

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNANOVA VALLEY

December 2009

Volume VIII, Issue 12

Religious Freedom — Diverse Perspectives



500 Montreat Rd
Black Mountain, NC 28711
(828) 669-8050, www.uusv.org

From Your Intern Minister . . .

Ah, December again. The annual onset (onslaught?) of this month makes me realize the swift passage of time like no other. How can it be this time of year again? I finally got the Christmas wreath coffee mugs put away, and it's time to get them out again? (OK, I lied, I never really got them put away this year.) I'm wondering if the reminder of time's fleet feet is one of the reasons so many of us find ourselves with a little less than the holiday spirit this month. If this describes you, my question for you (us) is, what should we do about this? Given that we aren't going to be able to get the rest of the world to cancel SolstiChristmaHanuKwanYears, is there a better response than going with the flow or becoming a hermit while gritting our teeth and wishing it were over?



As a practicing existentialist (practicing, meaning, I'm trying to get better at it), I am called to be responsible for my reactions to the holidays. If I'm finding myself blue or out of sort, I need to dig in and look at why that is so, and decide if that is really how I want to be. Some things are easy—when “Holly Jolly Christmas” comes on the radio for the 19th time, I can change the station.

Of course, some actions are more difficult. When we feel unhappy about something at least that is known territory – but to take action (such as, saying that you won't be following a family Christmas tradition this year), and seek to change it brings the unknown, which may be why it is often easier to complain than to change one's situation. But we are people of action, and, as I preached a few Sunday's ago, self-love is the greatest love of all—I believe we must honor our own needs and care for ourselves first; then we are more likely to be of service and to spread love in the world. Sometimes caring for ourselves may look like acceptance—acceptance of limitations, of one's own grievances, of the time that speeds by every December. But I don't think we have to accept our own unhappiness; discontent, to me, is a signal that I should pay attention to— it should motivate me to take action.

During the holidays, one of the ways that you can take action against holiday blues is to commit to giving in some way. There are many needs for volunteers, warm clothing, and food this time of year. I find that giving to others, even when it is a small action, always has a surprisingly positive effect on my mood. I wish you bright holidays this month, and if you feel the Bah Humbug cropping up, that you will take action.

I look forward to seeing you at our holiday services, particularly our second annual candlelight Christmas Eve service.

Warmly,

—Sally Beth

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Board Meeting: Tuesday 15 December, 6 p.m.

Send Newsletter Information to
Norm Kowal, *Editor*
normankowal@bellsouth.net

Newsletter Deadline: Tuesday 22 December,
10 a.m., covering January 2010

Board Notes . . .

We are well within the holiday season. This past week I picked apples, pressed cider and took a series of sauna/cold creek dips and spent a day with old friends. These are all activities that keep me in the present moment. In other words, I am taking care of myself. This may sound like a strange beginning to a president's report; but my message to you is my hope that you care for yourselves well during this holiday season. Listen to the little voice that helps guide you to self-care; for it is when we do self-care well that we can possibly care for others.

The past month was successful in many ways. We had a marvelous Gala Gathering which raised plenty of money to cover our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Thomas Jefferson District (TJD) dues. Yee ha! This was our first auction event and the planning team did a fabulous job pulling it off. The evening had an elegant flare to it. A very big thank you to the organizers, the people who donated items and/or bid!

Just a few weeks later we had the Boston Tea Party to raise money for our youth to go to Boston in June. This was very well attended and enjoyed. I could tell, by all the laughter and edge-of-seat sitting. We cried, we laughed – together. That is always a good thing.

After the tremendously well attended (about 14 new people) UU 101 class, we had a Member Sunday to welcome the newest among us. Our congregation is growing in numbers and in vigor. We are heading into the winter of our year but it feels like spring to me at the UU Congregation. New members, welcome.

Your board is working well; I am learning that that doesn't mean things are smooth. I always want things to be perfect. Well, there just ain't no such thing. We are talking to one another and communicating our true selves. In lies my sense that we are working well. Our November board meeting was meaty. The work we do keeps raising more questions for us to ponder and move us into action. Our meeting minutes are posted on the bulletin board outside of the office. Read them for more details.

