



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

C H U R C H O F S T O C K T O N , I L

MINISTER'S REMARKS

Winter Jubilation

Let us not wish away the winter... (It) is a table set with ice and starlight... rich in beauty, challenge, and pregnant negativities. — Greta Crosby

Winters and winters ago, we played Fox and Geese, which, though I did not know it then, is like running the perimeter and cross-sections of a huge Mandala, traced in white. Or, we rolled wet snow into lumpy replicas of the human form — real 6th day of creation work! By the time we turned toward home, flights of grounded angels blessed the yards. Yes, winter has its jubilations. Even in winter, the nature mystics tell us, the holy (however you define that mysterious category of existence) is as active and visible as on any perfect summer day, if we have eyes to see.

Counterpoint to our grounded angels, imagine the raven-hued starlings in Mary Oliver's poem, "Starlings in Winter."

Chunky and noisy,
but with stars in their black feathers,
they spring from the telephone wire
and instantly
they are acrobats
in the freezing wind.
And now, in the theater of air,
they swing over buildings,
dipping and rising;
they float like one stippled star
that opens,
becomes for a moment fragmented,

then closes again;
and you watch
and you try
but you simply can't imagine
how they do it
with no articulated instruction, no pause,
only the silent confirmation
that they are this notable thing,
this wheel of many parts, that can rise and spin
over and over again,
full of gorgeous life.
Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter,
even in the ashy city.
I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;
I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want
to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

Mary Oliver's vision has awakened a small joy within me in this still-dark season. I hope it speaks to you, too. How wonderful it will be to feel light and frolicsome, improbable, beautiful and brave, as the snow and stars and wings that surround us (above and below) admonish. If you are still not quite feeling the lift of wings, do read (online) Wendell Berry's poem, "The Mad Farmer's Liberation Front." In that wry and subversive piece, he says, "Be joyful, though you have considered all the facts." This season, perhaps finding joy is a revolutionary act. I dare you. Blessings abound!

Armida

CO-MODERATOR'S REPORT

Art Committee News

Be sure to talk to Mark Haman to reserve wall space for one of your favorite works of art that you'd like to share with the church starting in late January.

Co-Moderator Report

Here are some of the highlights of December's Board of Trustees meeting:

We decided that all items for our Friday email blasts should be turned in to Armida by Thursday afternoon. This means any and all upcoming items and reminders. Sheila continues work on the new directory. There are plans to put a speaker with a volume control in the Child Care Area so a parent or caregiver can listen to the service. The children's gifts for our Christmas families have been donated, wrapped, and delivered to the school. Thanks to all who helped with this – there must have been some happy faces on Christmas morning!

We are still reviewing some of the goals we set at our August BOT retreat. Three notable ones we are working on are 1.) doing a survey of the membership, 2.) becoming a Welcoming Church, and 3.) expanding the Soul Matters groups.

Be sure to reserve your tickets now for the **Annual Meeting and Potluck**. (Just kidding!) This important event will be on **Sunday, January 22** – See you then!

Mark Haman, co-moderator

WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

January Services Will Be Very Special

The winter weather has been keeping a lot of us out of church on Sunday this past December. However, no matter what the weather looks like for January, your Worship Committee has planned some great services for you. We hope you'll warm up the car and join us. Here's what's coming up.

January 1, 10:30 a.m. Rev. Armida will be in the pulpit. Her topic is "What's New Under the Sun?", a consideration of Ecclesiastes' wisdom. Don't forget to stick around for a special New Year's Day brunch.

January 8 Rev. Armida's topic is "Close Encounters of a Strange Kind: Epiphanies Large and Small." Who among us has seen, heard or felt the transformative power of epiphany? 9:15 a.m. Soul Matters introduction. Everyone welcome!

January 15 Steve Barg, the Director of the Jo Daviess County Conservation Foundation will address us with his topic "Traditional Ecological Knowledge"

January 22 Rev. Armida's topic will be "Woe Is Us?" Dealing with post-election blues (or reds, as the case may be).

January 29 Chloris Lowe is a Native American leader from the Ho-Chunk Nation. The title of his presentation is "Everything Has a Life and a Spirit."

I hope you'll agree that January will be an exciting month for us. You won't want to miss out. See you in Church!

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!

THANK YOU, Church Family!

We prepared 140 small bags of Christmas Candy for the FACC Christmas Baskets. In spite of the bad weather, Leslie delivered for us. Holiday Cheer from Stockton to Freeport!

Game Day - take two!

Sunday, January 8th is our second try to hold an afternoon of fun and games. We'll gather after church and coffee - a pot of soup will be available for a light lunch and then the games will begin!! There will be cards, cribbage boards, and word games available. All ages are encouraged to attend. This may be an opportunity to learn a new game! Please spread the word and plan to attend!!

