



## MINISTER'S REMARKS

On the Solstice, 2016

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ancient people knew a lot about the recurrences of the seasons. Their lives depended upon their accurate predictions about when to plant, when to harvest. They watched the transits of the stars, observed the growth of lichens and moss, marked the fall of leaves, the emergence of the first ferns. They kept track of where they were in the cycle of time. Some quadrants in that circle were more daunting than others and winter the most dangerous. They met their fear and dread with fire; as darkness and cold increased, they kindled the light and warmth of fire. And so do we. We too bring light into the dark. Very soon, homes and street corners will be outlined and illumined. We are not much removed from the caves or the oak groves of our past, and we perform a Druid ritual when we string tiny lights in trees at this time of year, the most necessary time, the darkest time, midnight of the year. Sometimes, the darkness extends into our society and into our bones as well. We have elevated into the most powerful seat of power a man who is admittedly fearful and hostile toward everyone except white men. White men who do not challenge him. Oh, but we struggled so long for the rights of women, minorities, LGBTQ people. Must we do it all again to protect those hard-won rights? Where do we find the fire to counteract this darkness? Four years is a long winter. Enough! Stop that! Remember your own history on this planet! Humans have survived ice ages and global winters, for heaven's sake! The stars continue their slow dance above us; the seeds sleep beneath us — waiting. Meanwhile, I shall strike just a small flame in the Chalice of my heart and retell the stories of the light-bringers — Raven, Grandmother Spider, Mithra, Buddha, Jesus. The stories bring me hope — a kind light for my inner darkness. These stories were born in dangerous times, and this much I know — they will survive this one too. “All will be well,” sang Sister Julian of Norwich, “All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” — Armida

## CO-MODERATOR'S REPORT

The Harvest Potluck Dinner was held on Sunday November 13<sup>th</sup>, after the Sunday service. Thanks to the Duffords for providing a turkey and everyone who brought a dish to pass. A video was shown that Rich Mattas produced with pictures highlighting events and services from the past year. Sheila Haman talked on what the board and congregation have accomplished. A tentative budget was presented by Ted Davenport for 2017 and can be viewed elsewhere in the newsletter. Please return your pledge cards to the Church address so the board can finalize a budget to be approved at the Annual Meeting which will be held on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017. If for some reason you didn't receive a pledge card contact Ted Davenport or John Fischer. We are discussing whether to eliminate the use of Paypal because of the inconvenience and the costs involved for the Church. The Church grounds have been cleaned up, thanks to Don and Edith for their donation to pay for it.

Stockton U.U. Church Board

## WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

### See You In Church

December is a busy season for all of us. Perhaps you're thinking "I don't have time to go to Church". We think that during this busy season is the precise time for us to go to Sunday services. Where else can you take an hour to relieve the stress of the season?

Here are the exciting services planned for the month of December:

December 4	Do You Hear What I Hear?	A readers' theater presentation
December 11	What the Dickens!	Rev. Armida Alexander
December 18	Jesus As Archetype	Alice Ericksen
December 24	Candlelight Service at <b>8 PM</b>	Rev. Armida Alexander
December 25	The Light Bringers	Rev. Armida Alexander with breakfast

Please take the opportunity to enjoy the **peace** of the season by joining your fellow UU's at these services. You'll be glad you did!

See you in church.

Your Worship Committee

## 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!

### FACC – CANDY FOR CHRISTMAS

For the last two years our church family has donated Christmas Candy to top off the food baskets that FACC prepares for Christmas distribution. The wrapped candy that you donate is repackaged into small bags, as many as 125 or more. (Sally, Joan and Perry have acted as the "elves" in the candy store.) Of course, ham and sweet potatoes are very important, but imagine the smiles for those who see the treats as well.

The candy collection box will be in the Patterson Room. Please fill it up with WRAPPED Christmas candy through November.

Thanks to you all for your continued support of the FACC mission to those in need.

