

St. Cloud UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST Fellowship



December 2020

All services are online at this time. Please visit www.uufstcloud.org for the Zoom information to join

10:30 a.m. Sunday, December 6: "The Holiday Spirit UU Style"
by Ellen Eastby Underwood UU

Unitarian Universalists have not only diverse backgrounds. We come from many religions and no religion. We celebrate different holidays. We find meaning in different traditions. These verities raise many questions. How do we achieve harmony in beloved relationship with one another as we go through the Holiday season? What does it take to be a community when we don't hold the same beliefs? How do we find the harmony within ourselves, in our own heart, mind, and soul; between the faith of our childhood and that which brings us comfort or joy now? The answers themselves are not terribly difficult to understand. But, to get to a point of internalizing the answers can, at times, be an arduous path to walk. Drawing in part from her own journey, Ellen will explore these questions and provide some possible answers, leaving time at the end of her talk for discussion. All children and adults are requested to have a candle for this service.

10:00 a.m. Sunday, December 13: "Holiday Mental Wellness"
by Kay Slama, Ph.D.

UUCWillmar invites SCUUF to join their service today. UUCW will hold their joys and concerns at 10am, and the more formal service will begin at 10:15, so SCUUF people can click in before 10:00am or shortly before 10:15, as they wish, with the formal service ending by 11:30. Mental wellness is a concern throughout this time of pandemic, and our stress may be compounded as the year-end holidays approach and we are not able to celebrate in some of our usual ways. Kay Slama, Ph.D., retired clinical psychologist and professor, will give some suggestions for maintaining our mental wellness as we navigate this season, then facilitate the ensuing discussion.

10:30 a.m. Sunday, December 20: "Sources"
by Richard Terrill and Larry McDonough

Much as UUs credit a wide range of sources for their spirituality, creative artists "borrow" from those who have come before. In today's service, pianist Larry McDonough (composition, arranging) and saxophonist Richard Terrill (poetry) will describe and illustrate their process of borrowing material from other sources for use in their own creative work, and attempt to link that process with spiritual concerns.

10:30 a.m. Sunday, December 27 "Coffee Talk"

As we experience even more isolation this winter, please join us for informal conversation via Zoom. We can share joys and concerns, ideas for winter activities, and the usual chit chat we would enjoy during coffee time after our service.

Provide your own coffee.

To contribute to SCUUF:

- 1) send a check to SCUUF, PO Box 805, St. Cloud, MN 56302, or
- 2) Make a contribution by debit/credit card or PayPal by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/Donate-SCUUF>

December President's Corner

by Ozzie Mayers

It seems fitting at this time of the year to begin with this poem by Rafael Jesus Gonzalez, who read a poem (not this one, however) at President Barack Obama's second inauguration:

"Grace"

Thanks & blessings be
to the Sun & the Earth
for this bread & this wine,
this fruit, this meat, this salt,
this food;
thanks & blessings to them
who prepare it, who serve it;
thanks & blessings to them
who share it
(& also the absent & the dead)
Thanks & Blessing to them who bring it
(may they not want),
to them who plant & tend it,
harvest & gather it
(may they not want);
thanks & blessing to them who work
& blessing to them who cannot;
may they not want—for their hunger
sours the wine & robs
the taste from the salt.
Thanks be for the sustenance & strength
for our dance & work of justice, of peace.

At our last meeting, the Board began discussing whether or not we should record and post our Sunday Zoom Services; Tom Hergert is investigating the legal ramifications of doing so. Also, we will continue to share Sunday Services with the Willmar UU Congregation since doing so the past few Sundays has been successful. I will convene interested members of the Fellowship to explore how we might organize a Zoom Anniversary Celebration in the Fall 2021. I will let you know the details and the date once these have been decided. **But, I continue to welcome suggestions.**

By the time you receive this newsletter, the news about the Covid-19 updates I currently have will no longer apply; however, I would like to provide you with the link to the MDH's Community Partner's site; this site provides updated safety guidelines as well as ways that underserved population can find assistance. If you access the link, information can be found in a variety of ways (e.g., by County, Group Identification, Language): <http://www.health.state.mn.us/ccc>.

The Board has agreed not to meet in December since we do not foresee any pressing business; so the next Board meeting will be on **January 17th**. If anyone has a request/issue that needs the Board's attention before then, let me know; and I will send it to the Board electronically.

