




Island Passages

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF WHIDBEY ISLAND
 P.O. Box 1076, Freeland, WA 98249 • 360-321-8656 • www.whidbey.com/uucwi/

DECEMBER 2001

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2 2 PM Choir 4 PM Sunday service and CRE 5:20 PM Assessment Report at Trinity	3	4 7:30 PM UU Book Group Christmas Party	5	6 7:30 PM Board meeting at Trinity.	7 	8
9 4 PM Sunday service and CRE.	10	11 	12	13 7 PM CRE meeting	14	15
16 2 PM Choir 4 PM Sunday service and CRE 7 PM WICUUPS "Yule" celebration & potluck.	17	18	19	20	21	22 
23 2 PM Choir 4 PM Sunday service and CRE.	24	25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	26	27 	28	29
30 4 PM Sunday service and CRE.	31 	1 <i>January 2002 New Year's Day</i>	2 7 PM Worship Committee meeting	3 7:30 PM Board meeting at Trinity.	4	5 7PM Movie Night

CONTACT TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

At 5:20 p.m., following the service on December 2, the Contact Team will meet with the congregation to share their report from the Assessment Process done last month. It is expected that the meeting will last 30-60 minutes. Child-care will be provided.

UPCOMING SERVICES

December 2 — *“Forgiveness: You Can Choose to be Right or Choose to be In Relationship,”* with guest speaker LueRachelle Brim-Atkins

In this interactive worship service of poetry, song, praise, and heart-work, you will be given an invitation to risk sharing whatever is unresolved, unhealed, unforgiven in your heart, and commit to experiencing total acceptance of what *is*. The goal is to come to a place of total peace as you heal an issue for the last time.

LueRachelle Brim-Atkins is president of Brim-Donahoe & Associates, an organization, consulting, and training firm based in Seattle. She is currently completing a Masters in Spiritual Psychology at the University of Santa Monica and is also co-authoring a book on spirituality in the workplace called *Heart at Work—Rituals & Practices That Honor Body, Mind, & Spirit in the Workplace*. LueRachelle is a member of First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Seattle and has dedicated her life to helping people connect with their hearts and transform their lives.

Service Facilitator: Kord R.

December 9 — *“The Priceless Gifts,”* with guest UU minister, Reverend Leon Hopper

Midst the glitter of the holiday season and the hype of spectacular gifts, this sermon will focus on the priceless and essential gifts we receive and can give every day.

Reverend Hopper is Minister Emeritus, East Shore Unitarian Church, Bellevue, WA, and has been a UU minister for 48 years serving churches in Massachusetts and Colorado. He is active in the UU Partner Church Council in support of partnerships between North American UU churches and Unitarian churches in Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Philippines and India.

Service Facilitator: Al G.

December 16 — *“Special Solstice Music Service”*

*“It’s a bright day in dark December,
Let the Yule fires be kindled, let the Solstice songs begin.”*

Claudia Walker will lead our winter solstice celebration with her magical voice, her quiet strength, and her poetic presence.

Service Facilitator: Linda G.

December 23 — *“Christmas Service”*

Our choir will be central in this joyful celebration of the Christmas Season, with an instrumental ensemble joining in. We’ll have Christmas carols for all to sing plus readings and a festive atmosphere.

Service Facilitator: Linda G.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Building Committee has been busy lately, meeting at least twice a month. They visited the Whidbey Institute where they were given a “behind-the-scenes” tour and learned a brief history of that facility’s creation. There have been information-gathering meetings with three architect/designers and a pre-fab company. Information is also being solicited on septic issues and county requirements for parking. Site-planning options are being studied.

The committee is planning a congregational gathering/potluck dinner for January 11 or 12 (we’ll keep you informed) which will be an information-sharing event and an opportunity for you to give feedback and input.

BOARD NOTES

prepared by Ken M.: Board Secretary

The Board’s monthly meeting was held November, 1 at Trinity. Treasurer, Mitch H., submitted the most recent financial statement (available by request) as prepared by our Bookkeeper, Sarah R. We are happy to report that the congregation’s finances are sound and we are on budget thus far. The Building Committee reported that the information sharing meeting scheduled for December 2 has been postponed due to a conflict with the Assessment Contact Team’s congregational meeting. A tentative date of January 12 was agreed upon (*subsequently changed back to December 2 —see announcement on page 1*).

In response to requests from the congregation for more information about the activities of the Board, it was decided that a “Board Notes” column be added to the Newsletter, to be prepared by Ken M. Also, those who wish to receive Board minutes can request to be added to the distribution list and have them e-mailed as they become available. Minutes are also posted on the church web site. If e-mail and the web are not available, arrangements can be made to receive “hard” copies by request.

