



THE CHALICE NEWS

Unitarian Society of Menomonie
A Welcoming Unitarian Universalist Congregation

January 2022 Newsletter

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance to one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

CALENDAR

10 AM IN OUR MEETING ROOM
(ZOOM CONNECTIONS WILL BE PROVIDED)

January 2 - No Service. Happy New Year!

January 9 - Service with Diane Light, "Reconciling Justice"

In January, we celebrate the birthday of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. It is a time to consider the ongoing racial inequalities in our society. On this day we will honor Archbishop Desmond Tutu as we reflect on reconciliation as a tool for justice.

January 9 at 11:30 - Board Meeting

Held in our church office. All are welcome to attend

January 16 - On the Path with Dave Williams

Dave presents his spiritual journey and how he came to be a UU.

January 23 - Service with Dennis Peters, "Magic!"

Is there magic in this world? If so, what is it? Is it only the manipulations of performing prestidigitators? Or is there something mysterious that happens in the world, a "power" to transform reality at... the wave of a wand?! Let's explore this together.

January 30 - Music with Rick Zold, local musician

***If you have an idea for a service, please let a board member know.**



JULIANA SCHMIDT, PRESIDENT



Here we are again, poised for another year, still stuck in the Covid maelstrom. Once again a surge is on the horizon with Omicron. Anxiety about the future weighs heavily on my mind, as I imagine it does for you. Yet, trying to be optimistic, we can still regard 2021 as making some progress.

Vaccinations have made it possible for us to gather in person. And now there's a new pill to take at the onset of Covid. Science is wonderful! In May we returned to in-person services. We are still meeting in-person, albeit masked and distanced and (with the latest surge in Covid numbers) there's no socializing afterward. It's not recommended by public health or the UUA. I miss the opportunity to chat with other UU's. I'm hoping that coffee hour returns in 2022.

According to experts, we will know in January if Omicron is as nasty as Delta. It may be more easily transmissible, but will life-threatening symptoms hit fully vaccinated folks? Breakthrough infections seem to be the norm. The uncertainty – another Covid ramification. How does one deal with this? We keep going. One foot ahead of the other, day by day, waiting, hoping.

And that we continue to live out our faith and work for the betterment of others.

Diane Light recently presented a message focused on hope. She used the term “hope verb” to describe those who bring hope to others through their actions. She cited an example of providing a last Christmas for a woman who had to leave her home to care for her ailing son at his home. She had to leave her own home quickly and hadn't returned in a long time. She had hoped to celebrate Christmas in her own house. The “hope verbs” made it happen, they swooped down and created a surprise, a beautiful holiday for the woman at her own home. We want to create hope for ourselves and for others in this time of such uncertainty. That's what UU's are about.

Our project to help homeless kids is a way to improve the lives of others. Donating items and cash, stuffing bags/boxes, we are helping those who are without a stable place to call home. We UU's become “hope verbs.”

According to Wikipedia, “hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large.” Wikipedia also paraphrases it with “expect with confidence.” I'm hoping (with confidence) that this surge brings with it possible herd immunity -- the hope that this is the last big surge before Covid is tamed and put back in its metaphorical box. Or, that because we are vaccinated, that omicron's effects will be minimized.

In the meantime, we continue the good work to help homeless kids while we wait. That we keep going with this meaningful and important project.

We at USM may have to pivot to Zoom services again, depending on what happens in the next few weeks. At least we have the technology to make Zoom services happen, a positive aspect of this pandemic. Community is important to us and we will get it as we can. Zoom services have meant that snowbirds in Florida or those who travel or those who are not feeling up to coming to church, can participate. In addition, we can earmark donations for the homeless kids project during the Zoom hiatus.

Message from Juliana Schmidt, Continued

I have confidence that we can do this again if we have to. Because we are a small (but mighty) congregation, we can make the pivot to Zoom easily. Through email or phone call, notice of a change can be sent quickly. You should keep an eye out for such a notice.

And that is what I'm clinging to in these seemingly dark days ahead. Hope. Expecting with confidence. December is very much about the dark and coming into the light albeit very slowly. Let's work to keep hope alive for homeless kids. Keep doing the good work as we wait for the light of more freedom from this devastating disease. And after January, too, since the issue of homeless kids is not going away any time soon. I leave you with a poem by Emily Dickinson, one of my favorite poets, which likens hope to a bird.

