



The Flaming Chalice

The newsletter of The Unitarian Universalist Community Church
69 Winthrop Street ~ P O Box 8 ~ Augusta, ME 04332-0008

December 2009

Worship Services Sundays at 9:15 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Dec. 6th *Living in the Shadows* Rev. Carie Johnsen

The Family Violence Project (FVP) will be the December recipient of Share the Plate. Deborah K. Shepherd, Executive Director of FVP and Harry Grimmitz, UUCC member and FVP Board President will participate in this service.

Dec. 13th *Illuminating the Soul* Rev. Carie Johnsen, Douglas
Barley And UUCC Choir

Douglas Barley and Rev. Carie Johnsen will co-create a melodic worship of words and song. Following the theme of light the choir will sing pieces from Bach and Mendelssohn, an African Spiritual and a French carol.

Dec. 20th 9:15 a.m. Holiday Pageant UUCC Religious Exploration
11:00 a.m. Solstice Celebration Annie Voorhees

The Rev. Carie Johnsen will join Karen Fisk, Director of Religious Exploration and Annie Voorhees, Chair of the Worship Committee as they create the traditional holiday services this congregation knows and loves so well.

Dec. 24th 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service Rev. Carie Johnsen

It will be an honor and joy to bring a Christmas Eve service of carols, readings and candles to this beloved congregation. Please join me to lift up as we lift up the gift of love and community.

Dec. 27th *A Hero's Journey through the Labyrinth* Susan Leary Seminarian, Bangor Theological Seminary

The first of a 3-part series combining two powerful and intriguing paradigms. In this service, I will address how these two images weave a path of mystery through the three traditions of the Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. All of life is a journey and we are all heroes. Join me as I begin to unravel the mysteries of these two images. Then, In subsequent services, we will address heroic and labyrinthine themes in Eastern and nature-based and animistic faiths.

Minister: Rev. Carie Johnsen

President: Debbie Mattson

Director of Religious Exploration: Karen Fisk

Administrator: Julie Pelletier

Choir Director: Douglas Barley

Small Group Ministry coordinator: Kathy Kellison

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Next newsletter deadline is December 21st. Please submit newsletter articles by
email to Julie Pelletier, UUCC Church Administrator at admin@augustauu.org



A Faith Journey...

Having just returned from the Unitarian Universalists Ministers Convocation in Ottawa, Canada, I feel obliged to engage in a reporting and recording of my time away. But in truth, it is for me, a means to naming the gifts received during this precious retreat with colleagues.

As you can imagine, not everyone would have appreciated being on a bus for twelve hours with 29 Unitarian Universalist ministers, but here in the circle of my friends, I found an abundance of wisdom, companionship and love to nurture my soul. And, at the end of four days filled with shared meals, generous worship, compelling conversations, stimulating workshops, tears and laughter, I found myself back in the fold of my district ministerial colleagues for the return twelve hours home. Such sweet company, indeed.

At the Saturday evening worship, the leaders shared the familiar story of desert travelers bringing gifts to the new born baby Jesus. As we entered the story, my mind quickly reacted with a pleading request to hold at bay my entry into the holiday season. My mind screamed "No, not yet, I'm not ready." I thought about leaving, but after much quiet, mental deliberation with my wiser self, I was convinced to stay and partake in what I imagined to be a premature holiday pageant.

As I return to my ministry in Augusta with all of you, I am quickly being carried away into the buzz of the holiday season. The Harvest Communion for Sunday needs to be planned. The Harvest Feast is this Friday. What will I bring? My Aunts would be horrified if they knew I was contemplating something purchased from the local deli. I need to make travel arrangements to be with my son on Thanksgiving. Julie needs my newsletter information including the information on holiday services. Thus, I am planning for December earlier than ever. Oh yeah, and some wise elves at UUCM are asking me to bake pies. The nerve!! My dear sweet Aunts must have called ahead.

