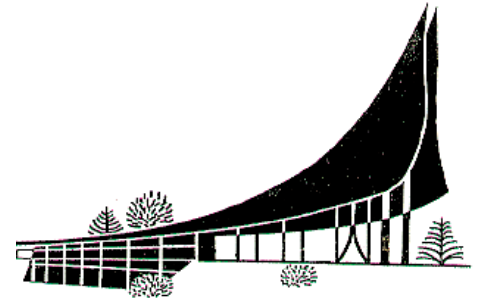


SOUNDINGS


The Unitarian Church in Westport
 10 Lyons Plains Road
 Westport, Connecticut 06880
 203 227-7205
 uuchurch@uuwestport.org
 www.uuwestport.org



THE NEXT SOUNDINGS DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, DEC. 16

Dec. 11 - Dec. 31, 2011

A Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Dec. 11 Services: 9 & 11 am <i>Share the Plate</i> SGM Demo, E.W., ... 10:15 am OWL Parents Group, E.W. ... 12:30 pm SGM Demo, Sanct., ... 12:30 pm Rainbow Task Force, Chapel, ... 12:45 pm	12 Board of Trustees, Fellowship Rm., ... 7:30 pm	13 Senior Luncheon, E.W. -11:00 am Finance Com. Meeting Hse., ... 5:30 pm Social Justice Council, E.W. ... 7:30 pm	14 Chant & Meditation Meeting Hse., ... 7:00 pm	15 Teen Choir - 6 pm Bell Choir - 6:45pm Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal, ... 8:00 pm	16 SOUNDINGS Deadline, 12 pm Shawl Ministry, M.H., - 12:30 Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary, ...4:30 pm	17 Special Projects Dress Rehearsal, ... 1:00 pm
18 Worship Service: 9 am Holiday Concert Service: 11 am OWL Parents Group, Chapel - 12:30 pm	19 O&AF Rehearsal, ... 7:45 pm	20 NVC Practice, Chapel, ... 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Choir, ... 8:00 pm	21 SOUNDINGS Mailing - 9:30 am Chant & Meditation M.H., - 7:00 pm Abolish Death Penalty, Fellow.Rm., ... 7:30 pm	22 Bell Choir - 6:45pm Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal, ... 8:00 pm	23 UU College/or Not Youth Reunion M.H., 6:30 pm	24 Pageant Rehearsal, ... 2:00 pm Pageant Service, ... 4:00 pm Candlelight Service, ... 9:00 pm Candlelight Service: ... 11:00 pm
25  Worship Service: 11:00 only No RE, Childcare Available, Chapel	26	27	28 Chant & Meditation Library ... 7:00 pm	29	30 SOUNDINGS Deadline ...12 pm Shawl Ministry, Meeting Hse., ... 12:30 pm UU Movie Discussion Grp., M.H. ... 7:30 pm	31

SERMONS:

- December 11 ... 9 & 11 am ... **Learning How to Give**..... Frank Hall
 We give. We receive. We move through the holiday season carefully, continuing to learn how to do it well.
Music: Once & Again Folksingers at both services.
- December 18 ... 9:00 am **“A Baker’s Dozen” and the Spirit of Christmas, a Holiday Story** Frank & Friends
Music: The Teen Choir
 11:00 am **Christmas Service/Concert**
The Special Projects Choir will sing their annual Christmas Service/Concert.
This year the featured work will be A Celtic Noel, with Uilleann Pipes, tin whistle, harp, organ, choir and soloists.
- December 25 ...11 am (one service only) **Reading: “A Christmas Carol”** Frank Hall
Music: Carols sung by congregation

Explore Your Whole Wuurld!

If you have any questions, contact Elaine McMillan: mcmillane@yahoo.com

Inspiration for Your Meditations

The 2011 UUA Meditation Manual, *Shine and Shadow* by Kathleen McTigue, is now available. Says John Buehrens, former UUA president, "In these stories of being 'startled awake,' in poetic calls to shared worship, and in meditations on 'engaged holiness,' Kathleen McTigue here teaches us how to give a blessing - which is what these pages are. Read, awaken, engage, and be blessed!"



