

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNANOVA VALLEY

Dec 2011

Volume X, Issue 12

Religious Freedom — Diverse Perspectives



From the Board

How did it happen this fast? Thanksgiving is upon us and the holiday season begins! Families gather, shopping lists appear and sweaters come out of the closet. As we ponder, with gratitude for all the things in our lives, we can also think about those who have no family, no shopping list and no sweaters, much less a closet to take them from! The baskets for food donations in the foyer are overflowing with the generosity of a caring congregation, and will be there to fill and refill, so bring your contribution and share your plenty. Pick up a box for Guest at Your Table as a reminder that there are those who don't even have a table! We are so fortunate. No matter whether you see the glass as half empty or half full, you still have a glass! Give thanks.

The Board of Trustees continues to meet and be your voice for the nuts and bolts of keeping the church on an even keel. Please remember that the board meetings are open to all and if you have a concern to voice, we welcome you. This is a roundabout way of letting you know that several board members are completing their term and we will be looking for several new members soon!

Please remember to welcome our new members and also to take note and welcome guests. We are a warm and welcoming congregation, and even though Sundays are a time to connect with friends, and to do what Unitarian Universalists love to do—talk—take a moment to greet our visitors and let them know we are happy to see new faces.

—Mary Soyenova, *Vice President, Board of Trustees*

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Board Meeting: Monday 19 Dec, 6 p.m.

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

Newsletter Deadline: Tuesday 20 December,
10 a.m., covering January 2012

Sunday Services

The results from our congregational survey, conducted almost 2 years ago, identified the 4 main reasons you come to church on Sunday mornings. Ranked in order most frequently cited, your responses include: to encourage spiritual growth and change, to develop compassion, to help us better understand ourselves, and to have time set aside for respite and reflection. The volunteer congregants serving on the Sunday Service Associates Team, have worked tirelessly to plan Sunday services to help meet your spiritual needs.

The Team members planning your services have appreciated your willingness to limit your spoken announcements, which are read by a Board member before the service begins. Getting your news out by publishing your announcement in the Order of Service, the newsletter and the weekly email is most appreciated. Publishing, rather than speaking the announcement, allows us more time for the heart of the service, the spiritual reasons you have identified for coming together on Sunday morning.

In addition, we have also appreciated the brevity you have demonstrated during the lighting of Candles for Joys and Sorrows. We have candle lighting for Joys and Sorrows on most Sundays. Being a small congregation, we are delighted to have the time in our service for this spoken ritual. Spoken Joys and Sorrows help us to connect with each other and sharing in your joys and sorrows is an important part of our ministry.

We are so grateful to Rev. Michael Carter and Rev. Judith Long for the wisdom they have shared with us on the second Sunday of each month for the duration of 2011. Due to Rev. Carter's increased work load at his day job, he is unable to continue in our pulpit on a regular basis. Rev. Long has offered to do a service or two for us this spring. Look for her on our Sunday line-up!

Lastly, I am stepping down from being the Chair of the Sunday Service Associate Team on Dec. 31st. I believe we've had some varied and meaningful services in 2011. I'm really grateful to the Associates on the team who have hung in there with me during this recent year of transition. We have all worked really, really hard. I'm also very appreciative of the members of the congregation who have said, "Yes!" when we have asked you to play a role in a Sunday Service. You have been willing to help us in so many ways: by leading a service, playing an instrument, singing a song, reading a poem, telling a story, home hosting a presenter, lighting the chalice, greeting, taking up and counting the offertory, running the sound and AV equipment, cleaning and preparing the Sanctuary, hosting coffee hour, thanking a speaker, and on every Sunday, be a caring presence! It's been a jolly good year!

In Light and Joy,

—*Carolyn Shorkey, Outgoing Chair of the Sunday Service Associates Team*

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 4 December 2011, 11 a.m.

Trust Me

Jeff Hutchins

Jeff Hutchins will speak on the issue of trust. "Trust Me" examines trust as the foundation of relationships and faith and the ways in which people trust and mistrust each other.