One upcoming agenda item is: What after Sally Beth? As you know, we are fortunate to have her in our midst one more year. In December 2010 her internship will be complete and we will say good-bye to her being our Intern Minister. She has been someone who is paid to provide spiritual leadership to our congregation and as such I think she has brought us stability, continuity, and focus onto the UU principles. Although I am deeply appreciative of her, it is time to start thinking about the role she plays and how we can continue to have a minister nurture us. With this in mind, the Board will be beginning this conversation this month, and when the time comes we will need your input.

One of my favorite things about being on the board is the opportunity to get to know each of you more. Please, come to us and share.

Sincerely,

—Heidi Blozan



It's a Boy!

David and Krista Brown are the proud parents of baby boy Campbell Francis Brown, weighing in at over 8 pounds. Krista gave birth Tuesday afternoon, November 24. Welcome Campbell!

New Member: Roberta Madden

Our newest member is Roberta Madden. She comes to us from the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge where she was a member for 41 years. Roberta is retired as the Director of Racial and Social Justice at the YWCA Greater Baton Rouge. Her hobbies and major interests are politics and she is a member of our Social Action Committee. Roberta lives in Black Mountain with her husband David, and she is delighted to find our congregation.

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 6 December 2009, 11 a.m.

It's About Time

Sally Beth Shore

In our culture, December can be a harried time, so let's think about our relationship with time. Isn't it about time we gave it more thought? If our perceptions of time control us, perhaps they can be changed, or at least examined, in the hope of experiencing less stress and being more who we want to be.

Youth in grades K-7 will begin the service in the Sanctuary before going to their classes.

Sunday, 13 December 2009, 11 a.m.

Hanukkah

Intergenerational RE Service

Sunday, 20 December 2009, 11 a.m.

"As in Days of Old" == A Solstice Celebration

Sally Beth Shore

Although Winter is just beginning, more light is on the way! The Sun returns tomorrow (Dec. 21), ever heightening its path across the southern sky. We observe this seasonal planetary phenomenon with story, song, and dance and shared reflections of light.

Thursday, 24 December 2009, 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service

Come sing carols by candlelight, share a Christmas Story, and welcome in the Yuletide together at UUCSV's second annual Christmas Eve Service.



After this short service, stay for cookies and cider, and take a few home for Santa.

Sunday, 27 December 2009, 11 a.m.

Remembering the '00s

Jeff Hutchins

In this final service of the decade, Jeff Hutchins will lead us in remembrance of the past ten years and preparation for the next ten, as we ring out the old and ring in the new. It will be an intergenerational service appropriate for children and adults.

Jeff was born in New York City, spent most of his youth in the Middle East, and graduated in 1969 from Boston University with a degree in Broadcasting & Film. He is a lifelong Unitarian, an atheist and humanist. Prior to his recent move from Pittsburgh to Black Mountain, he had been a member of the UU Church of the North Hills. Jeff is a frequent speaker at UU congregations and well known for his book "A Press Conference with God".

Sunday, 3 January 2010, 11 a.m.

[to be announced]

Religious Education Corner



Religious Education Classes

Attendance in all classes has been picking up again over the past month. The preschool has continued learning about famous UUs, and have also joined the K-3 class on some Sundays. The preschoolers have learned about Daniel Chester French, Dana Greeley, Oliver Wendall Holmes Sr., and spent a morning focused on how they are special people. Preschoolers also joined the congregation on Sunday November 22 for our Intergenerational Thanksgiving service. This group also continues their tradition of lighting a chalice and sharing joys and concerns every Sunday. The K-3 class read *Over the River and Through the Woods* (remember that one?), and made gratitude turkeys and pictures which decorated the walls in the sanctuary at Thanksgiving. They'll keep learning about being kind to others with the stories *Henry Works* and *This Is The Stable*. Most of the remainder of December this group will participate in holiday activities and intergenerational services. The grades 4 - 7 class will learn about the importance of love and joy in the holiday season and will hear the wonderful Chanukah story that took place in Billings, Montana where that community stood up to a hate crime and supported all the Jewish families there. The Coming of Age class has continued to explore their value systems, including discussions about when bad things happen in our lives and how to handle those difficult moments. All of the youth have been spending time with their mentors in and out of class, and will focus over the next two weeks on community service. All classes will break after December 6 for the holidays and will resume on January 10.

