

The Flaming Chalice

The newsletter of
The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta
69 Winthrop St.
Augusta, Maine 04330



Interim Minister: Rev. Lee Devoe

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November 25-December 9, 2007

Nursery care is available during Sunday Services.

On Sunday:

November 25 ***Soulful Waiting*** **Rev. Lee Devoe** **One Service at 10 am**
Reflections on the spiritual practice inherent in the season of Advent

December 2 ***The Work of Our Hands*** **Rev. Lee Devoe** **9:15 & 11 am**
Always and everywhere, people have created meaning out of the simplest materials of their everyday lives. Our service will explore some of these reservoirs of meaning, both old and new. Our First Sunday offering will be received for organizations providing care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

December 9 ***Reflections of Jesus*** **Rev. Lee Devoe** **9:15 & 11 am**
I will offer personal and historical perspectives on the meaning and message of Jesus.

December 16 ***Solstice Celebration*** **9:15 & 11 am, reception after each service**
The holy darkness and the longing for the return of the light, we will celebrate this universal cosmic drama with song and reflections—and participation by the Choir, Annie Voorhees, Lee Devoe, and members of the congregation.

December 23
9:15 am ***Christmas Pageant*** with Karen Fisk, Director of Religious Exploration
11 am ***Worship Service*** with Rev. Lee Devoe—and including lots of singing!

December 30 **One Service at 10 am**

World AIDS Day Community Event at UCC
Speakers, Music, and Candlelight Ceremony
Saturday, December 1, from 5-7 pm

Our thanks to Barbara Thurlow, Elva Ingraham, Hannah Faulkner, Cally Stevens and Mary Perkins for helping to get this newsletter out on time.

Next newsletter deadline is 12/3/07 Please submit all newsletter articles as WORD documents if possible.



It's not your fault. It's not your fault. It's not your fault . . . In the Academy Award winning film *Good Will Hunting*, the character played by Matt Damon is tired of dealing with his childhood traumas. He's not asking for anymore therapeutic intervention. His therapist, played by Robin Williams, is in his face – compassionate yet steady. His even voice repeats the words of release: It's not your fault. As the words go more deeply into Matt Damon's psyche and the locked space of his heart, his resistance melts and he is cracked open. He is released and able to move into more meaningful relationship, into true intimacy.

On the Saturday morning of our Systems Workshop, facilitator Connie Goodbread watched this clip from *Good Will Hunting* with us. Then she repeated to us the words of release: It's not your fault. I hope that in the weeks and months to come, these words will work themselves ever more deeply into the bruised spaces of your hearts and minds, opening you to more meaningful levels of relationship with each other and with my colleagues who will come to join you in ministry.

"Don't let this pain go to waste." Our facilitator reminded us of these words by congregational systems guru Edwin Friedman. Let's go into the pain thoroughly enough that we can get out the other side. Let's use it for all its worth to propel us to new levels of health and high functioning as a congregation. You have important work to do in this community and in this world. The principle of homeostasis reminds us that the system is stronger than any part, any individual. The tendency is for a group to go back to the same behavior again and again, despite the awareness and desire by individuals to do something different. Until there's enough pain. Secrets held by individuals within a community keep the pain out of the system. It's not that there's more pain now. It's that the pain is generalized throughout the system rather than localized – held by individuals out of love for their community.

The path to move beyond identity as a victim is the path of action. And you are walking that path. You have asked the hard questions: What was our part in this? How did we as a culture allow this and participate in this? What values were we supporting? How will we create different cultural norms within the congregation?

Together, in the systems workshop, you discerned the values out of which you were living: harmony, the ethic of being nice, the great New England ideal of being stoic. These values are all positive on the surface yet they ended up doing harm in the community. Harmony without dissonance remains shallow. Just as a piece of music begins with a simple harmony and works through notes of dissonance towards a greater harmony, a great crescendo of blazing beauty. Being nice is nice! Unless it's at the expense of being in real relationship. I was raised on stoicism and I value it. Yet it is a lonely path. Without resorting to emotional excess, can we be held in loving, supportive community? Are we willing to take risks in community? Are we willing to struggle together, to work through moments of dissonance, in the creation of authentic harmony and community?

