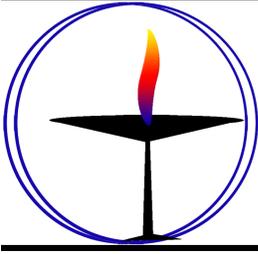


The UU Church of Buffalo



Gather – Inspire – Transform

April 2016 Newsletter

695 Elmwood Ave ∪ Buffalo, NY 14222

716-885-2136 - www.BuffaloUU.org



Faith Matters: Stretching

Last month our worship theme was “Awakening” as we welcomed the budding of spring and the celebration of Easter. This month we have awakened and are slowly greeting the new day; planting our feet on the floor, having a big yawn and giving our sleepy bodies a good *streeeeeeeeetch* before putting on those fuzzy slippers and padding down the hall to get a cup of coffee.

That morning stretch is important. Even if you're not aiming for tip-top athletic performance, loosening up those muscles can help you get through the day pain-free, increase range of motion, avoid injury and increase circulation.

But of course when we talk about “waking up” in church we are not literally talking about shaking sleep from our heads. Likewise when we talk about stretching, we are not simply talking about touching our toes. Care for the body is only one third of the equation. In church we also care for the mind and the spirit.

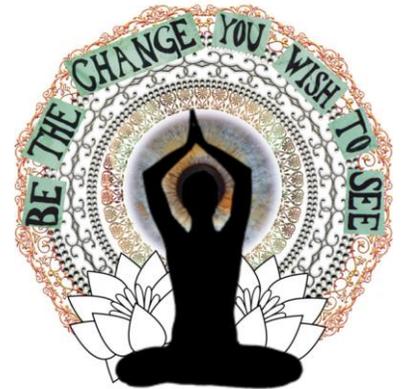
When we talk about “Awakening” we are talking about being fully mindful of the present moment. When we talk about “Stretching” we are talking about breaking free of ridged thought and spiritual ruts. At church we explore new ideas and make ourselves vulnerable enough to connect more often with the Holy.

Our church exists to make a difference. If it wasn't making a difference in some way, we would not exist. People would not come on Sunday mornings and the doors would close. But the truth is you keep coming. The doors are open. The happy noise in fellowship hour is deafening. Our weekly activities are increasing in number and participation. Church life is booming. We are clearly making a difference in people's lives.

This is an exciting time at our church. Making a difference means changing, growing, transforming, thinking outside the box, stretching. Let's join our bodies, minds, and spirits in being the change we want to see in our lives, in our church and in our community. This will mean being fully awake and getting a little (sometimes a lot) out of our comfort zones, but I have faith and confidence we can do it and do it with grace and power.

One more thing. Stretching always hurts a little. But you never push or pull until it hurts badly. We stretch until it feels good. Although it hurts, there is a truth of deeper, greater and more enduring comfort: you are never alone.

Yours in faith and affection, Rev. Joan



Joys and Sorrows

Our deepest sympathies are with Ellie Lawson and her family. Ellie's husband Bill passed away on the morning of February 28th. A celebration of his life was held on March 5th.

We send healing wishes to Mario Nunez who is recovering after surgery.

Our hearts are with longtime church members John and Grace Myhre. John has entered Schofield Nursing Home on Elmwood and would appreciate cards and good wishes.

Pulpit Previews

April 3 – Next Sunday, April 3rd is our spring Music Sunday service! "Music, Religion, and the Sound of Faith Traditions"

This service will feature the UUCB Choir, Soloists, Su Lee, and guest instrumentalists. Our music includes a rare performance of a very early Bach cantata, in collaboration with musicians from The Royal Consort, playing historical instruments. The service begins with a special arrangement of a choral work by Béla Bartók, sung in Hungarian, and also one of Franz Schubert's final works, his setting of the 92nd Psalm, originally written for a Vienna synagogue, and his only work in Hebrew. In each of these works are unique expressions of faith from some of the most gifted musical geniuses of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. From Bartók's wellspring of inspiration in folk texts, Schubert's profound devotion in application for another faith, to Bach's early life-affirming, humanistic expressions through a funeral cantata, we're deeply excited to share this special program with each of you!

