

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

December 2018 Newsletter



Gather ~ Inspire ~ Transform

695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222 * Phone: 716-885-2136, Website: www.buffalouu.org

Faith Matters: What does it mean to be a People of Mystery?

Rev. Joan Montagnes



Once upon a time, long, long ago, before there were computer browsers (on any device) or even very many books, people used to tell stories. And sometimes they told stories in the form of theater. Once upon a time, the people put on mystery plays.

Mystery plays were called 'mystery plays' for two reasons. First, they took God's mysteries as their primary theme. They aimed to show, in the course of a day, the whole history of the universe from the creation of Heaven and Earth to all the way to the end of the world.

Second, these plays were called 'mystery plays' because they were organized, funded and produced by artisan guilds, which were also called 'mysteries' in the Middle Ages.

Each play had four or five different scenes or acts. Each scene was performed at a different place in town and the people moved with the stage to the next location to watch the play (just like a bar crawl, but probably with a different outcome intended, I think, maybe...). The play usually ended outside the church so the people could enter the sanctuary to hear a sermon once the performance was over (Doesn't that sound like fun?).

Clearly this was the origin of the traditional nativity pageants that crop up everywhere at this time of year, and a lot of the alternative pageants as well.

But, these mystery plays got me to thinking, if we are people of mystery, and we find truth in many different texts, what would our mystery plays look like? What scriptures would we use as scripts?

Clearly we could draw on Mary Oliver and Rumi for inspiration, Maya Angelou and maybe the hymn, "Blue Boat Home." I would want to include a few dramatic milestones in the development of liberal religion – the first Edict of Religious Tolerance in Transylvania 1568, Emerson's Harvard Divinity School Address 1838, the merger of the Unitarians and Universalists 1961. We might also want to use Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech or his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", Dar-



win's *Origin of Species*, or Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*. Lucky for us, the list of possible scripture is enormous.

But, you know where I believe our real mystery play scripts live? I believe that each of us has access to a source of Truth far greater and far more mysterious than any voice of the poets, musicians, ancients, social activists, or scientists.

Each of us has our own direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder, which renews our spirit and opens us to the forces which create and uphold life. Each of us has a window on the Whole Truth, that greatest wonder of all. Our direct experiences are as Real as it gets. They are our greatest scripture.

So, tell your story. Write the script of your mystery play. Act according to your Truth. Invite your neighbors to the performance of your wonder-full life as you move around the town. And at the end of the day, welcome the people to the sanctuary of your heart, the Holy of Holies, to touch soul to soul in communion.

This, I believe, is how we are people of mystery. We do not become people of mystery by cloaking parts of ourselves from the world, but by opening ourselves to the mystery beyond the narrow confines of our own bodies, minds and souls.

I wish you all a very happy holiday season. Hanukkah, Yule and Christmas are approaching and soon the lengthening of days again. Sing joy for the mystery of it all! **-Yours in faith and affection, Rev. Joan Montagnes**

Pulpit Previews

December 2: Out of the Cold, Joan Montagnes

The weather outside is frightful, but our warm community is so delightful. Since we're cozy and snug at home, let it snow, let it snow, let it snow! But what about those who find themselves alone, homeless and hungry this winter? How shall we minister to them?

Tuesday, December 5, 7pm: Blue Christmas, Joan Montagnes

Holidays are traditionally a time of family, laughter and joy. For those of us who are grieving, have a seriously ill loved one, or are just "blue," the holidays can be a time of painfully mixed emotions and challenge. Come for a gentle service of care and comfort. You are not alone.

December 9: Music Sunday. Dan Bassin, UUCB choir and members of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra will perform Bach's *Christmas Oratorio, Part 5*.

December 16: Living with Mystery, Joan Montagnes

Most of the time we want to control our lives and our environment. When we can't control things, it can be distressing. However, the holidays of December are full of mystery and miracle – occasions we cannot create, grasp or stop – and yet, these holidays are celebrations of joy.

December 23: Solstice Pageant Service, Sarah Martin

Join us for a fun, interactive pageant as we celebrate the return of the light after the longest night of the year!

Monday, December 24, 7pm: A Mulling of Lessons and Carols, Joan Montagnes

A traditional service of lessons and carols for the whole family. Celebrate with readings, music, candles and stories.

Monday, December 24, 11pm: Candle Light Service, Joan Montagnes

A traditional service of lessons and carols.

December 30: Before and After, John Marohn

An old Egyptian saying tells us "there is nothing new under the sun except that which is forgotten," while one cynical psychologist claims that an epiphany doesn't last more than a couple of weeks. So, if there really isn't anything new (cynicism 101) and our heightened realizations have a short shelf life (cynicism squared) can any of us really change?