The Committee on Ministry will lead the congregation in a process of values discernment (beginning this winter, you'll hear more about it in future newsletters). We will experiment, trying out different values and living with them awhile, experiencing their effects on the community. After you identify your core values, everything you do as a congregation will flow out of those values. It will be an indispensable tool for leadership. The process of values discernment should flow nicely into the cottage meetings and congregational conversations that form the first stage of the search process for your new minister.

I am heartened to see a thorough conversation and a thoughtful process taking place before you begin to create a covenant of right relationship and a more thorough Safe Congregation policy. Policies are only as good as the people living them. You are moving forward. While not assigning guilt or blame and while taking care of each other exquisitely, you are moving forward.

Fifty people participated in the systems workshop held over Friday night and Saturday in the middle of October. Even more attended the worship services on Sunday morning which included participation by facilitator Connie Goodbread. Connie is a Healthy Congregations consultant with the UUA and was recommended by District Executive Rev. Mary Higgins. We are grateful that Connie was willing to travel from Florida to join us – and that her husband supported her in the journey. It was one of the few weekends that she had free until next summer. Like a Mastercard commercial, the weekend was priceless yet it cost us only \$139. The UUA gave us a grant of \$1000 and the district gave us a grant of \$500 to support this important work. And Connie herself, in addition to her distinctive facilitation skills, is fiscally frugal. She found a flight from Florida for \$202 and was willing to drive over from Manchester. Thank you Connie, Mary, District, and Association! It is reassuring to know that we are not in this alone.

During that weekend in October, I thought back to the first time I prayed with someone, the first time I was with someone while they were dying, the first time I sat with someone while their child died. I was shocked at how intimate these moments are. It was hard. They are real and raw. Everyone is vulnerable. The real work of ministry contains real intimacy. A minister who sexualizes their relationship with the congregation creates drama to avoid depth. They avoid the honest intimacy that comes with the role.

This has been a real moment, this time that I have walked with you. I am privileged to share it with you.

In faith,

Lee

On a personal note:

Thank you for your recent support. As many of you know, my sister's stepson, Adam Muller, was killed in Iraq the week before Veterans' Day. I will travel to Vermont to offer my support and attend the services.

I am looking forward to Thanksgiving. For the first time in 12 years, all three of my children will be together for the holiday, along with an extra child – my daughter's former college roommate. You might get to meet some of them at the Sunday service on Thanksgiving weekend.

I hope you have a meaningful holiday - Lee

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

The Committee on Ministry meets monthly with Reverend Lee Devoe to discuss issues of importance to the well-being of our congregation. We are continuing to process the boundary violations that we feel took place while Reverend Calvin Dame was our minister. In our efforts to be transparent and to speak our truth as well as to answer the questions we are receiving, we want to update you on the procedures that are taking place on the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) level.

The complaint of sexual misconduct by Reverend Dame was forwarded to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) of the UUA. The Executive Committee of the MFC reviewed the material and has invited Rev. Dame to meet with them on November 28, 2007, to discuss the situation in person. At that time, the Executive Committee of the MFC will decide what to recommend to the full MFC. The full MFC will meet later in that week and decide what action should be taken. The MFC has several options it could deem appropriate and it is best not to speculate at this time which option will be chosen. We will keep the congregation informed as we learn additional details.

As always, remember that the members of the Committee on Ministry are here to work towards what is best for the UUCC community. We invite you to share what is on your mind. Please feel free to contact any of us: Jane Gilbert, John Pelletier (chair), Janet Sawyer and Jim Spicer.

President's Column

The clock being set back really makes me realize that we're nearing the winter solstice and the New Year. Summer's over, fall's nearly over; it's a time of year to take stock of where we've been and where we are as a church.

