, as well as fancy desserts for our silent auction. If you can help, please contact Robyn Salvin at robynelaine23@gmail.com.

Volunteers: We’ll be leading a raucous sandwich-making party in the kitchen before the service on January 31st. If you can help, please contact Sarah Bilofsky at sbilofsky@nycap.rr.com.

COFFEE, CRULLERS & CONVERSATION!

CC&C will meet the first four Sundays in January. There are five Sundays, but we will not meet on the 31st. As usual, we will meet at 9:30am in either the Emerson or Fireplace room. The presentation for January 17th will be the first discussion of the UUA “Common Read,” Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson.

As of yet there are no topics scheduled for the other Sundays. But, the possible range includes: "Why there is something instead of nothing," "The meaning of life," and "The actual location of the fountain of youth." So come to CC&C. Why let others get all the donuts?

UUSSBUGS — HEY, LOOK US OVER!!!

Have you noticed our new presence at UUSS? We UUSS BUGs have our own space on the large bulletin in the long hallway. We are opposite the nametag bulletin board, right between the Ladies’ and Men’s rooms. The winter 2015-16 schedule (December 2015 – February 2016) for Beverage servers, Ushers and Greeters is posted there along with descriptions of the tasks and instructions. Additional copies of the schedule and instruction sheets are available if you need them.

A signup sheet is also available for people who would like to volunteer. If you put your name on the list, we will get in touch with you and be happy to give you more information about UUSS BUGs. We would be happy to tell you about the jobs, what you need to do and pair you with an experienced BUG for a future Sunday. We always need more volunteers!

When you check out the bulletin board and look at the schedule, you will notice some open spaces that we were unable to fill. They are highlighted in yellow. Please consider helping out on one of these dates. Just add your name and send us an email so we can let Susan know and keep our master schedule up to date.

In the future we hope to post some pictures of UUSS BUGs at work and possibly use this space as a way to sign up on an upcoming schedule. If you have any ideas for additional ways we might use this space, please let us know.

Being an UUSS BUG is a great way to help out and meet people. Please check our bulletin board and consider signing up to be an UUSS BUG.

Lisa Angle at langle.fking@gmail.com or 370-3582 and MaryAnne Mangano at mmangano@nycap.rr.com or 377-0052, UUSS BUGs Coordinators

SUNDAY MORNING YOGA AND MEDITATION!

"Every body" is welcome to relax and stretch at Guided Yoga with Mati every Sunday morning from 8:00-9:15am in the Emerson Room. On the 2nd and 4th Sundays, Mati leads Guided Mindfulness Meditation in the Emerson Room at 9:30am. This 20 minute seated meditation is followed by a period to share experiences and ask questions for further information. For more information contact Mati at mihackett@nycap.rr.com.
CIRCLES

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships will be available for UUSS members through the Leadership Development Team for participation in one or more classes offered this spring by the UU Leadership Institute! http://www.uuinstitute.org/. Currently 11 different on-line classes will be offered this spring; including: Spiritual Direction; History & Theology of Covenant; Healthy Leadership; Membership; Stewardship; Intercultural Skills for a Diverse World and other topics. It is our hope that anyone participating in this training will gain skill and knowledge that they can pass on to our UUSS congregation. Contact Mike MacLaury at mmaclaur@nycap.rr.com.

UUSS PHILOSOPHY GROUP

The Philosophy Group is continuing to read and discuss Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790). We meet every Wednesday in the Emerson Room at 10:00am. New members are always welcome. If you have questions contact Michael Foster at 382-5982 or mfoster9@nycap.rr.com.

THANK YOU

Thanks to the members of the Women’s Alliance and friends, who donated several bags of items for the YWCA's Domestic Violence Shelter at their December luncheon at the Turf. We were inspired by our program speaker, De Lois Ford from the YWCA, who shared her incredible story of marching at Selma with Dr. Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders. This was a great opportunity for us to hear what it was like for a young teenager to participate in this March and about her experiences living in the South during the turbulent 60’s.

CIRCLES SUPPERS - FEBRUARY

Interested in getting to know other members of the UUSS family a little better? Interested in good food? Interested in good conversation?