Maybe my more seasoned colleagues thought it would be wise to prepare us for our return home by sharing with us a holiday message of hope and ministering to us for a moment. In relating the Christmas story to ministerial giving, they generously filled our spiritual wells so that we might return home with something to offer our congregations.

Wise and generous are my colleagues. I am blessed to have so many.

Equally, I am blessed with an amazing congregation. I am happy to return to our little corner of the world to minister to; and yes, to bake a 'pie'.

Ready or not, the holidays are upon us.

May we all be blessed with joy. May our homes be filled with health. May our travels be safe. And may all be well.

In faith, Carie





The Worship Conversation

So who among you is asking, “What is Carie doing with (or going to do with) the worship service?” This is, by my accounting, a reasonable and curious question; certainly, a logical question of which I will begin to answer. But first a note of caution: if you are looking for a definitive answer, keep looking. After all, don’t we Unitarian Universalists espouse an affinity for ongoing and evolving revelation? This theology applies also to how we gather in worship together.

As I began my ministry with all of you, I sought to better understand the common elements of worship and the familiar order of worship at UUC. Here is what I heard from members who shared their experiences: there is no longer a standard practice for worship. I learned there are common elements, favorite rituals, much loved music and musicians as well as an affinity for witnessing shared experiences, but there is no longer one set order of worship that must be followed from week to week.

Ah hah, I said, there is room for creativity and spirit to enter and guide the worship service. I find this is an exciting way to enter ministry.

To this end, as I create a worship service, I work to identify a theme or message and then I add liturgical elements; rituals, music and homilies around the message. I ask myself what practices will serve to create a transformative worship experience around the intended message. Sometimes the message lends itself to an enriched and altered worship space. The Harvest Communion is an example: we moved the pulpit, brought in some props and some chairs, listened to stories shared by our elders, broke bread together and poured the cider. The choral response filled the space and our hymns added movement. The typical period of welcome, announcements and embracing meditation would have seriously altered the flow of the worship, so we chose to leave those elements out.

My goal is to keep enough of the common elements and order in the service, most Sundays, so we have the familiar to ground us; giving us our roots. At the same time, I like to venture away from the comfortable, inviting us to stretch with open heart and open mind: giving us wings.

As I said earlier, this is an ongoing, evolving process. As always, let me know what works for you and what doesn’t. This is a conversation; and you are welcome to enter into the dialogue.

Carie

Sharing the Journey of Marriage Equality. Are you still grieving, angry or baffled about the marriage equality vote? The Rev. Carie Johnsen and the UUC Pastoral Care Associates will be hosting two open groups for the ongoing process of living with the emotions and finding peace with or next steps in the outcome of Maine’s vote. These two open sessions will follow a small group ministry format. These sessions are open to members of the Augusta area community. Come to one or both.

- Monday, November 30th 6:00 – 8:00 pm, Front Committee Room of the church building
- Friday, December 18th 6:00 – 8:00 pm, Robbin’s Room of the church building

From the Director of Religious Exploration

Let religion be a voice of renewing challenge to the best we have and may be; let it be a call to generous action. (Vincent B. Silliman, SLT 466)

Generous action abounds at the UUCC. At this time of thanksgiving, I find myself yet again grateful for being a part of this beloved, generous, activist community.

When I sat down among the No on 1 canvassers, I was very proud of the fact that my minister was sitting among the workers there, and so were many congregation members, and my very own daughter. And the person leading the training was also a fellow congregant. I loved seeing members of our congregation putting their faith into action; I loved witnessing their affirmation of equality for all.

Recently I traveled together with youth from our Peace Jammers, adult advisors, and Carie, on a fact-finding mission to the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministries in Boston and to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee to see what we could do to aid the social justice movement, and thereby help ourselves better understand the world. I was once again impressed by the work of Unitarian Universalists. At the Urban Ministries, donations of time and money from UU congregations sustain the outreach to urban children and youth, encouraging them to finish high school and attend college, supporting their education both socially and academically. And at the UUSC, we witnessed partnering for change that is both respectful of the people who are being helped, and mindful of the reciprocal help the helpers receive. Our youth were both impressed and filled with ideas. More on this as our work develops ...