April 10 – “How Large the Circle”

Shifting our attitudes from scarcity to abundance is hard work, especially in these uncertain times during which fear is rewarded. And yet, shifting our attitude and our spirits is exactly our task if we are to survive.

April 17 – “The Committee Meeting of Your Mind”

Do you hear voices? Rev. Joan admits to having a lively cast of characters including her mother, a televangelist, and a fictitious character named “the Beet Woman” who help her make decisions. And yes, she also listens to the still small voice within.

April 24 – “Stretch Your Spirit”

If you think you have completed your spiritual journey and have decided once and for all upon your beliefs, think again. Get up off the recliner before you fossilize. Faith is not a spectator sport. and support, we also benefit from the prior season's work. We would not be able to do our work without the following:

Ministry Teams – Under the loving guidance of Reverend Joan and our senior staff, the Ministry Teams continue to clarify their purposes and functions. These teams create and run the programs of our church, and the Board is honored to hold the structure which creates the space for their work.

Stewardship – The pledges made for 2016 are a physical manifestation of the strength of our hopes and dreams for the coming year. This treasure provides the means to transform time and talents into inspirational programming within and beyond our church walls.

Board Leadership – As I begin my service as Board President, I am honored to work with Jeff Lowrey, Vice-President; Tom Petrocelli, Treasurer; Dick Krause, Secretary; Julie Taylor; Jack Cavanaugh and Francis Montgomery. Jack, Francis and Dick, elected by you at the January Congregational meeting, have enthusiastically accepted the responsibility to step into the seats most recently filled by the hard-working trio of Barbara Klobberdanz, Kirsten Anderson and Sharon Walker.

In Buffalo's climate of changeable weather, the Board and the congregation are well positioned to step out into what promises to be another beautiful day.

Stretching Before the Big Game

Liz Parke

Before any big game, the best athletes stretch their muscles and focus their minds to warm up, improve flexibility and prepare mentally.

Our congregation waited for four years for our big game – for our new minister to arrive and lead us in becoming a church that matters, a congregation that makes a difference. After our January Congregational Meeting, where three new board members were elected, the minister and the board are now building the team that will take on that challenge. It's now time to stretch our collective muscles, gather our thoughts, and prepare for the big game.

Fortunately, the muscles of the board are not limited to the seven trustees who meet monthly. No, we rely on our seven Advisory Committees – Governance, Strategy, Oversight, Finance, Endowment, Fixed Assets and Personnel. They help with the preparation and our game plan by reaching out into the congregation, the community and the wider world to collect information and ideas. They do the heavy lifting that allows the board to gather in conversation with the minister and decide what policies are needed so the programs of our church can thrive and we can live out our mission to create a more just and compassionate world.

So, how does the board ensure that the Advisory Committees will be both strong and flexible when we need them? We stretch them – with great focus and deliberation, cultivating clear communication in a continuous loop of direction and feedback. We open up conversations, asking questions and listening to answers. We stretch toward each other, and build deeper understanding of our community and ourselves. Together, we inspire ourselves to create our next, great game plan.

Go Team!

Share The Plate

Re-Tree WNY was established in 2006 by a group of 40 Western New Yorkers who saw first-hand the devastation done to our beautiful living resources — our trees — and decided to take action to re-forest every public area that was destroyed by the freak October snowstorm.

Paul Maurer is co-founder and current chairman of Re-Tree WNY, a program of The Buffalo Green Fund, Inc. Re-Tree WNY won the National Arbor Day Foundation Project Award in 2008 and Paul was named 'Citizen of The Year of the Erie County Environmental Education Institute – Paul MacLennan Award' (2012) and the 'New York Society of Professional Engineers Citizen of the Year' (2014). ReTree WNY has a five-year plan with a goal to replace the approximately 30,000 trees in Western New York that were damaged or destroyed. The first planting was on Arbor Day, 2007 when 2,000 trees were planted.