Boston Tea Party

I bet the real Boston Tea Party wasn't nearly as much fun as the one we had on Saturday, November 14th. This talent show, complemented by scrumptious desserts, coffee, hot chocolate, cider, and tea, raised \$497.00 for our youth trip to Boston next June. Many, many thanks to all the youth who recruited talent, made posters, participated in the performances, and helped sell desserts. My heartfelt thanks to the over 65 audience members, emcee extraordinaire Jim Carillon, bakers and donors of other food and supplies (Fern Martin, Beata Ball, Sami Steele, Shaw family, Marjorie Alexander, Carolyn Shorkey and Milt Warden, Judy Curtis, Angie Underwood, Marguerite, Connie Krachmal, Eliot-Gaines family, Heidi Blozan, Sabrina Mills, Sally Beth Shore, Evelyn Carter, Jey Hiott, and Bette Bates) and performers (Sam and George Scott, Bill Altork, Dawn Wilson, Jerry Pope, Rebecca Williams, Tera Joyce, Jim Carillon, Mary Soyenova, Emily Eliot-Gaines, Aaron Eliot-Gaines and his band Solstace, Scott Conklin, The UU Staff Revue, Phil Fryberger, and Linda Metzner). You showed your love and support of RE and our Coming of Age youth in particular by supporting us in our efforts. I am grateful in so many ways for this wonderful congregation that I am proud to be a part of. So...with this fundraiser, we have raised a total of \$2924.00 towards our Boston trip next June, and only have about \$1500.00 left to go. See below for upcoming fundraisers to watch for.

Coming of Age Fundraisers

December 6: sandwiches/dessert after church and a fair trade market (Coming of Age Fundraiser)

We'll sell our usual homemade sandwiches and desserts, and will also hold a fair trade holiday market where you can buy small seasonal gifts that help support women artisans and their families from around the world.

December 9: Congregational Coming of Age scholarship opportunity

Watch in the mail for a letter which will be sent to all members and friends for an opportunity to donate to our Coming of Age scholarship fund which will assist all youth in going to Boston in June. These donations are tax-deductible, so will make a great way for you to help the youth and make an end-of-year donation to the church. Details will be included in the letter.

Who's Who at the UU!!

Sophie Scott

Our own Sophie Scott (age 11) will be performing the role of "Young Clara" in the International Ballet Academy's production of "The Nutcracker" on Saturday, December 12th at 8:00pm. (Note: Sophie will be performing this role in the Saturday, December 12th 8:00pm performance only.) Show your support—Sophie has worked so hard to get ready for this outstanding performance!

From the Peace Center's website: *There is no substitute for the real Nutcracker, with the combined talents of the Greenville Symphony Orchestra and International Ballet! Under the combined leadership and mastery of GSO's Maestro Tchivzhel and International Ballet's Artistic Directors, Vlada Kyselova and Hennadii Bespechnyi, this classical Nutcracker is presented in all its wintry-sweet holiday magic and virtuosity. Hurry for tickets!!!*

For more information or tickets: www.peacecenter.org/shows/2009/the_nutcracker

DOCTOR David Brown....

Congratulations to David Brown (dad of Tre and husband of Krista) who defended his thesis and has just received his Doctorate in United States History from the University of South Carolina. Way to go, David!!

Intergenerational Holiday Services

December 13 will be our intergenerational holiday service, focusing on the theme of light. This will also be an opportunity for our children to participate in an intergenerational choir conducted by Linda Metzner. If you haven't already signed up, please let me know if your children would like to participate. Rehearsals will be during the 11 a.m. class time on December 6, 7:30 p.m. on December 10, and 10:15 a.m. on December 13.

