

**St. Cloud
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Fellowship**



November 2020

10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 8: "What Happened?"

by Rev. Karen Hutt

The last week in this country has been challenging and anxiety building. What are our non-negotiables that are holding us together as a community, as a fellowship, as families and as Unitarian Universalists? What is grounding us as the earth seems to be shaking beneath our feet? Please bring a handful of dirt to the service today (for a ritual).

10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 22: "Welcoming the Stranger"

by Dr. Karen Erickson, St. Ben's University

We reflect on religious and cultural traditions in which welcoming the stranger is a sacred act. The practice of offering welcome to one who is unknown, or not yet known, can increase our capacity to see the stranger in the divine, the divine in the stranger, and the foreignness deep in our own natures. Might this discipline also support a reimagination of the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving in a more honest and life-affirming way?

10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 29 "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) go to our web page at uufstcloud.org, click on the donate button at the top of the homepage and contribute by using a debit/credit card or PayPal.

November President's Corner

by Ozzie Mayers

I've been thinking about the myth of the Phoenix, the mythical bird that resurrects itself from its ashes (see <https://mythology.net/mythical-creatures/phoenix/>), as we live through the consternations of what is happening to our Democracy. A bit of hope I feel comes from thinking about this myth and how we might emerge from the challenges to our Democratic way of governing and living with a stronger, more evident sense of Democracy, if we "persist" in our efforts, whatever the outcome of the Presidential elections.

I want to express my appreciation for our UU Get Out the Vote Service on October 11th. In addition to the contributions that individual members made to this project, the Board has authorized the Budget and Finance Committee to also send in an additional \$520.20. We were asked "to consider gifts that honor the number 2020" and thus the reason for the amount.

Much thanks to Linda Peck for having chaired the Social Justice Committee. She asked to be relieved of this role; Linda has served our Fellowship well in this role and will I suspect continue to contribute to the work of this committee. In addition, I send my appreciation to Angie Stevens, who has agreed to take over the Chair of this committee.

Be certain to read Lisa Bershok's entries on both the Beloved Conversations and the introduction to what we are calling "Coffee Talk." Those who are interested in attending the Beloved Conversations can apply to the Board to have their registration fees covered. The "Talks" will be offered for those who might be feeling isolated at this time.

Also, Lisa Bershok, our President Elect, is planning on holding a virtual Chair Council on November 15 to hear feedback from Chairs on how they plan to address systemic racist practices in our Fellowship; this focus emerges from the presentation that James Addington, author of Tragic Investment, gave at our Leadership Retreat.

The Board is reconsidering delaying the 60th Anniversary of the Fellowship to the Fall of 2021 since it is proving challenging to organize such a celebration at this time. More to come on this event.

The next Zoom Board meeting will be on November 15, 9:00 a.m.

Program Committee News

by Pam Peterson

Our committee is pleased that so many of you have attended our Sunday services. This is a great way for us to stay connected in a time like this. If you are having trouble with Zoom or know of someone who is, please give me a call at (320)982-2360 (leave a message).

We would be happy to have some new members on our committee.

Even if you would like to participate in one particular service or do one part of a service-such as lighting the chalice or doing a reading.

•••ATTENTION•••Something New!

We will start having some “Coffee Talk” Sundays starting the end of November. 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 that we would enjoy during coffee after our services.

We will meet at 10:30 a.m. for one hour. Each of us will be assigned randomly to our first group and then change to another group at the designated time. We will likely change 3-4 times. See you there...

10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 29th
“COFFEE TALK”

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

Connecting When Living Alone

by the Caring Committee

The Caring Committee is offering to help members who live alone set up and maintain a regular connection with another person, if desired. We introduced this idea in January 2019 and had several responses from members. In the midst of COVID restrictions we wondered whether others might be interested now. If you would like a connection or if you are willing to participate as a contact, Hanni Epp and Charlotte Stephens will help you to pursue having a regular connection. Methods that can be used for connecting include telephone, email, text or whatever the individuals decide. We are also interested in hearing from members who have other ideas for staying connected with people while maintaining social distance to avoid the virus.

Share the Spirit Christmas Program

by the Social Justice Committee

The holiday season is fast approaching, and it is time for the Share the Spirit Programs of Catholic Charities. In past Christmases we have supported one or two small families with gifts and food for Christmas. This year due to Covid the Social Justice committee has agreed to collect and give money instead of gifts, to eliminate the chance of exposure to Covid while gift shopping.

The need is real, and I will collect checks from those who wish to contribute. If you would like to contribute, please make out your checks to Catholic Charities and write Share the Spirit Program in the

memo area of the check. Please send your check to me at Angela Stevens, 19465 County Road 7, South Haven MN 55382. I will collect the checks until December 1st. I will then take the checks in one group to Catholic Charities as donations by the St. Cloud UU Fellowship. I have consulted with other members of SCUUF and we feel this is the best way all around to handle this. Please help us help make Christmas merrier for those in need and THANK YOU.

CRE News

by Jessica Beierman

The CRE group went on a nice, but chilly hike on October 17th.

Thank you to those who were able to join!

We plan to schedule more outdoor events throughout the winter months to keep the children and families connected. Keep your eyes open for emails in the coming months as we hope to gather outside and enjoy an afternoon of sledding, ice skating, and possibly an evening snow hike.