Kathleen McTigue is the Senior Minister at the Unitarian Society of New Haven, in Hamden, Conn. The paperback is only \$8 and would make a great gift! Go to www.uuabookstore.org

Thinking of the Ministry?

An inspiring series of videos about being a UU Minister are now on YouTube. Posted by Harlan Limpert, UUA Vice President for Ministries and Congregational Support, the series includes: "Reflections on Being a Minister of Color," "What Do You Love About UU Ministry?," "The Ministry of Military Chaplaincy," "The Ministry of Music," and 8 other videos. Watch at: www.youtube.com/user/hlimpert#p/u

Congratulations!

First, the back story. Have you yet heard of the Meadville-Lombard Theological School? It is where future UU ministers study to embody liberal religious ministry in wherever they are called to serve. The school's mission is to take into the world our UU vision of justice, equity and compassion.



The Meadville Lombard Theological School has just announced newly elected members of their BOT. Our own Gail M. Pesyna, who has chaired the Membership Committee and led 8 canvasses, is one of these BOT members! Another is Susan W. Stenovec, (the daughter of long-time UCW members Joe and Marion Wertheim). In addition to being a trustee of the UU Fellowship of San Luis Obispo County, she is also a volunteer leader in the local Food Bank Coalition, Democratic Party, and Rotary Club. Congratulations to both and humble thanks for the task you are taking on!



More Holiday Gift Ideas!

Beacon Press is offering holiday gift ideas this month. Order before Dec. 15th and receive 20% off of your order through their website: www.beacon.org. From a selection of thousands, here's a small sampling.

- "Thou, Dear God": Prayers That Open Hearts and Spirits; by The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development, by Herman E. Daly
- Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home, by Anita Hill
- You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times, by Howard Zinn
- Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty, by Mark Winne
- Love & Death: My Journey through the Valley of the Shadow, by Forrest Church

The ODYSSEY program is planning for Spring!

You might be busy putting that inflatable snowman up on your lawn, but your Odyssey program committee is already thinking about spring classes. We want to build a core of classes around religion, UU history, and the Seven Principles. We already have one class lined up on parliamentary procedure, and we're looking for people to lead classes in comparative religion, mindfulness, and the history of the UUA, so if you feel you could lead such a class, please contact us.

Of course we're looking forward to the usual eclectic mix of offerings that come from our very talented and accomplished congregation. If you have any skill, hobby or knowledge you'd like to share with others, contact us and we'll help you put together a class. If you've taught a successful class in the past, please consider offering it again.

We also need two or three people to join our committee. Committee members help in planning the courses, creating flyers and our brochure, and coordinating the physical needs for each class. Anyone interested in joining the committee or leading a class should contact William McEvoy at 917-701-4548 or wmcnyc@yahoo.com.

December 5, 2011

Dear Friends,

The earth has made another trip around the sun. What a trip!

The holiday season – Christmas, Hannukah, New Year's Eve – is a touchstone. In former times a black siliceous stone (silicon dioxide) was used to test the purity of gold and silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either gold or silver. No frankincense. No myhrr. Just precious memories rubbed against the season.

All of us who were here last year are now a year older, and maybe somewhat wiser. We touch the stone – the holidays – and remember how we celebrated years ago, when the kids were little, or when we ourselves were kids.

I have powerful memories of Christmas time in my early childhood. When I was five years old I had two older brothers and two younger brothers, and another brother came when I was eight, then two sisters a few years later – a big family, especially by today's standards.

We put up a tree a week or so before Christmas, and left it up until the needles dried and began to fall. On Christmas morning we had to wait until the crack of dawn and we got the word that it was okay to come down to open presents. It was quite a scene – the tearing away of wrappings, the sounds of surprise and delight as my mother handed out gifts, reading the names on those little tags.

Some things were too big to wrap – a brown Mountain Boy toboggan, a Flexible Flyer sled, a tricycle, a red Radio Flyer wagon...and one time there was a Doodlebug on which you sat and instead of peddling with your feet you pushed back and forth on the handlebar to move it forward. That Doodlebug got a lot of use over the years!

Then there was the Christmas stocking – and we used an actual sock – in which food items were stuffed: candy bars and the small penny candy fillers. Mine always had a can of tuna fish because my mother knew it was a favorite of mine.

