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Unitarian Universalist
Society of Geneva



Pioneer Newsletter

November - December 2018



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Patrick's Ponderings...
"Hope is the Reason for the Season"
by Rev. Patrick Price

A number of years ago, a church near my home had a sign which read, "Hope is the reason for the season." As I daily drove past it during the weeks leading up to Christmas my attitude shifted from amusement, to "Bah! Humbug!" to appreciation. At first it struck me as sentimentally

quaint. Then as I began to approach the anniversary of my father's death on the 21st of December, I received word that the partner of a good friend died of AIDS complications, then that a child I knew in a colleague's congregation died from cancer, and that my sister was diagnosed with a recurrence of the breast cancer that would eventually kill her. Death and darkness had come for the holidays.

Death and darkness are important parts of our human reality. They have much to teach us and they cannot be denied or avoided for very long. But, we all have limits as to how much we can handle. Sometimes I find myself muttering resentfully, "Great! Another growth opportunity. Just what I needed." Unfortunately we cannot exchange these "gifts" from the Universe for a better size or color. So we are left with our pain, and faith, and hope.

For UUs hope is not naive wish fulfillment, but an honest optimism based on a deep faith that we are inherently unique and worthy beings, that we are not alone and that the universe ultimately has meaning. Faith is not based on proof, but on those things we know to be true in the absence of proof. Therefore, I cannot give you proof for having hope, only that we do, and must have it. We need light most when we are in the dark, and faith is the certainty that we have a candle and matches. And, if we can only lay our hands on them, we have hope of not being lost in the dark.

In whatever ways we individually understand and symbolize our sources of hope, whether it is the Christ child, or God's grace through the Hanukkah miracle, or the death and return of the Solar year, we all experience our hope through the particular and concrete; a card, a gift, an embrace, a song, a candle in the window.

These particular experiences of scent, of sound, of taste and touch, are what create and renew our awareness our connection and being a part of a sacred whole. Part of the importance of family, communal and religious celebrations is to remind us we are part of the sacred wholeness and we its particular messengers of hope to others. I am continually thankful for the blessings I have been given; the kindness and support I have gotten and continue to receive in my life, and which I can in turn offer to others. I am hopeful for our world because of that which I see shared generously in our congregations and in our larger community.

So this season is not about mindless frivolity and good times, and we should not feel additionally burdened by guilt because we are not "in the holiday spirit." This season, is in fact, a reminder that we have life in the midst of death, and light in the midst of darkness. It is about the possibility of joy in the midst of sorrow and pain. It is a reminder to us as Unitarian Universalists, that all people, including ourselves, are inherently worthy and not alone, and in turn we are obligated to share this message of hope in many manifest ways.

As great as our own desire is to withdraw and protect our tiny spark, we are to each other, the bearers of this light and hope. We are the Magi, we are the flask of oil, we are the ones who we sing the light back into being for each other. Together we blow bright the embers of our souls, and cup the flames of each other's hearts against the winds of despair. Together on this road of hope let us kindle and carry our festival lights through the

shadows of the valley of death, remembering that the reason for the season is indeed hope. Bright blessings upon you and all of us, through this season and the coming New Year.

Peace, Patrick.



Circles of Life

We are deeply saddened to share that longtime UUSG Member, Stuart Mansfield, passed away on November 3, after a short illness. You can read [Stuart's obituary here](#). Many of you may know that Stuart's wife and longtime UUSG Member, Gloria, suffers from advanced Alzheimer's, and the family has requested that cards and condolences be sent to Stuart & Gloria's daughter, Gail Mansfield, so that she can share them with Gloria at appropriate times. Please contact Christine at office@uusg.org for Gail's address. **A Celebration of Life Service will be held at UUSG on Saturday, January 26, 2019.** There will be visitation at 11am, with the service starting at 12pm. There will be a reception in our Common Room after the service, and we [welcome donations of food or beverages](#).