Join us for the spring Circles Supper. This is the dinner series we formerly called Silver & Gold. We will meet in groups of four to twelve at 6pm in members’ homes for good conversation and great food. Each adult brings an assigned dish and a beverage of choice. It is a great opportunity to meet new folks or get better acquainted with folks you already know. Please join us! We hope to see you there!

Date: Saturday, February 27, 2016
Sign up by: Saturday, February 6, 2016
Sign up at: http://goo.gl/Yfvgkg
More information: jodilovegrove5@gmail.com

SOUP KITCHEN JANUARY FUNDRAISER

Come to the UUSS Dining Room for the Fundraising Luncheon on January 24 and you will be helping Soup Kitchen Volunteers feed the hungry of Schenectady for the next year. For every dollar you give, we can feed one hungry person at the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen a hearty meal of our famous chili soup, plus a sandwich, fruit, juice, dessert and coffee. We will be serving you the same delicious chili soup, bread and dessert. Mark the date on your calendar!

FULL MOON DRUM CIRCLE – JANUARY 24TH

Sunday, January 24, 7-8pm
Under the Dome at UUSS
Featuring “Voice of the Grove” Native Drum

Voice of the Grove is a pow wow drum consisting of men & women singers with pow wow (social) songs. Who we are: A community of drummers and singers from the Capital Region who are of full blood or part Native heritage or who follow the Native way of living.

Join us to raise some energy and be surrounded with sound as we join in the International Drum for Peace. Bring or borrow instruments and a small snack if you can. Patti Gile leads. Earth Circles
MEDITATION SAMPLER
JANUARY 7TH 7-8PM FIREPLACE ROOM

Please join Mati Grieco-Hackett for a variety of mediation experiences that include, traditional seated meditation, walking meditation, meta meditation as well as a few surprise meditation techniques!

In order to make this evening happen, Mati is asking for a minimum of 3 participants. Please sign up at the Adult Faith Development table after service or contact Mati at mihackett@nycap.rr.com by January 4th.

JUST MERCY: A STORY OF JUSTICE AND REDEMPTION BY BRYAN STEVENSON
FIRST DISCUSSION: JANUARY 17 AT 9:30AM

Join UUs across the nation in learning about the pressing issues of our time with the UUA “Common Read,” Just Mercy, a powerful true story by the lawyer who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. Just Mercy explores the potential for mercy to redeem us, and issues a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice, from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time. There will be multiple opportunities to discuss this book beginning at 9:30am on Sunday January 17, with other dates to be announced through the winter and spring. To get involved, simply purchase and read the book Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson (paperback or e-book format), and indicate your interest by signing up at the Lifespan Faith Development of Social Action Council table in the Great Hall after Sunday services, through the UUSS website at http://goo.gl/nFVCWs or by calling the church office at 374-4446.

MINISTRY TEAMS STUDY PROCESS
GET INVOLVED ANY TIME!
FOUR SUNDAYS AT NOON, JANUARY 3-24

The concept of “ministry teams” is part of the new thinking about ways to mobilize congregational energy to tap into members’ commitments and passions, and to support mission-responsive initiatives. The Board of Trustees’ work on the process of governance change will be complemented by learning about ways to create and use ministry teams to support the vitality of church programs and activities.

This will be a four-session book-based discussion, beginning Sunday, January 3, with meetings each Sunday at noon (after morning services) through January 24. This process of exploration and inquiry will build the foundation for decisions and experiments with an exciting new model for organizing congregational life.

Anyone interested is welcome to participate at any time. To get involved, simply purchase the book Mobilizing Congregations: How Teams can Motivate Members and Get Things Done by John Wimberly, Jr. (paperback or e-book format), and register at the table in the Great Hall after Sunday services, through the UUSS website at http://goo.gl/nFVCWs or by calling the church office at

SEVEN STAGES OF MONEY Maturity
THREE SATURDAYS:
JANUARY 9, FEBRUARY 6, MARCH 5

Emerson Room, 9:00am – 12:00pm

Our Seven Stages of Money Maturity book discussion will explore the issues author George Kinder raises about the spiritual, psychological and practical concerns that surround money. Can we find ways to see our experiences with money as steps toward understanding our relationships with others and with ourselves? We will also discuss the book’s practical advice on budgeting and investing and the foundation of financial planning: the identification of goals and choices. Is it possible to attain greater peace, freedom, and security in our money lives? Register at the Adult Faith Development table and purchase the book in hard copy or for your e-reader.
Mark Your Calendar:

Cupid’s Cabaret is coming January 31st!

