

The St. Louis Unitarian

December 2016 Vol. 47 No. 6

Worship, RE and Nursery 10:00 a.m.

DECEMBER 2016 WORSHIP INFORMATION

December 4

“The Journey of the Heart”

Rev. Gary James

The Advent season—the four weeks before Christmas—is a time of preparation on our part so that we might truly enter into the heart of Christmas. We are easily distracted by the noise of Christmas muzak and the obsession with shopping. On the first Sunday of December, with the help of T.S. Eliot (*The Journey*) and Samuel Beckett (*Waiting For Godot*), I will provide an opportunity for all those who are in church to enter into the deep spiritual heart of Christmas.

December 11

“Music Sunday”

Joel Knapp

The choir will combine with harpist Sue Taylor to share Benjamin Britten’s *A Ceremony of Carols*.

December 18

The Annual Christmas Pageant

Lynn Hunt, Credentialed Religious Educator

This is our annual Christmas Pageant. People of all ages share in enacting our version of the Birth of Jesus and connecting with the power of story in our modern lives. Each year unique elements are added to the sheep and shepherds, townspeople, centurions, Mary, Joseph and dancing angels.

December 24

Christmas Eve Serices at 4:30 and 6:00 pm

Rev. Gary James

This night we will sing old songs, and traditional words, light warm candles in the darkness, remember the sacred stories and awaken the present hope, born again and again in our hearts, minds and actions.

**Designated
Collections**



**Auction
News
page 5**



**Partner
Church
News
Page 10**



**FAIR
TRADE
COFFEE
SALES**

**DECEMBER 4
& DECEMBER
18**

Minister's Muse

MINISTER, REV. GARY JAMES

I am one of them. I confess it. I am an autumn person. I prefer to move slowly, to sit in contemplation and brood over memories of long lost friends and old lovers; to recall, with melancholy, places I have lived to which I will never return. I love to gaze upon the barren trees in November, unsurpassed in beauty with their blanket of curling brown leaves covering the ground beneath them. There is a wisdom to be gleaned from this season, a wisdom that comes as fall's brilliant crimson and gold passes, leaving only the barren branch silhouetted against a grey-blue sky. Fall's days are often somber ones, particularly those days when it is raw and windy. On days such as these in the midst of my brooding, looking out at Autumn's landscape, I discern that which I had been unable to see - a vision that is quiet and soul calming, possessing distance and design.

In the fall nature walks naked bearing its skeletal structure. I mean, have you ever stopped and really looked at a tree in fall, naked against the immense sky, and known the tree to be the epiphany – a visitation of the holy – that nature was holding up for you so that you might see? In fall life is seen in its essential beauty. Removing its outer garments, she stands naked before us in her austere poverty, a good poverty, more honest, lean and harder than it ever was when all was glamoured by a green and then golden screen. The passion and commotion of summer having passed, we now look at last upon a larger landscape, grand and bare. In nature's mirror we are invited to gaze and let go as do the trees, of our less essential needs and look upon a revealed nakedness that is our leaner selves.

It was not until I grew older that I began to realize the importance of autumn and the other seasons. I may never have realized their deep meaning had I not lived in California for so many years. It was in Berkeley, while a seminary student, that I became aware of the absence of seasons and a feeling of loss. There are, of course, seasons in the bay area, but they are not painted in the bold colorful strokes we find here in the Midwest. They do not imprint themselves on the inner landscape as do our seasons. The seasons are sacraments of life's journey on its deepening migrations. We discover through them our own nature. We enter into a larger communion with life.

Our seasons are the vessels in which we experience our limits as those that life gracefully bestows upon us. Each year conveys, within its full cycle, a beginning, a middle, and an end – a birth and a death and a faith in rebirth, as the wise sage of Ecclesiastes wrote; "For everything there is a season . . ."

These reflections on fall bring to mind a time, some years ago, when I was a student at Antioch College. I was studying art and it was sculpture that I was drawn to with its lifelike three dimensions. I was God enacting the Genesis story. For hours without end I would sculpt in clay human figures. Sculpting in clay requires building first an armature of metal, the skeletal structure that I would pinch and squeeze clay onto until a human figure emerged. If they were worthy of casting in metal, I would save them, but more often than not I would have to pull the clay from the armature until the skeleton of metal was exposed and the sculpting clay returned to the barrel for the next sculptor's creation.

-continued on page 14-



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

TIFFANY SEWELL, POLICY BOARD PRESIDENT

Give Thanks and Bring Presence

The winter holidays are upon us – and however you celebrate, I hope you will join me in giving thanks wherever possible. In today's hectic world, we often rush from one task to the next without taking time to be thankful for the gifts in our lives. What are you thankful for?

