



## MINISTER'S COLUMN

*I want to see the thirst  
inside the syllables*

*I want to touch the fire  
in the sound:*

*I want to feel the darkness  
of the cry. I want*

*words as rough*

*as virgin rocks. -- Pablo Neruda, "Verb"*

People who work with words sometimes get the odd idea that the words themselves want to join hands in helpful and lovely ways and dance across the page if only we had the skill to command them, conjure them, remember them.

Ministers reach for words to invoke whatever powers are resident on Earth or in the stars to preach peace, disarm anger, comfort grief, and shout praises. It is a very long reach, and words come stumbling.

Many animals communicate with gesture and sound, from the songs of birds to the deep thrum of whales. But we humans out-do them all in the intricacy and longevity of language. Human language can be preserved over time -- centuries and millennia! I have seen ancient Sumerian clay tablets inscribed with inventories, papyri covered in love poems, sacred stories inked on parchment and illuminated with dazzling images rendered in vivid colors and pure gold. These artifacts, it seems to me, capture the magic of speech better than qwerty keyboards. Or is it the immensity of time that gives the old clay, the fiber, the skins, their aura of power? We moderns have powerful media and instruments too. With the touch of a button or a screen, we can send our words instantly to thousands. How the scribes would marvel at that!

Well, there the words are, I think -- all words -- coded in 26 letters, ready to be summoned. I hesitate over the keyboard. Ah, I'm with Neruda in his longing for felicity with language. I want words equal to the trouble and rapture of human life! I want words -- hot and weeping, and not mere rocks, but geodes! -- belched out of the throats of volcanos (dragons) when the Earth was young! Geodes, hiding treasures of crystal and rainbow inside. If I had those words, I would bless you. Perhaps I will bless you anyway. Yes.

Blessed be.

Armida



**Rev. Armida Alexander** brings 35 years of experience to Stockton UU. Many of those years were one or two year posts as an interim minister. She is a graduate of Rockford College, the University of Chicago and Meadville/Lombard Theological School. Her family roots go deep in Illinois in DeKalb and Jo Daviess Counties.

She hopes that there will be no more moves!

How to reach her? email: [revinreso6@yahoo.com](mailto:revinreso6@yahoo.com) cell phone: (605)906-0183.

## NOTES FROM THE CO-MODERATORS

The Board of Trustees has been getting ready for Armida Alexander's "official" start in September. We're continuing the conversion of the downstairs office to storage – Armida will have her office upstairs. We will be getting rid of old electronics and soon will expand and enhance the Child Care area. At August's BOT meeting we invited Anastasia Aldridge to share some ideas on gaining and retaining both membership and revenue. She has also offered to help us with technology issues.

We held our Board Retreat with Armida and Alice and Randy and me (from the Transition Team) on Monday, August 22. We identified 15 items that need attention. Some highlights include:

- Improve attendance and membership
- Become an official Welcoming Church
- Combine the Care Committee with the Committee on Ministry (the Transition Team is the Committee on Ministry for Armida's first six months)
- Concentrate more on Child Care than R.E. until we get more kids
- Encourage members to watch and discuss Ken Burns' Sept. 20 program entitled "Sharp's War"
- Start work on a new Church Directory

This is an exciting start to a new era for UU Stockton!

See you in church!

Mark Haman

## CARE COMMITTEE

The board of Trustees is concerned that the care committee needs to be revitalized. If you are on the committee or want to be on the committee please let Mark or Ted know so we can get organized. The first step is to have a chairperson who will work with Armida and schedule visits with our growing number of shut ins. In the meantime if you want or need a visit from a Church member please contact Mark Haman [haman@att.net](mailto:haman@att.net) 815-777-0493 Ted Davenport 815-238-8781 [tkdavenport@hotmail.com](mailto:tkdavenport@hotmail.com)

## CHURCH NEWS



Many thanks to everyone who continues to support the Freeport Area Church Cooperative with donations of personal items and toilet paper. Though our donations have been increasingly generous the FACC always runs out of these all-important items quickly as there is great need in our community. Please continue to give generously and know how much our contributions are appreciated!

## WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Your Worship Committee has an exciting line-up of services for the month of September. We're sure that you won't want to miss a single one.

On **September 4**, Rev. Armida's topic will be "Words, words, words". Prince Hamlet's bare-bones response to the question, "What are you reading?" gives no hint about the title, meaning, or import of those words. Words can conceal our thoughts as well as reveal them to one another. Armida will consider the tools of her trade — words — and what good or evil may come of them.