Life is a cabaret, old chum! Join us as we “stand on the side of love” on January 31st following the Sunday morning service.

You’ll enjoy tempting treats, sensational songs and a few surprises at Cupid’s Cabaret and the Just Desserts buffet. Sponsored by the Music Committee, we’ll be tapping both the baking and performing talents of our own USSS members for a truly delicious event to get you in the mood for Valentine’s Day. You never know who will grace the Cabaret stage!

Cupid’s Cabaret and Just Desserts is the major fundraiser for the church budget this year, so please make every effort to attend – and bring a friend! Tickets are: $10/adult and $7/children (maximum of $30/family).

After the service, a light lunch will be served in the dining room, while the Great Hall is transformed into a decadent den of desserts. You’ll sample tables of tasty treats, and have the opportunity to bid on special desserts, all prepared with love by USSS bakers. Food is love, so bring one to your family, school or co-workers and earn extra brownie points!

Come see what a talented congregation we are – mark your calendar for a January 31st event that will warm your heart and please your palate!

Family Promise Update -Mary O’Keeffe

Family Promise is happy to share the news that both of the families who were with us in Waters House in October are now in a financial position where they are able to be actively looking for apartments. Both families have stayed focused on their goals and are excited to be ready to secure permanent stable housing very soon. They are very grateful to the volunteers at USSS and all the host congregations that have provided a “home” during difficult times.

Family Promise will continue to provide advice and assistance to the families even after they move into their permanent homes. A third family entered the program during our second host week in mid-November and there are several more families in the process of joining the program who may be with us by the time we next host again at Waters House in early February.

Green Sanctuary:

Climate Justice – What’s Going On?

One goal of the USSS Climate Justice Initiative is to share information with the congregation and the wider community, on this important issue. Save the dates for some informative actions coming up:

- January and February: presentations on how we know climate change is real, and the causes, being coordinated with local professors by our own forensic meteorologist Dick Westergard.
- Sunday, March 6 at noon: the documentary “Merchants of Doubt”, how highly-funded pundits for hire have spread confusion on the well-studied threat of climate change.
- “Change is Our Choice, Creating Climate Solutions”, a discussion book course being offered twice a month on Tuesday evenings beginning March 29, or Sundays after the service beginning in April. More information about these sessions will be available at the Green Sanctuary table or in upcoming Circles and Circuits.

Special thanks to so many in the congregation who signed the “Thank You” card to President Obama for stopping the Keystone Pipeline, and signed the petition for the President to veto Congressional action to weaken the EPA’s Clean Power Plan and further jeopardize our planet. More information on the Paris Climate agreements will also be shared during January. If you want to help with the Climate Justice Initiative or want to know more, stop by the Green Sanctuary table after the services, or contact Crys Hamelink or Nancy Peterson. As we know, there is no “Planet B.”

The Green Sanctuary Winter Outing will be done this year on the morning of Saturday, January 16 as part of the Camp-In Weekend. We’ll plan to meet at 10:00am for a short Celebration of Winter in the dining room. Bring a winter song, poem, or short reading to share over a cup of hot chocolate. We’ll plan to be on the road by 10:30am. We’ll choose a local preserve on the basis of weather conditions on that day, but it will be within a half-hour drive. Some possibilities are the Reist Preserve, the Pine Bush Preserve, or the Lishakill Preserve. Depending on conditions, those with skis or snowshoes may want to go as a group, and those with boots or yaktrak may go as a second group. Whether or not you do the full Camp-In, you’re welcome to join us for this outing.
RIPPLES: SOCIAL ACTION COUNCIL

Beyond Family Promise - Vicki Michela

When this congregation voted to join Family Promise of the Capital Region and open our doors to homeless families in our area, we knew that putting a face on this issue was critical. We need to see that the homeless are just like us, with hopes and dreams for a better future. If you have volunteered, we hope the experience has been an enriching one for you and if you are thinking about it but are hesitant, talk to some of the folks who have volunteered and they will tell you how rewarding it is. All of the families have expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the welcoming space of Water’s House and the warmth of UUSS volunteers with whom they have shared a meal or conversation. Even more importantly, with the assistance from Family Promise, some of the families in the program are empowering themselves to move into jobs and permanent housing!

