



WUU NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
WILLIAMSBURG UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

DECEMBER 2017



You Are A Light

BY REV. LAURA HORTON-LUDWIG

We are not saints, we are not heroes. Our lives are lived in the quiet corners of the ordinary. We build tiny hearth fires, sometimes barely strong enough to give off warmth. But to the person lost in the darkness, our tiny flame may be the road to safety, the path to salvation. It is not given us to know who is lost in the darkness that surrounds us or even if our light is seen. We can only know that against even the smallest of lights, darkness cannot stand. A sailor lost at sea can be guided home by a single candle. A person lost in a wood can be led to safety by a flickering flame.

—Kent Nerburn

What if your life is bringing light to others? What if you, just by being you, are bringing hope into the world?

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I remember the day when, years ago, one of our beloved elders had a medical crisis during the worship service. He began to feel faint and then collapsed. We around him sucked in our breath, shocked, dismayed, scared. For a split second that felt much longer, no one moved. Then someone got up and went to him—one of our nurses, someone who knew what to do, thank goodness. She checked his pulse, helped him lie down. Someone else was already calling 911 for an ambulance. Give him space, she said in the firm, clear voice of one who was used to emergencies. Soon the paramedics were here. He was already recovering, trying to get up, declaring he didn't want anybody to make a fuss. All was well. But that nurse who moved so quickly to do exactly what was needed, because that's who she was and that was exactly what she knew how to do—in that moment, she embodied hope and confidence for that dear man and for all of us.

And I remember my third-grade teacher, Mr. Downs, who treated us kids like sensible, responsible people who could be trusted. He taught us cool vocabulary words like "ludicrous" and used them to good-naturedly trash-talk us kids in a competitive game of four-square on the playground. Learning was cool with him around! And one day, I remember he took me aside and said to me, "Laura, I want you to know something. You can be anything you want to be. Don't you forget it." I never have forgotten it. I hope he said that to every child. I know it gave me hope for what my life might be.

Your loved ones could tell similar stories about each one of you, I am sure. Each one of us is a light, often in ways we will never know, just by living our ordinary lives and doing our best and letting that be enough. You were born into this world as a gift. And so you are. Happy holidays!

With love,

Rev. Laura

P.S. I hope to see many of you for worship on Christmas Eve. We'll have two services: on Sunday morning at 11:15, a fun and family-friendly no-rehearsal Christmas pageant incorporating our Tabernacle Band. Children are invited to come dressed as animals, shepherds, angels, or wise people, though no costume is required! And then at 7 p.m., a contemplative service of holiday readings and music featuring our choir and other special musicians.

December Worship Schedule

DECEMBER 3

9:45 & 11:15 am

**"Wenceslas: A Winter Story of
Leadership and Service"**

Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig, Minister

We are all called to be "good kings" like the legendary Good King Wenceslas--generous to those over whom we have power, mentoring and helping younger people. In a cultural moment where too many powerful leaders have been shown to be abusing their power over others, Wenceslas' story stands out as a welcome corrective.

The WUU membership book is open for signing today by those who have completed our Pathway to Membership classes or those transferring from another UU congregation.

DECEMBER 10

9:45 & 11:15 am

**"Hope is a State of Mind:
A Biography of Mary"**

Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig, Minister

Today we celebrate the strength and wisdom of Mary--prophet, spiritual leader, and mother of a complicated family.

DECEMBER 17

9:45 & 11:15 am

"Revelations"

Worship Team Led Service

Today we explore Alvin Ailey's classic dance performance Revelations. It is a reflection on suffering, absolution and celebration. In the final days of the year we can find hope and inspiration in a beloved hymn to the human spirit.

DECEMBER 24

11:15 am

"All Ages Pageant"

**Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig, Minister
Austen Petersen, Director of Religious Ed**

We'll tell the story of Christmas in this family-friendly no-rehearsal pageant. Children are encouraged to come in costume as shepherds, angels, or their favorite animal (for the manger scene, of course--bees, dinosaurs, bunny rabbits, and creatures of every kind are welcome along with sheep and cows)! The Tabernacle Band will join in the fun.

7:00 pm

"Light in the Darkness"

Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig, Minister

All are welcome for this contemplative service of music and readings celebrating the Christmas story and the rebirth of hope in every life. .