December 27 will be another intergenerational service led by Jeff Hutchins. Jeff will have a story for all ages, and would like all ages to participate in his program

of out with the old and in with the new. This fast-paced service will be filled with stories, songs, and meaningful rituals. Try to join us if you can.

Important Dates to Remember

December 6: sandwiches/dessert after church and a fair trade market (Coming of Age Fundraiser)

December 6: RE Committee meeting 9:30 a.m.

December 13: Intergenerational Holiday service and intergenerational choir

December 20: Holiday activity for preschool through grade 7: no COA class

December 27: Intergenerational service with Jeff Hutchins

January 3, 2010: holiday activity for preschool through grade 7; no COA class

January 10, 2010: classes resume

All the best to everyone in this season of hope, love, and light.

—Sybil Argintar, RE Coordinator



Children and youth of all ages helped to collect food donations for Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries at our intergenerational Thanksgiving service on November 22.

Green Sanctuary



Merry
Christmas!

Hospitality News: Traveling UU's

Milt and I are connected with a national network of people who host traveling UU's in our home. More often than not, our guests want to come to church with us. Since Milt and I are often busy helping out in RE or doing coffee hour, our guests are left on their own during the service and afterward. They always tell us how warmly they are received and included in your conversations. They hear the minister or speaker being complimented for the efforts that are made to provide a Sunday service. Our guests see you hug, smile, and listen attentively to adults and the children. They enjoy seeing the sparkle in your eyes. Although we have a small but dedicated group of volunteers who put out the beverage service every Sunday, it is the warmth you share that makes our church a friendly and safe and welcoming place. Thanks to each of you for being hospitality ambassadors.

—Carolyn Shorkey and Milt Warden, Co-chairs of the Hospitality Committee

SOLS News

The date for the 2010 Trillium, a Festival of Follies and Flings will be April 17th. This is our big community oriented rummage, plant and bake sale, with children's activities and fun for everyone! Save us your good rummage—details in 2010. AND, Friday afternoon, December 18th, 4:00-5:30, SOLS will sponsor a church wide women's "coffee klatch". We had a wonderful time at our afternoon tea in September and look forward to gathering again in December. But wait! There's more! January 8-9th is the annual SOLS winter camping trip to Hot Springs. Please give a firm commitment to DawnWilson@aol.com by December 21st to make a reservation. That's all folks!

Room in the Inn Date Change

There has been a date change since the Nov. newsletter was published. The next date is Friday, Feb. 12th.

Make a difference this winter by volunteering to help the homeless in our community. The National Weather Service has predicted a colder than usual winter here in WNC. For that reason, these folks need your help more than ever.

The women will be staying at the Bl. Mt. Presbyterian church annex. The Social Action Committee is seeking volunteers to help that day. We need van drivers as well as overnight volunteers and food for 3 meals (breakfast, bag lunches for 12, and everything for the evening meal). A sign-up sheet is available in the foyer, or contact me at 686-3112, flora258@isp.com

—Connie Krochmal, Social Action, Room in the Inn Coordinator

Grounds

Grounds sends a special thanks to all those volunteers who took part in our recent leaf clean-up work party. The area looks so much better now. Our volunteers included Bill Al-tork, Bob Box, Jim Carillon, Evelyn Carter, and Monroe Gilmour. Les Johnson cleaned the roof and raked the leaves. The leaves will be recycled for landscape use.

—Connie Krochmal

Choir News

The choir schedule is a little different for December, as we will be singing with the children for the intergenerational service on December 13th. Also different is that we will meet at 10 AM on December 6th, and also 10 AM on December 13th for rehearsal. Thursday the 10th will be at 7 PM as usual. We will be singing a Hanukkah song, and one called "Solar Power", in honor of the season of Light.

