

# WUUnews

Monthly Newsletter of Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists

December 2014



## Mark Your Calendar

12.4

Navigator's Meeting

12.12

Yule Sing and Potluck

12.14

Meet the Minister

12.17

Pathfinders Book Group

12.21

Winter Solstice Pageant (11:15am)

Winter Solstice Ritual (7pm)

12.24

Candlelight Christmas Eve (9pm)

12.28

Rainbow Potluck

## December's Theme is Miracles

Rev. Jennifer Ryu

With the virgin birth of Christmas, the ever-burning lamp of Hanukah and the return of the light of Solstice, December seems like a good time to reflect on Miracles.

Mysterious, unexpected, and unexplainable events occur every day, don't they? People on the verge of death recover from catastrophic injuries. Against all odds, several unrelated events come together in an extraordinary coincidence. A fire rages through an apartment building, but not one person or pet is injured. It's a miracle! A wonderful and amazing thing happens out of the blue and we call it a miracle. Many people will go one more step and attribute these incredible events to God or a Divine intelligence that makes things happen.

This is the traditional definition of miracle: an extraordinary, welcomed event attributed to the work of God (divine agency). It is a definition shaped by a patriarchal culture that sees God manipulating the earthly natural laws. This God decides that one person out of 200 will escape an airplane crash or that a hurricane will narrowly miss a populated city. With this understanding of miracles, how does one make sense of the times when God does not intervene with a miracle? What kind of God lets thousands of people suffer and die?

Continued on page 2...

## Minister's Article Continued ...

For thousands of years the Biblical miracles were understood as the reality of God made visible through supernatural events. God's reality would be confirmed in the parting of the Red Sea and the healing of the lame and rising of the dead. And in more recent times, the face of Jesus appearing on a stained window is proof enough of the reality of God (for some people).

There is a great shift occurring within human spirituality. It is moving away from the patriarchal perception (top down) to a matriarchal, mystical understanding of our relationship to the divine. From this vantage point, we see miracle as life's yearning for more life, for order, and for healing. It is no longer a decision made by "the father," to contravene the laws of nature but Creation herself blossoming into reality.

This means that every day the sun rises is the true miracle. Yes, we understand the scientific explanation of daybreak and sunrise. Yes, we understand the movement of Earth and Sun and the colorful effects of atmosphere and clouds. Yet almost every one of us has faced the rising sun and experienced it as an extraordinary, welcomed event that changed the state of our minds and hearts and altered our very being--a miracle!

December brings dark nights and cold days. It may be harder to perceive Creation's miracles during this particular month, but I encourage all of us to look for the miracles rising in every day of our lives.

May your holidays be full of Wonder!



## December Worship Schedule

December 7, 2014

9:15am & 11:15am

*"Miracle on the Sandbar:  
Conversation with John Murray"*

WUU Worship Associates

Charles Tankersley, Eva Burke, Anne Stevens, and the Worship Team bring you the story of American Universalism.

### Religious Education

Lower Elementary: UU Principles

Upper Elementary: Peace & Justice

Middle School: Beloved Community

YRUU: Fairness

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December 14, 2014

9:15am & 11:15am

*"Expecting Miracles"*

Rev. Jennifer Ryu

Weaving together stories from Emerson's controversial divinity school address, the recent Pew research studies, and Hanukkah with the poetry of Nikki Giovanni and Thich Nhat Hanh, we reflect on the meaning of Miracle.

### Religious Education

Children's Chapel for all Children

YRUU: Responsibility

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December 21, 2014

ONE Service Only Today

11:15am

*Winter Solstice Pageant*

Austen Petersen & YRUU (high school)

Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year and represents the cyclical nature of life. Come celebrate! After the Solstice,

the days will begin to get longer again! Some of the YRUU youth have agreed to narrate as the children act out different ways that Solstice is celebrated around the world. The Tabernacle Band plays today-- why not join them!!

\*\*Rehearsal is December 20th in the Sanctuary at 2:30, and everybody is strongly encouraged to attend. Please contact Austen at austen@wuu.org with questions.

"A Winter Solstice Ritual"  
Sunday Night  
December 21, 2014  
7:00pm

Sue Walkley, Rev. Jennifer and friends invite you to experience the longest night of the year with meaningful rituals at the labyrinth, the fire ring, and indoors with candles.

Wednesday, December 24, 2014  
9:00pm  
"Christmas Eve Candlelight Service"  
Rev. Jennifer Ryu  
The WUU Choir and Out of the Woods recorder group bring joyful music to this beautiful night-time worship service.