The Board voted to use \$60.00 of its discretionary fund for its Sunday service on November 18.

The Board approved the Social Action Committee’s plan to hold a forum on comparative religion in order to better understand other beliefs and those who follow them.

The Board approved the formation of a Bylaws Review Committee who will undertake a revision of our bylaws. This was made necessary by conflicts in our bylaws associated with the hiring and contracting of our quarter-time minister and other issues.

UUCWI and its property are now covered by Church Mutual Insurance. The policy is available for review by request.

The Board reluctantly accepted Craig S.’s resignation from the Board of Trustees for personal reasons. We wish Craig the best and look forward to his return to church committee work when he is able. Pursuant to the bylaws the Board will seek to replace Craig as soon as possible.

YOUTH GROUP

from Megan R

The church Teen Youth Group is officially up and running! After meeting on November 25 to discuss the formation of the group, we have established our goals, future activities, and curriculum. The founding members are Erin H., Laura H., Dana P., and Megan R. All interested teens are invited! We hope to meet again in December to launch the group into the New Year. For further information or questions, please contact Megan R.

BILL'S BANTER "12 Steps Beyond Robert's Rules Of Order"

Last month I asked for contributions to a list of suggestions which could make our congregational forums more inviting and pleasant experiences for all. The following represents a synthesis of ideas gratefully received from Gail A., Dave C., and Frances W.

- ° Bring only your best to the meeting: Good faith, good will — always! Chips on the shoulder—leave 'em in the woodpile!
- ° Separate people from issues. Focus on the issue not on the person advocating. Watch and listen to avoid polarization.
- ° Use inquiry as well as advocacy in dialogue. Inquiry is useful to clarify assumptions and to help frame issues putting them into the context of the bigger picture before positions become cemented.
- ° Tell the truth. Avoid exaggeration, slanting, and editorializing.
- ° Speak for yourself, not for others.
- ° Seek ways to empower more reticent members. Their voice counts equally. Create silence so there is space for their contributions. Hold time for those who have not spoken.
- ° Take less than "your share" of the time. "Your share" is never greater than the amount of time allotted for discussion, divided by the number of persons present at the meeting, divided by the number of times you wish to speak.
- ° Honor those who speak with a moment of reflective silence and/or immediate acknowledgement of what they have shared.
- ° Respect the time others have devoted to the meeting. Have your thoughts in order with something that is on subject and not repetitious before taking the floor. It is not inappropriate to say: "I have nothing important to add."
- ° Let ideas and observations fly on the wings of their merits. Be cautious with parliamentary maneuvers; they may win the immediate battle yet leave an infectious residue of distrust.
- ° Hold the differences without rancor recognizing there can be multiple threads, answers, and opinions among persons of good will. We follow the democratic process. Consensus is great but doesn't necessarily equate to failure if it isn't obtained.
- ° Once the vote has been taken, resolve to go forward, not backwards.

I invite you to reflect upon whether these suggestions have merit. To the extent they do have merit, how should we as a congregation learn to incorporate them into our interactions with each other?

CHOIR NOTES

from Linda G., Music Director

Upcoming choir rehearsals will be on December 2, 16, and 23 (an "All-Music" service will follow this rehearsal). Choir members please remember to arrive a little before 2:00 p.m. to help set up chairs. You are also reminded to promptly leave the sanctuary at the end of the rehearsal (3:30 p.m.) so that the room can be prepared for the service, and an atmosphere of quiet reflection can be maintained in the space just prior to the service.

CHRISTMAS TREES

Come with your hatchet or saw and cull a tree from the Ferrier's forest. The trees mostly have grown a bit big for the normal house; it's okay to lop them off as far above ground as you like. Maybe call before you set out so we can aim you to the best ones.

CRE NOTES

from Kate L.

After having been the Lullaby League person during a Sunday service and having three children to watch (11-month, 18-month, and 3-year-old), I realized several things. First, the room was not really inviting to the children, and secondly, there were not enough toys/activities for children of those ages. We discussed this at the CRE meeting and came up with some solutions. First, we have a plan to set up the room with activity centers so that it is more inviting. We purchased some big equipment — a play stove, a slide, a baby activity center, and four small chairs as well as some other toys.

Because our budget is limited, there are still items we need:

1. canvass bags to group toys,
2. two small tables at the right height for the chairs,
3. a Lego table,
4. hand puppets of animals,
5. some push toys such as a truck, a shopping cart, a doll carriage,
6. some baby dolls.