### FACC NEWS

Freeport Area Church Cooperative (FACC) has requested that we include in our monthly contributions of personal care items: feminine hygiene products (tampax and sanitary pads). Please consider including these items with your donations. Here is an updated list of items that the food pantry and homeless shelter need:

Toothbrushes	Toothpaste	Shampoo	Soap	Dishwashing Liquid
Deodorant	Toilet Paper	Feminine Hygiene Products		Hotel/Travel
Size shampoo, soap, and toothpaste				

As always, if you can't get to the store to buy these items, please consider donating cash, as our church volunteers can then purchase the needed items. Thank you for your continued support!

## STOCKTON HOLIDAY FAMILIES

For the past several years the U. U. Church of Stockton has provided presents for 2 families in the area that can't afford to. This is in conjunction with the social worker, Cory Walters of the Stockton School District, who interviews the family members and gives us a list of presents that the children want and need. Our members take a present or 2 and buy the items, bring them to the Church where they are gift wrapped and then handed off to Cory who will deliver the presents to the families in need. We also accept cash and can buy the presents or give any extra monies to the families in the form of a gift card for Sullivan's Foods so they can have a holiday dinner. See Ted Davenport if you want to support this worthwhile charity project.

### Game Day!

All gamers are invited to gather after church on Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup> for some fun and games. We'll keep this simple: there will be cards available for euchre, or other card games, cribbage boards, and Quiddler (for you wordsmiths!). We'll gather after coffee hour and have some lunch (pizza? sandwiches? a pot of soup? – to be determined) and then – let the games begin!! Experienced or not, all are welcome! This may be your opportunity to learn a new game! For more information, contact Laura Dufford (947-2720 or [lauradufford@gmail.com](mailto:lauradufford@gmail.com)).

### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

**ATTENTION: THE NEWSLETTER DEADLINE WILL ALWAYS BE THE 20<sup>TH</sup> OF THE MONTH AT 5 P.M. PLEASE GET YOUR NOTICES AND ARTICLES TO TED ([TKDAVENPORT@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:TKDAVENPORT@HOTMAIL.COM)) OR MARK AND SHEILA ([HAMAN@ATT.NET](mailto: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
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>78,287</b>	<b>70,000</b>
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
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>78,045</b>	<b>70,000</b>

## 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

## SOUL MATTERS

We're in the process of getting a Soul Matters group started in Stockton. Most of you have read the Soul Matters material in the newsletter and wondered what to do with it. Now it's time to take part in the discussion of these timely topics! The plan is to meet before church (similar to Adult Forum of days gone by). We'll be setting up a date in January. More information to come in the January

### Soul Matters/Spirit Journey December 2016



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

*"This is the first, the wildest and the wisest thing I know:  
that the soul exists and is built entirely out of  
attentiveness." ~Mary Oliver*

Spiritually, presence can mean two radically different things. One the one hand, contemplatives talk of "being present." Presence from this perspective is all about awareness and remembering to "live in the moment." On the other hand, theologians tend to come at presence from the perspective of "otherness." Their concern is not just that we pay attention to the present moment, but that we notice a transcendent Presence that is woven through all moments.

This month, we refuse to takes sides. Attentiveness or otherness? Who says we have to choose? Isn't it true that, more often than not, they dance together more than they compete? Isn't it true that when we are most present, a powerful presence emerges? Pay attention to your child and slowly a confidence and unique self unfolds. Pay attention to the flow of your breathing or the flow of the ocean and something bigger than yourself enters the scene. Look for a long time at a singular tree and eventually it presents itself to you as a world in and unto itself.

The underlying message here is that the world is full of unnoticed gifts and grace. It's a message perfectly fit for this month that so often celebrates presents over presence. The greatest gift of the holidays is noticing the many gifts that have been sitting there all along. So how will you engage this dance? What powerful and meaningful presence is waiting for you to be present to it?  
- Scott Tayler

### Spiritual Exercise

**Option A: Uncover A World in Itself.** "The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself." ~Henry

**Miller** Do this: **Pick one place, object or animal and give it your attention and presence until it becomes a world unto itself.** Additionally, figure out your own way of recording the progression from a singular or simple object to an entire world. Take your time as you chose your focus. As always, consider bringing a picture to your group.