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 10:00 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.

Greater St. Cloud Faith Leaders Statement

In October the Greater St Cloud Faith Leaders group, where Charlotte Stephens represents the Fellowship, prepared the statement which you can read on the next page. The group thought it was important to continue to promote the values of peace and unity in the midst of discord prior to the election and beyond. The statement was distributed to news media and was published in the St Cloud Times on October 25. See next page.

November Meditation Schedule (Online)

by Lucinda Hudson

November 7th (Saturday): Finding Peace in Stormy Times

Living peacefully is not easy, especially in these tumultuous times. This meditation will include music and readings that can remind us that peace is still available, even with all of the challenges we face in our world.

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 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

Rental Liaison Report: Sharing Our Space

by Charlotte Stephens, Rental Liaison

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year our building was rented out to community organizations, individuals, and businesses for a wide variety of meetings, activities and events. Examples of renters include another faith community, a children's dental clinic, a civic organization, music groups, as well as monthly meetings of several organizations. December 2019 was the last month of weekly yoga classes, ending more than 2 decades of use by several different yoga instructors. All rentals came to an end in March 2020 when our executive board closed the building for all use due to COVID concerns.

Building & Grounds Committee Report

by Tom Hergert, Building & Grounds Committee Chair

Things were reasonably normal for Building & Grounds this year. Dan Jenson, our intrepid cleaner did his normal schedule until the pandemic arrived. We even rented a commercial style carpet cleaning machine and did ALL the carpets on the first floor. Small repairs, such as resetting and tightening the front door hinges, so it swings freely, were accomplished throughout the year. One ceiling light fixture was replaced in the Children's Religious Education classroom. Happily, there were no major repairs necessary and routine maintenance was just that. The HVAC system required some attention, luckily covered by our annual contract with the vendor. The west attic space has been tidied a bit, with some amount of rearranging to make things more accessible. That task will require additional time and attention.

Outdoors, teams of UUsers took down, cut up, and hauled away nuisance trees and lots of branches. Our mowing and snow removal contractors did fine work on a schedule very close to what we wished for. Of course, the Community Garden folks took great care of that space, improving the whole neighborhood.

After the onset of the pandemic and our limiting the use of the building, not a lot happened. Dan decreased his cleaning frequency, and I've been dropping in occasionally, often to replace smoke detector batteries. Many thanks to Charlotte and others who have been in the building and given me information and feedback on things we can do to ensure that the building is ready for us to return to when the opportunity presents itself. The chair has not called on committee volunteers, largely because there hasn't been much activity necessary.

The renter in our 1812 Quarry Road house is still very happy there and enjoys projects to improve the place (at no cost to the Fellowship). He always pays the rent, usually on time.

Budget & Finance Committee Report

by Doug Polley

The Budget & Finance Committee is integral to the financial health of the fellowship. The committee works with the treasurer to maintain the integrity of financial records by monthly review of accounts and through an annual financial review. The committee helps with planning each year through the creation

of an annual budget. The budget relies on input from the committee chairs and is officially approved by the board. The committee organizes an annual pledge drive to help gather support for the fellowship from members and friends. The committee will continue these tasks in the coming year, and due to presence of Covid19, the committee will also look for new ways to make support for our fellowship convenient in the coming year.

Communications Committee Report

by Judy Foster, Joel Bershok, and Tom Hergert

The Communications Committee is charged with the following, according to our SCUUF Constitution:

“The Communications Committee shall coordinate internal communications, including the monthly newsletter; manage the website; coordinate media relations; and publicize Fellowship purposes and activities.”

Accordingly, we have been fortunate to have Jessica Beierman take over our monthly newsletter, on which she is doing an excellent job. Jessica also created a new website for us, which she continues to manage at a high level of quality. Jessica also maintains our Fellowship calendar. Thank you, Jessica!

We have curtailed media publicity during the pandemic restrictions, but prior to that we carried out an advertising campaign on MPR. Now that we have resumed services via Zoom, the committee will be considering a new campaign. The committee maintains an electronic media distribution list and is available to prepare press releases for Fellowship programs and activities upon request from appropriate committees.

We update the Fellowship Directory twice a year.

We also maintain a Facebook Page, which we update on a regular basis, usually three times weekly.

During the pandemic, we have been sending out at least weekly messages to our Directory list to offer inspiration and encouragement, as well as to inform those listed in the Directory of important announcements and reminders in between newsletters.

We also keep the information center outside our building up to date with building access and upcoming program information.

In addition, we check SCUUF voicemail almost daily and forward any messages to appropriate recipients, as we do with Fellowship email, which we check twice weekly.

We coordinate as needed with the Technology Subcommittee (Tom Hergert and Jim Hixson).

Along with Charlotte Stephens, we manage SCUUF organizational documents and keep them up to date.

We maintain an annual Work Plan to ensure we fulfill all our responsibilities.

After the new Long-Range Plan was approved in May of 2019, we updated our committee goals to support the Fellowship Plan. The pandemic has slowed our progress, but we continue to monitor and

update our goals, which include outreach to young families, local social and environmental justice groups, and organizations working on anti-racism.

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.