When I think about the "to do" side of the ledger, we've got plenty of work ahead of us.

We've got folks working like crazy to make 71 Winthrop into workable church space. When it's done, we'll have extra space that's modern and designed to provide for the needs of our church. It will allow us to begin work on Phase I of our church renovations without losing too much space as work progresses.

We've got a capital campaign ahead of us to fund Phase I. We'll soon have a feasibility study to guide us through the capital campaign. You'll hear much more about this process early in the New Year.

While we're working on 71 Winthrop and planning for Phase I construction, we've got to keep up our current buildings as we'll need them for a long while still and how the whole place looks and feels impacts all of us. A well kept church makes for a better atmosphere for current church members and is a more attractive draw for visitors and prospective new members.

We've got follow up to the weekend session with Connie Goodbread which gave our church challenge and hope for making all of us better leaders and church members. The Committee on Ministry will take on the first major portion of this work with a values discernment

process so that we can affirm or reaffirm what's really most important to our religious community.

At the same time, we've got all the work that goes into every church community; committee work, board meetings, budget preparation, etc.

These are all good and necessary things for our church but they also demonstrate the strength, commitment, and love within our community. Which brings me to the other side of my reflection ledger, all the good and cool things that our church community is engaged in.

Sitting in services on Sunday morning in the Sanctuary led by Lee, and others, reminds me of the religious experience and church community that drew us all together at our church. The hymns, the homily, the choir, the crowd, the joys and concerns all contribute to making Sunday services the foundation of our church.

The Religious Exploration Services that occur at the same time as the main service shows the vitality of our RE program. When I attend the RE service, I see many families and youth participating in the services being led by Karen with enthusiasm and love. For folks who haven't seen the RE services, I encourage you to attend some Sunday morning. It will fire you up about the youth among us and for the future of Unitarian Universalism.

Our church's Welcoming Congregation efforts, aimed at being truly welcoming to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered folks, will help us all to be welcoming, really welcoming, to all who enter our church.

Our Caring Committee works to make sure that all of our church community is taken care of when help is most needed. Their constant and quiet work to take care of us when we're in need is awe inspiring.

Our work on the values most important to our church community will make our church better and safer now and into the future. With our commitment to the work, it will allow us all to contribute to a religious community with a foundation of love and respect for every individual.

Let's get back to 71 Winthrop Street. I mentioned it earlier as a work project that must be done for the church. At the same time, it's a testament to the hard work and devotion of many people in our church to our collective future. I can't think about this project without seeing the great things that people bring to our church community.

I'm sure that I'm leaving out many activities that contribute to our church community and that folks within our church are enthusiastic about. I mention the issues above not to give an exhaustive recitation of everything that goes on at our church, but to show how folks are giving their wild and precious life to make our church and our community a better place and a place for spiritual reflection and growth.

These are the things and you are the people that remind me to look past the committees and work to the real underpinnings of our church and religious community. Together, these are the things that make me want to go to church on Sunday morning.

See you in church,
George

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Our Small Group Ministry is overseen by a Steering Committee. We recently had our second meeting this fall and among other things, chose a metaphor for what we do. We decided we are the gravitational pull which keeps the groups connected to the church as a whole. New members and general support go from the church to the groups. The groups provide small units for thoughtful discussion, caring support and service to the church and wider community. Neither would work well without the other.

When Small Group Ministry was new, the facilitators met once a month to hear and learn from one another. Over the years, attendance fell off and that meeting no longer worked to keep the groups in touch with one another and the church. The committee recognized the time for a change.

This year, each of the members of the Steering Committee plans to serve as a liaison to two different groups. We have agreed to make regular phone calls to the facilitators in these groups to see how they are doing and what they might need. As we talked about what questions we might ask, we realized we are very curious about what the groups are up to! I hope to share successes and interesting stories in future columns.