December Religious Education and Events

Sarah Martin, Director of Religious Education

December is a busy month in Religious Education! While our ministry theme may be Mystery, all of our favorite events are coming back this month! Here's what's in store from the Religious Education Team this December.

No Our Whole Lives Classes in December

Due to the busy season, many of the families of our Our Whole Lives 4th and 5th graders are going to be unable to attend our scheduled sessions for December. Because attendance is important in this program and we'd like the class to finish the curriculum together, we will be holding a double session on Sunday, January 6 to finish sessions 9 and 10. The first session will take place during regular RE time and the second will take place at the regular OWL time of 12:30-1:30. In between there will be a pizza lunch provided.

Session 8 will be available in a series of take-home packets and weekly emails throughout the month of December. We also may schedule one or more "OWL Study Halls" to give our students the opportunity to ask questions and stay connected. Stay tuned for more on those!

Advent Spiral – Saturday, December 1

Parish Hall, 4 pm and 6 pm

Our 4 pm Spiral is geared toward families with more active young children, while the 6 pm spiral is generally a more contemplative affair. All ages are welcome at both events. Please join us for this lovely, meditative ritual to welcome the Advent season into our hearts.

Bring a tealight in a glass holder if you have one or use one of the many candle-holders we have available. If you've never been to the Advent Spiral before, there will be a guide at the door to explain it for you. We hope to see you there!

For more information, or to volunteer for the set up or clean up crew (which is MORE FUN than it sounds!) please email Sarah Martin at lifespan@buffalouu.org.

Coming of Age Class Overnight and Parent Shindig – Saturday, Dec 1- Sunday, Dec 2

Alliance Room/Marge Gardner Meeting Room, 7 pm (following take down of the Advent Spiral).

Adults and caregivers of our 8th and 9th grade Coming of Age Youth from both the Amherst and Buffalo UU Churches, please join us for an opportunity to connect with other parents of Coming of Age youth who will spend this year developing their faith credos and planning for the trip to Boston. There will be light refreshments provided.

Our Coming of Age classes will spend the night upstairs in the Alliance Room for a community-building overnight.

Mitten Tree – Sunday, December 16, During the Service, 10:30 am

Our mitten tree donations of hats, gloves, and scarves will go to both School 31 and the Back to Basics program, both of which will provide winter warmth to children and families in need. Every year our congrega-

tion shows amazing generosity with the sheer number of new or hand-made mittens, hats, and scarves donated. Please bring yours to place on the mitten tree during the December 16 service.

Not going to be at that service? Please contact Sarah Martin at lifespan@buffalouu.org to drop your donation off at another time, or leave it at the RE Table on Sunday morning.

Santa Claus Potluck – Friday, December 21, Parish Hall, 6-8 pm

Join us for our annual Santa Claus Potluck. Bring a dish to pass (allergens clearly labeled, please!) and join us for carols, community, and a visit from Santa! All are welcome!

Solstice Pageant Service – Sunday, December 23

This year's unrehearsed winter pageant will have a Winter Solstice theme. Join us for a fun, interactive pageant as we celebrate the return of the light after the longest night of the year!

If you are interested in helping to plan or facilitate the pageant, please contact Sarah Martin at lifespan@buffalouu.org.

Coming of Age Bake Sale – Sunday, December 23, Parish Hall, Coffee Hour

Support our 8th and 9th graders in their fundraising for their heritage trip to Boston this June!

Early New Year's Eve Party – Monday, December 31, Parish Hall, 4 – 6 pm

Join us for a potluck meal (everyone bring a dish to pass!) and a celebration to ring in the new year! We'll play games, have craft activities, and drop a sparkly ball in an early countdown to 6 pm. This event is always lots of fun and perfect for families with little ones who may not make it to midnight!



Adult Faith Development

Music with Michael: Leonard Bernstein -- American Maestro

Michael Harris, instructor



In 1943, when the 25-year old Leonard Bernstein made his spectacular Carnegie Hall conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic, a new classical music star was born -- proving that a native American could lead a major symphony orchestra. The multi-faceted Bernstein excelled, not only on the conductor's podium, but also as a pianist, composer, lyricist, essayist, educator and, famously, as an Emmy Award-winning television personality. This year, as we celebrate Bernstein's centenary, we'll take the full artistic measure of this musical genius. As the *West Side Story* song goes: "Something's coming, something good!"

14 sessions — Wednesdays, 9:30 -- 11:30 am, September 5 to December 12

\$10 per session; make check payable to UUCB. For more information, call Church Office at 885-2136. See what's coming up on the course syllabus at <http://www.buffalouu.org/adult-faith-development.html>. (scroll down).

