

The Pulse

December 2019

SUNDAY SERVICES, 10:00 AM

December 1 – Religious Education Classes – *Chalica*

Our Religious Education Classes will be teaching us about the Unitarian Universalist celebration of Chalica.

December 8 – Rev. Flo Gelo – *Solstice, Hanukkah and Christmas*

Winter holidays celebrate light – lights that glow in the dark time of year but also lights that dawn within us. This talk is about the importance of lights during the holidays of the season and the messages they contain for our spiritual lives.

December 15 – Rev. Dr. Edward Frost – *Speaking of Scrooge*

“Oh, a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, was Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old miser!”. So wrote Charles Dickens in his nevertheless much loved short and briefly written Christmas story, “A Christmas Carol”. Such an unpleasant character to celebrate in a season, so it’s said, of comfort and joy. Yet its creator, the ever-hopeful Unitarian author, prefaced his story with the purpose...”in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly.” In this ‘Spirit’ may this sermon of Ebenezer Scrooge so haunt our house pleasantly.

December 22 – Gail Costanza – *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*

This traditional Christmastime service will include carols, readings, candle lighting, and of course, singing *Silent Night*.

December 29 – John DeMasi - *TBD*

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1 – Chalice, decorating the church, children’s trip to see the Train Show at City Hall followed by hot chocolate.

December 12 – Humanist Forum 7 PM

December 15 – Mitten Tree (during service) & Cookie Exchange (after service)

December 16 – Spirit Circle 7 PM

December 19 - Motel Meals 3:30 PM

December 20 – Solstice Eve 7 PM

2019 DDUUC COOKIE EXCHANGE

Love cookies? Need some cookies for Santa’s plate? The 2019 Cookie Exchange will meet your needs. Cookies can be made in your kitchen, someone else’s kitchen, store packaged or bakery. Last year, each person participating received 5 dozen cookies. By Sunday, December 1st, let Barbara Kotch know if you are participating. Contact her by phone/text 609 680 0646, or email barbaralalcott@hotmail.com. Cookie bags, instructions and tags will be distributed on Sunday, Dec 8th. The Cookie exchange will be held on Sunday, Dec 15th during our coffee hour.

(Note: All events at DDUUC, 39 Park St., Bordentown, unless otherwise noted.)

List of DDUUC Officers 2018-2019

President – Christina Sturgis
Vice President – Mary Watterson
Secretary – Mary Ann Keiffer
Treasurer – Jen Chaiken
Religious Education – Trish Concannon
Social Action – Kara DeRose
Sunday Service – Joan Spengler

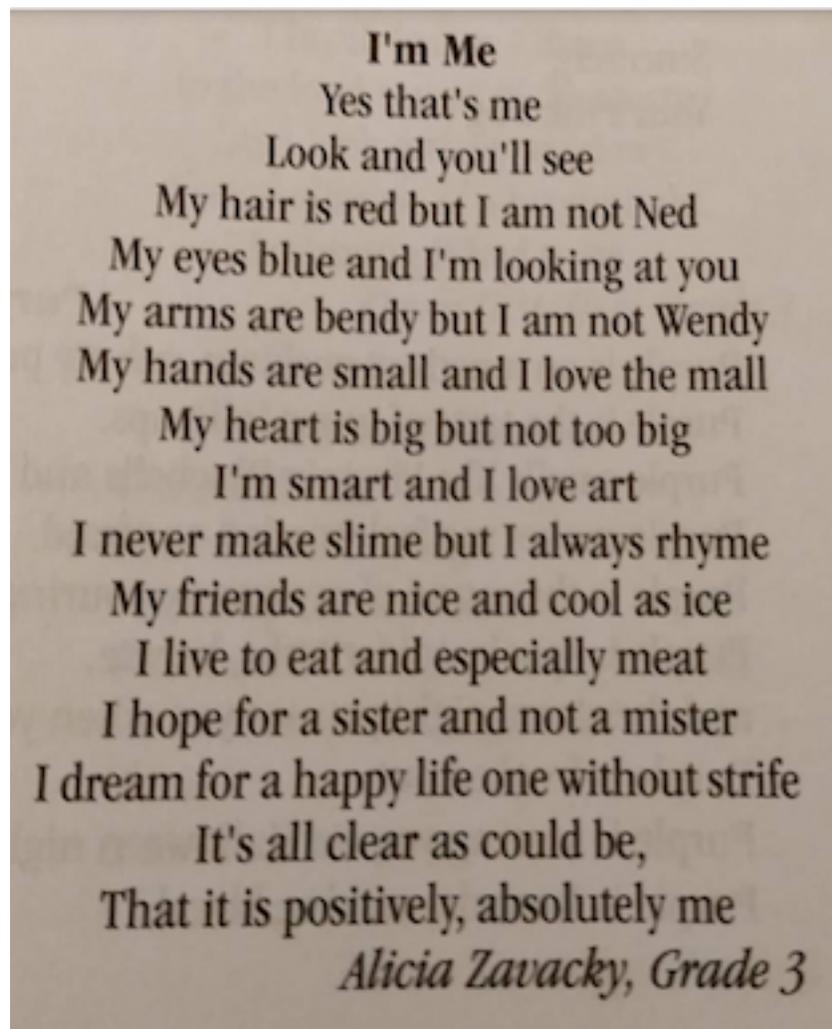
The Pulse is the newsletter of Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community.