—Annelinde Metzner

Holiday Party

Everyone is invited to begin the holiday season with singing, conversation, and food on Saturday evening, Dec. 5 at 6 p.m. Join Dawn Wilson, Phil Fryberger and Evelyn Carter at 200 Woodland Court off Route 9 in Black Mountain. If you did not sign up for this event at the auction, your admission is five cans of food for Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries. Other goodies are provided for your snacking enjoyment. Please let Dawn or Evelyn know if you plan to attend. See you at the party!



Congregational Care

The Congregational Care Committee is ready to assist our congregation in time of need by providing transportation and meals for those who are facing difficult circumstances. The Co-Monthly Coordinators for September-December will be Kay-Sea Conklin (686-7502, cell: 230-2227, kayseaconklin@charter.net) and David Reid (cell: 713-1607; daviddbreid@charter.net). If needs extend beyond those mentioned, please discuss them with the Co-Monthly Coordinators to see if we might have the resources to help.

Written Word Covenant Group

The Written Word Covenant group is accepting new members though January. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month to share a love of writing—their own or that of other authors. Meetings are held at the home of Shari Spires. Please call Shari at 669-9014 for more information.

Cards Make a Difference

Make every purchase count this holiday season. When you buy UU holiday cards here at UUCSV, you're supporting peace and human rights around the world. All proceeds go to the UU Service Committee.

Buy 2 or more packs and receive a free gift. These beautiful cards were designed by UU artists.

A pack of 10 cards is \$10. The Social Action Committee will be selling these in the foyer before and after the Sunday services in Dec.

Birthdays in December

- December 3rd Phil Fryberger
- December 5th Sarah Gilmour
- December 6th Annie Hall

If you would like your birthday posted in the church bulletin, please fill out the form located on the table in the foyer.



The ghouls came out for the "Boo at the UU" RE Halloween Party on Friday, October 30. Front Row: Heidi Blozan, Savva Etner, Cecilia Shaw, Jeremiah Etner, Evan Shaw, Devon Jennings, Evelyn Carter, Cora Blozan, Dorinda Ball, Tre Brown, Sue Miller. Back Row: Scott Shaw, Susan Shaw, Aven Blozan, Matt Etner, Noah Box, Beata Ball, Mary Soynova.

Friday Fling

December's Friday Fling, a fun party for grown-ups every third Friday of the month, will be held on 18 December at 6:30 p.m. at the church. Refreshments (red and white) will be provided. Bring some simple food, so that we can make a potluck supper out of it. The movie "Amelie" (2001, Audrey Tautou) will be shown. For further information, call Norm Kowal (669-4668). And don't forget drumming at 5:30.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNOA VALLEY



Social Action Committee member Diane Hutchins (right) and community volunteer Cathy Ollis discuss how to keep the outdoor bulletin board on the side of the Town Hardware up-to-date and tidy. Plans are being made to replace the bulletin board in 2010 with a new one. Community connections and free speech in action! Stay tuned!



On November 15, Heather Dillashaw Spencer (center) the Director of AHOPE, spoke in our Sunday service about homelessness and resilience. Three or four times a year, our Congregation sponsors a day of Room in the Inn here in Black Mountain for twelve homeless women. The next one is February 12, 2010. Volunteers are needed and you will find it so rewarding. Contact Connie Krochmal at 686-3112

Building Houses and Changing Lives

Can you wield a hammer? Secure a ladder? Paint a wall? Or plant a tree?

Now's your chance to put your skills or just your desire to work – on a 2010 Habitat for Humanity project – the *Building on the Dream* House. Recently, the Social Action Committee and the Board of Trustees unanimously endorsed UUCSV's involvement in this worthwhile project.

Habitat soon will bring together several Buncombe County churches/congregations to build the *Building on the Dream* House in tribute to the life and legacy of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Building on the Dream* embraces and celebrates cultural diversity and religious solidarity, which Dr. King referred to as "the beloved community." The beloved community includes everyone — regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, creed or religion.

Here are a few highlights:

- * Project begins Tuesday, January 12 and continues for about 12 weeks.