The wrapped gifts were often clothes – stocking hats, mittens, scarves – what Dylan Thomas called 'the useful presents' in his wonderful *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

"Let's get on to the useless presents," he says: a cowboy cap gun with holsters, and a Dick Tracy secret message bracelet, a sparkler you pressed to make the wheel spin and throw sparks, and a top you pressed on the floor to make it spin and hear it hum, and a Duncan yo-yo.

Yes, the earth has made another trip around the sun, so we celebrate by looking back at the collection of precious memories, and do our best to stay attentive to the present without worrying too much about the future.

I hope you add some memories to those you've accumulated so far.

I'm pleased with the progress we're making in our transitioning time here at the church. We have more work to do, of course, but we're headed in the right direction.

Have a happy!



A Golden Christmas, *Frank Hall*

She sat in front of the old black stove, alone, except for the gray cat who slept curled up on the small braided rug. The room was quiet, too, except for the muffled crackling sounds of burning wood.

Eighty-five winters had come to her, and gone again, but they were with her still when memories came like a gust of wind to make the coals glow, then they would fade away like distant sounds at night.

The knitting needles in her hands moved in rhythmic patterns intertwining yarns of black and gold like her years had knit themselves together in that New Hampshire house where generations descended slowly, like a floating flake of snow that hits a child's nose and melts away unnoticed in the midst of play.

The December sun was setting now, casting shadows in the room and she remembered scores of Christmases, silhouetted on her mind in permanent memories that wove themselves together like the golden yarn in the child's hat that she was knitting. She remembered special trees, cut from the grove beyond the hill and carried in the sleigh and then into the house -- the tapers on those trees lit up the winter-darkened room and shone like stars in children's eyes, while voices sang of Silent Nights.

She remembered the hush of calm and the quiet in the room when the song was done, and she felt again the heavenly peace that helped the tears to flow like the tears that she had watched, and wondered at, when her mother sat in this same chair so many years ago.

She heard the sounds again, from those special Christmas mornings past -- the children's voices, one her own, squealing with delight when they saw the stockings stuffed and hanging, and gaily colored presents waiting to be opened.

She held the scene and caught the sounds again in a precious moment that was cherished on that lonely winter day. The heavenly peace they sang about was hers to stay though the family was scattered from coast to coast and no one but she remained from the people in her dreams. They lived in her, and in the nooks and crannies of that house, if houses can remember.

And this December day had brought them back again -- the tree upon the sleigh seemed just as real today as she shook it off to clean the snow and brought it into the house. She smelled the pine and savored it, and burned the candles -- in her mind. The knitting needles now were still and the chair had stopped its rocking. She saw the stockings hanging there by that same old fireplace, -- she saw the presents wrapped with ribbons, and felt the same delight, and more.

She drank the wine of memory and smiled softly to herself. The cat got up and stretched and yawned, the wood was crackling in the stove. The needles in her hands took up their work again as she rocked alone on Christmas Eve -- a golden Christmas in her home.

Perry's Ponderings ...

"Was there anything in the stories that surprised you?" I asked the children after they heard adults who grew up Unitarian Universalist tell their childhood stories. "Yeah, that Sarah was the most difficult child," said one girl after Sarah Bell shared Jane Bickford's pronouncement as the RE Director then. We talked about how Sarah was considered difficult because she asked so many questions, but was also appreciated for that. After all, that is very Unitarian.

The children were fascinated that Sarah had helped create the Chapel stained glass as a fourth grader. They asked many questions about the panels and we discussed the meaning of the symbols and pictures. Just like the stained glass, each of the Sunday storytellers illustrated a different picture but they all came together to form a beautiful collage.

The experiences of community, music, and spirituality kept them connected as youngsters. Susan recalled that when Ed came they dressed up in rainbow suspenders and funny hats as they got to sing fun stuff, like Muppet songs. Barbara left as a youth to sing in another denomination, but returned to have her voice affirmed by the UU community that held her values.

Carl recalled that many of his friends struggled with their religion because they did not believe in the dogma. He did not relate to the struggle because he had the blessing of the openness of Unitarian Universalism. Wendy discovered this openness when she lived in Davis, CA and the husband and wife ministers were Wiccan witches. Each year we have a Wiccan couple give a presentation about this earth-centered faith to our 7th grade Neighboring Faiths class, a program that has a long history as Chris reminded us with his fond memories of "Church Across the Street" trips.