There will be change in the Open Group after the first of the year. Volunteers have come forward to make it possible to offer a group every Sunday morning. I am very excited about the possibilities this opens for welcoming newcomers to the church and newcomers to

Small Group Ministry. (Those familiar with ministry groups are also more than welcome.) Each Sunday at 9:30, upstairs in the Annex anyone who would like to participate is welcome to join a discussion using the outlines that many of our groups use at their regular meetings. We anticipate that the discussion will end in time to get to the second service. I hope to have the starting date firm by the next newsletter. Please consider stopping by some Sunday.

There will be an Open Group on Sunday, December 9, again, upstairs in the Annex at 9:30. We will talk about the meaning and challenge of the holiday season. All are welcome!

Kathy Kellison



HISTORY COMMITTEE

In the early 1960s, women from the All Souls congregation collected artifacts to use in a study of world religions with the children. These artifacts will be in the display case for the next few weeks. Items will be added gradually, so the display will change from week to week. The focus will be on the various ways people expressed the concept of gods and goddesses.

We invite you to display depictions of gods or goddesses that you might want to share. Please let Helen Zidowecki know if you have such items to include (hzmre@hzmre.com or 582-5308) and give the explanation of the item and your

name as displayer.

The History Committee meets on November 26, 10 AM-Noon.

Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee

At the October meeting of the Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee, we decided to maintain the same report format in updating this year's Five Year Plan. Since the UUA has initiated a national campaign to grow our faith, we are reestablishing a separate element in the plan for growth. Committee members will be updating the following elements of the plan for review at our December 18th meeting:

Jeff Janell– Provide a Facility for Our Projected Growth Needs

Deb Fahy– Search for New Minister

Stephanie Ralph– Spiritual Needs of the Church Community

Priscilla Jenkins– Service and Outreach

Steve Gove– Strengthen and Simplify the Operation of Church Business

Don Bell– Church Growth

The committee members would appreciate any comments you may have concerning updating these elements. Karen Fisk has agreed to update the Religious Exploration Programs for All Ages element.

Dan Sorensen has been appointed as the Board of Trustees' member to serve our committee.

FOCUS ON DARFUR by Priscilla Jenkins

(The first of a series on the individuals and organizations who exhibited at our Change the World Festival)

Student Kianna Burke came to show her video on the war in Darfur which is now generally considered genocide. Starting in 2003, war developed between Darfur's ethnic African Muslims and the Arab-dominated government. In her 10 minute video, and her op-ed piece on the world's lack of response, she gives us faces and a sense of the people who are experiencing minimally the loss of their land and homes.

Although President George Bush and the US and other nations around the world acknowledge the continuing murder of thousands of ethnic people in Darfur, we and the world as a whole have done almost nothing to stop it. This flies in the face of everything we promised each other after World War II and the Jewish Holocaust.

Lest this has dropped off your radar screen, here is an excerpt from an AP report on November 13:

"A prominent doctor who treats displaced people in Darfur says the Sudanese government is risking the deaths of hundreds of thousands by forcing people out of the camps where they receive humanitarian aid."

Kianna decided to make a video last year which won an award from the Council of Churches for its power in communicating to us the situation the people are facing

Kianna is a member of the organization Students' Anti-Genocide Coalition (STAND Coalition). It has 700 chapters at schools around the globe, and is the fastest-growing student anti-genocide coalition in the world today.

We heartily thank Kianna for raising our awareness on this tragic war. Please speak with Priscilla Jenkins if you want to learn more.



NOTICE

Announcing Hal's mid-week trade school and sweat-shop

Some of you may have some extra time mid-week, but feel that you don't have any skills that could help with the on-going renovation of 71 Winthrop Street. While this may cause you to gnash your teeth at the lack of opportunity to be part of The Team, don't let that stand in your way. There are any number of things you could be doing to help—even if it's just providing another pair of (sometimes vital!) hands to hold stuff, or clean the place up (the renovations create quite a mess). There's also the opportunity to learn a new skill or two.

