

QUEST



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of St. Augustine Newsletter
St. Augustine Beach, Florida
Reverend Tom Schmidt, Minister

December 2016
2487 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080.
3/4 miles south of State Road 312
uufsamail@gmail.com <http://www.uufsa.org>

Fellowship services are held Sundays at 10:30 a.m., September through June.
A program for youth is provided at 10:30 a.m.
Refreshments are served after the service so all may socialize.
Audio transcripts of most presentations are available online.

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Materials for the January issue are due by December 23.

Don Brandes, Editor e-mail: donaldbrandes@gmail.com

Thanks to Charlie West for proofreading.



From Your President



Namaste!

Tensions are high, people are on edge, many of us feel stressed and depressed. We are a community recently devastated by a massive hurricane, and more recently, by deep divisions within our government and political system. We watch helplessly, as we see peaceful water protectors brutalized by militarized law enforcement doing the bidding of corporate interests.

These frustrations eventually frazzle us, and we see even loving people become emotionally worn down and irritated even with those they love most. Keep in mind that holidays, as much as they bring joy, with all their responsibilities, can also bring stress into our lives. Remember our principles, to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to support and encourage each other.

Step back when you need to re-group and re-center yourself spiritually. Sometimes when things are at their worst, we forget to honor our spiritual side, perhaps too overwhelmed, perhaps rationalizing that it is the icing on the cake of life. But when we neglect it, it often seems that everything important to us falls apart. When we honor it, everything in life seems to fall into place.

As members of this fellowship, we are all on a spiritual journey together. Sometimes we walk with strength and purpose, other times we slip and fall. We will doubtless make some missteps, but we will grow as we work together through right relations and our democratic process. Nevertheless, we must never expect to arrive, because it is the journey which is important, not any destination.

Let's be kind to our fellow travelers on this Planet, and in our Fellowship. Endeavor to stand on the side of love. Before you say something, THINK~ Is it....

Thoughtful?
Helpful?
Intelligent?
Necessary?
Kind?

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about."

Happy Holidays
Robin Mahonen



From Your Minister

December is here and not too soon for many of us. November was a busy month for me, starting with my trip to North Dakota to stand with the Water Protectors in Standing Rock. I won't write much about the trip here except to say that it was a transformative experience and I am grateful to the Fellowship for making it possible. I am also grateful that so many of us stand in support of Water Protectors and joined in the St. Augustine Against DAPL on the march on the 15th and the Reflections on DAPL event here at the Fellowship on the 21st. The increase of violence by law enforcement has prompted another call for an Interfaith Day of Prayer at Standing Rock on December 4. In support of that event, we will be hosting our own Interfaith Prayer Vigil here at the Fellowship on December 4 at 7:00 p.m. It will be a busy weekend here at the Fellowship but I hope everyone will make the effort to be there and invite any friends who might be interested. It is open to the public and I expect it will be a powerful event.



In my November 20 talk called "Election Reflections," I mentioned the importance of spiritual community during difficult times because it helps to energize us and it reminds us that we are not acting alone. I also quoted Mark Morrison-Reed who said, "The Central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others." Sunday mornings are an important part of what we do as spiritual community but the format generally doesn't permit the type of sharing of the "particulars of our lives" that help us build the deep and lasting connections that many of us are looking for. If you are one of those people who long for deeper connection and you want to "unveil the bonds that binds each to all," then maybe you might be interested in small groups ministry, sometimes called covenant groups.

Covenant Groups are small groups that meet regularly either at the Fellowship or in homes once or twice a month, are led by a trained facilitator, and generally are focused on a particular topic or interest. Possible topics include: spiritual direction, art, ethical eating, social justice, Buddhism, travel, parenting, or even social activities like hiking or playing games. The point of Covenant Groups is not what brings people but rather that people come together to share and learn and grow.