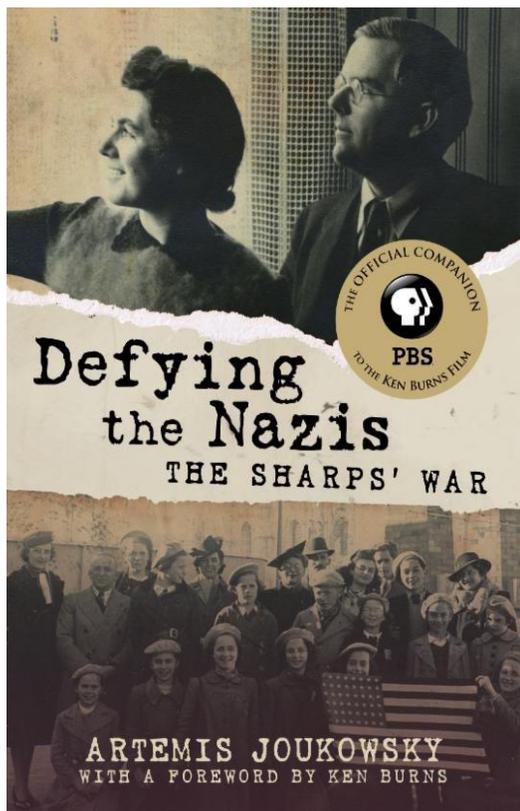
On **September 11**, our fabulous musicians will treat us to a service of song, leading us through a variety of old-time spirituals.

On **September 18**, our own Chris Aldridge will be in the pulpit with another of his interesting and insightful topics.

On **September 25**, Rev. Armida's topic will be "This Rock: That Stone". Armida will trace the significance of rocks and stones in scripture and story. From the cairn that served as Jacob's pillow in the desert to the playful stones that chased the Lakota trickster, Iktomi, to the five smooth stones in David's sling, the rocks rock.

See you in Church!

## UU ACTION PROJECT



This inspiring story begins in 1939 when a young Unitarian minister and his wife accept the call from the president of the American Unitarian Association to travel on a dangerous mission from Massachusetts to Prague to help save Jews and dissidents from the growing Nazi threat. Leaving their two young children at home, they risk their lives to provide refugee assistance and to smuggle those in danger out of Europe. Don't miss this compelling depiction of the Sharps' heroic efforts in the face of constant danger.

Unitarian Universalists across the country today are fighting Islamophobia and religious intolerance, modern-day reflections of the evils opposed by Waitstill and Martha Sharp. I call upon all communities of faith and conscience to join in defying religious intolerance and bigotry.

To help you in your mission we have created a [congregational action guide](#) with tools, materials, and stories at the [Defying the Nazis UU Action Project](#), co-sponsored by the UUA, UU Service Committee (UUSC) and the Fahs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School. Visit the [project site](#) to download the congregational action guide, the UUSC's refugee advocacy toolkit, the Fahs Collaborative's interfaith

discussion guide, and add your action to the map.

So, I ask you: Will you answer the call? Will you carry on the Sharps' living legacy by promoting interfaith justice in the face of anti-Muslim bias and the refugee crisis? Please answer the call.

In faith,

Rev. Peter Morales

President of the UUA

P.S. Interested in watching this with UU friends? Watch for announcement of home TV parties in Freeport, Galena and Stockton.

[Watch](#) the trailer for *Defying the Nazis*. Don't forget to take action at [uua.org/sharpstory](http://uua.org/sharpstory) and follow the discussion on social media with #WeDefy and #SharpsWarPBS.

## UU FUNDRAISING!



**Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>: Service Partner Concert @ Council Hill**

All profits are designated to go to Service Partners.

**Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>: Great Beginnings & Chocolate Finales, 6-8 p.m.** Mark your calendars! Invite your friends!

Silent Auction items will be needed for the Service Partner Concert and Great Beginnings and Chocolate Finales; F.Y.I. if you are willing to donate!

We will not have a plant sale this year; maybe next year. Book, art and music sale will be held in 2017. Thank you! The Fundraising Committee

## IN REMEMBRANCE

Our condolences go out to the families of members and friends who have passed away this summer.

Kay Meier, friend of the church, passed away on June 29, 2016. Kay was wife to the late Truman Meier, mother to Kim (Jay) Bauer and grandmother to Drew, Dillon, and Austin Bauer.

Dorothy Jones, age 99, passed away on July 5, 2016 at Waverly Place in Stockton. She is survived by sons Jack (Elaine) Townsend, Jerry (Kay) Townsend, and Tom (Janet) Townsend and many grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren. Dorothy worked at Kraft Foods and was the secretary at Stockton Elementary. Dorothy was a wonderful gardener and cook and was a member of our church for 64 years!