Children will be in the first part of the service for another of Jeff's original children's stories.

Sunday, 11 December 2011, 11 a.m.

The Love of Friendship

Rev. Michael Carter

In my last message to the congregation I want to focus on what it means to be a friend. It definitely takes hard work to develop these relationships, and in our highly technocratic society, time is one of those precious commodities many of us seem to have little of. Yet this is precisely what we need to develop in our friendships. Even a child knows that what you love you give time to. So as we come to the end of the year the questions become: What do you give your time to? What and whom do you really treasure in your life? What are you doing with your life? To have a friend we must learn to be one.

From the Worship Associates: Please join us for a reception following the service to thank Michael and Judith for their commitment to us as extraordinary pulpit supply ministers during our time of transition.



Sunday, 18 December 2011, 11 a.m.

Blessed To Receive

The time around the winter solstice is filled with celebrations of light and gift giving. And through it all, we're told it is more blessed to give than to receive, but is it? As we strive to open our hearts to

others, it requires us to let down our own walls and receive the gifts of spirit and community. Our winter solstice celebration includes the young people of the congregation, the music of Annelinde Metzner and the UUCSV choir, and words of seasonal blessing from Byron Ballard. And you'll have to be there to receive the gift of the playful nobility of those three legendary kings.

Sunday, 25 December 2011, 11 a.m.

Christmas Day

The UUCSV Board of Directors, in their wisdom, have deemed it appropriate to have something happening at our church on Sunday, Christmas Day, at the regular time of 11:00 a.m.

Scott and Kay-Sea Conklin, possessing no wisdom whatsoever, have agreed to make that "something" happen! What they propose is a Christmas Picnic. Bring your own food and drink, silverware and plates. Bring some food to share, if you wish, but we are not calling this a potluck. There will likely be some very brief words -- a blessing, if you like -- then just food and conversation.

Kay-Sea or Scott would like to have some idea of how many folks to expect, so speak to them at church sometime before Christmas, or call or email -- Scott's address and numbers are in the church membership directory.

Sunday, 1 January 2012, 11 a.m.

[New Year's Day service to be arranged]

Religious Education Corner



Please be generous and make this toy drive as awesome as our food drive!

UUCSV Family Connection Newsletter

In our continuing efforts to connect families outside of Sunday mornings, we want to get to know you better! Beginning in January, we'll feature an RE family in our new newsletter UUCSV Family Connection. But anytime you have something special you would like to share with us, please send to Sybil at sybil.argintar@yahoo.com by the end of the month. This can include things like birthdays, anniversaries, other milestones for not only your children, but the adults in your family as well.

Important Dates to Remember

December 3 Black Mountain Holiday Parade 4 p.m.

Join us for a potluck lunch and singing before the parade, beginning at noon!

Hot cider and cocoa available back at church after the parade too!

December 4 RE Committee Monthly Meeting 12:30 p.m.

December 18 IG Winter Holiday Service

January 16 Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Walk—more details soon!

Happy Holidays!

—*Sybil Argintar, Director of Religious Education* (sybil.argintar@yahoo.com)

By the time you're reading this newsletter, Thanksgiving will be behind us and we'll all be in winter holiday mode. It's easy to become swept up in it all. You've heard it before, but the commercialism of the winter holidays is really not what it's all about. Thinking of those we love through a small gift is always nice. But resist the temptation to overdo it. Remember that the important things, and one of the most precious, is the gift of time. Time spent with family, with children, with those in need who crave a little extra this time of year. Relax and enjoy yourselves, whatever you choose to celebrate through these next few weeks. Make memories. The Religious Education children, youth, and families wish for everyone in our church community to be wrapped up in gifts of love, peace, and happiness this month and in the year that lies ahead.

Curriculum offerings for the coming month:

Infant/preschool Class: *We Are Many, We Are One*; free play, stories, and songs

Cooperative play time.