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -

And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -

And on the strangest Sea -

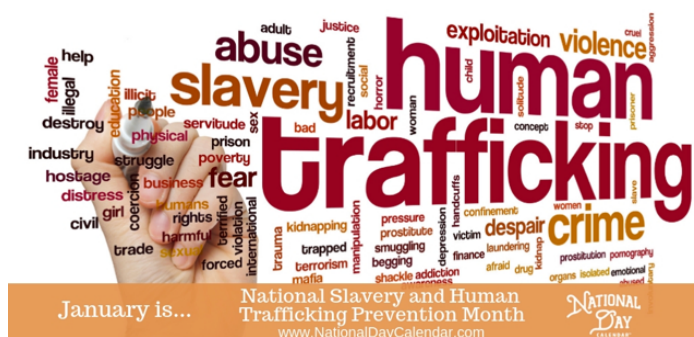
Yet - never - in Extremity,

It asked a crumb - of me.

Peace,

Juliana Schmidt

President of the USM Board



Needle Work Group

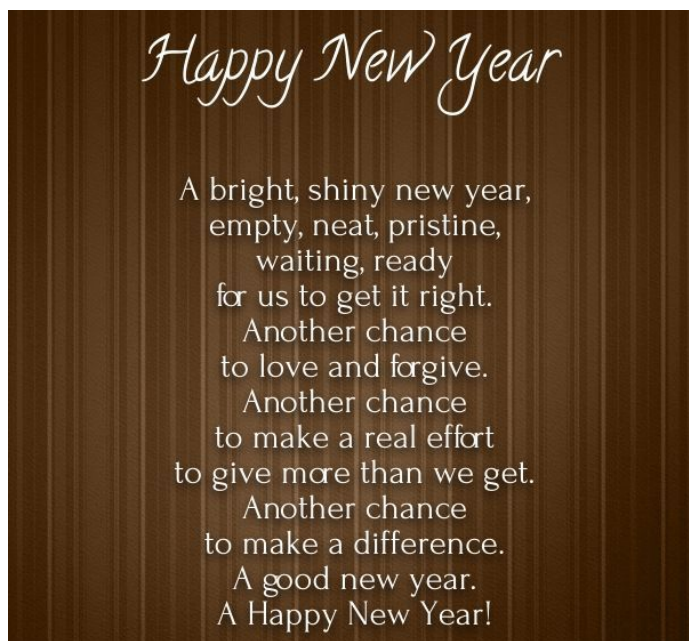
The needle work group meets each Wednesday at 1:00 pm in the UU office.

Homeless Kids Project

On December 22, UU's packed about 70 tote bags with nonperishable food for homeless kids to have an option for a meal during the school break. Mary Beth Lvoncek has done incredible work with local companies to donate foods and other items. She has also found places in the community for “pop up pantries” where homeless kids can find personal hygiene bags and the food tote bags. Thank you, Mary Beth, for all your hard work!

Have content for the next newsletter?

Please email events, news, poems, stories by the 25th of the month to be included in the next newsletter to kwiersgalla@gmail.com.



DIANE LIGHT, LAY MINISTER



A few days ago I was shoveling snow. The snow was heavy, and topped with an icy crust, so that I couldn't pick up a nice big shovelful. It was cold and the driveway seemed extra wide and long. I was feeling more than a bit of self-pity, especially as I heard the sounds of snow blowers in my neighborhood—a lovely sound, I thought. Kathleen and I shovel by choice—and usually I enjoy it, but on that day it was a slog.

As I shoveled snow, I thought of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that lovely man who worked for racial justice and human rights throughout his life. His work to end apartheid in South Africa was difficult, heartbreaking and often dangerous. I was reminded that the work of justice is often heavy work, with small shovelfuls of victories interspersed with many setbacks. Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and others succeeded in ending apartheid because they persisted, they kept going even when the work seemed insurmountable. Desmond Tutu in particular did this work with a heart full of love and joy.

The work of justice is ongoing—that utopian arc that bends toward justice always just out of reach. But like Desmond Tutu, we must not give up hope, but continue as we are able, to remove one shovelful of injustice at a time. All of a sudden we will look up and see that one more path is now clear. Let's keep that vision of clear paths of justice alive in our hearts in hope and love.

May it be so.