Though it wasn't organized as a Covenant Group per se, the Art Group that formed among many of our members serves much the same purpose. The Art Group limited its membership as all Covenant Groups do to allow for a greater rapport to develop and because of practical concerns. Meeting in homes means groups must be restricted to a certain size. The Art Group has been around for a while now and though membership has not been static and its focus has changed, it remains a safe place for people to share more deeply than is possible on Sunday morning.

If you are interested in helping to start a Covenant Group, even if you aren't sure what it should be about, please give me a call or send an e-mail. Now, more than ever, we need each other and this community. Once we have a handful of people interested, I will organize an informational meeting and open it up to anyone able to attend. I look forward to hearing from you.

Rev. Tom Schmidt

Sunday, December 4, 10:30 a.m.
**“Wiki-Church:
Transformative Community for the 21st Century”**

Rev. Tom Schmidt

Service Leader – Megan Porter

A “wiki” is a website whose users can add, modify, or delete its content and is typically powered by software that is created collaboratively by multiple users. The best known example, of course, is Wikipedia but there are countless others on the web. A wiki-church would be operated on the same basic principles of cooperation and shared leadership.

Sunday, December 11, 10:30 a.m.
**“Searching High and Low:
Japanese Psychology and the Art of Self-Reflection”**
Rev. Morris Sekiyo Sullivan

Service Leader – Ruth Weber

Palmer Short will be the speaker for the "This I Believe"

Among the forms of Buddhism present in Japan are Zen and Shin. Each focuses on a different approach to liberation: Zen stresses jiriki or "self-power," while Shin or Jodo Shinshu focuses on tariki or "other-power." On the surface, the concept of gaining spiritual freedom through one's own efforts may seem to clash with the idea of attaining enlightenment with the help of others. However, the core principles of Japanese psychology derive from these two approaches to living the Buddhist path. We will consider how to apply these distinctly different yet mutually supporting methods of self-reflection to living more constructively.

*Rev. Morris Sekiyo Sullivan is a Zen master in a Vietnamese Rinzai lineage, Sensei (teacher/minister) ordained by Bright Dawn Center for Oneness Buddhism and author of *Wisdom; Compassion; Serenity: First Steps on the Buddhist Path*. He also holds a certificate in Japanese psychology from the ToDo Institute.*

Sensei Morris first became interested in Zen Buddhism while a teenager. He spent a short time ordained as a monk in a Thai Buddhist order before enrolling in a ministry program with Bright Dawn Center for Oneness Buddhism, a nonsectarian Buddhist order based on Japanese Zen and Pure Land. He is the primary dharma teacher for Volusia Buddhist Fellowship, leading weekly meetings in DeLand and monthly meetings in Palm Coast. He is also the acting vice-abbot At White Sands Buddhist Center in northern Brevard County, where he officiates at services twice a month. He meets weekly with inmates at Tomoka Correctional Institution and speaks regularly to Unitarian Universalist congregations.

For more information, visit www.volusiabuddhist.org.

Sunday, December 18, 10:30 a.m.

“Was Santa a Shaman?”

Rev. Tom Schmidt

Service Leader – Pat Willott

The common story behind Santa Claus is that he is based on the life of St. Nicholas, a Greek Bishop who served the church in Asia Minor. He was reputed to be a miracle worker and had a proclivity for secret gift giving. This story, however doesn't explain many of the things we associate with Santa Claus like flying reindeer, the North Pole, a magic sleigh. Could it be there is an older version of the Santa story that better explains many of our other holiday traditions?

Sunday, December 25, 10:30 a.m.

“Christmas Past, Present and Future”

Robin Mahonen

This is a sharing service, especially for those in the fellowship who are missing their loved ones on this day. Bring something dear to you that takes you back, and makes you feel warm and fuzzy. A food, a song, an ornament, a cherished memory. We'll be sharing memories of the past, our plans for our present, and our hopes for our future. Working together, we will create our own unique celebration to honor this season in ways that are important to us.

If you are planning on attending, please RSVP to Robin Mahonen, (RRafael2@aol.com or 304.639.5538) for general planning purposes.