DECEMBER 31

11:15 am-One Service Only

"Revisiting Janus:

The Two-Headed Doorway Deity"

Rev. David Tetrault, Guest Minister

For ancient Romans, an army of gods and goddesses swirled through every event human life. The image of Janus entered the pantheon as a way of calling special attention to times of social transition large and small.

Janus has a head facing forward and another looking back. He appears to balance between worlds of memory and forward resolve. He governs neither realm. He invites awareness: Janus is the origin of our word "janitor," the humble servant who keeps things clean and the door open.



Yule Sing-This Friday!

Friday December 8 at 6:00 PM

Come one, come all to the annual All-Ages Yule Sing, when we enjoy dinner and caroling in the Sanctuary. We'll sing along with music provided by Alex Schwartz while we make ornaments and decorate the Christmas tree. There will be some special activities offered for the littlest ones among us.

This event is a potluck! If you would like to bring food to share, please label food, leave out any peanuts, and bring the food ready to serve.

Contact DRE Austen Petersen: austen@wuu.org or call 757-220-6830.

It is also the time we stock our Christmas tree with packages of new underwear and socks. Please consider bringing some new socks or underwear for FISH to place under the tree (all sizes/ages need.) Come, join us for this festive annual event, which is celebrating its 28th year!



Board Report

The new Strategic Plan is beginning to take shape. Behind the scenes, our Strategic Planning Task Force, chaired by Franz Gross, drafted an outline for the process between now and July 2018. The Board approved the process that enables various leadership teams and the congregation to provide input to the draft plan as it takes shape. The Board approved the process then turned its attention to an engaging activity directed by Michael Luchs. As a result of this work, the Strategic Planning Task Force has feedback that will be used to develop a concise statement of the Board's priorities.

The Board also took action on the following on-going business:

- Approved a recommendation from Finance to spend \$3000 from the McGiffert reserve fund to purchase Audio Visual equipment for the Gathering Hall.
- Approved the next steps to address safety issues related to an active shooter situation as well as to receive an annual review of general building and grounds safety from the Campus Improvement Team.
- Approved a budget recommendation for Finance to cover Board expenses, leadership training, and conference registrations for the new 2018-19 year.
- Approved a request to have our Attorney and By-Laws committee to consider an update for the definition of "being present" for the sake of congregational votes.
- Approved a recommendation from Franz Gross, Personnel Committee chair, for Carolyn Wilson to replace retiring Committee member Kerry Mellette.

Board meetings are open to all. November's guests were Ty Alexander, process checker, and Michael Luchs from the Strategic Planning Committee.



Les Solomon
Board President



What Our Pledges Support

Spotlight on Our Religious Education Programs

A significant part of WUU members' time, talent—and financial support—is invested in our religious education program. Our program tripled in size during the first three months of this year and continues to grow as families discover our congregation and a religious education program that deepens the lives of our children.

Did you know that:

- 65 children are registered for religious education (RE)?
- Attendance levels have reached new highs—almost 50—showing the commitment of both parents and children to our RE program?
- 10 children under the age of 2 have been in our nursery at least once this fall?
- 30 adults volunteer their time this year as RE teachers and volunteers?
- WUU pays for training our OWL teachers—\$500 per training—preparing them to teach this sexuality education program?
- Nine of our middle school kids spent a November weekend in the mountains of North Carolina for a fall conference—a 1,000 mile round trip drive?
- So many children came to children's chapel one Sunday that it had to be moved from the Little Sanctuary, which wasn't large enough?
- Our Director of Religious Education, Austen Petersen, is one of the few credentialed DREs in our denomination?
- Austen created a William and Mary staff/faculty covenant group that meets monthly in the Wren Chapel, with a contact list of at least 20 participants?
- We spend more than a third of the WUU budget to support our religious education program—our staff, our spaces, and our programs?

Our pledges pay for the \$800,000 mortgage, support our professional ministry with fair compensation, and provide for programming expenses, whether larger (such as Religious Education) or smaller (membership).

We thought you'd like to know how our annual giving supports our programs.



Tabernacle Band

The annual Tabernacle Band will play at the 11:15 morning service on Sunday, Dec 24th. Any one who has played an instrument is welcome to come and participate. We'll have a rehearsal at 10:15 am in the Little Sanctuary on Dec 24. Please contact Jamie B. (jcbart@wm.edu) to obtain the music in advance.