And our beautiful One Hen collected enough quarters to fund not one but two entrepreneurs through the Kiva foundation, which provides micro-finance loans to people who hope to build a sustainable business in areas of poverty. Our children and youth engaged in a questioning session and council circle that resulted in supporting two businesses. The first person they chose to support because she was on her own and they wanted her to succeed. The second they supported because a bakery is a great place for people to gather in community—and besides, bakery stuff is yummy! They chose unanimously not to support a person making cigars, for fear of luring anyone into an unhealthy activity. I was impressed with the reasoning and the compassion expressed in the circle of our children.

And is there a day that goes by that I am not grateful for the continued good will, flexibility, and awesome energy of the religious exploration volunteers? No! I witness such wonderful best selves, such amazing connections with and among the children and youth, such inspiring commitment to community.

And, so, as I enter into the season of thanksgiving and celebrations of generosity, I am once again and always sustained by this community. Thank you all.

Yours in faith,

Karen

Upcoming for Religious Exploration

Cookie Walk: We will be holding our annual cookie walk on December 13th. The walk is facilitated by the Junior Youth. We ask all congregants to offer a dozen or so of their favorite holiday cookies for this event. Then all are invited to fill a cookie container with a variety of goodies. All donations for this event will go toward youth programming. (If you have quart yogurt containers to donate to this event, please bring them to Karen.)

Adopt a Family for Christmas: In cooperation with the Social Action Committee, we will be sponsoring a family from the Family Violence Project again this year. Gift needs will be made known December 6th at our Faith in Action Service.

Multigenerational Winter Holiday Service: Our special holiday service will be Dec. 20th, first-service, with a holiday reception following. All children interested in being in our Pageant, please contact Karen. (No rehearsals, just arrive a little early on the 20th.)

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY



Here is a guided meditation to help you manage holiday stress:

Close your eyes and relax. Imagine that you are seated in a comfortable chair surrounded by seven to nine friendly faces. One person is speaking and the others are paying close attention. As the speaker quiets, there is a restful pause and then another begins to respond in a thoughtful manner. You find yourself realizing that these people are very much like you and yet their words help you discover thoughts and beliefs you had not realized were yours. Time passes as you share insights and laughter with one another. As the scene draws to a close, you all acknowledge that you will be meeting again in the near future.

When you are ready, turn your attention back to the newsletter. Notice that you feel calmer, satisfied and eager for the next meeting of this group.

As many of you know, this experience is real for many members of our congregation. Small Group Ministry is very much like this. We are currently in the process of beginning NEW GROUPS. I hope to have two groups starting in January. Dates and times will be announced after I have spoken with everyone who has expressed an interest. I will do my best to accommodate your availability and schedule. There are possibilities for groups in the evening or during the day and for meeting either once or twice a month. I encourage anyone who is thinking about Small Group Ministry to let me know in the next couple of weeks so I can include you in the planning.

Of special note is that there is interest in a MEN'S GROUP. If this idea appeals to you, please get in touch so I can include you on the list. I am listed in the directory and contact information is on the staff bulleting board outside the sanctuary.

Small Group Ministry serves the members of the group, our church community and the wider world. We have a place for you.

Kathy Kellison
Small Group Ministry Coordinator



Rise Up and Call Her Name

There is a slight change in schedule for Rise Up. We moved the two Native American Sessions to December 6 and December 13. We will be making masks. These will be the last two sessions of the curriculum per se.

But the ending is the beginning. Please join the Goddess Continued discussion about where we go from here in the study of the goddesses, Sunday, January 3, 12:15pm. Mark your calendar now, and watch for the details in the next news-

HISTORY COMMITTEE

In the last month, the History Committee has had a display related to the Book of Remembrance. We are looking for information, obituaries, articles, and your personal reflections on people who have died in the Unitarian Universalist community in the last 20 years. You may give material to any member of the History Committee, or specifically to Heide Munro. (Other Committee members are: John and Ruth Butts, Helen McKendry, and Helen and Krista Zidowecki.)