Christmas Lunch

After the Christmas morning service, a turkey meal will be served downstairs! For reservations and pot-luck contributions, please contact Yosi at 904-461-3175 or by email at jomcintire@bellsouth.net.



"Hanging of the Greens and Cookie Exchange" Saturday, December 3, 1:00 p.m.



We will be gathering as a spiritual community to work together to decorate and brighten up our fellowship walls, doors and windows with traditional reminders of this season of many holidays. Pines and pretty lights and poinsettias will be the order of business! We'll be climbing up in the rafters, and can use lots of help. Come help us to decorate and enjoy some music and holiday snacks.

We are also having a cookie exchange. It works like this: You make X dozen cookies, depending on how many sign up. You bring in your cookies, and you get a dozen from each other person on the exchange list. For example, if 3 people sign up, you go home with 3 dozen cookies. Cookies MUST be able to be frozen. We will exchange our cookies at the Fellowship at the Hanging of the Greens! If we have much interest, and there are more than six participants, we will make a half dozen for each participant.

It's a great way to have some interesting and diverse variety with you over the holidays, from your spiritual family! Keep in mind, if you can't eat all those cookies yourself, Dining with Dignity would surely love to help you use them in a positive way.

If you are interested in taking home a bunch of different holiday cookies, please email or call Robin Mahonen with your cookie type/name, RRafael2@aol.com or (304) 639-5538.



Join us in fun and friendship and a few fa la la la las!

Sunday, December 4, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Interfaith Prayer Vigil

Bring your broken heart, your deepest prayers, your drums, and your songs as we pray in support of the water protectors and those that will do them and our planet harm.

December 4, 2016
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
2487 A1A South
St. Augustine, FL 32080
www.uufsa.org
uurev@icloud.com for more information



Great Decisions

Monday, December 5, 7:00 p.m.

The U.S. announced in December 2014 that, after decades of isolation, it would begin to take major steps to normalize relations with Cuba. The announcement marked a dramatic shift away from a policy that had its roots in one of the darkest moments of the Cold War. Notwithstanding - and to many people's astonishment, the U.S. trade embargo has remained in place - and is unlikely to end any time soon.

Will it be possible for American and Cuban leaders to bring a relationship, once defined by antithetical ideologies, into the 21st century?

The Great Decisions group will meet on Monday, December 5 to discuss US Foreign policy with relation to Cuba. The discussion will be led by Rosita Angeli. Please join us downstairs at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome.



Prep reading material available at: <http://bit.ly/2gutwiK>

For more information, contact Yosi at jomcintire@bellsouth.net or (904) 461 3175.

Downstairs Dialogue

“Socrates Café” – Open Discussion

Sunday, December 11

9:15-10:15 a.m. downstairs

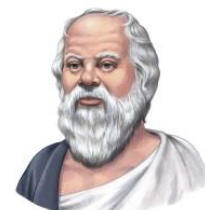
This month we will again have an open dialogue on topics of the day that interest and concern us.

What's going on in religion, politics, economics, security, justice, etc. in the world, nation, state, local community, or even within our own congregation? Would an open-minded sharing and discussion among thoughtful UUs in our traditional safe space be of interest? Maybe even come up with some ideas to make things better? We think so!

We will decide what topic(s) to discuss using the Socrates Café method used successfully at our local Council on Aging and in similar groups all over the world. At the beginning of the session, each attendee will suggest a topic, and we will “vote” on which one(s) to discuss. Topics should be of general interest. And since we are a religious institution, topics would typically have some connection to our UU Principles. Discussion led by Charlie West.

So bring your favorite issue or question and come join us at 9:15am on Sunday, December 11, downstairs.

Meanwhile, we are always soliciting new ideas for our Adult Learning program here at UUFSA. What would be a good topic for a new multi-session course that would attract a following? What smaller topics would make for a good one-hour discussion at a Downstairs Dialogue? Any ideas on interesting presenters we might invite? Contact me by email, westjrcw@gmail.com, or phone call (904-471-0335) with your ideas.