Becoming a host site fulfills a critical part of our “Living Our Principals” mission as a congregation to address homelessness. But it is not the whole story – we also need to educate ourselves about the causes of this crisis and take action to try to prevent it. But where to begin to tackle such a complex problem? Before we can answer this question, we have to know the facts.

In the U.S. as many as 3.5 million people experience homelessness in a given year, roughly 1% of the population or 10% of its poor. 37% of new homeless households are single mothers and 23% are children. It does not have to be this way - the homelessness crisis is directly tied to public policies like the war on drugs; welfare reform which cut access to and the value of public assistance; the low minimum wage; and perhaps, most importantly, the shortage of affordable and subsidized housing.

The Social Action Council has begun to explore the upstream actions our congregation can take together to alleviate the crisis of homelessness in New York State, where the rate of homeless families has TRIPPLED in the past 12 years. One initiative would be to support the Campaign 4 NY/NY Housing, which advocates for supportive housing programs for individuals and families living with disabilities and other challenges. In the supportive housing model, residents are able to access on-site services such as substance abuse treatment and employment counseling. Studies show that in the first five years of its existence, supportive housing has decreased chronic homelessness and provided stability among single adults by 47%. More than 86% of tenants in the program remain housed after one year and it has reduced the use of shelters, hospitals, psychiatric centers and incarceration. Supportive housing has proven to be by far the most successful and cost-effective way to reduce homelessness among this vulnerable population. As we continue to learn how to most effectively direct our collective efforts toward alleviating homelessness in New York State, we will share this information with you and hope you will make the commitment to join us!

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE UUSS INTERNET PRESENCE?

Website Development Team at Work

UUSS has a new Website Development Team that wants to be sure our church internet presence is savvy enough to attract and satisfy today’s viewers. The team is preparing to revamp and improve our website at uuschenectady.org.

The new site will be based on a sophisticated WordPress template that the UUA recently released, a template specifically designed to meet the needs of Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Because the internet has become part of everyday reality for so many people, in viewers’ minds the website is an extension of the congregation. A key goal for the new UUSS website will be giving viewers the experience of visiting the congregation by visiting the website. By looking at photos, reading about our activities, and listening to last Sunday’s sermon, for instance, our viewers can feel they are part of the congregation — and hopefully come back to the site or come to Wendell Avenue for even more.

Another goal is to integrate all UUSS online connections and services in one place. This will include more conspicuously linking the website to our social media feeds and taking better advantage of services such as online workshop registrations and online donations and pledging. The new site will continue to have a “Members Only” area, where members will be able to sign in to access an improved member directory.

An advantage of switching to the UUA’s WordPress web template is that it is more “responsive” than our current site. This means that the new site should work better on mobile phones and tablets, which are becoming increasingly important. UUSS can already use Google Analytics to access thousands of pieces of data about how people use our site. An analysis of this data for the month of May 2015, for example, showed that roughly 20% of the people visiting our site used mobile phones and 10% used tablets to do so.

Members of the new Website Development Team are Deb Best, Gigi Gabriel-Dillman, Mark Hyland, Christy Mutter, Rev. Margret O’Neal, Don Porter, Sal Prizio, Julie Rigano, Rebecca Rouse, and team leader Catherine Miller. The team would love to hear from people about how you use the church website now and how you would like to be able to use it. Please send your comments to Catherine Miller at catherinite@gmail.com.
**EBWA PROGRAM - JANUARY 28TH**

Guilty as Charged: Writing from a Woman’s Point of View

Amy Biancolli, Times Union columnist and author, has lots of experience to share which is unabashedly personal—feminine, tragic, funny, compassionate. She has published three books, given a recent TED talk in Albany (available on YouTube), and won two NY AP awards for her TU columns. Her latest book is Figuring Shit Out—Love, Laughter, Suicide and Survival inspired by her life following her husband’s suicide. Her most recent columns seem to be about women and their successes. Amy believes that although women have made advances, they are still “outliers” in a culture that remains overwhelmingly male. All women are invited to hear Amy speak at 8pm January 28th.