Grades K-4 Class: *In Our Hands and Moral Tales*

November 27 Making wrapping paper/toy drive/making dove feathers for the parade

December 4 From Enemies to Friends

December 11 Generosity, Give and Ye Shall Receive

December 18 IG Winter Solstice Service

December 25 No RE

January 1 No RE

Grades 5-8 Class: *Race to Justice and*

Beyond Pink and Blue

November 27 Attend service

December 4 The Game of Real Life

December 11 Real Life Revisited

December 18 IG Winter Solstice Service

December 25 No RE

January 1 No RE

Grades 9-12 Class: *A Chorus of Faiths*

November 27 Attend Service

December 4 Attend Service

December 11 The Beloved Community

December 18 IG Winter Solstice Service

December 25 No RE

January 1 No RE

There will not be any RE classes scheduled for December 25, Christmas Day, or January 1, New Year's Day. All classes will resume on Sunday January 8, 2012.

Toy Drive

During the month of November, our religious education children, along with the congregational care committee, sponsored a food drive for Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries. We filled a full barrel and then some, thanks to our generous members and friends. From now through December 11th, the children will continue in this spirit of generosity and love by holding a toy drive which will also benefit Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries. The children are asked to donate a gently used toy of their choosing, and adults in the congregation are asked to purchase a small gift for a child in need. Bring these to the RE space, and we'll wrap them up for you in recycled gift paper. These will be delivered on December 12, and will go to local families in need.

Membership Committee

Even though Thanksgiving (Thanksgetting?) Day is now over, the Membership Committee continues to be grateful for the seven (7) new members who joined our congregation this year!!

We are also thankful for the Membership Committee members. They are Evelyn Carter, Tina Rosato, Ann Sillman, and Mary Soyenova, plus Connie Krochmal who kept up with our shenanigans through e-mail.

—Angie Underwood, Chair

Birthdays in December

December 3rd Phil Fryberger

December 5th Sarah Gilmour

December 6th Annie Hall

December 17th Gene Chilton

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



Building, Aesthetics, Grounds Committee

We have almost finished our B/A projects for this fiscal year. The Minister's study is ready, the renovated restroom is finished, the doors and windows are done in the foyer, and the new sanctuary chairs are in place. The majority of the exterior of the building has been painted, and the outdoor lights in the back are up and functioning. The only work left on our agenda is to finish painting the steeple and the eaves in the area of the trash cans.

Jeannie Shimer is heading up our grounds work. She has a lot of experience, interest, and good ideas. We will be planting plants that are best planted in the fall before a freeze. We have already asked people to volunteer to rake, so we will see how that goes.

Our deepest gratitude has been expressed to all of our workers and volunteers, but it cannot be repeated too often. Thank you.

—Jane Carroll, Chair

Choir News for December

This month, the choir will perform on December 18th. Based around the theme of giving and receiving, we will sing "We Three Kings" and "Carol of the Bells", and also join in with the RE children on some simple songs. We will rehearse on Sunday the 11th at 12:15, and then on Wednesday the 14th at 6:30, as well as Sunday the 18th at 10 AM.



For an extra chance to sing this month, anyone can come to the church for potluck at noon on December 3rd, rehearse for the Black Mountain Christmas parade, and then walk along and sing with the UUCSV float that afternoon.

Best wishes to all.

—Linda Metzner, Choir Director
(annelinde@hotmail.com)

Thank You

After our November food drive volunteers from the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries picked up the food donated by members of our congregation. One volunteer commented that if all churches in the Swannanoa Valley were as generous as our congregation, SVCM wouldn't have to buy any food to help feed families in need. Thank you for your generous participation.

Friday Fling

December's Friday Fling, a fun party for grown-ups every third Friday of the month, will be held on 16 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 "Made in Dagenham" (2010; Sally Hawkins, Bob Hoskins; "In Dagenham, England in 1968, in the fight for equal rights, an ordinary woman achieves something extraordinary—based on a true story.") will be shown. For further information call Norm Kowal (333-4925).



SOLS (Sisters of Lucy Stone)

The SOLS meeting time has changed. We will be meeting on the last Sunday of the month at 12:30.

