



Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg, FL

ALARUMS AND DIVERSIONS

"Happy New Year!"

Rev. Kathleen Korb

There is an interesting phenomenon that I have noticed among Unitarian Universalist youth, and that is that they seem to be more willing in general to claim atheism as their theological stance than their elders who are more likely to say that they are agnostics. Admittedly, I haven't known a huge number of youth recently, but that has held true for most of them that I have met. I suspect that it may be the tendency of young people not to have had a whole lot of opportunity to discover themselves to be mistaken. I'm not saying that they are mistaken in this regard — atheism is a perfectly reasonable theological stance — merely that those who have lived longer are less likely to be absolutely sure about anything. We've had too many opportunities to be wrong.

For example, I used to be very dogmatic about the complete pointlessness of the whole New Year thing. It's not that I didn't enjoy parties with drinking and kissing and singing "Auld Lang Syne", but I couldn't see any reason for making a big deal out of switching from last year's National Wildlife Federation calendar to this year's Alzheimer's Association one. January 1st always seemed about the same as December 31st as far as any observable phenomena were concerned. I suppose a sufficiently precise timepiece could measure the tiny difference in length of daylight, but it certainly was never enough for me to notice.

And what was the point, I would ask, of saving up resolutions for improvement for that date? If you think you need to change something, why wait for the New Year? If you don't, then it's even sillier to try to find something to change. Ah, youth! How lovely to be so sure of the possibilities for perfection.

"New Year", p.3

UUSP MISSION

"Our mission is to be an inclusive, evolving religious community that inspires spiritual and intellectual growth to make our world a better place."

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SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD: A REPORT FROM THE JANUARY MEETING

Tamara Lush

Because Board president Greg Burton was absent, Marcia chaired the meeting.

Katy said that the church will be the host of the annual Cluster meeting on Sat. Feb. 8, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Katy said that there will be workshops at the Cluster meeting, including one with Connie Goodbread. Church members are encouraged to attend And to welcome other UUs from around the state.

The Board discussed Right Relations training. Katy explained that initially, it was planned that the Board members would be trained to facilitate small meetings in people's homes. Katy and the Board agreed to make training for the Board members a priority in the coming months so those small meetings can eventually take place.

Much of the meeting's discussion was centered on the church's financial situation and the proposed cuts to the next six months of the church budget. Part of the church's budget crisis is the fact that revenue is down, and it was agreed that an additional request from endowment would be necessary. The cuts will come from program expenses; staff salaries are not being cut. The Board set dates for several upcoming meetings where the budget, revenue generation and fundraising will be addressed. In mid-March, the annual budget will be prepared, and in mid-April, the annual meeting will be held.

The Board talked about rumors that some people in church are in favor of selling the building due to budget constraints. The Board members stressed that there have been no decisions or even serious discussions about this idea.

Michael asked a question about Careena, the church's DRE. He wanted to know how long she will be with the church. Jane said that Careena is taking some time off and will decide whether she wants to continue when she returns. Marcia said that Careena "is feeling she should get a search committee underway" for her replacement.

Other business: The Board agreed that it should research gift cards that will give cash benefits to the church.

PLEASE NOTE: Splinters is written by Tamara Lush. Splinters is meant to be about what happened at a Board meeting. It is not official and it is not minutes.



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UUSP VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to be the beacon
for freedom of thought,
belief, and conscience
in St Petersburg.

NEW YEAR

Continued from Page 1

Age and experience have not only made me more tolerant, but more grateful for specific times and places to be reminded that I can still work on my imperfections. It is so easy just to live reactively. Lives get so busy and things happen that we need to deal with today, and we can seldom take the time to think about whether we're dealing with them helpfully or even intelligently. It's so much easier just to go on doing the same things in the same way. So I am grateful to be reminded that it's a new year and a new day with no mistakes in it yet, in which I'm expected to think about how to make things better than they have been in the past. I no longer feel that there are any guarantees that I'll get better or that times will get better, or even that what I think is better really is, but it keeps me from just getting stuck in the past.

So even if we really know better — we really do know that the calendar is merely a human invention — let's mark this time with our resolutions to be more kind, more generous, more hopeful, and to work for a better life for ourselves and for the world. We can also resolve to lose weight, quit smoking and remember to pay our bills on time if we want to. It's a new year, after all.

Katy

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greg Burton

The Church has been able for many years to live beyond its financial means. The endowment and gifts have provided the most cited means. But another resource has become evident: our ability to allow the buildings to slowly deteriorate without having to invest the sums needed for their proper maintenance.

Many talk about the need to paint the original historic structures. But actually, Conway is in even worse condition. If you were a visitor, what would the condition of the entire property say to you about the Church and the congregation's ability to maintain the buildings? About its commitment to remain a viable downtown presence?

Our greatest challenge is how to reach a sustainable budget and then begin to grow. To do that, we must be willing to admit we cannot afford to maintain the current buildings. We were unable to do so when we received a wonderful gift that was used to underwrite our last called minister, and we certainly can't now.

But that does not mean we need to abandon what for many is a beloved spiritual home. I thank Wini Stowe for having the courage to openly suggest solutions that, to many, must seem radical. I don't think we need to take a wrecking ball to Conway just yet. But her comments and those of others do raise the important question of just how much space we really need. We have two revised HVAC bids; both are in the \$325,000-350,000 range. If we only air-condition the historic building for now, we reduce the cost by another \$100,000.

When I work with buyers looking to find a new home, I advise them to make a list of what they must have and a list of what they would like to have. To reach a sustainable budget, the congregation must distinguish between what it must have and what it would like to have. Once we have put ourselves on a solid financial track, we can begin to grow; as we grow, we can start adding items from our "wish to have" list to the annual budget. Less can actually be more.

Check It Out!