To make reservations for the vegetarian meal served at 6:15pm, e-mail Gabrielle Reals at ellegr3@gmail.com by Monday, January 25th or by calling her by 8pm Tuesday, January 26th at 382-5685. Gluten-free meals are available if requested with your reservation. You may also bring your own meal or arrive by 7:45pm for just the program. Arriving at 5:45pm for juice or wine allows extra time for socializing as does the networking (sharing) time after the meal and before the program. Cost of the meal is $15; program only is $3.

Looking Ahead: On February 25th Kathryn Greenwold, quilting instructor, will speak on “Quilts Through the Twentieth and Into the Twenty First Century.”

**WOMEN’S ALLIANCE - JANUARY 7TH**

On January 7th, The Women’s Alliance will present Mati Greico-Hackett at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady who will guide us through a simple chair yoga sequence that incorporates both standing and seated postures in order to create balance in the physical, mental and emotional bodies. Both strength and flexibility will be cultivated along with peace of mind in order to promote a general sense of well-being. Please wear comfortable loose fitting clothing. Bring a small towel or blanket, an open mind and a willingness to try something new!

Lunch will be served promptly at 12noon at the cost of $13. Reservations are to be made with Mariko Baertsch at 399-4552 or mariko@nycap.rr.com. Men are welcome. If you must cancel please notify by the Tuesday before in order to avoid the cost of the luncheon.

**ALLIANCE SPECIAL APPEALS**

The Women’s Alliance is seeking requests for donations from its Special Appeals Fund. Over the years, the Special Appeals Committee has awarded donations to a variety of organizations, including grants to UUSS programs such as the Soup Kitchen Committee, Green Sanctuary, Dining for Dollars, and the Youth Group. We have also awarded donations to community non-profits such as the Hamilton Hill Arts Center, SICM, the YWCA, and Planned Parenthood. If you are aware of a UUSS or a local non-profit group that would benefit from a grant, please let them know that money is available and will be awarded during the spring of 2016. The organization should make its request by letter and include a brief purpose of the organization, a request for a specific amount and an explanation for how the donation will be used. All requests should be submitted to Crystal Hamelink, Special Appeals Committee Chair at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady (UUSS), 1221 Wendell Avenue or by email at dhamelin@nycap.rr.com, by March 15. The members of the Alliance are pleased to help the Community in this way!
You can be a Sponsor of Cupid’s Cabaret

After the service on Sunday, January 31, 2016, UUSS members, families and friends will enjoy a light luncheon, then gather in the Great Hall for our four biennial Cupid’s Cabaret & Just Desserts Buffet. This day will be the major fund raising event in the 2015-16 church budget, but also a whole lot of fun for all ages, with singing, dancing and comedy as well as scrumptious desserts.

You can participate in the cabaret and demonstrate that you too “Stand on the Side of Love” at UUSS by becoming a cabaret sponsor. Our sponsorship levels were chosen to honor those who have taught us how to love one another better. (See descriptions over.)

Martin Luther King, Jr.: $600
Rodgers & Hammerstein: $300
Masters & Johnson: $100

Albert Schweitzer: $400
Jane Austen: $200
Elmo: $50

(Plus business sponsor ads: $75)

All sponsors will be admitted free to the cabaret and acknowledged in the cabaret program (unless anonymity is requested). Contact Christy Multer with your questions about sponsorship at 399-2050.

The deadline for becoming a Cupid’s Cabaret Sponsor is Sunday, January 24. Please fill out the form below and return it to the church office along with your check made out to Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady. Be sure to indicate “Cabaret Sponsor” on your check memo line.

Yes, I do stand on the side of love, and I want to help sponsor Cupid’s Cabaret!