There are many needy towns that lost trees in the storm. Retree plants neighborhood streets, parks (such as our unique and valuable Olmsted Parks), public venues, by-ways — any project that needs help to renew this precious resource.

Retree WNY needs your help: volunteers are needed to maintain and plant trees, work on fundraisers, offer recommendations, report where the needs are greatest and SPREAD the WORD about Re-Tree's mission. If you love trees and want to join in this labor of love to return WNY to the beautiful tree-scape that is our heritage please contact them at: www.re-treewny.org



Faith Development News

Sarah Martin

There may be a lingering chill in the air, but the days are finally growing longer, and there has been an increased hustle and bustle on Elmwood Avenue! So too, in our church building, has there been buzzing and excitement. Here's a little taste of what's coming up in Religious Education and Adult Faith Development:

Sunday, April 3, we are inviting all of our children to stay in the service and experience the beautiful sounds of Spring Music Sunday. There will be no regular Religious Education classes that day. Classes will resume on April 10.

April 3 is also the first Sunday of the month, and we are going to launch something new and exciting. Please join us from 9:30 to 10:15 in the Parish Hall for First Sunday Pancake Breakfast! The whole community is welcome to come and enjoy pancakes and great conversation in a multigenerational setting. If you have an electric or stovetop griddle we can borrow for the morning, it is very much appreciated. Donations of juice and milk are always appreciated. All are welcome! Email Sarah Martin at lifespan@buffalouu.org for more information.

Save the date for Sunday, May 1, when our youth group will hold their annual Youth Service. Come see our graduating Seniors off while we come together for a very special multigenerational worship service. The youth are working hard to plan this service, and your support is so very welcome.

The nursery is still looking for volunteers to spend a Sunday or two upstairs with our littlest UUCB members. This is a low-commitment way to support our thriving Religious Education program and encourage young families to become part of our church community. Email Sarah Martin if you are interested.

In Adult Faith Development, we have a whole slew of new classes coming up. Here is a taste of what's ahead in our Spring quarter. Be sure to sign up for a class and join us!

Savory Words

Discuss a book, share a pot-luck meal based on food in the story and delight in good company! The book for April is "A Feast of Love" by Charles Baxter. Participants are asked to bring food that relates in some way to the story. A deliciously fun time will be had by all!

6:00 - 8:00 pm, Alliance Room

Tuesdays

April 4, May 2, June 6

Suggested donation: \$15 for 3 sessions

Registration required

Bonnie Bostford is an avid reader, a fan of classical music, and longtime church member.



Music with Michael

EMINENT (AND NOTORIOUS) VICTORIANS: A Preview of the 2016 Shaw Festival

George Bernard Shaw was a creation of the Victorian Age, but also one of its leading social critics. The 2016 Shaw Festival offers a panoply of both the famous and infamous who exemplified the era. We'll examine Shaw's scandalous indictment of 19th century prostitution in Mrs. Warren's Profession, as well as his satiric religious parable The Adventures of the Black Girl in Search of God. Another notable girl's adventures are on view in the world premiere musical version of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. Onstage as well will be some of Shaw's eminent playwright contemporaries: Oscar Wilde (A Woman of No Importance), W.S. Gilbert (Engaged), August Strindberg (Dance of Death), and Anton Chekhov (Uncle Vanya). And on the notorious side of the ledger is the ultimate Victorian nightmare -- Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Stephen Sondheim's masterful musical thriller. All in all, an eminently entertaining line-up. Queen Victoria might not be amused, but *you* surely will be!

9:30 am - 11:30 am, Alliance Room

Wednesdays, 11 Sessions beginning May 11

\$70 for full course, or \$10 per session

Michael Harris has fashioned for us, the stalwart and loyal fans of his courses, likely the most ambitious of his recent offerings! We are excited to see what will unfold. Please join us for as many Wednesdays as you can. (Time off for vacationing, travel, visiting family, and snowboarding is allowed.)