Charlie West
Co chair, Adult Learning



Holiday Poinsettias

Each Sunday in December our holiday decorations will include live poinsettias. These will be for sale and all proceeds will go to the UU general fund.

See **Robin Mahonen** or **Annette Jones** for your purchase or information.

Generosity of the Congregation

On Share the Plate Sunday (Nov. 21) UUFSA collected \$1,001 for the Food Pantry--our best donation ever!

Palmer's play "Incommunicado" also brought in \$350 for the Operating Fund--thanks to Palmer and his minions!

Nana Royer

Children and Youth Monthly Food Collection

We are pleased to announce that the Children and Youth will have a monthly food collection. Donations will be given to the Food Pantry. **The next collection will take place on December 18**, please be sure to bring enough food donations so that every child has an opportunity to participate in this worthy cause.

Palmer's Pic (movie)

Family Man

December 23, 6:30 p.m.

The movie for Dec. 23rd is *Family Man*, starring Nicholas Cage and Tia Leoni. Jack Campbell (Nicholas Cage) a single wealthy Wall Street trader living the high life in New York City wakes up one morning in a suburban New Jersey bedroom with a wife (Tia Leoni) he never married and two kids he never had, the life he would have had if he had made different choices as a younger man. Find out what it takes for a single minded business man to become a Family Man in this wonderful comedy about second chances. All this takes place during a crazy Christmas holiday.



Meditation Group

The Meditation Group will be meeting every Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. downstairs starting November 29th.

No experience necessary, come sit with us.

Peter Gibbon



New Art Show January 8

We have so many talented people in our congregation. Let's see some of your creations. Please deliver your art work to the Meditation/Art Room downstairs at the UU by Jan. 1st. Make sure your work is ready to hang with a wire and be sure to fill out the paperwork which will be on the side table. Questions? See Joyce Peterson or Annette Jones

Food Pantry



Special thanks to all who contributed so generously to the St. Johns Food Pantry, at the third Sunday collection in November. A spectacular amount, \$1,001, was collected!!! This will really help with the holiday extras that the Food Pantry tries to provide the clients who utilize it. This includes low income St. Johns county residents and families, as well as our homeless neighbors.

Happy holidays and many blessings in the new year to all of you, with special recognition of the volunteers who give so willingly of their time.

Cherie Dolgin
UUFSA Food Pantry Coordinator

Dining With Dignity

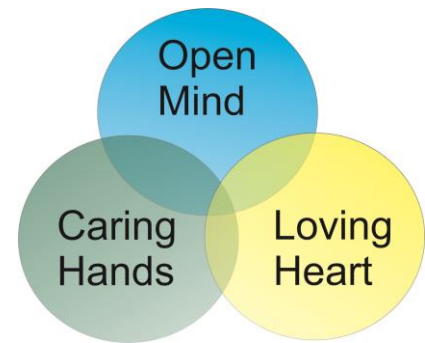
Our next opportunity to provide a nourishing meal for the homeless will be Sunday, **December 4, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.** For more information, contact a member of the Dining with Dignity Team:

Mary Kellough, Nana Royer & Claudia Atkins



Life-long Learning - Children and Youth.

Our children and youth were busy during the first three weeks of November. In the sanctuary, they participated in “Stories for All Ages” and collected food from members of the congregation that will be given to the Ecumenical Food Pantry for those less fortunate than ourselves. In their classes, under the guidance of our wonderful teachers Maggie McElhaney and Jennifer DeLaRosa, our children planted seeds in our organic garden and lovingly helped them grow every Sunday. They played a recycling game, developed a classroom covenant and integrated the UU Principles into all their lessons. The children reflected on the meaning of gratitude as they talked about Thanksgiving and remembered our homeless friends in the community.