SOLS is engaged with the membership, and with the minister in particular, of UUCSV's partner church in Medeser, Romania. At our Nov. meeting we voted to send \$300 to their church for Christmas. They will be told to use the money as they see fit. We hope they will be able to use at least a part of it for individual gifts. Evelyn Carter is our liaison with the Medeser minister and posts letters to and from them on the display in the back of our sanctuary.

The members voted to help Bert Gaines decorate UUCSV's Christmas float for the parade this year.

Ann Sillman will represent our congregation, through her attendance and contribution of a dessert, at the Church Women United holiday dinner at the women's correctional center. This is the second year SOLS has contributed \$150 to the Church Women United to help defray the cost of the dinner and to be represented at the dinner.

Jeannie Shimer is the newly appointed Tour Manager for SOLS. She is working with Diamond Tours to present to UUCSV, their friends and families, and the public a four-day trip to Washington, D.C. in March 2012. Details are posted on the bulletin board in the foyer. Interested travelers may call Jeannie at 828-625-2777. If we have a full roster of people (30) sign up to go on this trip, we will have some funds refunded by Diamond to SOLS for use as trip scholarships or as a contribution to UUCSV.

All women of the church are invited to belong to SOLS. Just come to a meeting or talk to any of the Sisters if you have questions.
—Jane Carroll, Chair

Care Team

The Care Team meeting (59 minutes or less) will be at 6:30 pm on Thurs. Dec. 8. Thanks to everyone who voted as to when they could attend the next meeting. The Care Teams will be changing a bit with the new year, having more facilitators connecting our friends who wish some Care Team help with those who want to do something they love for others. It's all being planned as we go, by the team members.

Christmas Eve at UUCA

If you have an interest in attending a UU Christmas Eve service, we encourage you to visit our sister congregation in Asheville. The church is located at the intersection of Kimberly Ave. and Charlotte Street. FMI call: 254-6001 or visit their website, uuasheville.org.

Saturday, December 24, 4 PM

Diversity at the Manger

Benette Sherman, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Join the Zoroastrian wise ones, field animals, magical angels, Jewish shepherds, possibly pagan innkeepers and others during this family service. Children and youth will recreate the traditional Christmas story while all of us sing and express our deep joy, knowing that each night a child is born is a holy night-- no matter where, no matter what religion, and no matter what ethnicity.

Saturday, December 24, 9 PM

Evergreen

Rev. Mark Ward, Lead Minister

Pines, holly, firs decorate our homes at Christmas time as a way of calling attention to the beauty and vitality that, as the ancient story suggests, are waiting in our lives to be born and born again. Please join us for this brief service of words and music and the lighting of candles against the darkness.

From Our Partner Church

Below is a wonderful and moving letter from the husband of the minister of our partner church in Medeser, Romania. Lazlo writes to Evelyn Carter, the Sister of Lucy Stone who maintains communication with Monika, the minister. SOLS recently sent \$300 for Christmas to the Medeser church. Borbala is the small daughter of Lazlo and Monika.

Dear Evelyn,

We are reading gladly your words, your e-mails. I (Laszlo, Monika's husband) am translating

to my wife your letters, and after she is telling me, what should I write. But anyway we would like to

keep in touch with you and, and to get closer.

On the first place let me appreciate your ecclesiastical work. It is so joyful, that you have a good community, which is able to make sacrifices for the church, for the congregation.

You wrote about the developments on your church. These are fantastic things.

God help you, as you can continue this useful evolution!

In all sincerity we would like to have at least one improved, snug room in our parish (maybe this will be next year),

a good place for the children, a renovated church... These are just dreams now, but we must to dream!

We searched on the internet, and we found UUSV's web page. We were so glad watching you, reading about your programs, about the congregation's life. It is a nice gesture from your part, that on your home page is a link about us (partner church).

Thank you!

Our reason wherefore we researched after you is: The people in Medeser asked my wife: "Rev. Monika, it will be fine,

if you could show us some pictures about these people, who don't know us, and still they are helping us so much."