SOUL MATTERS

Soul Matters Start Up

What is a Soul Matters group? It's a group of UU's getting together to discuss some of the important questions of life. Sound too heavy, too personal? Not at all. It's friends getting together who may follow the suggested topic outline (found in our newsletter) or may decide that topic didn't touch their lives and go on and discuss something more pressing.

Is there homework? Yes, if you want to do it. Some people in the Galena area group (I won't name names) never do their homework but have great ideas. Can I count on confidentiality? Absolutely! Will the people involved get to know each other better? Yes!

The Galena group is enjoying Soul Matters so much we hope a Stockton area group can now start up. We'll meet for the first time on Sunday, January 8 at 9:15 in the RE room. Come for coffee and donuts and a good discussion.

Linda Weeder

Soul Matters/Spirit Journey January 2017

What Does It Mean To Be

A Community of Prophecy?



For Unitarian Universalists, the prophetic voice has always been less about shouting “You’re evil!” and more about pointing out “We’re all asleep!” The prophetic message, for us, is not so much “Repent!” but “Wake up!”

If election day was about realizing we were asleep in a bubble, the question on Inauguration Day becomes, “Are we ready to wake up?” This is not a politically partisan thing. One unemployed Michigan factory worker was quoted after the election saying, “I vote Republican because I won’t vote for anyone who doesn’t see and respect me.” On the other side of the political fence, black, Latino, Muslim and LGBT families are struggling with real fear about what’s been unleashed and what may be unleashed against them and us. And we and they are wondering if this country will wake up to and take our and their fear seriously.

Being a community of prophecy is not just about helping people wake up to each other’s realities and fears; there is also the matter of waking up to and being wide-eyed about the need for resistance. As an activist said, “I am not crushed. I am awake.”

Spiritual Exercise

This month is full of prophetic holidays. But too often our culture turns them into parties or excuses for another day off, or worse yet, ignores them all together. Your assignment: Pick at least one of the major holidays of January and find your personal way of keeping it “large”-keeping it’s radical and prophetic potential alive.

New Year’s Day: Are your New Year’s resolutions too small? Are they really big enough to bring down your “bully”? Are they radical enough to make life feel like a playground again?

MLK Day: His call for equality and justice is regularly reduced to an invitation to embrace diversity and ignores his demand to turn the economic social order on its head. Treating him as a “saint” ends up hiding how radical he was. So this year, what can you do to honor “the radical MLK”?

Inauguration Day: Consider making this Inauguration Day about prophetic listening. Treat this Inauguration Day like it was one of those prophets of old; figure out how it is “judging us,” “warning us of danger” or “calling us to become something new.” Make at least one major commitment that represents what you figure out.

One final note: Regardless of which holiday you focus on, pay attention this month to the thread that ties all of them together. Each in their own way asserts that we are prophets of our futures. Each declares that our destinies are not determined. All of them remind us that we are not puppets that life pushes around.

Session plan

Chalice Lighting 5min

Avoid the bad habit of domesticating the prophet of your choice, turning him into a cheerleader for your way of thinking and way of life. Remember that all the great prophets were courageous and outrageous folks who railed against the powers-that-be, challenged self-satisfied posit, threatened the prevailing social order, and would find you falling short in some significant ways. ~**Parker Palmer**

General Check-In 10min

Question: *What's a prophecy or prediction about your life that has come true?*

Exercise - Each person share their responses. After sharing, discussion. 20min

Conversation - a question that "grabs" you, and answer. 30min

1. **Who has been a prophetic oracle to you? Whose voice has influenced, and thus, predicted your future? Is it still doing so?**
2. **How is Beauty calling you to a new future?** (Beauty is the oracle that speaks to us all. - Luis Barragan)
3. **Have you domesticated your prophets? Is your "cloud of prophetic witnesses" really just an echo chamber?**
4. **Are your New Year's resolutions too small? Are they really big enough to bring down your bully What New Year's resolution will make life feel like a playground again?**
5. **What, in this new age, do you feel the need to be prophetic about? What are you awoke about and need to wake others? What are you coming to see now?**
6. **What makes you afraid or uncomfortable about being a prophet? What support do you need from your church community to step further into this role?**
7. **Is your prophetic engagement with or without love?** (If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. - 1 Corinthians 13:2)

Group Conversation: 20min

The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it. Only through the prophetism of all believers can we together foresee doom and mend our common ways. ~**James Luther Adams, UU theologian**

How should this church become a place that honors, strengthens, and amplifies the prophethood of all believers?

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

Closing Words:

The words of the prophets are
written on the subway walls
and tenements halls
and whispered
in the sounds of silence.