Wendy moved a great deal as a child but had the connective thread of UU com-

RE CALENDAR

Sunday, Dec 11 ...
12:30pm OWL Parents Group - EW
Friday, Dec 16 ...
4:30pm Pageant Rehearsal - Sanct.
Sunday, Dec 18 ...
9 & 11am Caring Congregation Project
2:30pm OWL Parents Group
Sunday, Dec 24 ...
2pm Pageant Rehearsal
4pm Christmas Pageant
Sunday, Dec. 25 ... No RE

**Holiday Pageant for grades 1-8,
to register click on**

<http://uuwestport.org/xmas.html>

Save the Date:

Family Worship for All Ages & Potluck -
Saturday, Jan. 7 at 5pm
Great Music, Story, & Sharing

Warm beautiful Thanksgiving weather brought out...



the "Turkeys" and the "Badgers"



for a friendly multigenerational wiffleball game.

munity throughout, finally landing in Westport where her children represent the third generation in our congregation. The storytellers and the service commemorating the 50th anniversary of the merger between the Unitarians and Universalists reminded us that we carry a rich and storied history forward. After the

YOUTH OUTREACH/ Jamie Forbes



2010 UCW College or Not Reunion

UUWestport 2nd Annual College or Not Reunion- December 23rd

We had so much fun last year that we are doing it again. We reminisced, caught up with each other and sang Christmas carols! If you are an alum of our youth program (any age) join us on Friday, December 23rd at 7pm in the Youth Room at the Meeting House. Let's celebrate our common bond of our UU Youth. As you have now realized since you have been out in the world...we are a minority! Looking forward to seeing you on the 23rd! Look for our UUWestport Alumni Facebook group administered by Amrita Sankar and Michael Watson or e-mail Jamie for information (or just to let us know you are coming!)

YOUTH OUTREACH CALENDAR

Sunday, Dec. 11
Soup Fundraiser for DC trip
Sunday, Dec. 18
Soup Fundraiser for DC trip
Friday, Dec. 23
College or Not UU Youth
Reunion, 6:30pm, Youth Room

stories, the children stood up on the stage to lead the affirmations and parent Ellie remarked that it was the first time her son had done that. No doubt five-year old Aiden will be standing up there many times over the years and, perhaps, will do so one day as an adult when he shares his stories with the children.



It's All About CONECTION

On Wednesday evening, November 30 forty-two members of our congregation travelled to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bridgeport's east end to attend the Founding Assembly of CONECT (Congregations Organized for a New CT). Most didn't know exactly what to expect but spirits were high with anticipation. As the 7:30 start time approached and our numbers grew to over 1,500 people the sound of a gavel called the meeting to order.

The 25 member congregations were recognized as were another 25 congregations that were observing the event. State officials were recognized and issues were presented.

We heard from Governor Malloy and he heard from us. Other state officials and state representatives were also present. They heard stories from a family of 4 without a job, a small business struggling to pay for health insurance, someone facing mortgage foreclosure, and drivers' license and automobile insurance problems facing an undocumented immigrant.

We agreed on some things and disagreed on others. But what was most important is that CONECT is in relationship with the Governor and state officials. We arrived expectant. An hour and a half later we left excited, impressed, and encouraged by the possibilities of what can be accomplish when Christians, Jews, Muslims, and UU's work together, indeed, for a new Connecticut.

If you would like to learn more about CONECT please speak with David Vita, 203.227.7205 x14, david@uuwestport.org or just grab me after a Sunday service!

\$\$\$\$Share the Plate Success

Last April our Share the Plate recipient was Homes for the Brave and the renovation of a house in Bridgeport for female veterans and their children. That house is now completed and occupied. It's the first community-based transitional home for homeless female Veterans and their children in Connecticut.

These women now have a roof over their heads but they still had some very basic needs. So in November, Homes for the Brave was our Share the Plate recipient once again, this time we were looking to raise \$859.10 to purchase:

- 10 bed pillows
- 4 shower curtains
- 6 comforters
- 3 folding wooden chairs, and
- 30 bath towels

Thanks to your generosity we surpassed our goal by over \$200. Thank you!

