



THE CHALICE NEWS

Unitarian Society of Menomonie

A Welcoming Unitarian Universalist Congregation

December 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)

Dec 4 – Christmas Gifts for The Bridge

Bring your Christmas gifts designated for The Bridge. We'll organize them, carol around the piano if you like, and then have a potluck brunch. (See info in this newsletter about our traditional holiday gift giving, this year to The Bridge.)

Dec 11 – Service with Dennis Peters, “Santa Claus”

Who is this overly large guy in a red suit? Where did he come from? Why do we let him into our houses? Is his existence a good or bad thing for our kids? (Spoiler alert: if you're contemplating bringing young kids to this service, you might be ruining this and all following Christmases for them!)

Dec 18 – Festival of Lights/Solstice Service

We will hear music and readings about Solstice, and share significant memories of Solstice's past.

Dec 25 – No Service - Happy Holidays!

Jan 1 – No Service - Happy Holidays!

****There is no USM board meeting during December. Next meeting is January 15, 2023.**



DAVE WILLIAMS, What's to be done?



Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin. and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith. Matthew 6:26-30. New King James Version

I'm sitting at my dining room table, laptop in front of me, gazing out the window at our bird feeder, where there's steady traffic of chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals and the occasional squirrel. Beside me is the latest issue of the UU World, on the cover of which is its focus: Facing The Climate Crisis.

The news this week is all about the international conference in Egypt on climate which has been generating headlines about the dire circumstances we humans have created for our world, and the pleas/demands for some sort of reparations by the world's poorer countries, countries which caused little of this crisis but stand to suffer most from it.

All of this conspires to pose the question: what should communities of faith think about all this, and perhaps more urgently, what should we do about it?

I couldn't help but remember the Biblical citation noted above from the religious community I grew up in. One reading of it could lead one to suggest it's all in God's hands, and we should stop worrying. God feeds those birds I'm watching out my window (so perhaps I could cut my bird seed budget?), and he created the beauty of nature, but made humans so much more important than those lilies or those birds.

Regardless of your creation beliefs, nature is pretty amazing. There is astounding beauty. There are systems that have worked for eons of time. But as Darwin showed, there's also survival of the fittest, which often isn't so lovely to contemplate.

We as humans are the wild card, the fly in the ointment, the wrench in the gear. We've managed in just the past few hundred years to put enough carbon dioxide and other gases into our atmosphere to now wreak havoc with the world's climate.

I don't believe a community of faith, which considers the role humans have played in bringing us to this precipice, can blithely leave it all to God. We're responsible. We need to own that, need to make amends where we can.

So what do you, the reader of this column, believe you/we can do to turn our crisis around, if that's even still possible? Please share your thoughts. Time is not on our side anymore.

[Family Gifts for the Holidays](#)

For a number of years, our Unitarian Society of Menomonie has adopted one or more local families in need providing holiday gifts, food, wrapping materials and other items to make the holidays happen for people who might otherwise not have one. For the past two years we supported the same family. Our contact for that family reports that the family is now doing well and does not need our help.

Our board has made the decision to work with the Bridge to Hope this year to help families in crisis maybe experience some normalcy with a nice Holiday celebration. The Bridge to Hope provides shelter, support, information and referrals to those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other related traumas.

But it's a little more difficult to single out a family as we have done in the past. Families transition into and through the Bridge to Hope. Rather than assign a specific family for us to shop for, the Bridge to Hope asks that we provide our support in a more general way, with gifts for various ages of children, and thoughtful options for their parent(s). Then families who find themselves at the Bridge to Hope during the holidays can "shop" for their children.

Here are some suggestions from the Bridge to Hope staff based on ages of kids (Please note that new items are preferred): (See next column)

[UUA seeking member input on Article 2 of UUA governing documents](#)

The Unitarian Universalist Association has been reviewing its governing documents and has published a draft for a new [Article 2: Purposes and Covenant](#). We as a member congregation have the opportunity to review this draft and make comment before it goes before UUA membership at the 2023 General Assembly in the summer of 2023. It can also be a heartening refresher of the basis of our denomination, whether you have comments or not. [Provide your feedback here](#).

[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.

Infant to age 2: Blocks, kids books, toys that make noise, learning toys

Ages 2 to 4: Tunnels, or things to climb, books, toy musical instruments, learning toys

Ages 5 to 6: Coloring books, cars, dolls, Barbies

Ages 7 to 10: Craft or other fun kits to build things, games

Ages 11 to 13: Slime making kits, fidgets (pop its, squishy toys)

Ages 13+: Gift cards, nail art, or other fun kits

For all in the family: Games to play as a family

If considering age-appropriate clothing for kids, gift cards are best so parents can choose based on sizes and interests.

Food items like popcorn tins, hot chocolate, holiday plates and napkins so families can celebrate are great. Food gift cards are also appreciated. Please also consider giving wrapping paper, tape, ribbons and to/from tags.

And gift cards so parents can buy something nice for themselves for the holidays are a great option too.

We are planning to use Sunday, December 4 as the date to bring together the gifts our fellowship is donating, and enjoy a potluck together. Please bring your gift(s) to that Sunday morning unwrapped, but identified with the appropriate age group. I'll then deliver the gifts and other items to the Bridge to Hope the following morning.

Thanks for supporting families in crisis this way, and thanks for being adaptive to our new way of "adopting" people in need for the Holidays.

[January Book discussion: "Braiding Sweetgrass"](#)

Our next book discussion starts January 15 led by Sherry Hagen and Juliana Schmidt. The book is *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. To quote the website, Goodreads, "As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these lenses of knowledge together to show that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world."