Share the Plate



The Share the Plate collection on **December 10** will be designated for the **Community of Faith Mission (COFM)** week-long emergency shelter at WUU.

Our guests will receive gifts of new underwear, warm sweats, socks, and items that will bring warmth and comfort to them in this holiday season. We will also purchase laundry and gas cards. Any excess funds will be donated to Community of Faith Mission for shelter expenses such as bus tickets and supplies.

FYI - The expenses for food and supplies for our shelter week are partially covered in the WUU Social Justice budget. This STP donation will be used for additional supplies, gifts and extras, so please give generously.

More on the Share the Plate Program

The WUU Share the Plate Program donates the entire plate collection on the second Sunday of each month to a local charity or other non-profit that provides human services for those in need in our community.

That is only a thumbnail sketch of STP. The rationale and the results may not be so well known. So, in the coming months, we will include items in the Newsletter more fully describing the program and its results. For example, the January issue will carry a listing of contributions made in 2017 and how you may nominate potential recipient agencies. In the meantime, questions and comments may be addressed to stp@wuu.org. Stay tuned.



FISH Update

(our local food and clothing pantry)

WUU has a tradition in the month of December of collecting new packages of socks and underwear and loading them up under our Christmas tree for delivery to FISH in the beginning of January.

Socks and undergarments are one of the most requested (and often overlooked) items. All sizes and types are needed.

Please bring them to our Yule Sing Event on December 8 (see page xx) or place them in the FISH collection wagon in our hallway any time in December. Thank You!



Auction News

WUU CIRQUE DES RÊVES Auction

Saturday, February 17, 2018



As promised, tickets are now on sale for the February 17 event. We anticipate a sellout, so don't delay in securing your place at WUU's premier FUNdraiser! Click [HERE](#) to purchase online or call the WUU office at 757-220-6830.

Tickets are \$25 per person if purchased by January 31. After that date, any remaining tickets available will be \$30.

The Auction Committee is busy planning, and there are volunteer positions available in areas such as food service, set-up and decorations, greeting and auction coordination during the event, etc. Click [HERE](#) to sign up to volunteer.

Donations are beginning to come in, and we need lots of these to make the event successful. After all, it is an AUCTION! The holidays are a great time to think about what you might be able to contribute: higher value items for the LIVE auction and smaller items for the SILENT auction. Consider going in with a friend to donate a gift certificate for a getaway vacation or a dinner at a favorite restaurant. Or show off your talents by donating a beautiful item you have made, or will make/cook/teach/perform. If you own a timeshare that you won't be using in the coming year, consider donating it. The possibilities are limitless, and we need lots of items to make the event successful. Auction donation forms are available [HERE](#). For further information contact Paul Luchsinger (paulcork@cox.net).

Look for more details about the Auction in future Spirals and newsletters!!



Winter Solstice Gathering

Thursday December 21 7:30pm

Outdoors on the WUU Campus

Please join us to mark the Return of the Light on the Winter Solstice. The glow of a candlelit labyrinth and the warmth of a bonfire will help you reflect on the turning of the year and move forward with renewed spirit. It is time to realign your vibration with music, poetry and meditation.

Older children who may appreciate a service that is at times quiet and meditative are welcome; however, no childcare will be provided.



WUU Caring Team



A ride to a doctor's appointment can seem like an insurmountable task when you are incapacitated due to surgery, illness, etc. Things we take for granted like picking up a prescription or a few groceries becomes a puzzle.

The Caring Team has been called upon to do these things frequently. We are recruiting new members to help lighten the load.

If you could give an occasional ride, run an errand, take a meal or visit someone in need, please add your name and contact information to our list of volunteers. It is a rewarding experience to visit with someone while being of service to our WUU family. If you can help please contact Carolyn Greathouse or Trenna Tankersley or email caring@wuu.org. See future editions of the Spiral and Newsletter for updates.



A Winter Fundraiser for the Community of Faith Mission: Join us for WARM UP WILLIAMSBURG, a soup tasting event.

18 local chefs are donating their tastiest soups for this special event which will be held Friday, January 26, 5:15 – 8:00 pm at Williamsburg Community Chapel.

Along with soups, there will be bread, dessert and live music provided by Elderberry Jam. We also have a Bake Shop selling delicious homemade treats.