Just send Hal an e-mail (halbooth@verizon.net) with the time(s) you're available, then sit back and watch your in-box for opportunities!

If you don't have e-mail, see Hal Booth, Andy Fisk, Wayne Ladner, or Maggie Ricker at church, or call Hal (623-8383)!

Among Our People

Congratulations to David and Sarah Findlay Carlson on the birth of their daughter, Story, born November 5, 2007, 6 lbs. 2 oz., 20 inches long. Story is the little sister to Luna and granddaughter to Doug and Linda Findlay.

Welcome to New Members . . .

**Keith Morgan-Davie
Rebecca Parker Brackett**

Who signed the Membership Book of UCC in July and November.

**World AIDS Day
Community Event at
UCC
Speakers, Music, and
Candlelight Ceremony
Saturday, December 1,
from 5-7 pm**

Leadership Training at Crawford Notch

by Diana Scully

UUs from Northern New England gathered at magnificent Crawford Notch, New Hampshire, from Friday evening, November 9, through mid-day Sunday, November 11, 2007. Twelve people from ten UU churches in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire participated in training on governance and spiritual leadership at the Appalachian Mountain Club's Highland Center. I was one of four people from Maine who participated.

Our guides for the weekend were Rev. Mary Higgins, District Executive of the NH-VT and ME District of Unitarian Universalist Societies; Rev. Sue Phillips, former minister of the Keene (NH) Unitarian Universalist Church; and Peggy Kannenstine, former Board President of the North Universalist Chapel Society of Woodstock (VT).

This workshop was part of a leadership development series sponsored by the NH-VT District. Its purpose was to encourage participants to: develop strategies for understanding committees and governance work in terms of ministry; learn ways to provide opportunities for lay leaders to reflect on their spiritual gifts and how they might best be cultivated; and explore how to make theological reflection an essential element in church meetings. There were two tracks—Governance and Spiritual Leadership.

The *Governance* track covered models of congregational governance (e.g. policy governance, representative democracy, boards of trustees); developing effective executive committees; and running efficient and reflective committee and board meetings. The *Spiritual Leadership* track explored how to identify, cultivate, train, and empower future leaders and how to support the spiritual needs of lay leaders through regular theological reflection.

One might think that as a member of our UUCC of Augusta Board, I would have signed up for the Governance track. However, I decided to participate in the Spiritual Leadership track, because I have been trying to figure out how I want to be involved in the life and work of our church. Our group of six learned and thought about many things:

- How to have positive, inclusive conversations about the work of our congregations through “*appreciative inquiry*”—This approach assumes that all organizations have significant life forces, that these forces are available in stories and imaginations, and that by bringing these resources into the organization's conversations and planning, major changes can be implemented. Appreciative inquiry is a way of seeing and creating on an ongoing basis.
- Seven *principles to lead in uncertain times*—1) Life is uncertain. 2) Life is cyclable. 3) Meaning is what motivates people. 4) Service brings us joy. 5) Courage comes from the heart. 6) We are inter-connected with all life. 7) We need peace of mind.
- Six *practices to find focus and peace*—1) Start the day peacefully. 2) Learn to be mindful; recognize that there are options. 3) Slow things down. 4) Create a personal measure of what you're doing. 5) Expect surprises; realize that expectations can kill excitement and control means having a narrow boundary around life. 6) Practice gratefulness.
- The role of *covenants* in helping congregations to have difficult conversations.

We also had time to reflect and write about the question “Where my spirit is leading me?” Before I knew it, I'd written five pages, so I guess there has been more on my mind and in my heart than I realized. I still haven't answered the question.

I hope others from our church will take advantage of future leadership workshops offered to members of the seventy-five churches in our three-state district. I found the weekend to be challenging and restorative at the same time. I'd be happy to share more information with anyone who is interested. Feel free to contact me at scully.artemis@gmail.com or by calling me at 622-2310.

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