I am personally thankful for the hard work of each and every leader in our church. From committee chairs to task force heads to members of the Policy Board and Church Council, I would like to thank each and every one of them for giving their time and talents to serve our congregation. The job you do differs based on the role you have, but your efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

I'm also thankful for everyone who participated in our "Home Sweet Home" auction. Many thanks go out to Emily Jaycox for spearheading a fun event that would not have been possible but for the help of a small army of volunteers, donors and participants. Efforts like this help to provide a hospitable sanctuary, and you made the auction a rousing success, with donations of over \$18,000!

I'm thankful for our LGBTQIA+Allies covenant group for hosting their first Transgender/Genderqueer Allyship workshop on November 13th. At a time when our country desperately needs to remember that kindness trumps (see what I did there?) intolerance, sessions like this one and those hosted by our Towards Justice group provide great examples of how we can enable people to work for love, decency, tolerance and justice.

But when the turkey is gone and we've said our thanks, what then? Then it's time to talk presents – or, as I prefer, presence! Take some time to decide how you will make your presence felt this holiday season. Will you strike up a conversation with a new visitor in Fellowship Hall? Will you take Carole Watson's challenge to bring a canned item for each member of your family, each time you come to church, to benefit the food pantry? Or will you create a new tradition for yourself this year?

My family started our holiday tradition two years ago: each December 28th, we take toys to the Humane Society in honor of my late mother's birthday. This year, in honor of her 59th birthday, we'll be dropping off 59 dog toys and 59 cat toys for animals in need. It isn't a huge effort, but then not everything we do has to be big. As Steve Jobs said, "Things don't have to change the world to be important." Take a moment to think on that quote, and ask yourself, what important thing will you do with your presence this year?

Happy Holidays!

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DESIGNATED COLLECTIONS—As a way of putting our faith into action, we as a church periodically dedicate one of our collections to a worthy non-profit or church program. October's designated collections are 100 Neediest Cases (Dec. 4th), The Robert Ford Haitian Foundation (Dec. 11th), and the Southside Early Childhood Center on Christmas Eve (Dec. 24th).

With roots that date back to 1900, the 100 Neediest Cases today serves more than 10,000 families each year. Administered by the United Way, and with administration costs funded by the St. Louis Post Dispatch and over 100 other agencies, 100% of every dollar donated goes to needy families. This designated collection was nominated by Kimberly Perry.

The Robert Ford Haitian Foundation serves the people of Grison-Garde, Haiti. It began with the creation of an orphanage and primary school and has expanded to include secondary and technical schools, Elderly Village, wells, meals, and health care. 100% of donated funds to projects, and all projects are initiated and executed by the local community. There has been tremendous growth in all of the foundation's projects, both in the number of people served and the types of projects developed. Many of the original orphans and students are now going to college, which is very rare in Haiti.

Lisa Ross states, "I have been involved for eight years and have seen the success of the projects. What I love about the foundation is the community based, community run model, which means that all the projects fill a need perceived by the community. Also 100% of

the donations go to the projects; there are no administrative costs. This designated collection was nominated by Lisa Ross.



Southside Early Childhood Center exists to provide quality care and preschool education to under-served populations. It was established in 1886 by a group of 15 Unitarian women concerned that the working poor in factories, house services or caring for others' children did not have adequate child care or access to educational opportunities for their own children. It does not discriminate in regard to race, ethnicity nor socioeconomic levels. Its mission is to nurture, educate and inspire children and families in a diverse and inclusive environment, promoting healthy development and a strong foundation for success. Its vision is that children develop a lifelong love of learning, flourish within a supportive family environment and contribute positively to their communities. This designated collection was nominated by church members Gina Hoagland and Rosemary Lawton.

First Church Food Project

Your donation of canned meats, fish and stews as well as jars of peanut butter and boxes of powdered milk can help individuals in need feed themselves and their loved ones. Donations of personal care products: soaps, body washes, toothpaste and toothbrushes, as well as deodorant and shampoos, are also welcome.

AUCTION NEWS

How to say THANK YOU to everyone who helped to make the November 5 church auction a success? Let me count the ways!

Thanks to the **109** people who were at church on the night of the auction (either ticket holders, or stopping by to help out); **39** people who donated services or certificates to be auctioned; **38** individuals who worked before and/or during the event; and **5 whole committees** that donated food, gift baskets, made Fellowship Hall festive, and advised on event planning (Knitting Ministry, Fair Trade, Policy Board, Women's Alliance, and members of the former Feasts and Festivals Committee)...

At last count (with more contributions continuing to arrive), money raised after expenses exceeded \$18,500 - a very exciting result for a starting goal of \$10,000!

The theme of the auction was "Home Sweet Home," celebrating our congregation's 100th year in this building in the Central West End, where it has served as a meeting place for people of all faiths who want to work together on issues of justice and inclusivity. In that time our church home has served as an incubator for cultural organizations like the West End Players and service organizations like Food Outreach. In another act of hospitality, in the 1980s we sponsored a Vietnamese immigrant family - the second generation of which is now running the much-acclaimed restaurant, Mai Lee. Today, our congregation is the gathering place for area UUs attending the Pride Parade, and is a place for continued engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement.