Program Committee News

by Charlotte Stephens and Pam Peterson

In 2021 our Program Committee plans to continue offering two Sunday Services each month using Zoom. A third Sunday for informal conversation called Coffee Talk is scheduled for the last Sunday of November, December, and January. In addition, we are in contact with the Program Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Willmar (UUCW). We have already begun to share with you information about some of their Sunday Services, and some of their members have attended one or more SCUUF Service in recent weeks. On December 6 we are inviting them to our service, and on December 13 they invite us to join their service. In January St Cloud will plan services on January 10 and 24, and Willmar will plan services on January 3 and 17. Look for details in our January newsletter.

Our committee welcomes your comments about programming and your ideas for future topics and presenters as well as your thoughts about our collaboration with Willmar. We are concerned about members who have not been attending the Zoom services and we would like to hear from you if you have ideas for other ways to stay connected or participate in Fellowship activities during the pandemic.

Your December TOUCHSTONES Journal was sent as an attachment with this newsletter distribution

In this season of darkness, we have an incredible opportunity to make a brighter future for us all

by The Program Committee

This article provides background for our January 10th Sunday Service and for your taking action if you choose to do so. Chuck Derry, a Sierra Club Consultant, will be our guest speaker on January 10 addressing the proposal by Xcel Energy to build an 800-megawatt fracked gas plant in Becker, Minnesota. Our UU voices as well as the voices of our central Minnesota neighbors are critical in shaping our future energy sources.

Every two to three years all utilities are required to submit a plan that outlines how they will meet their customers' energy needs for the next 15 years. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will review the plan to determine whether Xcel's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) meets its customers' needs while ensuring reliable, low cost electricity. After careful review, the PUC will then approve and/or deny aspects of the plan. This year's IRP is being referred to as the "world series" of IRPs because the majority of Xcel power plants are up for retirement within 15 years. Consequently, very big decisions are needed now on how our state will move forward with energy production into the future.

Our environment is at risk from our use of fossil fuels. We are seeing expanding impacts of climate change throughout the world while scientists are predicting that we have 10 years left to drastically cut our greenhouse gas emissions.

Chuck will discuss various studies and reports being conducted on our energy use and sources, and how they will impact our future. Sierra Club's efforts are to engage a broad network of Central Minnesota citizens to submit their comments and opinions which oppose the continued use of fossil fuels and the building of a new fracked gas plant in Becker.

If you would like to take action before or after Chuck's presentation, you can submit a comment to the MN Public Utilities Commission at: <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/speak-up/> Be sure to **reference docket # 19-368. The deadline for comments is January 15, 2021.**

Our future depends on our understanding, our voices, and our action.

Joys and Concerns

from the Caring Committee

During our Sunday Services we take time to share personal joys and concerns. The Caring Committee is looking at extending that opportunity to those who read the monthly newsletter. If you would like to share a joy, concern or sorrow, please send your information by email to Linda Saupe. It's important for you to know that there will be a delay because the newsletter is monthly. We also want you to know that the newsletter is available to anyone who accesses our website. In recent weeks we learned of the death of people close to a Fellowship member.

Brenda Graves shared the sad news that her partner Jim Hart died on October 23 at his home in Minneapolis. He was 81 years old and had been dealing with 2 terminal illnesses for a couple of years. Some of you remember Jim from the years he attended the Fellowship with Brenda and for his musical program presentations. There may be a celebration of his life sometime next year. His obituary in the St Cloud Times can be seen at this link:

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sctimes/obituary.aspx?n=james-everett-hart&pid=197027025>

And on November 10th Chris Smith lost her life-long best friend, her sister Cindy Calder, due to Covid-19. She was the middle of 5 children and loved to be the tie that bound the family all together. Her family nickname was Auntie KissKiss and she gave the best hugs!

Share the Spirit Christmas Program

by the Social Justice Committee

Greetings to you all!

The donations to Catholic Charities Share the Spirit Program ended on Dec. 1st. I want to thank all who have donated. Your gifts are greatly appreciated by Catholic Charities.

For those who wish to contribute to the Guest at Your Table, donations are accepted through December. This year's Guest at Your Table theme is "The Meaning of Home". The UUSC will be working with partners in Central America to see that no one is forced to leave their homes due to violence and economic failure. They are also working in Alaska, Louisiana, and the Pacific to help indigenous people fight for their homes and ancestral lands against mining and climate change. In Burma the UUSC is working with partners to support the rights of the Rohingya minority after facing government backed genocide in their homeland.