MONDAYS: Shaolin Kung-Fu, 7pm
N.A., 7pm

TUESDAYS: Handbells, 6pm

WEDNESDAYS: Mindfulness Meditation, 7pm

THURSDAYS: Shaolin Chi Kung, 6pm

FRIDAYS: Picnic on the Playground, 6:45pm

SUNDAYS: Choir Rehearsal, 9am

Discussion Group, 10am

Service, 11am

STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

Karen Coale

Immigration Update

In 2013, activists in the immigration reform movement have been hard at work. Hardly a day passes that a group has not held an action, visited members of Congress, sent letters, protested and prayed to bring attention to the dire need to pass immigration reform. Though the Republican leadership got in the way of a victory this year, 2013 has still been an incredible year for immigration reform movement; a solid basis on which to begin 2014.

Clothing for Farmworker Children – We Need Your Help

Farmworker families began returning to the Plant City area in mid-November. Since then, we have made two trips to the farms where these families work and live. Our focus is on the children – bringing gently used and new clothing as well as books and school supplies. **We appreciate your donations – but please, no adult clothing as our partner organization, the National Farm Work Ministry, handles that.**

Unfortunately, several bags of adult clothing and products, such as open bags of adult diapers, walkers, etc. continue to be dropped off at the Church. Since we have no use for them, we throw them out. However, our disposal containers in the alley are already overflowing. **We really need your help in limiting your donations to just children's clothing and books – no toys, strollers, etc.** We do not have the space to store, transport or dispose of them.

Please place your donations in Conway Hall East by the shelves. We need some help sorting the clothing as well as trekking to Plant City for our monthly winter visits. To help out, contact Karen at kcoale@tampabay.rr.com

Food for Immigrant Families

In January and February, food will be collected and given to local immigrant families. Just place your non-perishable food in the wagons at each Church sanctuary entrance.

Migrant Immigrant Committee Planning Meetings

We meet most months on the 4th Tuesday from 5:30pm to 6:50pm in the Church Office. Next meeting will be January 22nd. All are welcome – use the Arlington Avenue entrance.



Farmworker Camp Visit

Plant City
Saturday, 1/18, all day

Music Concert

Featuring Nick Boutwell,
Local Accordionist
Gilmour Hall
Sunday, 1/26, 1pm

West Central Cluster Meeting & Workshop

UUSP
Saturday, 2/8, 10am-5pm

Canvas

Church-wide
Saturday, 3/1 – Fellowship Dinner
Sunday, 3/2 – Celebration Sunday

For more, check the UUSP
calendar, order of service,
Facebook, and Twitter!

GET INVOLVED!

There are LOTS of ways that you can pitch in, help out, and have FUN!
Talk to the chair of the committee that interests you, or just crash their next meeting!

Here are the major committees and ministries:

Building & Grounds | Program Council | Care Ministry | Scope
Social Justice (*Homeless Sub-ministry / Migrant Sub-ministry*) | Children's Religious Education
UU Service Committee | Growth Committee | Worship Committee
Congregational Life / Membership | Hospitality | Strategic Planning

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED, WELCOMED, AND APPRECIATED!

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD: A REPORT FROM THE DECEMBER MEETING

Tamara Lush

Board members present: President Greg Burton, Vice President Marcia Piacentino, Jane Fanning, Lori Price, Ian O'Hara, Reggie Craig, Rev. Korb (ex-officio), D.R.E. Careena Cornette-MacCue (ex-officio).

Also present: Board Clerk Keevy McAlavy, Office Manager Nick Wheeler, Pierre Williams, Jessica Peters, Jim Peters, Milagros Padilla, Dale Potter, Michael Pohl and Splinters reporter Tamara Lush..

Notes:

Katy said she wanted to address the fact that she wasn't at the previous Sunday's congregational meeting. "I know that the reasons for asking the staff not to be there were the best of intentions," she said, "but I think that it is encouraging the type of thing that we should stop encouraging." She said that people discussing other people is "the kind of thing we've done way too much of in this congregation."

TREASURER'S REPORT: Greg said that there have been a substantial number of pledges this month: through Dec. 10, the pledges totaled \$15,811.

Keevy had a question about bank signatories. Greg and the board agreed that Marcia, Dani and Greg should be the signatories on the account.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS REPORT: Reggie said that contractors are downsizing the scope of the AC system to make the proposal more affordable.

Jane said that a group of people would like to beautify the women's bathroom and bridal bathroom.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Marcia said the committee named six strategic goal areas. They will be involving the congregation after the beginning of the new year.

NEW BUSINESS: Greg said the board has to start thinking of the annual canvas event.

A few people from the audience spoke. Milagros said that, as a new member, she sensed the tension immediately. She suggested the board, and the congregation, work on communication issues. Pierre said that it's OK to have some conflict, but people need to remember the Covenant. Michael said he has a lot to cherish from past years but there are a lot of things he can't get past. He, too, said that people must understand Covenant.

Everyone agreed that if congregation members hear others speak out of Covenant, they should be corrected, then forgive.

INTERGENERATIONAL DAY

We are planning our Fourth Annual Intergenerational Day, again in March. It's a day of fun and creativity which brings us together in an atmosphere of unconditional love and non-judgmental play.

When you were a kid, what was your favorite way to spend time? What kinds of activities put you in touch with your "muse?" If you have a favorite way to exercise your imagination, tell Anne, so that all ideas may be included for a truly satisfying day of recreation, food, and getting to know each other in a whole new context.

Sound like fun? We are looking for participants, organizers, and helpers of all kinds. Give Anne a call.

Anne Justiss
(727) 824-6011 or (727) 502-7557 (No texts, please)

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*The motto should not be,
"forgive one another;"
rather, "understand one another."*

-Emma Goldman

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