We also have found many ways to use our church home in the service of religious tolerance. Central Reform Congregation, our neighbors across the street, rented space from us for 15 years before building their own building. A group of Catholic women who had become persona non grata in the eyes of the Roman Catholic hierarchy for ministering to Catholics as inclusive and welcoming priests, now hold their weekly services in our chapel, as does the Center for Pragmatic Buddhism.

The lack of specific religious symbolism in our building makes it a much more hospitable place for people of many faiths. We know this, because many of us personally have struggled to find a church home that encompasses all of the sources we bring to our personal spiritual journey without imposing specific doctrine. Many of us have searched for a place to raise an interfaith family, or (in the days before Marriage Equality) a minister and a church that would perform a civil union.

The auction theme is meant in all those senses: this location where we gather, the community we form together, and the place where we bring diverse parts of our selves and our world to make a spiritual home. Thanks to your support of the auction, you have helped strengthen our Home Sweet Home.

Emily Troxell Jaycox, Auction Chair





FAIR TRADE COFFEE SALES

December 4 & 18

Remember that we now accept *credit and debit cards* as payment through PayPal, in addition to cash and checks. All Fair Trade products sold at First Church support small-scale farmers and their local cooperatives in the authentic Fair Trade model. Thank you for being a part of this. It matters.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

The Women's Alliance will hold one meeting in December. On Dec. 13th, we will hold a business meeting at 11:00 am, followed by lunch and cookie baking. All women of the church are invited to bring a lunch and join us. Coffee and tea and cookie making materials will be provided.

—Deborah Richie

PARTNER CHURCH

The Partner Church Committee will be holding their annual bake sale on December 11, so be sure to stop by Fellowship Hall following the service to stock up goodies for the holidays.

—Judy Crouch



Hanging of the Greens

Help prepare the church for the Christmas Season!

Hanging of the Greens is an annual family-friendly event to celebrate the start of the holiday season.

All are welcome to share in a catered meal and decorate the church for the Christmas season. On Friday-December 2nd, there will be crafts, a catered dinner, carol singing, decorating of the tree and church, and—rumor has it—some time with a special annual visitor! Doors open at 6:00 with dinner starting around 6:30. Cost for the meal is \$10 adults, \$5 children 12 and under, with a family cap of \$30. Infant care is available. Parents and children eat together in Fellowship Hall. This is a BYOB event for adult beverages.

You can register and pay at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2gezvs4> or sign up in Fellowship Hall on Sunday or pay at the door.

We need your help to make sure the event is fun for all, so if you've ever wanted to put up the tree or be an elf, you can volunteer at the following link or sign up in Fellowship Hall on Sunday. <http://bit.ly/2gezvs4>

Please join us for a wonderful evening.

—Brittany Hagedorn and Dan Livengood



Church Council Chair Notes

**Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field.**

**I'll meet you there.
(Sufi Mystic Rumi)**

How do we get to that field? That is the question, at least for me. The path that I seek is one of non-violence, one that is not blocked by walls of rhetoric crafted of insults and hate. I would hope to walk along a trail strewn with leaves of kindness and civility, blown from trees bending to the strong breezes of compassion. I hope to walk this path in community, with many voices raised to stand up for justice and fairness for all, for a country free from fear and intimidation.

And when we reach that sacred field, we bear the difficult responsibility of not blaming, but seeking to understand. Of resurrecting respect and common courtesy toward one another. Of forging common ground upon which we can all build a nation our grandchildren will be proud to call home. No simple task.

So I'm asking you, each of my fellow members of our beloved Unitarian community, to join me in doing several things, large and small. First, wear a safety pin on your lapel, signifying to anyone who is confused and fearful in today's world that you are a "safe person" to talk with, to be with, to build with.

Second, bring a can of food to church each and every Sunday, one can from every member of your family, all winter, spring, summer and fall. Let's live those words, "I was hungry, and you fed me."

Third, think hard, pray hard, and come up with the best ways for us as a religious community to stand up to bigotry and hatred, to have a loud voice demanding fair and equal treatment for all, shouting *zero tolerance* for rhetoric and laws that close doors unfairly and undermine our fragile democracy.

Perhaps we can give voice to our beliefs via social media and print media. What would that sound like? Send me your ideas at cw63130@gmail.com. We could demonstrate our beliefs along Kingshighway every Sunday after church. Or embrace an all-church social justice project we can ALL get behind, and invite the larger community, Trump supporters included, to join in. Let me know what you think.

As Unitarian martyr Francis David said so many years ago, "We do not have to think alike, to love alike." Democracy, indeed, begins in our hearts.