Coming in January: Weill and Wonderful Wednesdays at UUCB!

FROM BRECHT TO BROADWAY == THE MUSICAL THEATRE OF KURT WEILL

Michael Harris, instructor



Virgil Thomson called Kurt Weill (1900-1950) the most original workman in the American theatre. After becoming the toast of Berlin's theatre scene, Weill immigrated to America and reinvented the Broadway musical. We'll examine his collaborations with Bertolt Brecht, Ira Gershwin, Alan Jay Lerner and Lotte Lenya – his wife and greatest song interpreter, hear backstage tales about *The Threepenny Opera*, *Lady in the Dark* and *One Touch of Venus*, and savor such hits as "Mack the Knife" and "September Song."

14 sessions -- Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m., January 9 to April 10, 2019

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

695 Elmwood Avenue; Buffalo, NY (Alliance Room, 2nd Floor)

Cost: \$75 for full course, or \$10 per session

For more information, call Church Office at 885-2136.



Music Notes – December 2018

Daniel Bassin, Music Director



Step Out of the Cold into our warm community. In this season of Advent, with the festival of Hanukkah upon us, and with Music Sunday right around the corner, your UUCB Choir and our brilliant musical guests have been cooking up some musical delights. On December 2, we welcome Bruce Pfeffer to our sanctuary Steinway, who will treat us to some baroque and romantic gems, while the Choir offers up Chorale previews of our two upcoming Bach performances: *Christmas Oratorio, Part 5* for December Music

Sunday on the 9th, and the conclusion to our multi-year survey of this festive masterpiece on Epiphany Sunday, January 6th with *Part 6*. We look forward to sharing this music with each of you!



Joys and Sorrows



We rejoice with Sarah and Brian Zralek. The Zralek family has grown with the addition of beautiful, October baby, Naomi Joy.

A baby has also come into Sue Mann Dolce's life. Sue became a grandmother in October.

Our compassion is with Ellen Sanders Noonan. Ellen's mother, Ruth Sanders, passed away last month.

Our hearts are also with the family and friends of Dodie Lock. Dodie, mother of Martie Nicotera, died on October 15. Dodie was a long-time member of the congregation and will be missed.

We send healing prayers to Leo Mitchell's father, who is recovering from a heart attack.

Our thoughts are with Nancy Brennan whose close friend and ex-husband passed away last month.



2019 Giving Campaign

Your Generosity Makes a Difference!

The holiday season offers us many opportunities to live our Unitarian Universalist values - buying gifts for the less fortunate, sharing our holiday table with others who might be alone, buying organic, sustainably raised food.

Your pledge of financial support to the church is another way to live your values, to show your commitment to all that we do here to make lives better. Many people have already made a pledge for 2019 and nearly all have increased from last year, recognizing the 4% increase in our church budget for 2019. Thank you! Your generosity will make a difference! If you haven't yet made your pledge, please consider how much the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo means to you and to the community. About half of our pledgers are "Fair Share", meaning they pledge 1 - 10% of their income. But if this is out of reach, be assured that any gift, when it comes from the heart is meaningful to the church and to the giver.

If you did not receive a pledge card, they are available at the Welcome Table. Questions? Please talk to Maria Testa or Dave Batt or email stewardship@buffalouu.org

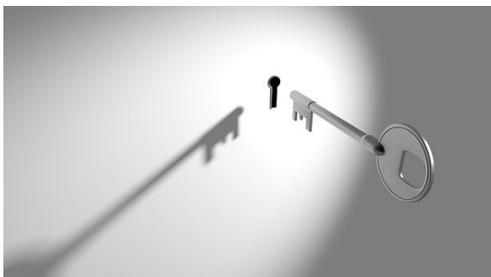
Pay part of your IRA required minimum distribution directly to UUCB as a charitable donation!

Are you 70 1/2 or older? Did you know that having a portion of your IRA required minimum distribution paid directly from your IRA to UUCB to pay on your pledge or to the Endowment Fund may qualify as a charitable distribution for income tax purposes? Check with your financial advisor to learn if this approach could be advantageous to you. - Jane Armbruster janearmbruster@gmail.com, Endowment Committee



IMPORTANT MESSAGE!

New Rental Contracts and re-keying of church building



Hello from Bridge, the Administrator of Facilities and Communication. I am working hard with a few parishioners on a new comprehensive rental contract- this will include new pricing for renting of the facility. Our plan at present is to **roll the new contract out as of January 1, 2019**- we will need all groups presently renting to sign new contracts at that time and will begin asking for payments for the use of our facility based on the new pricing at that time. **We are also rekeying the building on November 29th** - new keys will be issued to those who see me during my office hours. If anyone has any questions about these upcoming changes, they can reach me at brauch@buffalouu.org.