Ken Brierre, husband of Laura Brierre and father of Mark, all of Freeport, passed away on May 31, 2016. Ken worked for the Housing Authority in Chicago and Freeport for many years. He will be remembered for his kindness and concern for others and doing everything he could to make this world a better place.

Sylvia Kunz, wife of Norman Kunz and mother of Kristi (Ted) Davenport, passed away on August 9, 2016. Sylvia worked at Sullivan's Grocery Store for 30 years and then as a cook at Stockton Elementary. She was loved by her many friends and family members and will be greatly missed.

Paul Ericksen, husband of Alice Ericksen, passed away on August 12, 2016, at home in Galena, under the care of Hospice of Dubuque. He was lovingly surrounded by Alice, their son Jeff and daughter-in-law Korynne. Paul initially pursued his passion for music, but soon turned his efforts towards a career in special education. The family called Elmhurst home while Paul worked with emotionally disturbed children and supervised a variety of special education programs. They eventually moved to Molalla, Oregon, where he continued to work until his retirement in 2000. Our thoughts are with Alice and family.

## COUNCIL HILL STATION BENEFIT CONCERT

Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton

"Love is our spirit and service our mission. All are welcome here."

Plan on attending the Council Hill Station Benefit Concert on Saturday, September 17, from 2-5 p.m.. The music will be provided by Medicinal Purposes 3 featuring "Cowgirl" Pearl Breitbach, Scott Kerry Guthrie, and L.A. Seuss. Their music is a blend of rock, blues, folk and rockabilly. Bring your dancing shoes!

Suggested donation is \$5. Proceeds will go to area food banks and other non-profits through our Service Partner Program. In addition to great music and relaxing atmosphere, there will be some terrific silent auction items and a 50/50 drawing. Food and beverages will be available for purchase. There are handicapped accessible portable restrooms near the concert area. Council Hill Station is located at 6521 N. Hill Road, Scales Mound, IL 61075. Check them out on Facebook!

Service Partners for 2016 include the American Red Cross, The Workshop, Apple River Food Pantry, Stockton Nutrition Assistance Fund, Warren Food Pantry, Tyler's Justice Center, Freeport Area Church Cooperative Homeless Shelter and Food Bank, Elizabeth Food Pantry, Stockton Food Pantry, Purr-Fection Animal Shelter, Riverview Center, and Hospice of Northwest Illinois.

See you at Council Hill Station on the 17th!

# COUNCIL HILL STATION

6521 N. Hill Road, Scales Mound, IL 61075



## MEDICINAL PURPOSES 3

**Saturday, September 17, 2016**

**2-5 p.m.**

*~Music in the Barn*

*~Silent Auction*

*~Food & Beverage available*

*~Family Friendly*

**Raising funds & awareness for the social needs of our communities**  
(**\$5 suggested donation**)

**Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton**

## **Soul Matters/Spirit Journey September 2016**



### **What Does It Mean To Be A Community of Covenant?**

*The ancient question, "Who am I?" inevitable leads to a deeper one: "Whose am I?" – because there is not identity outside of relationship. You cannot be a person by yourself. To ask "Whose am I" is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?*  
- Douglas Steer

Our culture teaches us that what it means to be human is to be an individual – self-defined, self-determined, separate even. But our UU covenantal theology affirms that being human comes down to the commitments we make to and with each other – the relationships we keep. We become human through our promises to and with each other.

And even more than that: covenantal theology also says that when we break those promises, we yet somehow find ways to reconnect and begin again. When we realize right then, that we are still connected, and we can't give up – and so we return, and begin again. This beginning again, says our faith, is when the holy and the human meet.

Let me tell you right now, sometime in the next year, maybe in the next few minutes, the people you most believe in and care about are going to disappoint you. Your church is going to disappoint you. This world is surely going to disappoint you. Like, all the time. We all are walking wounded and weary from the way this world can – and does – break our hearts.

And what our faith asks of us, what our faith imagines for us, is that somehow, right at that moment when our hearts break, we will find our way to see through that heartbreak. We will stay put – not close off, not run away, not hurt back – but keep on being in relationship, doing what we can to repair the world and each other, keep on opening our hearts with greater love. And, right then, our covenantal faith says – we will feel not only most human, but also most whole and most at home.