Share the love,
—Carole Watson, Council Chair

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT

LYNN HUNT,

CREDENTIALLED RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR

This is the time of year that we tell ourselves powerful stories from our religious heritages. Stories of improbable light and birth. Stories of hope in the darkest of times. Stories that recognize despair and longing and, at the same time, courage and tenderness. That these stories endure is testament to the importance they still hold as metaphors to guide us through the troubles of our personal lives and of those in the world around us. I hope you find time to enjoy, take comfort and enliven our living faith tradition in this time of story. May each of you have a warm and safe holiday season. Here are some dates and upcoming programs – with peace – *Lynn Hunt, Credentialed Religious Educator*

For Children and Youth

December 4th – Nifty Gifty – This is our annual gift making Sunday. Children will come to the Chapel for lots of fun and creativity. **Also, remember to bring a new unwrapped toy on this morning to support our annual toy drive for Project Ark. December 11th is the last Sunday we can accept donations. The Youth Group** will prepare and serve the hot lunch for hungry people in our community at Trinity Episcopal Church.

December 11th -- Pageant Scenery Set-Up (11:15) – All hands on deck to assemble our stage set for the Pageant!

December 17th – Pageant Rehearsal (9:30 – noon) – details of the rehearsal will be mailed to all families.

December 18th – Pageant – Sunday School children will present a traditional Christmas Pageant during the 10:00am service.

December 25th – RE Winter Break – No Service/No RE Classes

Second Semester Religious Education Teachers

The second semester of Religious Education is approaching and there are several teaching openings. Teaching is one of the greatest and fundamental gifts to the congregation, our children, and the tradition of liberal religion that you can give. It is also one of the best ways to get to know the families in the RE program, develop a closer connection with the children and, also, a great way to learn yourself. Look for the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall or contact Lynn Hunt if you would like to participate. Thanks in advance.

Special Thanks to everyone who has been teaching in the Sunday School:

Karen Siegrist, Lynda Mueller Drendel, Sue Fazio, Claire Weichselbaum, Michelle Green, Joel Minor, Shannon O'Boyle, Kathy Wilke, Dan Wilke, Nick Annin, Molly Koebbe, Jess Green, Noah Durham, Sara Park, and Victoria Bonvento.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve with all of you.

For All

Project Ark is committed to providing services that enhance the lives of children, youth, young adults, women and families infected, affected and at risk for AIDS through coordination of medical care, social support and prevention services. They are the only organization in the St. Louis metropolitan area that specifically coordinates medical care, social support and prevention services for these demographics.

You can support this organization's holiday toy distribution project by bringing in a new, unwrapped toy for a child between the ages of one and fourteen. We can accept donations through December 11th.

For Adults

Covenant Groups

In Covenant Groups people come together in a circle of trust, in covenant, to be in right relation with one another with respect and care. We cultivate deep listening as each person takes a turn in a kind of sacred space to express what stirs in them about the topic of the session. The careful listening enriches the lively back and forth interchange that follows. If you would like more information about joining a group you can: sign up in Fellowship Hall, call the Faith Development Office (314-361-0595 ext 25) or send a message through the website (<http://www.firstuustlouis.org/engaging/covenant-groups>).

TOWARD JUSTICE

Toward Justice (Anti-Racism) Group

The Toward Justice Group, formed in the wake of the Ferguson events, meets monthly to discuss Racial Justice actions in which we can participate and reform issues for which we will advocate.

In the past several months we have written to the St. Louis Police Officers Association asking their board to seriously consider the damage their spokesperson does to the community (this was in support of the Anti-Racist Collective's initiative) and a letter to the Kirkwood School District Administration calling for them to publicly apologize for the manner in which a situation with a white high school wearing 'black face' was han-

dled (this was in support of the WE CAN initiative). We hosted several forums on issues of racial justice and community reform for the congregation and a book discussion. In addition, several members participated with Metropolitan Congregations United phone banking effort to defeat Amendment 6 – voter I.D. (the amendment passed).

Member **Lisa Ross** has been working with the MCU education committee. Through her efforts we hosted an education session on how to work with the local St. Louis County Family Courts and reforms that have been mandated by the DOJ. Several members also attended the MCU mass meeting during which school districts from around the region were publicly asked to work towards ending out of school suspension for PreK – 3rd grade. There is information on this effort at the Faith Development table in Fellowship Hall – come check on whether or not your local school district participated.

Members of Toward Justice continue to attend various educational events that are offered throughout the metropolitan area. Our future plans include an event on Inauguration Day (January 20th) to express our UU values of justice, equity and compassion for all, a screening and discussion of the documentary (Feb. 13th) and another book discussion in March. We also will continue advocacy work in conjunction with MCU and other area organizations.

If you would like to receive our newsletter of such events, please sign-up in Fellowship Hall or contact Lynn Hunt.

Our next meeting is December 1st at 6:30pm – Join Us!