Name: ____________________________________________

Level / dollar amount: __________________________________

Name(s) as you wish it to appear in the program: ____________________________________________
Martin Luther King, Jr.: $600
A clergyman, activist, civil rights leader, and brilliant writer and orator, Martin Luther King probably did more than any other American to help us learn to love and respect one another. He used civil disobedience to stand up to racial segregation and the desperate inequalities it created, and in the end paid for his courage with his life.

Albert Schweitzer: $400
After achieving success as an organist, musical scholar and theologian, Dr. Albert Schweitzer decided to become a doctor and spent most of the rest of his life as a “medical missionary” in Africa. Reverence for all life was his central belief: “Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace.”

Rodgers & Hammerstein: $300
OK, so Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein never won the Nobel Peace Prize like the two worthies above. But who else taught us about love and life the way this song-writing duo did when they created the characters and lyrics of Oklahoma, Carousel, The King and I, Flower Drum Song, South Pacific, and The Sound of Music?

Jane Austen: $200
Without Jane Austen’s Emma and Pride and Prejudice, would we have had Clueless, Bridget Jones’ Diary or the now endless line of Austen sequels and imitations? Austen’s heroines and their struggles to find true love within the confines of 19th century English society remain as true and as instructive to us today as they were to her first readers.

Masters & Johnson: $100
The team of William Masters and Virginia E. Johnson taught us about love through their 30 years of research. They debunked many myths and showed that sexuality is a healthy and natural part of the human condition, calling not for fear or shame but for openness and communication.

Elmo: $50
If you’re older than 10, you may have forgotten Elmo, but don’t worry, “Elmo loves you!!” He loves you unconditionally with the innocence and whole-hearted enthusiasm of a three-year-old. A regular on Sesame Street for 30 years, this little red monster remains the perennial favorite of millions of toddlers and teaches them about love, friendship, and optimism.

Plus - Business Sponsors: $75
Show your love of UUSS by purchasing a business card-size ad for your business in the cabaret program for $75. Give your business card or other camera-ready artwork to Christy Multer or email to cmulter12@gmail.com
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**Events and Activities:**
- **January 2016**
- **Jan 1, 16:** Church Closed
- **Jan 1, 16:** New Year's Day (United States)
- **Jan 3-9:** APC Circle Supper
- **Jan 3:** Seven Stages of Money Maturity (E)
- **Jan 16:** Memorial Service (GH)

**Detailed Schedule:**
- **Jan 1:** APC Camp-in (Reduced)
- **Jan 20-22:** RE/PC Camp-in (Reduced)
- **Jan 21:** Men's Lunch (Edison Club)
- **Jan 25:** Full Moon Drumming (GH)
- **Jan 26:** Cabaret Rehearsal (DR/KJE)
PURPOSE OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SCHENECTADY

The members of this Society covenant to maintain and foster in Schenectady a non-creedal religious society whose purpose shall be to:

- Encourage a free and responsible search for truth, knowledge, and understanding;
- Nurture the religious growth of all who participate in the life of this Society;
- Serve the community;
- Seek the realization of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Affirming the individual right of conscience, freedom of belief and the democratic process, with reverence for life and respect for the profound mystery of existence, we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Sunday Services and Religious Education
10:30AM every Sunday Morning

Minister: Reverend Margret A. O’Neall
Hours: Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 10am-4pm (by appointment)
Phone: 518-374-4446 #2
Email: revmargretuuss@gmail.com

Director of LRE: Julie Rigano
Office Hours: Monday: 1pm-4pm
Tuesday Off
Wednesday, Thursday: 11am-3pm
Phone: 518-504-0684
Email: JulietheDRE@gmail.com

Music Director: Gareth Griffiths
Phone & Fax: 518-395-9381
Email: ggriffiths1739@gmail.com

Office Administrator: Susan Marino
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm
Phone: 518-374-4446 #0
Email: uuadmin@nycap.rr.com

Bookkeeper: Carolyn Sabol
Email: uubookkeeper@nycap.rr.com

Custodians: Helen Freeland & Ed Holen
Phone: 518-605-5551

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