December Services & Celebrations

December's Theme: Hope

Sunday, December 2, 9:30 & 11:15am

Rev. Jennifer Innis & Rev. Patrick Price, "From Revels to Wrapping Paper: Origins of Modern Christmas"

Sunday, December 9, 9:30 & 11:15am

Rev. Jennifer Innis & Rev. Patrick Price, "Hope Made Manifest"

Sunday, December 16, 9:30 & 11:15am

Intergenerational Holiday Pageant at both services led by our Pageant Team and Rev. Jennifer Innis, "A Child of Hope"

Sunday, December 23, 9:30 & 11:15am

Rev. Jennifer Innis & Rev. Patrick Price, "Yuletide Service For All Ages"

Monday, December 24: Christmas Eve Services

3 pm: Our "Family Friendly" service especially for young children (Please note earlier time this year--**3pm instead of 4pm**).

8 pm: "Service of Lessons and Carols": Seating in the Sanctuary is limited to 150 people, so get here early to get a good seat!

11 pm: Candlelight Christmas Eve Service: Need to get away from the hustle and bustle of kids, presents, noise, glorious choirs, and our material world for just a few minutes? We offer this new service to those who want to experience the holiness and quiet of the late evening in community. Please come join us for some quiet hymns led by Classical Guitarist, Paul Sargent, along with a short selection of meditations and readings. No child care will be provided, but children are welcome if they can indeed be a part of this quiet service. Come to be at peace.

Sunday, December 30, 10 am

Intergenerational Service at 10am; potluck brunch at 11am



**Religious Education Town Hall
December 2, 12:30-2pm
UUSG Common Room**

What do you love about children and youth education at UUSG? What could grow or change? Join us for the first in a series of conversations about life at UUSG. For children and youth programs, the Board needs your input as they put together a plan to add paid staff as quickly and as thoughtfully as possible. The Town Hall will run from 12:30-2pm. Lunch is provided. A plan for children's activity is in process. [Kindly RSVP here as soon as possible.](#) See Rev. Jennifer for questions or if you want to contribute, but cannot attend.



UUSG Music

Warming hearts this chilly autumn have been the talents of three ensembles, beginning with dynamic tunes by the MUUSA Bluegrass Band comprised of John Sandman, Jeff Teppema and Tracy Dullea.

Lending their music to the powerful Veterans Day service were Brian

Joose, Tracey McFadden and David Hanchette, with bugler Dawn Pokorny concluding the program with taps.

The Jazz Combo shone in favorite standards played by Michael Townley on trombone, Geoff Pynn on piano, Tracy on double bass and guest Michael Bazan on saxophone and flute.

The RE Music Students, led by Sandra Anderson, sweetly performed “I Have a Dream,” with a little help from the congregation. Sharing their gifts at the piano were Sandra and Robert Vanderschaaf.

Looking ahead, we’ll hear violinist Mary Phillips and the keyboard artistry of Geoff, Lynn Fisher McCanne and Tom Zimmerman. Don’t miss our fun-filled Brown Bag Holiday Pageant and the wonderful musical variety that accompanies it, featuring Ellie and David Montgomery.

Be a part of the joy of music – there is a place for you in our Music Ministry! Students, amateurs, professionals, adults, and youth. Please contact Music Director Tracy Dullea at music@uusg.org today!



Our House

Big thanks to Sherri and Larry Casterline, Tom Lichtenheld, and Kevin O’Neill for hanging the Christmas wreath and garland on the chancel this last weekend!

The Facilities Team was able to install wood trim and quarter round at the base of the Pioneer House porch posts, but the weather didn’t cooperate to allow for painting them. Big thanks to Ron Craig, Pat McGleam, Dave Tomell and Kevin O’Neill for doing the trim work. Unfortunately, given how quickly winter has come upon us, this project won’t be fully completed until spring.