Partner Church News

“A Personal Reflection about the Trip to Transylvania,”

By Tom Crouch

Walking down a steep, cobbled path from the citadel village above the city of Segesvar, after lunch at Prince Charles’ favorite Transylvanian restaurant, we heard a violinist playing. As we passed, I tossed a few coins in his case and he responded with “I love America.” In my mind, I was flattered by this seeming tribute to our country, and us, as its tourist representatives. Of course, his response could have been completely due to the coins we gave him, or perhaps, he was truly thankful for the role of the U.S. in helping bring about the collapse of the Soviet bloc, which had set the stage for the revolution that led to the demise of Ceausescu’s regime in 1989. Recent military investments by the U.S. have probably also contributed to Romanian prosperity, but was the violinist even aware of such things? In any event, I felt a sense of pride hearing his statement. But, was I lending support to the contention of many of our country’s conservative politicians who claim American “exceptionalism” in today’s world? Is the U.S. exceptional when compared to other countries, possessing unique political and moral qualities ingrained in our society? What new conclusions and judgments would I make based on this new experience in eastern Europe?

What was true nature of this country, hobbled over the centuries by invasions, genocide, and authoritarian rulers? Our tour leader, John Dale, who, along with his wife Csilla Kolcsar, run the UUA Travel Service, served

as our capable leaders for much of the trip, providing wide-ranging information on the history, geography, religion and economy of, first, Hungary, and then Romania. Both are residents of Romania, and Csilla has deep roots in the country. We were, I believe, their 22nd UUA tour group that they have accompanied this year to primarily Transylvania, but also the Philippines and India, where Unitarianism is also present. It was from their great depth of experience in Transylvania and also in guiding Americans to these locations that they prepared us for our initial encounters with the local people. They emphasized the need to “go with the flow” and to not expect the superficial friendliness to which we were accustomed in our normal Midwestern American abodes. In fact, with some exceptions, when we arrived in Budapest and set out from our hotel to do things individually, Judi and I found many of the people we met to be unfriendly, unhelpful and unsmiling, even when we were purchasing items or ordering meals at restaurants. Hotel personnel were a notable exception to this generalization. Were these attitudes a consequence of “Ugly American” tourist attitudes or the genuine, collective hardships suffered by most people living in these areas over the centuries? Food for thought.

As we approached the Hungarian-Romanian border, John gave us specific instructions to follow when the border guard boarded our bus to collect our passports. Keep your legs and possessions out of the aisle and when asked about your origin and destination be sure to answer

“Budapest” and “Cluj” he admonished us. He further explained that this advice was based on difficulties they had encountered previously, and following it would make our passage easier and quicker. It did--we only had to wait about half an hour before our passports were brought back to the bus. In books I read preparing for the trip, I became acquainted with the terrible ordeals the populace of eastern Europe endured during the time of the Soviet bloc, and really, stretching back centuries before. What were we getting into, I wondered? Will we have any trouble getting out of the country to go home?

As we encountered more people and places, however, these initial impressions and questions started to change or be answered. For one thing, we were with a relatively large group of travelers. In addition to the 10 of us from First U., there were 13 from Eliot Chapel and an additional 3 from a church in New Hampshire. We began to meld as a group as we rode together in our comfortable bus availing ourselves of the wealth of knowledge John, Csilla and Magda (Csilla’s sister) provided, and getting to know one another through this common experience. Unspoken worries were dissipating and the scenery was proving intriguing. As our learning process continued and we got to know one another, my confidence grew, and along with it the pure enjoyment of learning about this enchanting part of the world—Transylvania. Visiting the Unitarian headquarters and a Sunday service at the “Mother Church” in Kolozsvar seemed to be a real turning point for me. We were now absorbing the shared heritage of our “American” brand of Unitarianism with that currently practiced in Romania and Hungary, which had developed as a part of the larger protestant reformation movement in 16th Century Hungary.

As we left the seat of Unitarianism, the incredible, beautiful vistas of the Carpathian foothills, along with the running commentary about the Transylvanian region became truly mesmerizing to me. Along the way, we stopped at historically significant castles, citadels, cathedrals and churches.

Eventually, as we reached our Unitarian village area of Trei Sate, cities had diminished in size and the country-side vistas were dotted with small villages, each with light-colored white and tan-plastered buildings and clumps of church steeples dominating their skylines. Green fields, forests and hills continued as backdrops. I began to understand the love affair that previous travelers from our church had expressed for this area. It appeared to be a place seemingly unspoiled by modernity!

In next month’s newsletter, you will learn some details about our stay in Csokfalva. Suffice it to say, for now, that when we returned to our first church service back in St. Louis (Oct. 2), I could not avoid conjuring up a multisensory remembrance of our Thanksgiving Service in Csokfalva, merely a week before. The pews had been much harder and cramped, the scent of the air was that of an “old” place, the spoken language indecipherable, and yet the friendships, love and community that had been forged in our four days at the village had been very similar to what we experience at First Church in St. Louis!