December Share-the-Plate: Harriet Ross Tubman School, P.S. 31

Located in the Broadway- Fillmore District of the East Side, the school currently serves approximately 530 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade. We are a school that receives Title 1 funding. Our students come with many different needs that range from academic to social emotional. Currently, the staff has participated in trainings focused on Restorative Practices. These strategies are used to help students and teachers build relationships with one another. We are currently seeking funding for a meditation room for students to utilize to de-escalate and reflect. Items needed for a successful meditation room could include special lighting, alternative forms of seating, calming music/ sounds, calming manipulatives. Your generosity will impact our students for years to come. Thank you so much for your consideration and support. We are truly thankful.

Social Action Sunday Events (SASE) News

This month we are coordinating our Social Justice activities with the Share the Plate recipient Buffalo School 31. We will be collecting winter items of clothing to donate to the children at 31, specifically **gloves, scarves, and hats**. We will also be collecting basic **school supplies such as pencils, notebooks, crayons etc.** The SASE always appreciates the active involvement of the congregation in our social justice activities. We hope you will be generous in support of School 31.

I want to take a moment to let you know how we chose School 31 as our Share the Plate recipient. The team was aware that in some city schools there is a “backpack “program but we didn’t know how that worked. It was suggested we contact Say Yes which I did. The backpack program is a function of the Food Bank and didn’t present congregational involvement. After discussion, the Say Yes representative suggested that we might provide assistance to School 31, which has a diverse lower socioeconomical population. The school has a high refugee population of about 35%, about 80 to 85% of the students are in poverty with about 30% of students needing special education services.

We will be writing postcards as we do on a monthly basis. This is planned for Sunday, December 2. We look forward to your participation.

We are always looking for new members to our SASE team. We meet the first Tuesday of the month from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM. Our current team members are Liz Parke, Sharon Walker, Sandra Dunbar, Leo Mitchell, and Rev. Joan. Steve Wixson Chair wixsongs@gmail.com





Peace Conference and Peace Circle Practices

Sponsored by VOICE-Buffalo and the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition

Wondering how you could help with creating alternatives to arrest and suspensions? Consider becoming a Peace Circle/Conference facilitator. Using Restorative Practices to create effective changes in our criminal justice system, Peace Circles build community while Peace Conferences can be used in situations where a harm has been done that needs repair. With that in mind, you are invited to experience and take part in our monthly Circle and Conference practice sessions that build community and take on real issues.

Information on training to become a certified facilitator is available at each session.

Peace Conference, First Thursday of each Month

R Healin Center, 1057 Kensington Ave., Buffalo, NY 14215

December 6, 2018

Registration and refreshments at 5:00 pm

Peace Conference Practice; 5:30-7:30 pm

Peace Circle, Second Tuesday of each month

UU Church of Buffalo, 2nd Fl., "Marge Gardner Meeting Room," 695 Elmwood Ave.

December 11, 2018

Registration and refreshments at 6:00 pm

Peace Circle Practice; 6:30-8:30 pm

One of our guideline statements is "What is said here, stays here. What is learned leaves here." For the past four months we have been meeting and talking, discussing, sharing and opening our hearts on the topics of race, community and gentrification, gender issues, and gratitude. By developing the ability to come together to tackle difficult topics our Circle Practice builds community with the long-term goal of UUCB becoming a community Peace Hub.

For more information on the Peace Circles taking place at UUCB email uucb.wny.specevents@gmail.com.





UAIM NEWS

“The Difficulty of Being Just: Including People with Disabilities in Congregational Life” is an article in the UUA website. The article begins with the Opening Words from the UUA Congregation Webpage.

“Our faith calls us to live a spirit of radical hospitality-only when we are truly open to the wealth of diversity in our world will the inherent worth and dignity of every person be affirmed with a large voice. Let’s not rest until all are welcomed into Beloved Community.”

This article gives some suggestions on how to be in a right relationship with members and friends in our church.

Accessibility and Inclusion Recommendations for People with Visual, Auditory and Mobility Limitations

Cut-out pews for people who use mobility devices (this is almost done)

Power assisted doors

Assisted Listening Devices (We Looped UUCB several years ago)

Accessible Bathrooms

Always use microphones (even if someone says they don’t need one)

Large print hymnals and orders of service

Encourage speakers, worship associates, etc.. to speak loudly & clearly

Raise the pulpit so everyone can see

Wear name tags all the time for people with memory problems

Leaves seats on the aisles for people who have difficulty moving into the aisles. And speaking of Seats: It is not okay to force people who use mobility devices to sit in front of all the pews or behind all the pews because there is no other seating option. Segregated seating is not an acceptable seating arrangement.