It is published monthly, September through June. Articles are solicited from members and friends. The Pulse is edited by Pete Costanza.

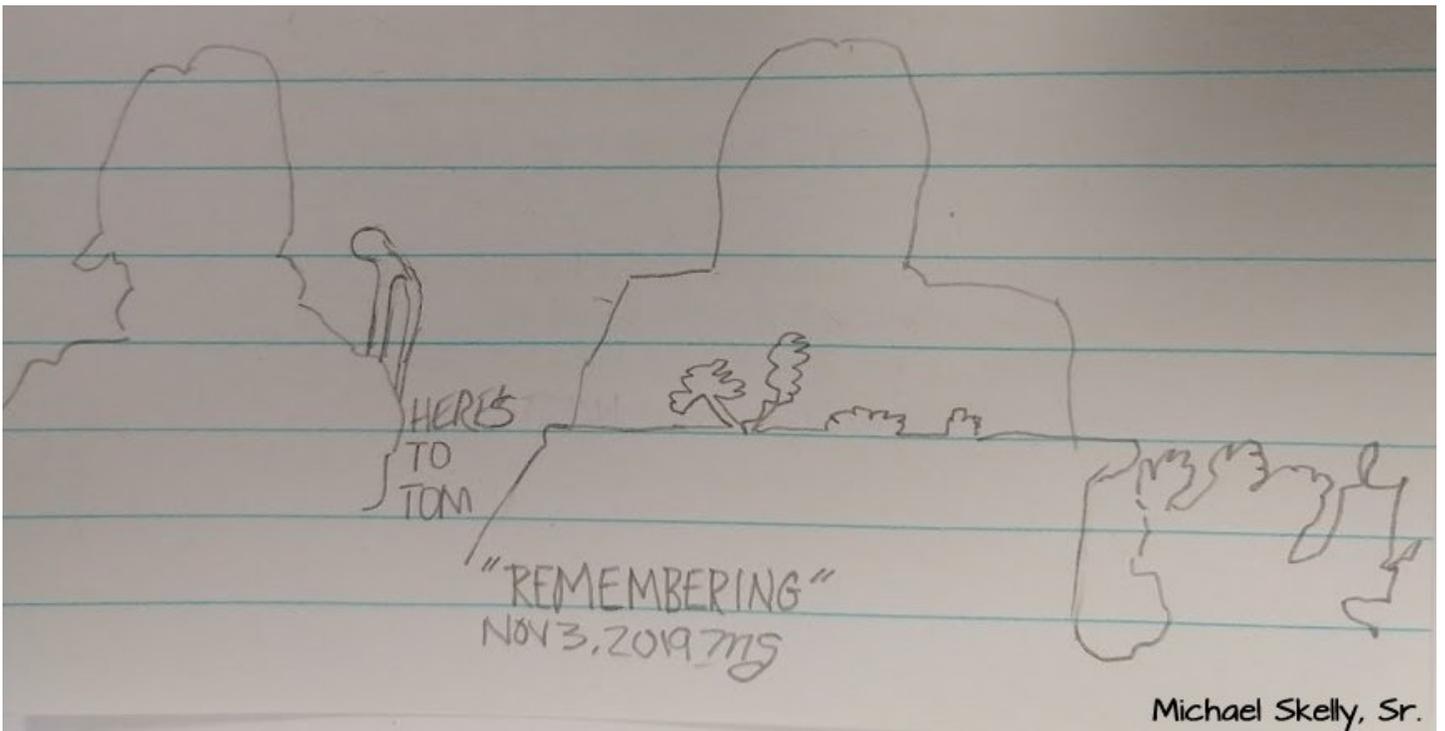
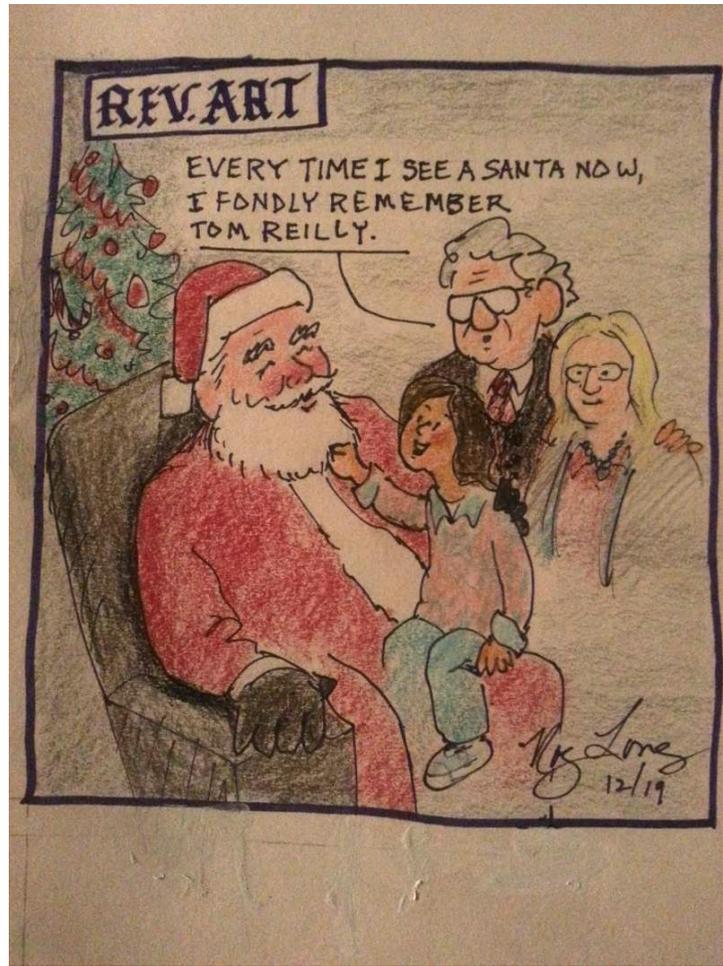
DDUUC has services every Sunday at 10:00 AM from the Sunday after Labor Day through the end of June. Informal Sunday services are held on selected Sundays during July and August. Sunday services are provided by guest ministers, outside speakers, or members and friends of the congregation. DDUUC has an ongoing religious education program for children. We have many activities in which to participate, and are also involved with the Greater Bordentown area through our sponsorship of an Interfaith Dialogue and many social action tasks.

DDUUC NEWS BRIEFS

- Alicia Zavacky had a poem published in her school poetry publication, which she read during one of the chalice lightings. Congratulations, Alicia! (see below)
- Some of the RE kids have been learning about world religions. A good friend of Trish Concannon and Kara DeRose, who teaches at a synagogue, came and talked to them about Judaism.
- Cathy Vandegrift and the Hustis family offered to buy fried chicken for motel meals for Thanksgiving and December. Their generosity is greatly appreciated!



REMEMBERING TOM REILLY



The Humor of Jesus Christ

Most people believe that Jesus was always serious and had no sense of humor. However, as Alan Watts points out in one of his lectures, there are a number of passages after the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus basically pulls everyone's leg, so to speak, using deadpan satire to make a point.

First, Jesus has always said that he is against following the strict letter of the law of Moses like the Pharisees, instead of the spirit of the law. Yet in *Matthew: 5* he tells the crowd that they must observe every minute detail of the law in order to go to heaven. A seeming contradiction, or is there actually a twinkle in his eye?