As you may have concluded from reading my account, I started the trip with some trepidation, but in the end, the trip lived up to its advanced billing by previous travelers as “life-changing.” The answer to my

-continued on page 16-

RECYCLING



Don't forget....the church belongs to a recycling

program with **Quill**, our office supply company. The church receives rebates for recycling inkjet cartridges. Recycle bins are found in the copy area of the church office.



**DON'T FORGET
TO LIKE US,
FOLLOW US
AND CHECK-IN
ON
FACEBOOK**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FITNESS: BODY, MIND AND SOUL....

QIGONG OFFERED AT FIRST UU

- **Qigong** combines mindful, gentle, physical postures and movements with meditation, breath-work, sounds (mantras) and self-massage techniques to revitalize your Vital Life Force energies and to enhance physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing.
- **Qigong** techniques help to dissolve accumulated stress and fatigue, increase energy, and strengthen the immune system.
- Accumulated daily practice of **Qigong** movements and meditation build up a storehouse of Qi energy and also lead to enhanced concentration, improved mental focus, and greater intuitive functioning.



*Hour long Qigong classes on Tuesdays
at 2pm in Hope Chapel.*

These are pay-as-you-can classes.



TOASTMASTERS CLUB

Join us each first and third Sunday at 7 p.m. in the Clark Room. For information contact Stan Veyhl at (314) 863-3229 or sveyhl@earthlink.net.

DO YOU SHOP ON-LINE?



When making your on-line purchases be sure to log on to GoodSearch.com. Search for your items through Good Search, each search earns money for First Unitarian Church. The potential is SO MUCH higher...cost to you...ZERO!

Simply go to the GoodSearch website, log-on and input "First Unitarian Church of St. Louis" into the field that asks for what group you want to support. It's that easy.

It's a free and easy way to raise money for our church and get some of your shopping finished.

Each month, GoodSearch sends the church a check!



Don't forget to use your eScrip card when shopping at Schnucks. The church receives a percentage each time you shop. Don't have an eScrip Card? Stop by the sign-up table in Fellowship Hall and pick up one this Sunday. Simply register on-line and you are ready to earn money for First Unitarian Church.

ROAD TO MEMBERSHIP



Anyone who wishes to join our congregation as a member may sign the membership book on the last Sunday of each month shortly after the service.

The minister or a board officer (President, Church Council Chair, Secretary or Treasurer) will meet you on the Sanctuary chancel.

We welcome you to our religious community

JOYS AND CONCERNS FROM NOVEMBER 2016

Let us keep in our minds all who live with grief or joy this day, those who are healing from illness or surgery and those who have family members who are ill.

—**Carolyn Nolan** passed away on Friday, October 21. A memorial service was held on October 26.

—**Lorraine Wallis**, our eldest member, had a recent decline in health and died on Friday, September 23. A memorial service was held November 6.

—**Donald Jeffries** is now cancer free and his other health concerns continue to be challenging

—**Kathy and Jim Wire** celebrated the arrival of their second grandchild. Brooke Elizabeth Spellman arrived on October 5 in Columbia, MO.

—**Jim Stoien** recently celebrated his 70th birthday at Delmar Gardens West.

IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT ORDERING

YOUR HOLIDAY POINSETTIAS!

Help decorate the sanctuary for the holidays by purchasing one or more poinsettias. After they create a festive atmosphere for December services, you may take them home for your own enjoyment anytime after the Christmas Eve service. Contact Dottie Kinscherf via e-mail at dottiek@att.net or during coffee hour for more details. Cost is \$10 per 6" pot, payable at signup.



-continued from page 2—Minister's Muse-

The dismantling of these human figures was always for me a poignant moment. I would slowly un-create what I had created, pinching and pulling away legs and shoulders, half a torso, the head. As I pulled away the clay from the body, exposing the wire bones, the figure would become in its loss, more significant than it was in the moment of forming it.

The clay figures, like the trees in fall, were mirrors in which I glimpsed creation in a more discerning way. There is a truth that is found not by adding anything, but by a process of subtraction. This subtraction is a process of essentialization. It is this essential wisdom, the wisdom that is revealed in fallen leaves and barren branches that autumn would bestow upon us.

See you in church,
—Gary

MEMORIALS AND SPECIAL GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

THANK YOU FOR THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL DONATIONS:

- A total of \$529 was donated to Designated Collections on October 16 for **Sandwich Making**.
- A total of \$561.25 was donated to Designated Collections on October 23 for **UUNO**.
- A total of \$1,062 was donated to Designated Collections on November 6 for **Partner Church**.
- A total of \$53 was collected for **UNICEF**.
- A total of \$1,352.06 in memory of **Carolyn Nolan**.
- A total of \$2,000 in memory of **Shirley Bassett**

CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

Please keep in mind that the calendar is updated daily and does not show outside rentals. Refer to the Web Site calendar for up-to-date information.