The Team completed a variety of other projects, e.g., we hired our arborist, Gary Granberg, to remove the dying spruce tree next to Pioneer House and to trim the big maple tree in front of the sanctuary; Dave Tomell cleaned the gutters and repaired some siding on the Pioneer House, and Jeff Stibal had the hearing loop installed in the sanctuary.

The Facilities Team will be turning its attention to interior projects, so if you'd like to see our historic site preserved, our meeting space improved, or our classrooms enhanced, then please contact Kevin O'Neill at facilities@uusg.org. We have a wide range of projects requiring varying levels of skill, so anyone can help.



Cookie Walk 2018 - 4,000 Cookies and Counting!

Don't feel that you need to bake a thousand cookies to sign up -- any number of festive decorated cookies help make the event a success! If you would like to bake or volunteer to work a shift as a "Cookie Elf", [please sign up today at uusg.org/cookie-walk](http://uusg.org/cookie-walk) or in the Common Room. The Cookie Walk is a long-held and cherished fundraising tradition at UUSG, and it is part of the Geneva celebration that welcomes in the holiday season with light, food, and festivities. Questions? Email Diane Peters & Rhonda Robinson, Cookie Walk Coordinators, at cookiewalk@uusg.org.

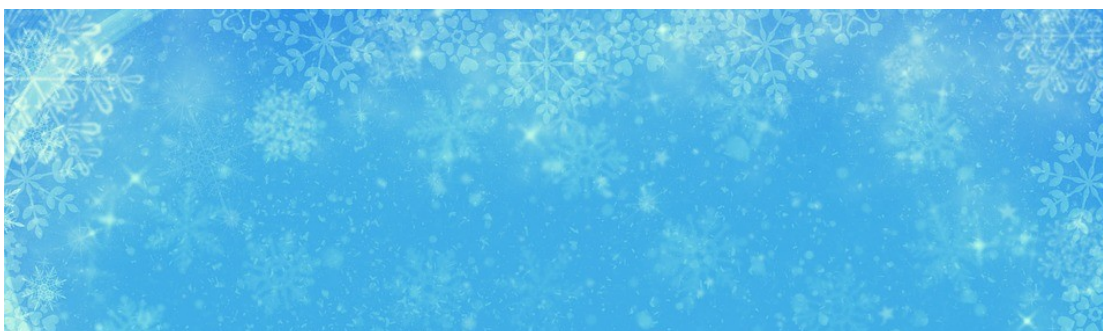


Stewardship Team Hosts Planned Giving Discussion

On Sunday, December 9, at 1pm in the Common Room Ted Kuczek of Kuczek & Associates will give a presentation on the following subjects:

- 1) Will planning
- 2) Joint tenancy planning
- 3) Beneficiary designations
- 4) Disability planning
- 5) Living trust planning
- 6) Charitable giving strategies
- 7) Current charitable gifts
- 8) Planned charitable gifts (charitable remainder trust/charitable lead trust)
- 9) Tax efficient charitable planning (from IRAs etc.)
- 10) Health care powers of attorney/living wills

All are welcome! Questions? Contact our Stewardship Team at stewardship@uusg.org.



Mental Health Ministry Presentation

On Sunday, December 16, at 1pm, Colleen Cushing and the Mental Health Ministry will present on the topic of recently approved and experimental treatments for depression and anxiety. Colleen will present on topics such as TMS (transcranial magnetic stimulation), vagus nerve stimulation, ketamine, and research into psychedelics. Please join us in the Common Room for this discussion, which is free and open to the public.



Helpful Information about Individual Retirement Accounts & Required Minimum Distributions

by Patricia Ward, UUSG Member

READ ONLY IF YOU ARE AT LEAST 68 YEARS OLD

If you haven't already started receiving distributions from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you must begin taking a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) in the year in which you reach age 70½. That's enough acronyms for one short article. The point is, even if you don't need any IRA money to supplement your income, you'll be required to withdraw an amount equal to your RMD each and every year starting no later than your 70½ birthday. Along with your receipt of the RMD goes your obligation to pay income tax on the entire amount.