Second, he speaks of murder and says that anyone that does shall be brought to trial. No joke there. But then he says that if anyone is angry and violent with his brother, he shall go to trial. And if he calls his brother a useless dummy (Raca), he shall be brought before the Council, an even higher court. Finally, if he calls his brother a fool, he is in danger of the fire of hell. Strangely, as the offense becomes less severe, the punishment becomes more severe. Once again, is there a sly smile on his face as he says these things?

Finally, he speaks of adultery, and says that anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her has already committed adultery in his heart. This man should pluck his eye out rather than be denied heaven. Can he be serious? Certainly this requirement is virtually impossible if our biology requires sexual attraction to procreate. Committing unjust action is not the same as a brief thought. And Jesus has already forgiven the woman caught in adultery. Once again Jesus is joking with the crowd, who are really in the know.

There is no reason to believe that Jesus didn't have a sense of humor. Charismatic leaders general do or else they would not win people over. Either that or Jesus was not making sense in these passages. These are not gaffes; they are deliberate satirical attacks once again on Pharisee hypocrisy.

Jesus Makes a Pun - Another form of humor is a pun. Jesus makes a pun in this quote (Matthew 16:18): "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." in Greek, the word for *Peter* and for *rock* are the same.

So the holidays are almost here. I'm not ready! I haven't spent enough money to prove to everyone that I love them, or that I love myself! I haven't shopped until I dropped. Do you sense a touch of sarcasm here?

The vocal right wing is claiming that there is a 'War on Christmas'. If there is, I haven't seen it. I have seen reindeer, candy canes, snowmen all lit up with strobe lights and glitter. I wonder what these have to do with the holiday.

I'm a touch angry right now. I saw an ad on TV that proclaimed that the holidays are here and you should go out and buy a new car for yourself! If people are angry about a war on Christmas, I want to ask them, how does a new car relate?



This is supposed to be a season of joy, the light is returning. But with all the commercial lights out, who can tell it ever went away?

Enough ranting. I have seen such beautiful things in the forest. I have watched the squirrels frantically gathering nuts for the winter ahead, I have seen lots of deer foraging in the woods, I have seen geese flying overhead letting the whole world know they are there by their honking. I have seen the sun rise through the trees. And it is all wonderful. So I will forget about annoying ads for self-gratification and being told that if I really love someone I will but them this or that other thing. I will focus on the present, not the presents.

I wish everyone a calm and bright holiday, whether you celebrate Chanukah, Yule, or Christmas.

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood

Monday morning the 25th of November was a beautiful day for golf. But my Senior Golf League is over, so, what to do? Next thing I know I'm in the barbershop exchanging pleasantries. Then a customer came in and exclaimed what a nice day it was. And I blurted out, "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood." And that got me to thinking about the new movie out starring Tom Hanks as Fred Rogers that has had great reviews. And I got to thinking about Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood and what makes every day in his neighborhood a beautiful day—beautiful neighbors, kind, generous, decent, loving, compassionate and caring people. And I thought, how timely! Insofar as MAGA, maybe America should take its cue from Fred Rogers and his neighborhood. Rogers taught young children about "civility, tolerance, sharing, and self-worth..." "He also tackled difficult topics such as the death of a family pet, sibling rivalry, the addition of a newborn into a family, moving and enrolling in a new school, and divorce."*

I didn't see the movie, but one reviewer said the plot contrasts Mr. Rogers with a skeptic like myself. A reporter for the New Yorker is assigned to interview Fred Rogers. He, naturally, thinks Fred Rogers is too good to be true. Turns out, he is pretty much too good to be true. He grew up in a wealthy household, was a only son, but had an adopted sister. As a child he was overweight, shy and introverted, and therefore bullied. He was also lonely and took to puppetry to entertain himself. Also, he took up the piano at age 5. By high school, though, he was coming into his own. In college he was a music major who specialized in composing. This is where he met his musician wife. They had two children and were married for 50 years, when he died of stomach cancer in 2003.

After some work in children's TV in Canada and the US, he became an ordained Presbyterian minister, but was non-practicing. He became interested in all religions. But mainly he was interested in making television a force for good. TV was his pulpit.

If you don't believe me, see the movie. Or the 2018 documentary "Mr. Rogers' neighborhood." Or go to Wikipedia, like I did. He was one of the truly good guys.