To donate by mail, make checks out to the UUSC and write Guest or GAYT in the memo field and send to
UUSC - PO. Box 808 - Newark, NJ - 07101-0808

Any help you can give is greatly appreciated - Angela Stevens

CRE Sledding Event Planned to Ring in the New Year

by Melissa Woods

As the end of the year comes to a close, we want to thank everyone who participated in CRE this year and especially those that took the time and energy to teach a lesson to the children. We also want to acknowledge the new families who came to our fellowship before in-person services stopped. We hope when the pandemic settles down you will join us again!

Your CRE leaders understand the importance of following distancing guidelines to keep everyone safe during the pandemic. However, we would like to plan another outdoor event for the UU children of our fellowship to see each other and have fun in a safe way! Weather permitting, we will be gathering for outdoor sledding and ice skating at Memorial Park in Saint Joseph, MN on **Sunday, January 10th** at 2:00 pm. Communication about this event will happen via email as the date draws closer so please let Melissa know if you'd like to be added to the email list (woods.melissa11@gmail.com). We hope we can make this work and get to see your smiling faces again soon!

SCUUF Book Club News

by Marcia Neely

Our book club will read Isabel Wilkerson's book *The Warmth of Other Suns* and discuss it via ZOOM at 10 a.m. January 9. Even if you can't join the discussion, I encourage you to read this Pulitzer-prize winning book. In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life.

Membership Committee News

By Marge Bates

This year many of us will probably be experiencing a different kind of Christmas. The children might be experiencing the disappointment of not seeing family members again, like for Thanksgiving. It might be helpful if they received Christmas Cards from as many of us as wish to send them. Also, do not forget adults who will be alone this year, maybe for the first time. The vaccine is allegedly on its way soon, but we still have to hold fast to our safety patterns. May you all have a very Happy Holiday Season and hopefully we can be together in the new year.

Anti-Racism Workgroup News

by Hanni Epp

The Anti-Racism Work Group met by Zoom on November 16. Our discussion centered on ways to support Fellowship committees in their work to not only examine dismantling white supremacy from an individual and institutional perspective, but also to build anti-racist knowledge, behaviors and practices.

Our work is based in part on knowledge gained from the workshop for Council of Chairs, led by James Addington, and his book, *Tragic Investments*. We are also looking very carefully at the survey responses to inform next steps in our work.

We hope to offer opportunities soon through our Book Group, our Meditation Group, and our Services for you to engage in this important work. Many of you may already be reading books related to anti-racism. Others may be participating in community organizations to fight racism. We encourage you in these endeavors and hope you will bring these experiences to our Fellowship, as we meet and talk in small groups (virtually, for now).

The demands placed on all of us to support the election, as well as the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 are certainly factors that are slowing our progress. However, this is a long-term commitment, and every step we take both as individuals and as a Fellowship, shapes how we encounter the world around us. Find joy in the path!

December Meditation Schedule (Online)

by Lucinda Hudson

December 5th (Saturday): Holiday Meditation for 2020

It's clear that this year the holidays will be very different from previous years. How can we help make the holidays an enjoyable and restorative time, even when our ability to gather is limited? There are no easy answers, and this meditation will simply be an opportunity to explore this question.

These meditations are offered with a low-tech approach that only involves e-mail. You can meditate for whatever amount of time you choose. Many members of the meditation group begin to meditate at 11 AM on Saturdays, but you can pick a different time if that time doesn't work well for you. The form is also flexible, and you can meditate while sitting or while walking--or while practicing any activity in a mindful way. After the meditation, anyone is welcome to share a comment or reflection. To receive meditation readings or if you would like further information, please contact Lucinda at lucindahudson9@gmail.com or 320-224-5440.

Meditation is the practice of focusing one's attention with intention and is used in many ways. For example, it can be used to be more aware in the present moment—more mindful of thoughts, words and actions. It can be used for growth and healing, as with loving kindness and self-compassion practices. Meditation can help build inner resources in a variety of ways.

The End Is Near

from the Budget & Finance Committee

As December arrives, we remind you that this is the last month for making tax deductible donations in 2020. Please allow at least a week for mail if you want your gift to be included in the 2020 tax year. Alternatively, you can give using the donate button on the website.