Please talk to Kate about specific toys, and come by and see the child care room or volunteer to be on the Lullaby League even for one Sunday.

Next CRE meeting — Dec. 13, 7:00 p.m.

BOOKSTORE IN A BOX

Don't forget about our little Bookstore in a Box located outside the sanctuary on the Membership table. You'll find some of the best-selling books related to our religious movement offered by the two outstanding publishers associated with the UUA: Beacon Press and Skinner House. This is a non-profit endeavor— all money taken in will go to purchasing more books. Thanks, Mavis, for agreeing to be our bookseller!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ken,

Please consider this a “letter” that I happen to have chosen to send you electronically, instead of with the aid of a postage stamp. Consider it a “letter to the editor” in response to your November “Soapbox.” You see, I use e-mail, as others do, to send memos, notes, proposals, letters and documents to family, friends, clients, colleagues, creditors, teachers, etc. It enables me to reach more people, sometimes committees, groups or extended family, in a more clear, spontaneous, thoughtful, and timely way. It allows others to do the same and each of us to be responsive to the other; it allows each of us to quickly acknowledge receipt of a message, whether or not we wish to respond to the content, thereby closing the loop in a human way.

Qualitatively, there is little that I attribute necessarily to the content of mail as a function of it being e-mail. It appears to me no more or less one-way than any other form of written communication, except that it provides the opportunity for a much quicker turn-around. E-mail offers an opportunity for a more active dialogue, then is offered courtesy of the postal service.

Yes, sometimes it may be best to do so by phone, or in person. As the author and sender, as well as recipient, of frequent e-mail messages, I am aware that the message may not always be received as intended. Given the power we tend to attribute to the written word, that is probably true of most forms of it. And we need to be careful about our attributions.

“ . . . AND SERVICE IS OUR PRACTICE.”

news from our Social Action Program

SHADE GROWN/FAIR TRADE COFFEE

Sales of fair-trade/shade-grown coffee have been perking along. Keep in mind that we will be ordering it as you want it. If we can gather a big order (say 15#) the shipping cost is spread out over a larger quantity and therefore costs less per pound, which helps build up a Social Action fund for our church.

As the holidays approach, you might consider pre-ordering extra pounds of these delicious blends for gifts. Beginning December 15, we can make sure the package is suitably dressed in holiday garb and ready to give. A gift which helps struggling coffee farmers, preserves bird habitat, and is organically grown surely keeps the spirit of the season. According to our discriminating UU coffee drinkers, it is also a special coffee.

Mukilteo Coffee Company roasts for themselves and also Whidbey Coffee Company. Gary & Bev Smith, the owners, are in the process of finding and buying more and more shade grown/fair trade/organic coffee beans. Their aim is to eventually roast nothing else. If, when you buy coffee in any form, you would ask for either shade grown or fair-trade coffee it will help hasten their transition to the good stuff. As an example: Pay Less Foods, Freeland sells Whidbey Coffee Company product. When you buy coffee ask the cashier if they sell shade grown coffee. If enough of us do that, the cashiers will tell the manager, Tom, and he will ask his supplier(s). If we keep it up, he will keep after his suppliers until it happens. The end result will be more peasant farmers able to earn a livelihood, more habitat saved for our songbirds and the slowing down of environmental degradation throughout the coffee growing areas of the world.

GUESTS AT YOUR TABLES

With such a fantabulous introduction you should not be able to forget “A Guest At Your Table.” (The skit was written, produced and directed, as well as acted, by Kate.) So each night at dinner (or as often as you feel comfortable) think of all the folks that are being helped by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and contribute to their cause. The boxes will be collected at our first service of 2002, that is January 6.

CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS

The Nicaraguan Christmas ornaments will be offered at the Unity Church on November 25 and United Methodist Church in Langley on December 2. They will then return to our Social Action table, assuming there are any remaining. Hand painted in Nicaragua, \$5 each, and all the money goes to support the new medical clinic in Neuva Vida, Nicaragua.

RAMADAN BOMBING PAUSE

Those of you that signed the letter to be e-mailed to President Bush asking for a pause in the bombing during Ramadan, be assured that it was e-mailed and their *automated* response came back. It was very nice.

COMMITTEE NOTES

Ann Gerike has joined the Social Action Committee. We have room for you also, and with more energy on the committee, more can be accomplished — so . . . ! Become a radical activist! — join the SAC.

How I perceive the written word is often influenced by the intent I attribute to it. Even the “terse” is understood to be benign or friendly, when I assume that to be its intent; I understand it to be unfriendly when I assume that to be its intent. Here I am talking about my perceptions of the context, purpose, and sender of the message — perceptions which may not be close to accurate.