December 28, 2014  
9:15am & 11:15am  
"Jazz Funeral for the Old Year"  
Rev. Jennifer Ryu and Renee Kingan  
Using elements created by Melanie Morel-Ensminger by for the New Orleans UU congregation, we will leave behind the parts of the old year that no longer serve us and look forward to a brand new year.

## From the Board President, Lola Warren

This month in our worship we focus on Miracles. With energy and excitement abounding throughout our congregation, there has been one "Wow," a miracle perhaps, following another.

"WOW!" We've passed our Stretch Goal of \$1,200,000 and, with everyone pitching in, we'll arrive at much higher than that. If you have not yet been contacted by a Visiting Steward about the Capital Campaign, please make yourself known to Allen Cooke or Kerry Mellette.

"WOW!" The James City County Planning Commission is meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 pm in the County Government Center Board Room, 101-F Mounts Bay Rd., to consider our Special Use Permit (SUP) application to expand our sanctuary building. If you are able, please attend this session to show the Planning Commission how much this building project means to us. Once the SUP is approved by the County, our Design Build Team and Guernsey Tingle Architects will be back to the drawing board to begin finalizing the design.

"WOW!" We have paid off the UUA mortgage! By February, we will have paid off the Sun Trust mortgage which we took in-house earlier this year.

"WOW!" In mid-March, the Building Our Future Task Force and Finance Committee will present the final design plan and financial plan before putting construction out for bid. If you are a voting member (signed the book and made an official pledge for this fiscal year), you will be needed at that meeting to cast your vote on approval of the plans.

"WOW!" The Nominating Committee will soon be presenting a good slate of candidates for next year's elected offices: Board, Endowment Fund, Nominating Committee, Committee for Right Relations. If you have interest in serving on one of these or other committees in the future, please let Fred Gilbertson know. It takes the whole congregation to make our goals, dreams, vision and mission realities. So sign up to be considered for these offices or simply join in (no election required) the work of one of our Ministry Teams.

And "WOW!" Here we are in December. Where did 2014 go? I wish you a "WOW"-ful holiday season with many celebrations, memories, times for family and friend gatherings. May it also be a time of spiritual journey and renewal for you. Happy Wows and Miracles!

--Lola Warren





## Share the Plate Sunday, December 7 - Virginia Peninsula Food Bank

The Share the Plate collection for Sunday, December 7, will be donated to Virginia Peninsula Food Bank. Since 1986, they have provided over 117 million meals to residents throughout their service, which encompasses the Cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson and Williamsburg, and the Counties of Gloucester, James City, Mathews, Surry and York. In order to sustain the ever-growing need, the Foodbank collaborates with over 200 partner agencies, made up of faith based organizations, food pantries, soup kitchens, children's and adult homes/shelters, and other community centers that people turn to in times of need.

For more information on the Share the Plate program and to nominate a recipient agency, email [stp-at-wuu.org](mailto:stp-at-wuu.org).

### Do you know every WUU? Neither do I.

That's why we want to include a brief member biography in every newsletter.

Maybe you'll discover someone who shares your background, interests, or hobby. Maybe you'll learn something new about someone you already know. Or maybe you'll be moved to reach out to someone who needs to hear from you.

Please help us strengthen the WUU community by sharing your story. Together, we can weave a growing web of friendship, support, compassion, and love. [Melissa Ackley, ackleymw@gmail.com](mailto:ackleymw@gmail.com)

### Spotlight on Dave Warren

Born in Erie, PA on a Sunday morning at 11 to Presbyterian parents, which might indicate that I was predestined to become clergy. The path to that: Allegheny College, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a stint in the Army. At Allegheny, met Lola and married in 1959, after my second year of seminary. Perfect timing. My GI Bill had just run out and she started what turned out to be a brief, but financially sufficient, teaching career. Over the next 38 years, I served six Presbyterian congregations ranging from 2 months (interim) to 17 years: Detroit, Zanesville, OH, Clinton, IA, University Park, MD, Baltimore, MD, and Parkville, MO. We have two daughters, Carole and Laura, and four grandchildren, who live in

Richmond and Fairfax, the reasons we didn't remain in MO. But, as a baseball nut, I remain a loyal, though disappointed, KC Royals fan. We have found Williamsburg to be the greatest place to retire and WUU a major contributor to our satisfaction. Genealogy is my hobby. Love travel. Part of that has been hosting 4 of 5 group tours to Israel and exchanging houses with families in England, Germany, Australia, The Netherlands, and Seattle. 38 years of preaching with a growing number of asterisks, finally led us in retirement to WUU in 2008, where all asterisks are acceptable. I drive a few times a month for Williamsburg Area Faith in Action. At WUU I enjoy singing in the choir and being church historian.