The Caring Committee

The Caring Committee has been formed for the times in each of our lives when we need help from another person. The members of the Caring Committee are available to help members and friends of the St. Cloud UU Fellowship in a variety of ways. Feel free to contact any member of the committee:

Linda Saupe (Chairperson), Marge Bates, Hanni Epp, Doug Polley, Chris Smith, Charlotte Stephens, and Ron Syme.

For anyone with emergency needs, a wide range of services is available from agencies and organizations in the community. These can be accessed by calling 211 (or 800-543-7709).

Annual Committee Reports

Children's Religious Education Report

by Melissa Woods

This past year CRE saw some exciting growth before we had to stop meeting in person due to the pandemic. Three new families with young children walked through our doors and participated in a few lessons. Over the year CRE discussed a variety of topics including conservation and social emotional lessons from the Big Life Journal. We also did charity work through raising money with homemade crafts around the holiday season. New this year, we initiated Family Fun Nights where families joined together for social activities and to connect outside of the regular congregation time. These were a huge success and when we are able to meet in person again, we will plan more of them! To keep our CRE group connected during this challenging time, we have decided it's best to plan outdoor activities when we can. Our first was a fall hike on October 17th and in the future, we plan to gather for sledding, ice skating, night hiking, and more over the winter months. Once we are able to meet in person again, our lessons' focus will be around anti-racism and nurturing diversity. We plan to touch on some of these important topics and values while we meet in person during the winter activities outdoors!

Membership Committee Report

by Marge Bates

The Membership Committee continued to facilitate Sunday Coffee and Soup Sunday. We were able to hold an Orientation Meeting for prospective members, but were unable to welcome them to the Fellowship due to COVID. We were also working on our own goal of supporting LGBTQ, but again, COVID interfered. Hoping we have a better second half this year.

Program Committee Report 2019-2020
Looking forward to 2020-2021 Program Year

2019-2020 Chairs: Pam Peterson and Lisa Bershok

2020-2021 Chairs: Pam Peterson and Charlotte Stephens

2019-2020 Committee Members: Bettina Hixson, Wendy Schoen, Lucinda Hudson, Deb Williams, Dave Mitchell, Charlotte Stephens

2020-2021 Committee Members: Bettina Hixson, Wendy Schoen, Lucinda Hudson, Sally Pitzen

The Program Committee co-chairs would like to give a HUGE thank you to the dedication and hard work that our committee members put in to create wonderful lay-led services, bring in community presenters, and organize the various UU ministers who visit us. This year we have had to use more creativity in thinking through our programs to work in a virtual format. We want to thank those that have helped with program logistics in making our virtual services successful, especially to Tom Hergert and Lisa Bershok for the tech work.

Due to COVID-19, our Sunday programs ended in March 2020. We held 26 Sunday programs prior to our program year ending early.

- **2019-2020 Sunday program presentations**
 - UU Ministers = 7
 - Program sub-committees = 6
 - UU Congregants = 1
 - Social Justice committee collaboration = 3
 - UU Musicians = 1
 - Non-UU Clergy = 2
 - General community = 6

Looking Forward

We have been having two services a month and plan to continue this throughout the program year. Services will be led by UU ministers, professionals, and members of the Program Committee. Also, we are having a short connection time following each service. In addition, we are having one Sunday a month to have “Coffee Talk”, an extended social connection time. We have also been working with the Willmar UU Program Committee and will be partnering with them as they host services on our “open” Sundays.

As always, if you or your committee have suggestions for programming, speakers you would like to hear, or are willing to develop a program, we would love to hear from you! There are also opportunities to be involved in specific sub-committee development of lay-led services without having to join the committee fully.

Calendar Reminders

AVOID ZOOM CONFLICTS: We encourage you to use the Zoom licenses for video conferencing, but please follow the standard reservation process to ensure the Zoom “meeting room” (license) is available at the time you would like to make use of it and to allow others to see planned meetings on the calendar.

Please check the online calendar on our website for scheduled Zoom meetings at www.uufstcloud.org/calendar. A meeting event/room reservation button to submit a form for reservation requests can be found below the calendar on the website. This same button can be used to schedule any Zoom meetings. Please reach out to Jessica Beierman at calendar@uufstcloud.org if you have any questions.

Tom Hergert and Jim Hixson have agreed to be the contacts for the Zoom License and will provide a tutorial for anyone needing to learn how to host a Zoom Meeting. Their contact information can be found in the new UUF Directory.