Thursday, December 1

5:00 p.m. - Facilities Meeting (C1)

Sunday, December 4

Bake Sale/Family Chapel

10:00 a.m. - Worship Service (S)
11:15 a.m. - Visitor Orientation
11:30 a.m. - Young Adult Planning Meeting (DR)

Tuesday, December 6

2:00 p.m. - Qigong Class (CH)

Wednesday, December 7

8:00 a.m. - Legislators Breakfast—MCU (FH)
7:30 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 11

Fair Trade Coffee/Newsletter Deadline/

Partner Church Holiday Bake Sale

9:00 a.m. - Sandwich Making for the Homeless
10:00 a.m. - Worship Service (S)
11:15 a.m. - Pageant Scenery set up (S)
11:15 a.m. - Fire Side Chat (DR)
11:30 a.m. - Knitting Ministry (C7)
11:30 a.m. - How to be a Transgender... (CLK)
7:00 p.m. - Toastmasters (CLK)

Tuesday, December 13

2:00 p.m. - Qigong Class (CH)
6:00 p.m. - Policy Board Meeting (C1)

Tuesday, December 14

2:00 p.m. - Qigong Class (CH)

Saturday, December 17

9:30 a.m. - Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 18

10:00 a.m. - Worship Service (S)
11:30 a.m. - Colton Covenant Group (C7)
11:30 a.m. - Partner Church Committee (CLK)
11:30 a.m. - Kelley/Veyhl Covenant Group (C8)
11:30 a.m. - Feinberg Covenant Group
7:00 p.m. - Toastmasters (CLK)

Tuesday, December 20

10:00 a.m. - Newsletter Folding
2:00 p.m. - Qigong Class (CH)

Wednesday, December 21

7:30 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal

Friday, December 23

7:00 p.m. - Young Adult Vespers & Fellowship (CH)

Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve Service

Sunday, December 25

NO Christmas Service

Tuesday, December 27

2:00 p.m. - Qigong Class (CH)
7:00 p.m. - Church Council Meeting (C1)

Wednesday, December 28

6:00 p.m. - Susan Knoll Covenant Group (L)
7:30 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, December 31

New Years Eve

For updates to the church calendar visit

firstuustlouis.org

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

**Newsletter
Deadline:
Sunday,
December 11**

**Newsletter Folding
Tuesday, December 20**

-continued from page 11 (Partner News)

“exceptionalism” question was one that I had felt I knew the answer to, in my heart, prior to going, but can now answer with some new authority since I have actually experienced the people and culture of this new part of the world. The U.S. and its people are not “exceptional,” but merely a component of a world where humans have been universally affected by natural and human-caused events. Events in our history were equally horrific if we go back far enough in time. What a wonderful gift of understanding, enlightenment and friendship we travelers experienced as a result of this “pilgrimage!”

Hopefully, our tales of adventure can motivate future groups to continue in this worthy tradition of meeting new people and solidifying long-distance partnerships. Also, what a thrill it would be to help support a reciprocal visit to St. Louis by our Partner Minister, Lorant Tokes and his family, with perhaps some other newly-found friends from his Csokfalva congregation, within the next several years.

To learn more about our trip, please mark your calendars for the week of January 22-28, which we will be calling “Partner Church Week,” since it will contain two events of great interest: 1) our special Partner Church Sunday worship service on January 22 with Roger Bertschausen, the new Executive Director of the UUA Partner Church Council, preaching, and then 2) on the following Saturday, January 28, a special program entitled “25 Years of Partnership—A Silver Anniversary Celebration,” including music, slide presentation and trip recollections by our “pilgrims.” As always, our fabulous Hungarian dinner, with some new tweaks to our recipes, will precede the program. Please save these dates!

As many of you have heard, I am leaving First Unitarian. I'm not leaving St. Louis or going to another church -- I just need to clear space for pursuing my “hell, yes!” particularly around my work. This congregation has been a very significant part of my life since 2008 and so it feels really important for me to honor the way we have woven our lives together. It has been a privilege to witness and participate in the life of this congregation over the last 8 years. Thank you for supporting me and my brother through his 3 month hospitalization in 2013. Thank you for being a place that could hold the milieu of my spiritual beliefs. Thank you for being a space where I could try to find/create what I was looking for. Thank you for connecting with me and giving me a sense of belonging in this community. I appreciate very much the generosity and open heartedness of the many folks who've reminded me I'm welcome to come back any time for Sunday morning worship or other activities. Thank you for making space for me to live this transition in a way that feels in integrity with who I am. If you'd like to read a longer version of this farewell letter including many memories, it's available here: <http://tinyurl.com/firstulove>. I leave you with blessings of remembering the spark of divinity inside you and knowing you are woven into the fabric of this community, always. With love, respect, gratitude, and deep appreciation -- Paulita Pranschke



OUR NEW MEMBERS: MEET LINDA SPINA

Have you said hello to Linda Spina? not, you are missing a vivacious, outgoing woman, who joined our Church last spring. She and her husband, Costan, live in Creve Coeur. They grew up in Michigan and met at Michigan State. Linda retired after teaching for 43 years mostly to elementary school kids in Kirkwood.