* Wikipedia

What You're Saying When You Say "I Don't Need a Mic"

By Erika A. Hewitt, UU Minister

"At a recent ministers' meeting I attended, the culture was such that when someone starting to speak didn't have a mic, multiple people would say, 'Please use the mic.' I can't tell you how much that meant to me, not to be the one complaining about not being able to hear. That was real inclusion."

—Rev. Barbara Meyers

One of ableism's most sinister characteristics is the portrayal, both conscious and unconscious, of able bodies as the preferred norm. In the words of Rev. Suzanne Fast, this "reinforces societal attitudes that people with disabilities are worth less" than those with able bodies.

Regrettably, this devaluing of people with disabilities occurs with dismaying frequency in our Unitarian Universalist congregations and organizations. One of its most prevalent forms is the phrase, "I don't need a microphone."

One religious leader—a UU ministerial candidate who asked not to be named, but who has a hearing disability—explains, "When a mic is being used at a meeting and someone looks at it and says, 'Do we really need this?' I feel outright anger. That person just asked if people like me really exist and demanded that we defend ourselves."

Failing to use a microphone, in other words, is a form of exclusion. "When I'm excluded," our anonymous leader continues, "I feel weary, frustrated, and invisible. It's as though I'm on the other side of a plate glass window from the room where almost everyone else is, and they don't even notice that I'm stuck outside of their conversation."

To all of those who have trouble hearing, these are the messages you're sending when you say, "I don't need a microphone" (or just don't bother using one):

- "I can hear fine, and everyone is just like me."
- "I'm assuming that everyone can hear me, so it's your problem if you can't."
- "My belief that 'I can project' matters more to me than your ability to hear."
- "My discomfort in hearing my own amplified voice is more important than your need to be included."
- "If you really want me to use a microphone, you'll have to assert yourself to request and/or justify that need (which will likely be uncomfortable)."
- "I am willing to exclude people."

These messages that we send are often at odds with our *intentions* to be inclusive. For those who wish to practice more effective accessibility for those with hearing disabilities, here are some guiding principles and suggestions for congregational leaders:

- Understand that hearing aids and other hearing-assistance devices do not correct hearing as completely as glasses correct vision. Hearing aids are able to amplify or compress sound according to what's quiet, painful, or potentially damaging to the

auditory nerve, but they don't perform perfectly. For instance, a storyteller who highly varies their pitch and volume is difficult to hear: when they get quiet, hearing aids amplify accordingly, and then if they get loud, it hurts and overloads the hearing aids. Drama is great, but some predictability in range and loudness helps a lot.

- If someone needs you to repeat something, and especially if they have to ask twice, change your wording.
- Repeat critical information in different ways. For example, "Our hymn is number three hundred fifty-two. Three five two is the number of our hymn."
- Minimize the layering of words and music at the same time (e.g., a sermon delivered with piano music as a backdrop). "Hearing aids switch into music mode," says one hard of hearing person, "and you might as well be talking with a pillow over your face."
- The Time for All Ages becomes more accessible when the minister or storyteller repeats into the mic any comments, questions, or answers the children offer. Similarly, repeat un-amplified questions or comments from the floor of a meeting.
- People speaking while facing another direction are harder to hear, and impossible to lip read. This makes sharing of Joys and Sorrows challenging. One solution is for a person with normative hearing to take notes and share them with the caring circle and minister(s) after each service.
- When possible, have someone carry a second microphone to the people speaking; cultivate patience to wait for the microphone.
- Encourage others to speak up and do something when the needs of a person with a disability have not been considered or have been unintentionally limited. When someone says "I don't need a microphone," please consider being a good ally and taking action. It can mean so much to those who would otherwise be excluded, it can educate someone who needs to be educated, and it can mean a lot to you, too.
- If you own your building, [hearing loops](#) [1] can be profoundly helpful to those with hearing disabilities.

We know that a third of adults between 65 and 74 years old have hearing loss, and half of those over 75 years of age do. We also know that hearing loss is a commonly reported disability among Unitarian Universalists. Responding considerately and compassionately to hearing loss and helping others learn to do so is a good investment—in your own quality of life or that of someone you love.

Thanks to Rev. Suzanne Fast, Rev. Barbara Meyers, and an anonymous ministerial candidate for contributing to this post.

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