**Option B: Make Your Presents About Presence.** “Your children need your presence more than your presents.” – Jesse Jackson. Who wants a new tie when they could have the gift of being seen? **Pick at least one person this year and make their holiday present about presence!** Show them you are present to them and really see them by picking a gift that reflects something especially unique about them. Or help them be more present to life by giving them a gift that helps them stay focused on what’s important or that helps them step back from the blinding busyness of routine life.

## **Session plan**

### **Chalice Lighting**

**5min**

"When you love someone, the best thing you can offer is your presence. How can you love if you are not there? The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers." ~**Thich Nhat Hanh**

### **General Check-In**

**10min**

Question: *What’s the present/presence you need most this time of year?*

**Exercise** - Each person share their responses. After sharing, discussion. **25min**

**Conversation** - a question that “grabs” you, and answer. **30min**

1. Has the experience of “presence” increased or decreased for you as you’ve gotten older?
2. **Who has gone missing right before your very eyes?** (“Sometimes, people can go missing right before our very eyes.” -Cecelia Ahern) **Have you lost sight of yourself?** (“ Sometimes, we lose sight of ourselves when we’re not paying enough attention.” -Cecelia Ahern)
3. **Would you be more present to your life if you weren’t trying to perfect it or win at it?** (“Allow your life to be a work in progress. Do not hurry to mold the masterpiece; Always there is more to be done. Life is always unfinished business.” ~Richard S. Gilbert”)
4. **Where is your chance tomorrow to love someone with your presence?** (“At the end of the day: do others feel loved in your presence? This is the spiritual bottom line.” – Masin Kipp; “Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity” - Simone Weil)
5. **Whose absence feels most present to you? What can you do tomorrow to feel and honor them more deeply?** (“One of the best feelings in the world is knowing that your presence and absence both mean something to someone.” -- anonymous)
6. **Are you living like you deserve to take up space in the world?** (“You deserve to take up space in the world.” -Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

### **Being Present for the Holidays.**

**20 min**

Reflect on the poem by May Sarton. What rituals, objects, and practices help you feel more present to the magic of this season?

#### **Christmas Light**

When everyone had gone  
I sat in the library  
With the small silent tree,  
She and I alone.  
How softly she shone!  
And for the first time then  
For the first time this year,

I felt reborn again,  
I knew love’s presence near.  
Love distant, love detached  
And strangely without weight,  
Was with me in the night  
When everyone had gone  
And the garland of pure light  
Stayed on, stayed on. ~**May Sarton**

**Check-Out** - What’s your take-away about “story”? Gratitude for this time? **5min**

**Closing Words:** “At the end of the day: do others feel loved in your presence? This is the spiritual bottom line.” ~**Masin Kipp**





## CALENDAR – DECEMBER 2016

Sat. Dec. 3 Winter Walk

Sun. Dec. 4 *Do You Hear What I Hear?* A readers' theater presentation

Sun. Dec. 11 *What the Dickens!* Rev. Armida

Game Day! Stay and play!

Wed. Dec. 14 Worship Team in Elizabeth

Sun. Dec. 18 *Jesus As Archetype* Alice Ericksen

Sat. Dec. 24 Candlelight Service at 8 PM

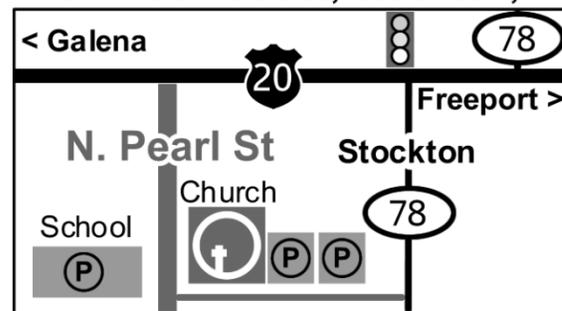
**Candles, Choir, Everybody!**

Sun. December 25 *The Light Bringers*

Rev. Armida, with breakfast by John

## 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**

**UUCHURCHOFSOCKTON.ORG**



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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