U.U. Ladies Retreat 2016



The Stockton UU Ladies Retreat was held on November 19 and 20 at Sinsinawa Mound Retreat Center. We experienced walking the labyrinth, Zentangles, seated yoga, poetry and reading selections and story-telling along with some great fellowship over meals.

A few quotes from the participants will give you an idea what it was like to be at the retreat:

“Oh, oh, I forgot a wine bottle opener.”

“I chose this reading because it reflects where I am in life.”

“Yummy brownies.”

“Perhaps Persephone enjoyed her time with Hades.”

“I always pay my gambling debts.”

“I don’t know why I chose this reading.”

“I usually go to bed at 9:00.”

“I got this at the gift shop.”

Let’s just say a good time was had by all!

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

ATTENTION: THE NEWSLETTER DEADLINE WILL ALWAYS BE THE 20TH OF THE MONTH AT 5 P.M. PLEASE GET YOUR NOTICES AND ARTICLES TO TED (TKDAVENPORT@HOTMAIL.COM) OR MARK AND SHEILA (HAMAN@ATT.NET).

UU CHURCH OF STOCKTON PROPOSED 2017 BUDGET

Income	2016 BUDGET	2017 PROPOSED BUDGET
Contributions	3900	4000
Interest	75	75
Fund Raising	4812	5500
Chalice Lighter Grant	3500	0
Pledge Income	66000	60425
Total Income	78,287	70,000
Expenses		
Committees	2550	2540
Service Partners	1800	1500
UUA/MWD	3960	3960
Building & Grounds	5050	7000
TCM Rev. Erik	29425	00
TCM Rev. Armida	12000	33000
Administration	17160	20000
Search	4500	00
Guest Ministers	1600	2000
Total Expenses	78,045	70,000

Pledge Drive Update And Annual Meeting Reminder

Thanks to everyone who returned their pledge cards for 2017, and we are pleased to note that some pledges were increased. To date we're at \$53,000 in pledge income with a goal of \$60,000. There are still outstanding pledges that haven't been returned. If you need a pledge card, contact Ted Davenport or John Fischer by December 31st so we can have a budget to present at the annual meeting January 22nd. Your participation at that meeting is especially important for the health of the U.U Church of Stockton. The board is exploring ways we can reach out to our members, friends, and shut-ins through the internet. (maybe live streaming the Sunday services through our web-site) Attendance has been low on Sundays, and this is a large concern with the board. Ideas on what we need to do will be discussed and input from all of you is of vital importance. Please plan to attend the potluck dinner and Annual meeting on the 22nd of January. And if you can be here at 10:30 in the morning, stop in for the Church service also. We miss you!

CHURCH CANCELLATION PROTOCOL

With winter just around the corner, it's time we advise everyone on the policy for cancelling church. It's the co-moderator's responsibility to call off any church function in the event of bad weather or any unforeseen situation where we can't have a scheduled service of any type. For future reference, this procedure will be in place and these television stations will be contacted. From the Quad Cities: 8-WQAD, 6-KWQC, 4-WHBF. From Rockford: 23-WIFR, 17-WTVO, 13-WREX. The safety of our members and friends is paramount, so use good judgement when the roads become unsafe for travel. Feel free to contact the co-moderators with advise or questions. Mark Haman (815)777-0493 and Ted Davenport (815)238-8781

CALENDAR – JANUARY 2017

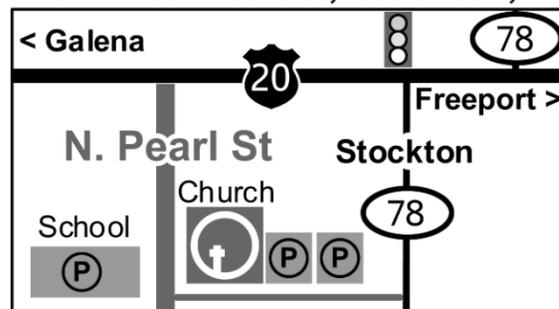
Sunday Jan. 1 Rev. Armida “What’s New Under the Sun?” New Year’s Day Brunch following.

Sunday Jan. 8 Rev. Armida’s “Close Encounters of the Strange Kind: Epiphanies Large and Small.” Come early at 9:15 for the introduction of Soul Matters.

Sunday Jan. 15 Steve Barg, the Director of the Jo Daviess County Conservation Foundation will address us with his topic “Traditional Ecological Knowledge.” Sunday Jan. 22 Rev. Armida’s topic will be “Woe Is Us?” Dealing with post-election blues (or reds, as the case may be.) Sunday Jan. 29 Chloris Lowe is a Native American leader from the Ho-Chunk Nation. The title of his presentation is “Everything Has a Life and a Spirit.

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



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

219 N PEARL ST, STOCKTON, IL 61085