# **WUU Holiday Potluck and Yule Sing**

- ◇ **When: Friday, December 12 @ 6:00 pm**
- ◇ **Where: Sanctuary**
- ◇ **Who: Everyone!**

**The Membership and Social Justice Teams and the Council for Religious Education have teamed up to bring you this fun-filled event for everyone!**

**The evening will begin at 6:00 p.m. with a Potluck Dinner followed by crafts for all ages to make decorations and trim our WUU Christmas tree.**

**In addition to information and ideas about compassionate giving during the holidays, we'll enjoy singing favorite carols, and Santa may make a surprise appearance!**

**PLEASE JOIN US for this annual event.**

**Yummy Food!**

**Singing**

**Tree Decorating**

**Ornament Making**

Religious Education Corner  
Austen Petersen, Director of Religious Education



Our Upper Elementary class, grades 3, 4, and 5, will explore the ideas of peace and justice in December. The theme for the month is miracles, and our question going into these lessons is in what ways are peace and justice miracles?

True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. —  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Who springs to mind when we think peace and justice? We'll hear a story that spotlights Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., two prophetic leaders who worked tirelessly for justice and change through nonviolence, and trace their inspiration back to Henry David Thoreau, a prophetic voice from our own Unitarian Universalist heritage. A Unitarian and a Transcendentalist, Thoreau demonstrated and wrote about the power of civil disobedience. His example has led generations to seek change through peaceful means. Students can explore ways they might act on the examples of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King.

Henry David Thoreau belonged to the Transcendentalist movement, a generation of people struggling to define spirituality and religion in the decades prior to the Civil War. Affirming each individual's ability and right to commune directly with God or the Divine, they favored intuitive and experiential

**TEACHERS needed for "Second Semester"**

Would you like a chance to spend time with our wonderful children and youth?  
Then please consider being a teacher for the second semester, beginning February 2015!  
Please get in touch with Austen Petersen at [austen@wuu.org](mailto:austen@wuu.org).



YRUU (high school youth group) helped out the greater Williamsburg community with the help of Housing Partnerships! The youth painted tar onto the roof of a house badly in need of sealing, and really earned their pizza party afterwards! Three cheers for our youth and marvelous advisors!



**Food For FISH**  
**(our local community's food & clothing pantry)**

December is new underwear and socks for all ages all sizes. This has been our Special Christmas Donation for many years. They can be placed in the red wagon or under our Christmas tree once it has been set up. Of course canned items of soups and vegetables are always appreciated...



The Social Justice Committee reminds people to be aware of being a **Conscientious Consumer** over the holidays. As much as possible, we should buy locally and US made items that are friendly to the environment, support lower paid workers in restaurants, and be generous to responsible charities.

**Community of Faith Mission (COFM) Homeless Shelter**



This year WUU will host the COFM homeless shelter February 15-22.

We will be inviting you to volunteer for:

- Making and serving dinner and breakfast.
- Checking our guests in and out.
- Overnight watch ( 2 shifts each night)

WUU is proud to be involved in the community homeless shelter. This is one opportunity to live our UU principles and share our bounty with our neediest neighbors. Volunteer sign-ups will begin in January. We hope you will plan to participate in this important social justice project.

Please contact Helen Hansen [helenfoxfhansen@gmail.com](mailto:helenfoxfhansen@gmail.com) if you would like more information regarding these important volunteer opportunities.

Also--Temple Beth EL will be hosting the COFM Homeless Shelter on Christmas and Christmas Eve. If you can volunteer for a shift, please contact Helen Hansen [helenfoxfhansen@gmail.com](mailto:helenfoxfhansen@gmail.com) for more information.

Sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

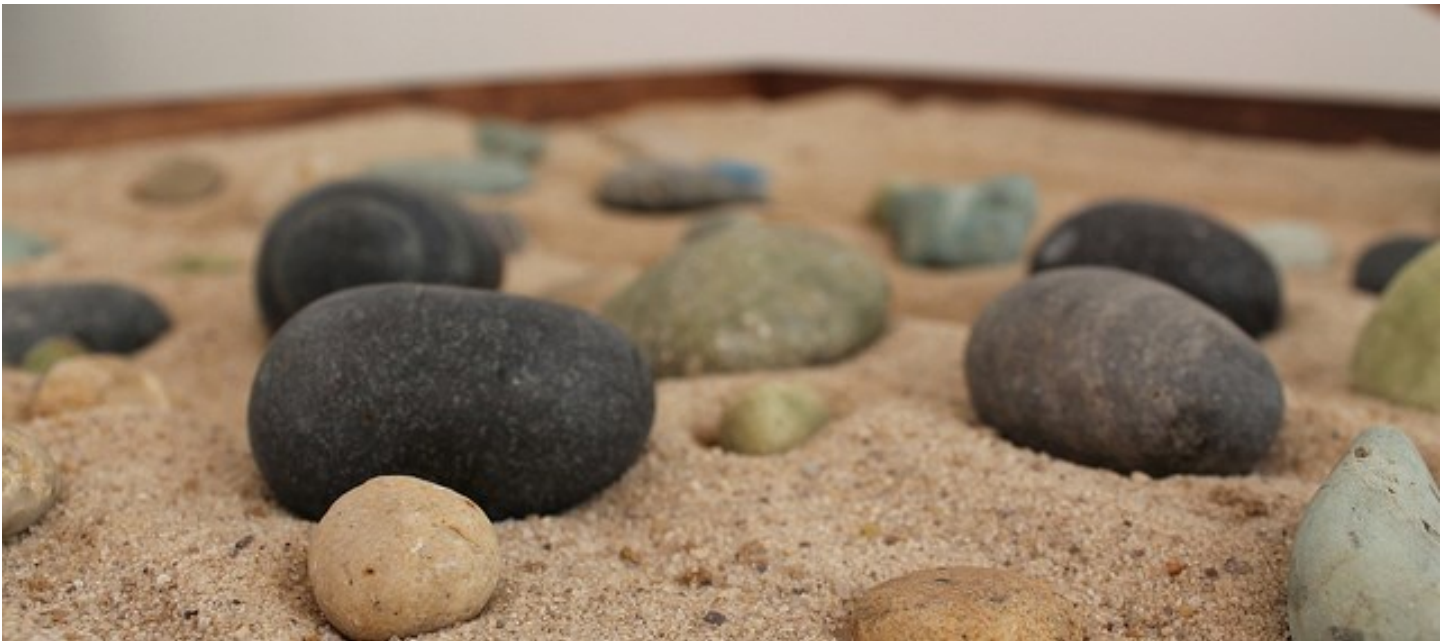


**ACT-SO**  
Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics



**Martin Luther King, Jr. NAACP ACT-SO Breakfast**

This 26th annual event honors local high-achieving high school minority students and will be held on **Monday, January 19, 2015** at the CW Lodge and Conference Center. In support of this program, WUU has again reserved a table this year (10 places). Please contact Jessica O'Brien at 810-7859 or [newjb2001@hotmail.com](mailto:newjb2001@hotmail.com) to purchase your seat. Tickets are \$40 per adult.



## COVENANT GROUP UPDATE

We have many small group ministries at WUU: from the choir to the book discussion groups, art group and meditation group, there are many ways to connect with others around a particular interest. There is a specific type of small group called **Covenant Groups**. These are groups of 8-12 people who meet twice a month for 2 hours. The groups allows for deep listening and non-judgemental sharing of ideas. It is not a support group nor is it a problem-solving group. For many people it is the only place in their lives where they can speak freely and also practice deep listening. The topics are chosen by the group or the facilitator.

Many facilitators have stepped forward, and we will be having our first **Facilitator Training Session on Thursday December 4th from 4:00 to 6:00 PM.**

*As soon as we determine the Covenant Group Meeting times and dates, we will start registration in December.*

***Covenant Groups will run from January to June, 2015***

## GROUPS FORMING

- Embodied Spiritual Practices
- Compassion Deep Study
- New WUU Members
- Open Spiritual Themes

## POTENTIAL THEMES

- Geography
- Perspective
- Play
- Stories
- Enoughness
- Anger
- Mercy

**If you are a young adult @ WUU,**  
have you ever wanted to get together with others in your own generation?

**The come join Austen Petersen as she hosts the:**

**Young Adults Gathering**  
Wednesday, December 3, 2014  
6:00 PM  
Parker House





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**TIME SENSITIVE**

**CELEBRATE! CELEBRATE!**

Looking for a way to acknowledge a friend or relative's special day? Why not make a contribution to the WUU Endowment Fund in their name. We will then send out a letter acknowledging that the WUU Endowment Fund has received a gift from you in the name of that special person. What a unique way to recognize an occasion! For a Memorial Gift Form, contact [Endowment@wuu.org](mailto:Endowment@wuu.org).

(To add your name and month to the birthday and anniversary list, contact Ellyn Stephens in the office at [office@wuu.org](mailto:office@wuu.org).)



**December Anniversaries**

The Fourniers  
 Dave and Donna Stanford



**December Birthdays**

Don Allen	Doug Randolph
Jamie Bartlett	Gerta Smith
Natalie Chamberlain	Bob Tschannen-Moran
Alina Citta Wolverton-Diggs	Rollene Wells
Larry Dorsett	Lisa Williams
Christian Felipe	Marion Wolfe
Rebecca House	
Marty Limber	
Grace McArdle	
Rob Piland	