She also worked as a reading specialist and language arts specialist. Her husband continues to teach history at Villa Duchesne.

Linda grew up as a Lutheran, Costan as a Catholic. They raised their two kids (now 30 and 33) as Catholics, spending much of their time at St. Francis Xavier, the St. Louis University College Church. The UU chemistry really worked when they came to First Unitarian. She was overjoyed to find friendly people from diverse backgrounds, a philosophical and intellectual minister, wonderful music, the right balance of ritual and informality, and great summer programs. Linda says that the “Search is the Answer” banner captures her spiritual philosophy. She became a member last spring. Her husband comes to church as well but is in Linda’s words “less of a joiner.”

Linda has long been interested in the role of food in health care and skeptical of the power of pharmaceutical companies. She represents a company called Juice Plus that sells condensed fruit and vegetable pills. She also has an interest in “Tower Gardens” vertical gardens that grow a mix of as many as 20 different fruits and vegetables in a small space. She volunteers at the Refresh Shop, a resell store that offers used clothing in support of the Foster Care Coalition.

With an 87-year-old father, a 92-year-old mother-in-law, both in Michigan, and a son in Chicago, she and her husband can’t make every Sunday to Church, but they want to do more in the coming months. Do yourself a favor, say hello. -- *penned by Charlie Kindleberger, Spotlight Team*

—Norma Vogelweid

PROFILE OF NEW MEMBER CLAIRE WEICHSELBAUM

You may not see Claire every Sunday in church, but that's because you are in the Sanctuary while she is with the K-1st grade RE class. If you stay for coffee hour, however, you can usually find her at the Young Adults table.



A native of Chicago, Claire came to work on her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at Washington University. Her area of interest is the molecular basis of behavior, including psychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders. Claire got involved with Unitarian Universalism while she was in college at Bryn Mawr, where she participated in the campus UU community and attended the Main Line Unitarian Universalist Church. After graduation she moved to Washington, D.C. for a position at the NIH. There she joined the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, MD and started teaching RE classes.

Although she has no children of her own, Claire enjoys children's RE as a meaningful way she can give to her church community and the larger society. She loves the thought of helping to shape the future of our UU faith community. She organized the 6th grade "mystery box" project two years ago as her students explored how to make good things happen - the positive side of the "Why do Bad Things Happen?" curriculum. This year she's working with our youngest in the church community, the K-1st grade class who have named themselves "The Loving Bobcats" (after many rounds of voting and discussion!).

Claire has been attending and teaching RE at First Unitarian for two years and signed the membership book in August 2016. She also coordinates the Young Adults Group vespers service on the last Friday of each month, and welcomes everyone to join in. In November, vespers will instead be held on Friday the 18th as part of the Young Adults "Friendsgiving" potluck – all are welcome! -- *penned by Margaret Weck, Spotlight Team*

—Norma Vogelweid

The Holidays are Upon us.....

..And as in years past,
we will take up a collection for monetary Christmas gifts for our
hourly and contracted staff members:

*Augie Underwood,
Rhonda Buerger,
Elliott Smith,
Mary Thompson,
Ashley Cox, and
Tredell Wilkes
as well as our parking
lot security guard.*

*A collection box will be at the
Sign Up Table in Fellowship Hall through
December 13th.*

*Contributions can also be
mailed to the church office,
Attn: Yvette Clemons*

Or

*Call Yvette in the church office or visit the
church website*



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!!!
From the office staff

The St. Louis Unitarian
First Unitarian Church
5007 Waterman Blvd.
St. Louis MO 63108

Address Service Requested

Dated Mailed: Please Deliver Promptly

Date Mailed: Tuesday, November 22

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit #1484



www.UUSTL.org

Member, Unitarian Universalist Association

**The St. Louis Unitarian
Volume 47, Number 6
December 2016**

January newsletter deadline: Dec. 11

Fold: December 20 @ 10:00 a.m.

Submit news to office@firstuustlouis.org
(314) 361-0595/96 • fax: (314) 361-0712

Minister

Rev. Gary James

☎ ext. 27

gjames@firstuustlouis.org

Minister Emeritus

Earl Holt

Religious Education Team

Lynn Hunt, Credentialed Religious Educator

☎ ext. 25

lhunt@firstuustlouis.org

Rhonda Buergler, Sunday Assistant

Augustine Underwood, RE, Admin. Assistant

Music Team

Joel Knapp, Choir/Music Director

music.director@firstuustlouis.org

Earl Naylor, Organist/Accompanist

Administrative Team

Yvette Clemons, Church Administrator

☎ ext. 23

yclemons@firstuustlouis.org

Membership

Dan Livengood, Membership Coordinator

Mary Thompson, Sunday Sexton

Elliott Smith, /Darrius Salisbury Custodian

Donald Jeffries, Newsletter Proofreader

Office Hours

Mon — Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday Closed