To the degree, for instance, that some people have difficulty with my e-mail communications, I suspect this has more to do with their assumptions (which are usually not checked out) about my intent, including what they may attribute to my use of language, then anything else. This is certainly how I often come to misunderstand messages from others, whether spoken or written. It is harder to hear the message when I don’t trust the messenger’s intentions or simply don’t appreciate the messenger. And e-mail is neither the message nor the messenger; it is simply the communications medium.

I appreciate your ideas and suggestions for what we might call “rules for the e-mail road.” Most of them, I think, would be helpful with other forms of written, and some forms of spoken communication. They are a clear call for us to pay attention to the potential for unintended consequences in our communications. And while the problem may not be with the intentions of the messenger (the sender), it may well be with the language or tone, brevity, or length of the message.

My sense is that we would benefit from the presence of more invitation and opportunity for dialogue in our congregation and that e-mail may provide one of those opportunities. As busy as many of us are, finding ourselves unable to meet on the phone or face-to-face as often as we might wish, perhaps we ought to take full advantage of e-mail. We might actually seek ways to make more active use of the e-mail medium to share feelings, ideas, perspectives, and values, rather than limit ourselves to the e-mail equivalents of “sound-bites” or profound silences.

Perhaps if we trusted each other more, in terms of our intentions, we would be more open to actively take the opportunity provided by e-mail to acknowledge and responsively communicate with each other. Trust-building takes time; quality communication also calls for time, as well as our attention to both the quality of our transmission and reception. E-mail need not be an obstacle or a problem, it may be indeed an opportunity to strengthen our connection with those whom we wish to share. And connections need to be cultivated if they are to be strong.

—Kord Roosen-Runge

SOAPBOX

from Newsletter Editor, Ken M.

To me, being an unabashed cinephile and bona fide, soft-hearted sap, the best thing about the Christmas season is the movies. Now while I’m generally cynical when it comes to seasonally



inspired works of art and literature, there are a handful of films that I make a point to curl up with every year around this time. The list hasn’t changed much over the years, but I’m always open to an addition to my holiday play list. Here’s my list of admittedly guilty, Christmas pleasures:

The Bishop’s Wife: (USA 1947) My all-time favorite Christmas movie. Cary Grant, David Niven, and Loretta Young with a great cast around them and an awesome script. Grant plays Dudley, a guardian angel sent to show Henry (Niven) the way. Loretta Young plays Julia, Henry’s neglected wife. The film, in so many subtle and beautiful ways, illustrates the meaning of Christmas — friends, family, simple pleasures, kindness, tolerance, and memory. It’s also gorgeously directed by Henry Koster and shot by Gregg Toland (*Citizen Kane*). The “Lord is my Shepherd” scene, the choir scene, the ice skating scene, and Henry’s sermon are just magical. Do yourself a favor and rent this one early in the season.

It’s a Wonderful Life: (USA 1946) It bombed in initial release and didn’t surface as the perennial Christmas TV hit for almost 30 years. It’s a great concept with a terrific cast. If you want to really enjoy it without interruption, I recommend you rent the uncut, black and white version. One interesting note: Karolyn Grimes plays both Debby in *The Bishop’s Wife* and Zuzu, making her one of the three great Christmas kids.

Miracle on 34th Street: (USA 1947) Convinced it was a minor film and would flop, the studio released it in June of 1947. It was a huge hit and still in theaters come Christmas of that year. Can anyone tell me if Kris gave them the house or just found it for them? It’s always bugged me. Stars Edmund Gwenn (Academy Award, Best Supporting Actor) Maureen O’Hara, and Christmas kid number two, a very young Natalie Wood.

A Christmas Story: (USA 1983) Jean Shepherd’s autobiographical story of a boy’s quest to get a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. For everyone who’s ever heard a parent say, “you’ll put your eye out.”

A Christmas Carol: (UK 1951) The Alastair Sim version is the best in my humble opinion, but there are several versions of this timeless story to choose from: A British 1936 version; An American TV version starring George C. Scott; *Scrooge*, a 1970 British musical; and *Scrooged* starring Bill Murray are also worth a look

Meet Me in St. Louis: (USA 1944) Not really a Christmas movie per se. The film chronicles a year in the life of a St. Louis family culminating in the World’s Fair. The Christmas section features Judy Garland singing “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” which is good enough for me. Also stars Christmas kid three, Margaret O’Brien.

These are my favorites. It’s an incomplete list of course, and I invite you to add to it. Please tackle me somewhere and rail at me for my omission of your favorite guilty, Christmas pleasure. I may get an addition to my list.