However, there is a special break for folks age 70½ and older. If you direct the holder of your IRA account to send some or all of your RMD to a qualified charity, such as UUSG, you will not pay income tax on the amount sent directly to charity. You will not get an itemized income tax charitable deduction for this amount, but under current tax laws fewer people than ever will be able to itemize deductions with a total exceeding the standard deduction. If you have any question whether this strategy will benefit you, check with your accountant or tax return preparer.

Even if you don't benefit tax-wise from making a charitable rollover of RMD money to a charity, consider that you will probably be able to pay your entire annual pledge to UUSG in one payment. You won't have to pay your pledge in monthly or weekly payments, freeing up for your use the dollars you were previously paying to the church. You might even have the ability to increase your pledge amount because you don't have to make pledge payments out of pocket.

Be aware there are a few rules you must follow to do this right. Consult with the holder of your IRA account, who will be fully aware of these rules and make the transfer correctly. What you absolutely can't do is receive the RMD from your account and then contribute some or all of it to UUSG.

Several church members have been taking advantage of this charitable RMD rollover to pay their annual pledges for a number of years. As I contemplate doing the same in the next few months, I want everybody who qualifies to be aware of this option to help yourselves and UUSG at the same time.

Patricia Ward

Disclaimer: This information is not legal or tax advice. Always consult your own advisers before proceeding.



Women's Retreat 2019

In the spirit of this year's theme "Awakening Joy by Embracing Change," we are truly embracing change. Rev. Jennifer Innis will be facilitating the 6th Annual UUSG Women's Retreat. Her background in helping communities work through transitions will be an asset to this year's retreat as UUSG and the Women's Retreat are experiencing change and transition. We are continuing to provide a retreat that fosters connections, and a meditative and reflective space to rejuvenate ourselves.

[Registration is open here through December 8](#), and there are still spots open although overnight spots are almost filled. Make sure to register to claim your spot on the wait list once the overnight spots are filled.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Rachel Harbold at womensretreat@uusg.org or any of the other committee members.



Green Sanctuary News

[Newest US climate change report, the Fourth National Assessment](#)

[The Sunrise Movement](#) - this is the group that came to Nancy Pelosi's office one week after the election to protest and demand serious action on climate change. One week later, thousands visited their own representatives.

[Monday Dec. 3, Environmental Townhall:](#)

U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) will host a national town hall on Monday, Dec. 3, aimed at addressing the global threat of climate change and exploring solutions that can protect the planet from devastation and create tens of millions of good-paying jobs. Sanders will be joined by [350.org](#) founder and author Bill McKibben; actress, activist and Our Revolution board member Shailene Woodley; CNN host and author Van Jones; Earth Guardians Youth Director Xiuhtezcatl Martinez; Union of Concerned Scientists Director of Climate Science Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel; Dale Ross, mayor of Georgetown, Texas, and other environmental experts and activists.

Greenest Region Compact 2 Forum

Friday, November 30, 10-11:30am, Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, 3795 Campton Hills Drive, St. Charles

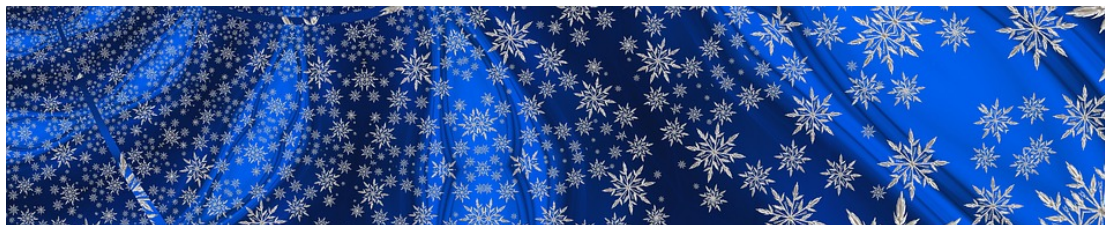
[Fox Valley Sustainability Network's GRC2 Forum](#) [GRC2 sign up](#)

It's been a very busy week, you may have missed last week's newsletter. From last week - these are still hot!