The next History Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec.10th, 10am-Noon, in the Olsen Room of the Annex. Please join us.

If you still have a UUSC - Guest at your Table box in your home, please return it to the sanctuary during any Sunday service in December. Thank you!

Welcoming Congregation: Marriage Equality

Maggie Ricker, was a major organizer in Augusta area for the Marriage Equality campaign, offers the following summary of the work the Augusta UCC for the UUA district Welcoming Congregation e-list. This shows the ability of the congregation to participate over a period of time. **Thank you, Maggie, for taking this leadership.**

- From February on, we held weekly phone banks at the Church in our Fellowship Hall. Some people worked the phones; some people brought food.
- Also, back in those very early days of the campaign, we had two services specifically focused on the issues faced by the LGBT community. Keith Kron from UUA delivered one of the sermons.
- Many of us attended the public hearing in April wearing bright red and contributed to that 'oh my goodness' feeling one got when they walked into that huge civic center and saw a sea of red everywhere!
- In August, we had a very successful baked bean dinner. We went through 40 pounds of hotdogs and 7 huge crock pots of beans and more desserts than you can imagine. The dinner was followed by a fabulous talent show. (We seriously know how to eat, act, sing and play!)
- On Oct 25th we had one of the most rousing services I've ever attended – “Standing on the Side of Love!” It was standing room only, we had crafted some creative methods of presenting our views. We also served wedding cake at Fellowship hour. We were fortunate that the press was in attendance and we got a front page article that completely captured the essence of the service.
- The Sunday before the vote, we held a candle light Vigil outside the church. It was very surprisingly well attended by lay people from the church and from the community as well as 5 clergy. (The *Kennebec Journal* indicated that 75 people were in attendance). Although the write up didn't equal the job the first one did, it did still get the message out that there were people of faith who believed in civil marriage for gays and lesbians.
- The last week of the campaign, the No on One campaign put forth a mega door to door canvassing event, staged from a very large empty office building. Many, many of our members worked there; dropped off a ton of wonderful home made food, made endless phone calls and walked miles and miles of door to door canvassing. The Governor came in Tuesday morning to personally thank us and shook everyone's hands.
- On Wednesday night after the vote, we held a service of grieving and healing. We were heart broken and Rev. Carie Johnsen gave us the opportunity to grieve out loud together, to speak of our pain, anger and fear. We cried together; we raged together; we held up our love and respect for each other and for the work we had done together. When we left the church the overwhelming pain and anger had been lifted enough for us to make it through the next few days without 'losing it' – and with a renewed commitment.

The Welcoming Congregation Alliance is offering two new Small Group Session Plans:

*After A Vote

*Heterosexism

COMMUNITY NEWS

When your heart is not joyful. For some people in our community the holiday is filled with loss, pain, estrangement, regret, anger, uncertainty, hopelessness and loneliness. Let us gather in the spirit of loving community this holiday season. If you are looking for a place to share your story or sit in silence with those who understand, please join Rev. Carie Johnsen on Tuesday, Dec. 8th or Monday, Dec. 21st from 6:00 - 7:30 pm in the Robbins Room for care and companionship. Come to one or both.

~ Elder Lunch ~

Our next Elders Lunch is scheduled for Dec 13th, following the second service. We hope to see you there!

December 4th - Pot Luck Supper to Benefit the **Orphaned Children of Chennai** from 5:30-7:30 in Fellowship Hall. Ellen Bowman of Readfield will be volunteering at the orphanage in Chennai, India, through Global Volunteers. Donations will be gratefully accepted

Day of Mindfulness

Stopping, Calming, Resting, Healing

In the midst of the winds of autumn, we move with society through the hustle and bustle of preparations for the holidays on top of work and home and other responsibilities.