More suggestions from UAIM: Always ask a person if they could use assistance, never assume that they need assistance, look at the person you are talking to, do not lean on a wheelchair or mobility device.

UAIM is thankful for all the assistance the congregation has given us in the last five years. But as the UUA webpage states LET’S NOT REST UNTIL ALL ARE WELCOMED IN OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY.

Widows and Widowers Circle

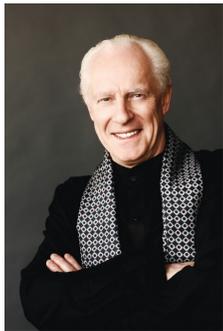
A monthly gathering of Women and Men who have lost their partners



We will gather for support, nurturing and sharing coping ideas for those of us who have lost partners—“Bringing grief out of the shadows is our spiritual responsibility ...our sacred duty” -(Weller: “The Wild Edge of Sorrow”). **Our next meeting is Dec. 2, Noon—1pm in the Marge Gardner Meeting Room.** Bring lunch and a friend if you want. I have an article to share on THE PHYSICS OF DEATH AND WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR ENERGY

WHEN YOU DIE. All widows and widowers are welcome.

Bonnie Collins is a family therapist and a widow herself. She will facilitate the group. **Call her for further information** and/or to sign up. (716 648 4455)



Vincent O'Neill
Artistic Director
Irish Classical
Theatre

UUCB WOMEN'S SOCIETY'S SPEAKER-LUNCHEON SERIES for December 20:

We are very pleased to welcome **Vincent O'Neill, Co-founder and Artistic Director of the Irish Classical Theatre. He will hold us in thrall with his reading of the classic "A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES" by Dylan Thomas.**

Refreshments at 11 am (\$3 donation); Vincent O'Neill's reading at 11:30; Prepaid luncheon at 12:30.

Cost: Women's Society members - lunch \$15 - no cost for speaker only

Non-members - lunch \$20 - includes speaker

Non-members - speaker only - \$5 at the door

Paid reservations accepted Dec. 9 and 16 at the Women's Society table after service in the Parish Hall or, if by mail, we must receive your check by noon on Friday, Dec.14. Make check and mail to: UUCB (memo line: "WS luncheon"), 695 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14222.

Women's Society Used Book Sale

We look forward to the annual book sale every spring and are now collecting your books, i.e. hardbound and softcover books of all topics, children's and young adult books, art books, puzzles and games, books on CD. Please no reference books, encyclopedias, textbooks or magazines. If you have questions, contact Joyce Bol at joukjebol@gmail.com



Turn your clutter into clear vision, better hearing, and renewed hope



Your Women's Society maintains a collection bin year-round to receive your un-needed eyeglasses, sunglasses and hearing aids. The bin is located in the Garden Entrance foyer on Sundays and in the Parish Hall during our Thursday luncheons September - April.

Non-Perishable Food Items for the Food Pantry

Please Bring a Non-Perishable Food Item for the Food Pantry each time you come to church year-round. The donation box is in the Garden Entrance foyer.



No UUCB Book Group Meeting in December.

But Looking ahead: January 28, 2 pm, RED-HAIRED WOMAN by Orhan Palmuk; Feb. 25 at 2 pm, ELEPHANT WHISPERER by Lawrence Anthony.

Questions? Ellen Gibson at 882-3488.



We gather in loving community ~ inspiring one another ~ to transform ourselves
to create a more just and compassionate world

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

695 Elmwood Ave. Buffalo New York 14222

716-885-2136 www.buffalouu.org

<p>Minister: Rev. Joan Montagnes minister@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Administrator of Facilities and Communication: Bridge Rauch office@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Director of Religious Education: Sarah Martin lifespan@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Music Director: Daniel Bassin music@buffalouu.org</p>
<p>Care Network: Ginny Vaughan 716-768-1077 wixsonsg@gmail.com</p>	<p>Gatekeeper: Sara Kirkland office@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Wedding Coordinator: Paulette Notaro weddings@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Organist/ Accompanist: We're looking! Apply here</p>
<p>Administrator for-Finance: Donna Sentz donnasentz@buffalouu.org</p>	<p>Nursery Care Coordinator: Morgan Silver</p>	<p>Newsletter: newsletter@buffalouu.org</p> <p>Weekly Announcements: announcements@buffalouu.org</p>	



A chalice alit since 1831
A sanctuary on the National Registry of Historic Places