[Just what is a Green New Deal?](#)

[Reducing Amazon packaging waste - for when you can't stop short of using Amazon](#) Thank you for this suggestion to Becky Hruby.

[Serious but easy to read pipeline report from Green Peace](#)



Steeple Walk

Sunday, December 9 at 2pm, UUSG and three other Geneva churches will host Steeple Walk. The program includes music at each venue with a guided stroll between the churches. Please contact Gail Tattersfield for tickets (\$15/each). Cynthia Spiegel, soprano, Elena Spiegel, violin, and Angela Salvaggione, piano, will perform at UUSG.



UUSG Circle Suppers 2019!

Don't miss out! Circle Supper sign up is happening now. Everyone is invited to participate in our small group dinners, once a month January through April. Your schedule won't allow you to commit to 4 dinners? Sign up as an alternate!

[Sign up online at uug.org/circle-suppers](https://uug.org/circle-suppers) by **December 3**, or fill out a form in the Common Room. Questions? Contact Mary Swanson at circlesuppers@uug.org.



Get Involved With Interweave

Interweave is a local group of LGBTQ members, friends and allies who meet once a month to have time together for discussions and special events. We will meet Sunday December 16, after second service about 12:30pm, to begin planning for the annual LGBTQ service scheduled for March 3, 2019. We will also have a holiday potluck lunch, so bring a dish to share. Chili and drinks will be provided. For information please contact Lynn Steele at interweave@uusg.org.



UUSG Holiday Party for Incarcerated Youth

For over 20 years, UUSG has provided support for the young men at the Illinois Youth Center by holding a holiday party for some of the youth who do not receive visitation. Traditionally we have purchased an item for their Rec Center or needed items for the young men, such as socks or body wash. Without these things life for the kids would be pretty bleak, especially at the holidays. Please help us continue to reach out to these boys, by signing up to help out at the Holiday party on Saturday,

December 15, from 1:00 to 3:00. You must be at the Center by 12:30. **In order to participate at the party, you must submit your date of birth and social security number to Melissa Auer before December 1,** as the Center will do a background check.

In addition, we will be having a pre-party get-together on Saturday, December 1, 10-11am, at UUSG. While attendance is optional, attending will allow you to meet members of your "team" and review the party plan.

Please help us let these young men know that someone cares about them and believes their lives have value.

For more information contact Melissa Auer at auermel@yahoo.com/630-338-2519 or melissa.auer@illinois.gov.



Two Social Hours in the New Year!

Volunteers Wanted in the New Year! Starting Jan. 6, 2019, UUSG will be hosting two social hours! The First Social hour, between services, will be hosted by our wonderful teams and committees. The Second Social Hour, will be following second service and we'll need everyone's help: families can sign up together, grab a few friends and host as a group, or just bring your favorite snack! Thanks for helping us test this new "relaxed" second Social Hour experience. [Please sign up at uusg.org/hosting](https://uusg.org/hosting).



Fire Drill: Mission Success

Kudos to all who participated in November's semi-annual fire drill. We achieved a stellar result.

Appreciation to all who automatically went to the staging area in front of Patton House. And a "gold star" to those who helped others get there safely and/or reminded your fellow Congregants to not remain in front of our facility or at the parking apron area.

Our evacuation times and the call from our monitoring company to Tri-Com were both within acceptable limits.

Two items for improvement to be followed-up on include:

- Inadequate weather protection for our youngest students
- Visibility of the teachers holding up their status signage

Feel free to address any comments to Hal Schulman, ERT Head, ertleader@uusg.org.



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