Introduction to Unitarian Universalism: A Membership Class

Everything you ever wanted to know about Unitarianism, Universalism, Unitarian Universalism, our congregation, and the Denomination, but were afraid to ask! Rev. Joan will take you on the magical "mythtery" tour of our faith, denominational structure, and heritage. Great for the searcher, aspiring member, and long-term member alike!

10:00 am - 2:00 pm, Alliance Room

Saturday, May 7 Free of charge

Registration deadline: April 30

Reverend Joan Montagnes began her ministry with us in August 2015. Before that she spent 20 years serving congregations in Quebec, Washington, and Idaho.

Are you pondering "how to face the mess we're in . . . without going crazy?" Here is the discussion group for you, based on the book Active Hope.

Active Hope, co-authored by Joanna Macy and Dr. Chris Johnstone, is about finding, and offering, our best response to the crisis of sustainability unfolding in our world. The book offers tools that help us face the mess we're in, as well as find and play our role in the collective transition, or *Great Turning*, to a life-sustaining society.

Joanna Macy is an eco-philosopher, scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology, in addition to being a long time peace, and social justice activist. She is now in her eighties and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Chris Johnstone is a medical doctor from England specializing in the psychology of resilience, happiness and positive change.

The *Active Hope* discussion group will be led by Sandy Chelnov who is an interfaith minister, a member of UUCB, and has studied with Joanna Macy. It will meet for 7 consecutive Tuesday evenings starting April 11 at 6:30 pm. An introductory meeting on April 11 will include a recent half-hour PBS documentary: *Natural Heroes: Joanna Macy and The Great Turning*.

April Music Notes

Daniel Bassin, Music Director

T.S. Eliot begins his poem, *The Wasteland*, “April is the cruellest month,” but if he knew about all of the wonderful music we have coming up this month, he’d surely issue a retraction! The month begins with Music Sunday and keeps going from there, with choral gems, engaging new works, and familiar favorites.

Rev. Montagnes’s monthly sermon theme, “Stretching,” is kicked-off with our Music Sunday service, *Music, Religion, and the Sound of Faith Traditions*, where the UUCB Choir again returns to Bach, but this time with a very early masterwork, and in collaboration with our friends in the historical-instrument group, The Royal Consort. We also ‘stretch’ our musical muscles with a special arrangement of Béla Bartók’s first choral work, the first number from his *Four Old Hungarian Folksongs* – sung in Hungarian! Language plays an important role in our other choral masterwork on this service – Schubert’s setting of Psalm 92, originally written for a Viennese synagogue, and his only setting in Hebrew. The Bach cantata, *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* (God’s time is the very best time), was written when the composer was only 22, however there are both musical and religious themes contained in this work which the composer would return to throughout his life. Originally written as a funeral cantata, we’ve found this deeply humanistic and life-affirming work a rare treat to bring to life, and look forward to sharing it with each of you!



Throughout the year we’ve been sharing the various settings of our Seven Principles, as set by UU composer and music director, Mark David Buckles. On April 10th we’ll complete the cycle with Principle #6, *The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all*, as part of our music selections for the “How Large the Circle” service. On April 17th, “The Committee Meeting of your Mind,” we’ll feature a rousing choral anthem with a setting of the 9th century hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Finally, as we end the month with the “Stretch Your Spirit” service, we’ll return to some classic gospel choral works which – alongside the masterworks of Bach and the western canon – have been a mainstay of the UUCB Choir’s core repertoire.

We look forward to welcoming spring, sharing this great music, and *Stretching* with each of you!

*Beyond the Hedge
Denomination and Interfaith Connections*

Sharon Walker

**WNY Cluster of UU Churches: Activate! – Saturday, April 23, 2016,
UU Church of Buffalo**

**Save the Date! May 20 & 21, 2016
The Once & Future Church or, "Chicken Little Goes to Church"!**

On, the UU Churches of Amherst and Buffalo (NY) are co-hosting this weekend event: The Rev. Joan VanBecelaere will present information from her research on faith and church trends in the 21st century, and how we might prepare for the shift in how we might do church in the future. More information forthcoming - but mark your calendars now!