At this writing we are looking forward to the Sunday after Thanksgiving when our children will have a special visit from Fellowship member Diane Battle. Diane plans to introduce them to foods Native Americans shared with the Puritans to help the Puritans through their first winter on this continent. She also plans to have the children do some baking.

December will also be busy! On December 4th, in addition to participating in "A Story for All Ages", the children will decorate cookies for folks who attend "Dining With Dignity" in downtown Saint Augustine. They will learn about Hanukah on December 11th and on the 18th, the children will participate in music making to begin in the sanctuary and continue downstairs in the classrooms with our UUFSA President, Robin Mahonen. At this writing, activities for Christmas Day are still in the planning stages. All of this and the children will now regularly collect food from members of our Fellowship for the Ecumenical Food Pantry. Our young people are important members of our Beloved Community, and we love having them with us. It is wonderful to see so many new faces! If you have questions about our programs for Children and Youth, suggestions, or would like to join the Team coordinating these programs, please contact Claudia Atkins, claudiadeland@aol.com, Barbara Battelle, babattelle32137@yahoo.com or Vanessa Friedman vfriedman32084@yahoo.com.

We wish all our families a joyful and peaceful holiday season.

Book Club

The UU Book Club will meet **Tuesday, December 20, from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.** downstairs. Anyone interested is invited to attend. The Book Club meets on the third Tuesday of the month, from September through May; the luncheon is in June. Book selections are listed on the UU Calendar and below. **If you have any questions, please email Dianne Battle at battled@gmail.com**

December 20 - *A Long Way Gone*, by Ishmael Beah, led by Gale Burnick

January 17 - *The Japanese Lover*, by Isabel Allende, led by Pat Maguire

February 21 - *The Little Red Chair*, by Edna O'Brien, led by Barbara Brenner

March 21 - *She's Come Undone*, by Wally Lamb, led by Gale Burnick

April 18 - *The Heart of a Woman*, by Maya Angelou, led by Kathleen Paracer

May 16 - *Ragtime*, by E. L. Doctorow, led by Dianne Battle

June - luncheon - date and time to be determined



December Calendar



- 2 – Darts 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
- 3 – Hanging the Greens & Cookie exchange 1:00 p.m.
- 4 – Social Concerns Team 12:00 noon
- 4 – Dining with Dignity 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- 4 – Interfaith Prayer Vigil 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- 5 – Great Decisions 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- 6, 13, 20, & 27 – Meditation each Tuesday 3:00 p.m.
- 9 – Food Pantry 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- 11 – Downstairs Dialogue 9:15 – 10:15 a.m.
- 12 – Board of Trustees meeting 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- 20 – Book Club 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
- 16 – Darts 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
- 23 – Food Pantry 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- 23 – Deadline for December Quest
- 23 – Movie: *Family Man* 6:30 p.m.
- 30 – Darts 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.



Care Connection



Our Care Connection group provides short term support and assistance for members of the Fellowship during times of difficulty. We thank everyone for their generous support with transportation to medical appointments, making meals, assistance with errands, visiting and sharing. The Care Connection includes everyone in our Fellowship willing to receive and give support at times of difficulty. Contact *Elle Barry* if you are in need of assistance or would like to be involved in the Care Connection Team.

Darts Nights



Darts nights are held at the Pub UU (Basement at the UU) at **7:00 p.m.** on the first and third Friday of each month and the fifth Friday if there is one. This month they will be **December 2, 16, and 30.** Contact Palmer Short, palshort@gmail.com, for details.

Beyond Our Congregation

Regional and National Events

April 7-9, 2017, Florida UU Women's Retreat, Ellenton, FL. For more information, go to: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/lcng1kppd2sf9b5/FL%20Women%27s%20Retreat%202017%20UPDATE%20D.pdf?dl=0>

June 21-25, General Assembly 2017, New Orleans, LA

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, 900 Convention Center Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70130.

<http://www.uua.org/ga>

For information about events beyond our Fellowship, check the UUA Southern Region event calendar at: <http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/home.html> and the UUA web site <http://www.uua.org/>