- * A WALL-RAISING event will be held January 15, Dr. King's birthday. We encourage anyone who wants to see the jobsite to come to the WALL-RAISING. It's a lot of fun!

- * House will be in Habitat's Woodland Court subdivision, off Patton Ave., in West Asheville.

UUCSV is fortunate to have this opportunity to participate in this build, and help provide a safe, decent and energy-efficient home to a family who is currently living in inadequate housing. Watch for more information about the Llamas family in future newsletters.

Want to learn more and find out how you can volunteer? Come to an informational meeting at the church on **Tuesday, December 1 at 7 PM**. At this meeting we'll describe the project in detail, talk about the schedule, what's expected of volunteers (no experience necessary!) and answer any questions you may have. Or if you cannot come to the meeting and still want to volunteer, call Susan Culler, 779-2120, or email skc1@charter.net. Susan is the UUCSV liaison with Habitat.



Cassie Miles Meets Civil Rights Icon: In 2005, our Congregation generated scores of letters of encouragement to Cassie Miles, a 7th grader in Bryson City, who received a vulgar death threat in her book bag. Today, Cassie is a senior at Cherokee HS and will graduate from high school and with an Associates Degree from Southwestern Community College at the same time! She is a finalist for a National College Match scholarship and had her interview with Harvard in mid-November. On November 21, she sat next to Franklin McCain at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation's awards banquet in Asheville. Mr. McCain is one of the four NC A & T students who sat down at the Woolworth's drugstore counter in Greensboro in 1960 starting sit-ins around the south. Needless to say, Cassie was thrilled and still appreciates the boost our letters gave her.

UUCSV a Volunteer Station for Senior Companion Program

Did you know that our church is a “Volunteer Station” for a wonderful program called the Senior Companion Program. And, did you know that our very own **Daniel Morrison** is the first Senior Companion Volunteer in the Swannanoa Valley? Read on.

The Senior Companion Program (SCP) is part of Senior Corps, a network of national service programs that provides older Americans with the opportunity to apply their life experiences to meeting community needs. Senior Companions serve one-on-one with the frail elderly and other homebound persons who have difficulty completing everyday tasks. They assist with grocery shopping, and transportation to medical appointments, and they alert doctors and family members to potential problems. Senior Companions also provide periods of respite to family caregivers and assist in Adult Day Care Centers.

Because of this program, thousands of citizens in our country are able to live with dignity in their own homes. Senior Companions themselves are at least 55 years old, living on limited income and willing to commit to volunteering 15- 40 hours per week. Senior Companions receive a tax-free stipend of \$2.65 per hour, mileage reimbursement, paid holidays, vacation and sick leave.

Locally, the Senior Companion Program is sponsored by Land of Sky Regional Council. The Program is recruiting for Senior Companions in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. **Daniel has eleven seniors he works with and is looking for more, so if you know someone who could use his services, please contact him at 686-1411.** Each Volunteer is assigned to a community Volunteer Station which signs off on the volunteer’s work hours and promotes the program. We are pleased the UUCSV can fulfill that community need. If you are interested in becoming a Senior Companion contact Tracy Ash @ 828-251-6622.



Daniel Morrison explains the Senior Companion Program to the Social Action Committee at its November 11 meeting.

From the Editor—The Last Word

From the September issue of *Scientific American*: “The observable part of the universe is now inhabited by 100 billion galaxies, each containing 100 billion stars and probably a similar number of planets.” That comes to about 10^{22} planets in the observable universe. Given the perhaps low, but not zero, probability of life developing under various chemical and physical conditions, together with the principle of evolution, which—“survival of the fittest”—should apply anywhere there is life, it is practically a certainty that the universe contains many, many different sorts of intelligent creatures, or “beings.” Unfortunately, because of the immense distances between stars, it is likely that our own species will have become extinct before we have any chance of contact with any of them. What might they be like? What have they done on their own planets? What sort of societies do they have? What do they think about? Might they be thinking of us?