My wife pledged, she will do something for the sake of the cause. So I got your photo album, but I can't save the pictures.

Please, be so kind, when you will have a little free time, send me a few pictures from your congregation, and I will print them!

In Medeser just 2 families have internet connection. (You should send us your daughter blog-address, too).

The Christmas is coming (here is so cold, but snow not yet) and we would like to send a gift for the congregation.

Because we feel, in some way we must to gratitude your kindness, your frequent help. I would like to make a surprise for

our brothers and sisters which will help you to know better the people from our church. I got your post address on your web page: UUSV, 500 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain, NC 28711. Please let me know, if this is the correct address of your church!

Please, on behalf of my family, and the people of Medeser, say thank you for the UU congregation of the Swannanoa Valley for their Christmas gift! We will buy it packages for the children on Christmas Eve.

Tomorrow is the first Sunday of Advent. Now we must to prepare to the sermon. We will make some advent wreath for the churches, and for ourselves. Borbala already started the work :)

Dear Evelyn, I know I made a lot of mistakes, but I hope you are understanding us.

Blessings,

Monika & Laszlo

Book Talks

Please contact Carolyn Shorkey if you are interested in working with the two authors cited below. We need someone from the congregation to organize an adult book talk program for these interesting gentlemen. Contact Carolyn email: c14shorkey@att.net or home phone: 299-9456.

UUCSV member, Joe Haun, recently published his autobiography, UNBELIEVABLE! The book traces his journey from religion through enlightenment to a modern stance that places the scientific method and skepticism at the center of human advancement.

Haun earned his doctorate in plant physiology from the University of Maryland and spent his professional career in corporate and government research and as a professor at Clemson University. He is known for the Haun scale, which quantifies daily plant growth. The search for knowledge urged on him by his parents, coupled with his training in the rigors of the scientific method, led him to a philosophical pursuit of the truths underlying both religious doctrine and the creative imagination.

Another recently published book, *Liberating Liberals*, has come to our attention. Author, Bill Branyon, explores the freedoms liberals have to evaluate social and political issues revealing the vast and surprising horizons of human potential, and hope.

For twenty years, Branyon has been a staff reporter and editorialist for the Mountain Express. He has a graduate degree from WCU and is a hyper-activist.

Organizing a book talk for these authors would be a short term volunteer opportunity for one of you thoughtful participants of our congregation.

SOLS Sponsored Trip

A trip to Washington DC with Diamond Tours is being planned by SOLS (Sisters of Lucy Stone), the women's group of UUCSV. A comfortable bus, less than 3 years old with Video capability and restrooms will leave UUCSV at 8:00 a.m. on Friday Mar 23rd to return Mar 26th. The cost of the trip is \$369.00 (double room - additional \$120.00 for single) and includes hotel, all breakfasts and dinners, all gratuities, admission fees, etc. Only lunches are not included.

Some of the items on the guided tours will include: the US Capitol, White House, National Archives, Embassy Row, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King and War memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknowns, Kennedy graves and Iwo Jima Memorial, the Smithsonian Institution, etc. A deposit of \$75.00 will hold a reservation and the balance is due by Jan. 25th.



From the Editor—The Last Word

Editors get all upset about the strangest things. The “serial comma” for example. Simply described in the little book by Strunk and White (*The Elements of Style*): “In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last. Thus write,

red, white, and blue

gold, silver, or copper

He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.

This comma is often referred to as the ‘serial’ comma.”

It has become common to omit the last serial comma. This is a bad, ugly, and shameful practice, even though used by *The New York Times*. It is frowned upon by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, Fowler, Barzun, Follett, and all sensible people. Omitting the final serial comma often leads to ambiguity—“red, brown, black, and white dogs” eliminates any thought of a black-and-white dog. The author of the following sentence should of had second thoughts about omitting the last serial comma: “In the abandoned house we found broken furniture, an old refrigerator containing spoiled food and a stray cat.”

Editors worry about the strangest things.