My yoga instructor once said "this is the perfect time to have a day of retreat... to "stop the world"... to slow down, stop our ordinary routines... to look and listen more carefully. Otherwise, we can become out of sorts and out of balance. We may experience various dissatisfactions with business as usual, if we never STOP, never turn inward, never get quiet."

A dozen members and children from the Peaceful Heart Sangha stopped together on Saturday, November 14. We quieted our minds and bodies, opening our minds and hearts for gentle teachings from Thich Nhat Hanh and each other.

If you would like to join us, we will have another "Day of Mindfulness" on Saturday, December 5. You do not need to have experienced meditation before to benefit. Please spread the word outside the walls of our church, if you have friends or co-workers who might like to join us.

9 - 10 children and adult practice

10 - 12 childcare available during adult practice

12 - 1:30 mindful pot luck lunch

1:30 - 3 adult practice.

You are also invited to join us any Monday evening from 6:30 - 8 PM.

Don't miss the initial **Hannah's Boutique gift sale** of choice items for church members on **December 6 during the coffee hour**. All proceeds go to our church. We continue to welcome and receive bountiful donations of gift items, new or like new, including Christmas treasures, pottery, knitted garments, regifts and books. A widely publicized and larger Hannah's Boutique sale for the public will take place **Saturday morning, December 12 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.** Set-up will be from 1-3 p.m. on Friday, December 11. If you want to sell your own items that Saturday and make a donation to the church, please contact Hannah Faulkner (293-9377 or hannahuu3@fairpoint.net) or Judith McCown Bierce (897-3683 or jsmbierce@myfairpoint.net) to reserve a table.

A special "thank you" for all your help this year and for the wonderful farewell gathering last week. Your kindness is greatly appreciated. ~ Faith Soria

Holiday Reception

The RE Committee will host a reception during fellowship hour between Holiday Services on Sunday, December 20th. Contributions of light finger-foods are welcome.

COOKIE WALK

Our annual fundraising cookie walk is an opportunity to buy a beautiful cookie container (thus funding the faith-in-action efforts of the religious exploration program) and fill it with cookies from an array of offerings from our congregation.

The cookie walk is also an opportunity to share your favorite holiday treats with your congregational family. The more cookies we have, the more fun it will be. So please plan to bring cookies to add to the offerings and help make the festivities vast and varied and beautiful!

The event will take place December 13th during Fellowship Time. The Junior Youth will host. Please bring your cookies to them in the fellowship hall before service. We hope to have enough cookies so that everyone who wants to can fill a container—at least one per family.

Thank you!!



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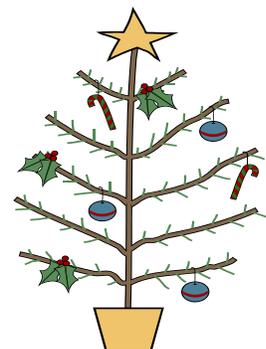
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Lorna Tarbox

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The pie sale on November 21st at Longfellow's Greenhouses was a real success!!! Thank you to everyone who baked a pie! Fifty-three pies were donated and sold for \$640. We gave one pie to the Longfellow's staff for their break room and a second to Scott Longfellow, the owner. We left with eight unsold pies. We took those to church on Sunday and sold six of them. We are freezing the remaining two and we will use them for the December Elder Luncheon. Everything went well and we are invited back to Longfellow's next year. Our thanks to Marty Thornton for suggesting this fundraiser and for all of her hard work in making it a success. We hope it will become an annual event.

Judy McCown and Bruce Bierce
Fundraising Chairs



Unitarian Universalist Community Church
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Our Administrative Office is open:
Mondays and Tuesdays 8 am-4 pm and Saturdays 8 am-12 pm
71 Winthrop Street, Augusta, ME 04330

Thank you to everyone that has graciously given of their time on Saturday afternoons to help with the order of service and to Stephanie Ralph and Stefanie Barley for helping with the newsletter. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Holiday Hours:

Dec 23rd - Administration office will be open 8am- 12pm
Dec 26th - Administration office will be closed for the holiday weekend