Heart Land: Where Faiths Connect

Columbus, OH, Greater Columbus Convention Center, 400 N High St, Columbus, OH 43215

“The faith world is increasingly multifaith. People are crossing borders of religion and spiritual practice to create wholeness in their lives individually and collectively. The labels—Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, theist and non-theist—no longer define who or what we love, or how spirit moves in our lives. General Assembly 2016 in Columbus Ohio will assemble leaders and communities of many faiths to worship together, learn from one another, and create a new vision of faith that no longer divides us, but connects us to an interdependent future that works for all.”

Registration now open at www.uua.org/ga
Financial assistance and scholarships are available. For delegate information email, sharonw447@gmail.com



Women's Society Program

On Thursday April 21 we will welcome Mary Callahan, Director of the Peace Center. She will be accompanied by an African woman, who wishes to have her name remain anonymous . She will speak on " My Asylum Seekers Story," Female Mutilation. This will be followed by Mary Callahan giving information about the Peace Center and it's efforts to protect these innocent victims.



The cost of the lunch is \$15. You can make a reservation at Josettepc50@gmail.com or in the Parish Hall after the service on Sundays April 10 and 17. Make your check payable to the U.U.C.B. and in the memo line write: Women's Society. If you wish to mail in your check, then it must be received in the church office by Friday April 15. If you make a reservation on the last Sunday sign up date, payment will be due in person.

We will start at 11 with appetizers and beverages. The speakers will start at 11:30 and a catered lunch will be served at 12:30.

You will not want to miss our guest's riveting true narrative.

WOMEN'S SOCIETY FIELD TRIPS!

1. On Friday May 13 we have been invited by the Muslim Community to take a tour of the Masjid Noor Mosque located at 745 Heim Road in Getzville. They will provide lunch for us prepared by them, gratis . We are also invited to stay for their prayer service, following the lunch. Since there will be no cost, it would be generous of you to make a monetary donation.

There will be a sign up sheet at the same table in the Parish Hall where we take reservations for our programs. You can start signing up on Sunday April 3, and most likely every Sunday after that, but no later than May 8 as an accurate head count will be given to them for the food preparation. Monetary donations can be made during sign up, Then the monies will be pooled together as one donation which we will give to them on the day of the tour.

Head coverings are NOT necessary for men or women. Their only request of us is just to dress modestly.

We will meet at 11 sharp at the entrance to the mosque, where the tour will begin.

2. The Niagara on the Lake field trip will be on Wednesday June 8. The fee for the trip is \$ 40. Payment is due at the time of sign up. Make your check out to the U.U. C.B. This includes a pre-show chat that will start at 11. and the Shaw production of "Mrs. Warren's Profession" Lunch is on your own and the performance will start at 2. Tickets will start to go on sale on Sunday April 3 and will continue to be on sale until they are sold out. Only 40 tickets are available.

Further important information flyers will be available for pickup when you purchase your ticket or tickets. There is new information in regard to parking and the location of the venues.

FOOD PANTRY

The suggestion items for donation in the month of April are canned or bottled nonperishable juices.

Stewardship News

We are all heartened by a successful 2016 Stewardship campaign in which we surpassed our goal of \$330,000. We raised over \$342,000 in pledges, the most ever raised at our church, an increase of about 13% from the previous year. The number of pledge units increased about 10% (despite losing some previous pledgers) and about 10% of pledges were from people who had not pledged before. More than a third designated that their pledges were “Fair Share” (i.e., 3% or more of adjusted income). We feel good about this. The goal of this year’s campaign was to “turn the ship around” toward a healthier financial future that will reduce our increasing reliance on our endowment. We sought to make stewardship not a “dirty little secret” but part of our spiritual practice: a way to live out our commitment to a more just and compassionate world.