**Rev. Gretchen Haley, Senior minister, Foothills Unitarian, Fort Collins, Colorado**

### **Spiritual Exercise**

Reflecting on the words of Douglas Steer, above, "whose are you?"

1. Find and print out four pictures of four different people:
  - one that represent your promises to those that have gone before you
  - one that represents your promises to those who will come after you
  - one that represents your promises to someone central to your life right now
  - one of yourself -- past or present -- that represents your promises to yourself
2. Put these four pictures in a place you will see every day this month.
3. Make a conscious effort to reflect on them every day and do at least one thing to further or honor your promise to one of these people.
4. Bring your four pictures to your small group and share how living with them altered your days.

# Session plan

## **Chalice Lighting**

**5min**

A covenant is not a contract. It is not made and signed and sealed once and for all, sent to the attorneys for safekeeping or guarded under glass in a museum. A covenant is not a static artifact and it is not a sworn oath: Whereas, whereas, whereas. . . . Therefore, I will do this, or I'll die, so help me God. A covenant is a living, breathing aspiration, made new every day. It can't be enforced by consequences but it may be reinforced by forgiveness and by grace, when we stumble, when we forget, when we mess up. ~ **Rev. Victoria Safford** full text here: <http://www.uuworld.org/articles/bound-in-covenant>

## **General Check-In**

**10min**

Question: introduce yourself (name, place of birth, hobby) and then answer: *What's a promise that has shaped your life in the last year?*

**What Shall the Covenant of this Group Be?** Have a discussion, and take notes, about the promises you make to each other. Listening? Timeliness? Confidentiality? Honesty? What do you expect of each other?

**10min**

**Exercise** - Each person share their pictures. After sharing, discussion. **30min**

**Conversation** - a question that "grabs" you, and answer.

**40min**

1. What promises have you made to those who have gone before?
2. What promises have you made to those who will come after?
3. What is the most life-giving promise you've made?
4. Some of us preempt heartbreak by leaving relationships before others have a chance to break their promises and our hearts. What is keeping you from the risk and pain of covenant?
5. Covenant rightly calls us to work on repairing relationship and sticking in there even when it is hard. But sometimes one's covenant with self requires us to put up boundaries and know when to leave a relationship. Is it time for you to put your covenant with yourself first?
6. Theologian James Luther Adams names the foundational covenantal nature of the universe as "the love that will not let us go." How do you experience this love? Has it kept its promise to you? How? Have you kept your promises to it?

We sometimes wrongly say it is the absence of creed that is most important to who we are [as Unitarian Universalists]. This is wrong. We could practice religious freedom all day long, every day, and never come into community. It is covenant that brings us out of isolation, covenant that brings us out of selfish concerns, out of individualism, to join ourselves to something greater, to become a part of a community that is working to practice love, to dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge and wisdom together, to find better ways to live our lives and live in the world. ~ **Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray**

**Question:** What does it mean to you to be part of a covenantal faith and faith?

**Check-Out** - What's your take-away about "covenant"? Gratitude for this time? **5min**

**Closing Words:** *Love is the spirit of this church and reason is its guide. To dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in freedom, and to serve human need; this is our covenant.*

## CALENDAR –SEPTEMBER 2016

September 4<sup>th</sup> 10:30 a.m. - Service

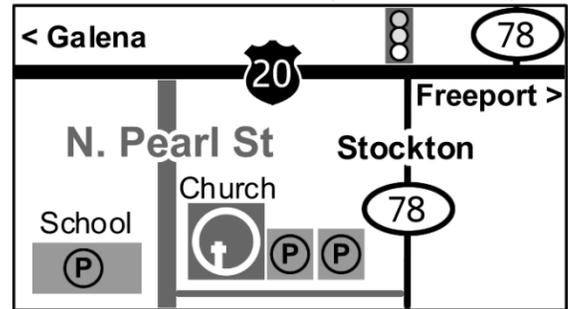
September 11<sup>th</sup> 10:30 a.m. - Service

September 18<sup>th</sup> 10:30 a.m. - Service

September 25<sup>th</sup> 10:30a.m. - Service

## CHURCH INFORMATION

219 N Pearl Street, Stockton, IL



Wheel chair parking and elevator access is available from the rear parking lot.

**SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10:30 AM**

**CHILD CARE EVERY SUNDAY AT 10:30 AM**

**REV. ARMIDA ALEXANDER, MINISTER**

**UUCHURCHOFSTOCKTON.ORG**

**FACEBOOK.COM/UUCHURCHOFSTOCKTON**

**REVINRES06@YAHOO.COM**



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

**219 N PEARL ST, STOCKTON, IL 61085**