For reservations go to COFM.info or call 757-903-7031. Help support the Community of Faith Mission Winter Shelter! Call 757-903-7031 if you have any questions or wish to volunteer at the event.



Speaking From the Heart

Our members occasionally speak “from the heart” as part of Sunday worship. Ty Alexander, a new member, spoke about why he became a member of WUU. Here are excerpts from his Nov. 26th “From the Heart.”

“The first services for me were excellent and I found myself wanting to return. The new member orientation classes and group discussions really piqued my desire to continue to read and discuss UU principles with other members, sharing why they joined UU and their personal stories, journey and transition to this faith.

...I discovered I had much in common with those who left traditional religions to pursue another faith alternative.

I spent most of my life in various religious faiths—something was missing and I did not feel my need for a faith that was truly open and accepting of all-- social justice and marriage and gender equality, for example. My attendance for several years at the United Church of Christ in Pittsburg was the exception—all were truly welcomed.

Most helpful for me was reading “A Chosen Faith” by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church to gain insights to Unitarian Universalism.....

....As my awareness increased and questions were answered, through a great deal of personal meditation and reflection, I committed to membership December 2016.

My spiritual journey continues and has been a “leap of faith”. This “free and chosen faith” has exposed me to ...an alternative I have been searching for and longing to embrace.

My personal beliefs and values are much more consistent with UU than I ever realized. As I grow in my faith as a WUU and increase my engagement with the WUU congregation, I know that being here as the right decision for me.

Ty Alexander

A BIG thank you to Deborah Jane Wells for teaching the RE kids EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) this past weekend for Children's Chapel! The kids learned so much about tapping and expressing emotions in healthy ways!

You can check out Deborah's website here: <http://www.djwlifecoach.com/>



Transgender 101



Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists Sunday April 15, 2018

Transgender 101 is a foundational discussion to improve understanding of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. The training will be provided by Planned Parenthood of Greater Richmond, Virginia. We have two sessions which are developmentally appropriate. We ask participants to please stay for the entire training.

Session 1: Middle School

Room 110

11:30-12:30

Contact: Austen Petersen, Austen@wuu.org

Please RSVP by April 8th, 2018.

Session 2: Adults

Room 110

12:45-1:45



Seniors, Don't Overlook the Advantages of the IRA Charitable Distribution

If you are 70 1/2 or older, making an IRA rollover gift before December 31, 2017 is a great way for you to support Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists and our Endowment Fund. Since the provision is now permanent, each year you can direct up to \$100,000 from your IRA required distribution to charities.

The advantages of this provision:

- An IRA rollover gift can be used to meet all or part of your IRA required minimum distribution.
- You pay no income tax on the gift.
- The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your taxes.

The Endowment Committee hopes you will consider this option (Jim and I make our annual pledge for WUU operations this way, too), and members would be happy to talk to you more about this win-win way to make a gift. Contact one of us if you have questions: Greg Caldwell, Linda Foster, Ruth Fraser, Paul Luchsinger, or me.

Phoebe Kent, Endowment Committee Chair

Religious Education News

Day of the Dead Celebration



What fun it was to celebrate Day of the Dead on Thursday November 2nd here at WUU. About 60 folks of all ages came out to celebrate this holiday. Thank you, Paulina Carrion for leading us! Way to go Susan Walkley for helping the kids plant bulbs which will arise as flowers next spring! Thank you to Jessica O'Brien for making the kitchen run smoothly so that we could bake our delicious treats, shown below. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped.



Middle School

InLight Celebration

InLight Celebration took place in downtown Richmond on Friday November 3rd, and about 20 folks of all ages came to celebrate and explore art galleries! Below; one of the art displays we saw



The children made lanterns to march in the parade celebrating InLight 2017.



The Jedi Academy has explored topics of Hero Journey (referencing Joseph Campbell's work), The Light Side or the Dark Side, two different Lightsaber Practice times, and Sense of Sound. The picture below shows the group practicing with their lightsabers.



Lower Elementary

Picture Book World Religions has been such fun for the Lower Elementary group. Together, the class has explored Hinduism with stories about Rama and Sita, Savitri, and Divali, and is currently exploring Islam with stories like the Hundredth Name, and Sitti's Secrets.



Shown here: a celebration of geometric patterns in rugs that the children made to explore Islam.