But we still have work to do going forward. Nearly 100 of our 350 members do not pledge, despite numerous letters, phone calls and emails. Imagine what our finances would look like if EVERYONE pledged. No matter how frugal we are, costs of running the church typically rise every year with the cost of living. That means that every year we need to raise a little bit more just to keep up with these costs. Pledging the same amount year after year is not sufficient to cover these increases. In addition, we have just reached a level of paying our staff at the fair compensation levels recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association. We need to do better considering that we are still significantly understaffed.

It is also a concern that our median pledge (half above, half below) is \$1,000, substantially lower than the \$1200 median pledge for the denomination as a whole. Obviously, not everyone can afford \$1000 per year and we are grateful for the generosity of all members at whatever financial level they can afford (annual pledges range from \$20 to \$10,000). But we suspect that there are people with above average incomes who are pledging substantially less than the median amount. If you are a “medium income” person (\$50,000 in Buffalo), then \$1,000 is a benchmark. If you are a higher income, professional person then we hope that you can pledge at a higher than average level. Using the suggested Fair Share Giving guide allows both low and high income people to give and be recognized for generosity at the same level. Where else in America is this financial equality possible?

Our church’s financial circumstances are not dire by any means and our endowment provides us with a welcome cushion. But neither are we so wealthy that money is not a concern. We have no grant or foundation support, no big angel donors, no rich parishioners contributing scads of money. *We have no other major source of income except for our members.* We hope the church and its future is important enough that everyone does his or her share and does not assume that someone else will pick up the slack. Stewardship is a concrete way to put our beliefs into action – supporting our liberal values inside and outside of the walls of our church.



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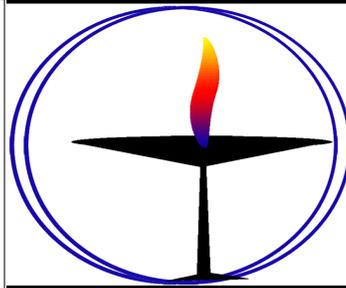
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Happening at the UUCB

UUCB Yarnbusters

Our “Not for Knitters Only” group continues: 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, from 6:30ish to 8ish in The Women’s Lounge. In April, we will be gathering on the 12th and 26th. Whether you knit, crochet or cross stitch give us a try. This is an open group, church membership not required, so please forward to any friends or family that may be interested.

Baby Blankets and Hats for Newborns of UUCB Families

Knitters and crocheters (aka “knitwits” and “hookers”), looking for a project? Minister to our families and give the gift of a layette to our newborns and at dedications. For more information please email Sharon Walker at sharonw447@gmail.com



Summer Worship Theme is Transformation

Summertime at UUCB offers an opportunity for members of the congregation to lead a number of our Sunday services. The theme for this year's summer services is "transformation." If you are interested in leading a service on that theme between June 29 and Labor Day, whether or not you have led one in the past, please submit a simple proposal stating the title of the service, a brief (50-100 word) description, and any preferred (or excluded) dates. The proposal should include anything else you know about the service at this point, such as music, other participants, readings, etc. We will have support from the Music Director in planning summer services, so worship leaders need not be responsible for finding their own music. All proposals are due in the office by April 15.

In developing their service, speakers will work closely with the Worship Associate assigned to their service. All summer service leaders who can are expected to attend a workshop on developing and leading worship and creating an effective sermon. It will be held in late May or early June.

If you have questions about summer services, please feel free to speak to Rev. Joan, or one of the Worship Associates: Fran Manly, Ken Manly, Francis Montgomery, Mary Sczepanski, Steve Wixson, Dana Gerace, or Steve Brachman.



Service Auction

Thanks to our generous donors and enthusiastic bidders, the Fun and Fellowship auction raised \$10,500 on Sunday. Do not despair - there are still several slots available for tours, picnics, dinners, etc so you can still enjoy fun and fellowship events. Email Mariatesta@roadrunner.com if you are interested in bidding.