My Saturday Phone Call

Saturday morning I dropped Marjolijn off at the train station for a Cambridge visit with family so when the phone rang 4 hours later I was expecting her voice on the other end of the line.

You can imagine my surprise when I picked up the phone and it was the National Rifle Association calling. Yes, National Rifle Association executive vice-president Wayne LaPierre was calling me with an important message. Or at least it was a robo-call from Wayne.

Well, the message was that the Obama administration with China, North Korea, Cuba, and Iran were working for world peace at the (on no!) United Nations and if they were successful every hand gun, rifle, and shotgun in the United States would be banned! Well I was shocked and I knew that I had to do something about this.

The NRA has a gigantic voice and when it's bashing the United Nations we need to listen because our representatives certainly do. In fact so does the UN. I Googled Wayne and discovered that he addressed the UN this past July.

We UU's have a voice as well and when it comes to the United Nations it's our UU United Nations Office (UU-UNO), a non-governmental organization that represents us, that speaks for our UU values at the UN.

My UU-UNO membership is about to expire at the end of the year so I took the NRA call (a wake-up call?) as a reminder to renew my membership. What about you? Are you a member? If not, please consider joining the UU-UNO and adding a little more volume to OUR voice at the UN. Membership forms are on the social justice table.

If you find this story hard to believe you give me way too much credit. You just can't make this stuff up. It's 100% true!

Our UU-UNO Committee will be meeting on Sunday, December 18 at 12:30 in the Library.



Timeline for our Future: A Roadmap for the Next Five Years

Dear Friends,

There are many feelings being experienced in our congregation as we begin the journey of transition from Frank Hall's more than 27-year ministry to that of a new Senior Minister. Naturally, there is a mixture of anxiety, excitement, and curiosity around these changes. In these uncertain times, we long for something tangible to guide us – a roadmap to help us visualize the steps we need to go through, and what the changes will look like.

This draft visual shows, to the best of our knowledge, what the next five years will look like. It is not carved in stone. It is a proposed beginning point for discussion. It may be amended and revised as we work together through a collaborative, democratic process of discussion and decision-making.

To fully appreciate this chart you need to see it in color! If you received it by email and would like a color print-out but do not have access to a color printer, copies will be available in the foyer and church office. Here's how to read the chart.

Two-part chart. The upper part of the chart maps out events that we think will definitely happen, or should happen according to best UUA practices. The lower part of the chart includes possible events that are optional, that may happen depending on choices we make.

Ministerial Transition. These activities are displayed in the rectangular boxes in the upper part of the chart. These boxes are color-coded to the relevant period on the timeline – Frank (pink), Interim Minister (light yellow), and new Senior Minister (dark yellow). Key milestones are as follows.

1. Frank Hall announced his retirement date in September 2011, and his retirement will be effective August 15, 2013.
2. In Spring 2013 we will search for, and hire, an Interim Minister who could serve for two full church years, from September 2013 to August 2015. While it's reasonable to plan for a two-year interim, it might be two interim ministers who serve a year each; depending on how the congregation responds to the first one...the first year.
3. During the Interim Minister's term, we will form a search committee and select and call a new Senior Minister, to begin service in September 2015. Congregational votes associated with this process are shown in circles.

Planning Activities. These are displayed in white boxes with red type, and show important transition, planning and visioning steps in which we all need to participate and be involved. Key milestones are as follows.

1. Resiliency in Change sessions during November/December 2011
2. An Appreciative Inquiry process to begin in February 2012
3. A full Five-Year Visioning process during March/April 2012
4. A congregational survey and report to be conducted by the Search Committee for the new Senior Minister in Spring 2014.

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of thinking, planning, and existing together as a congregation – a process and methodology designed to bring out the best in us. We plan to adopt it as an ongoing way of doing things after we kick off the process in February 2012.

Financial and Space-Needs Activities. Financial activities are shown in purple, and possible space-needs activities are shown in blue on the lower part of the chart. Reality dictates that as a congregation, we will need to make various decisions in these areas over the next five years, which are in addition to our annual pledge drive and operating budget.

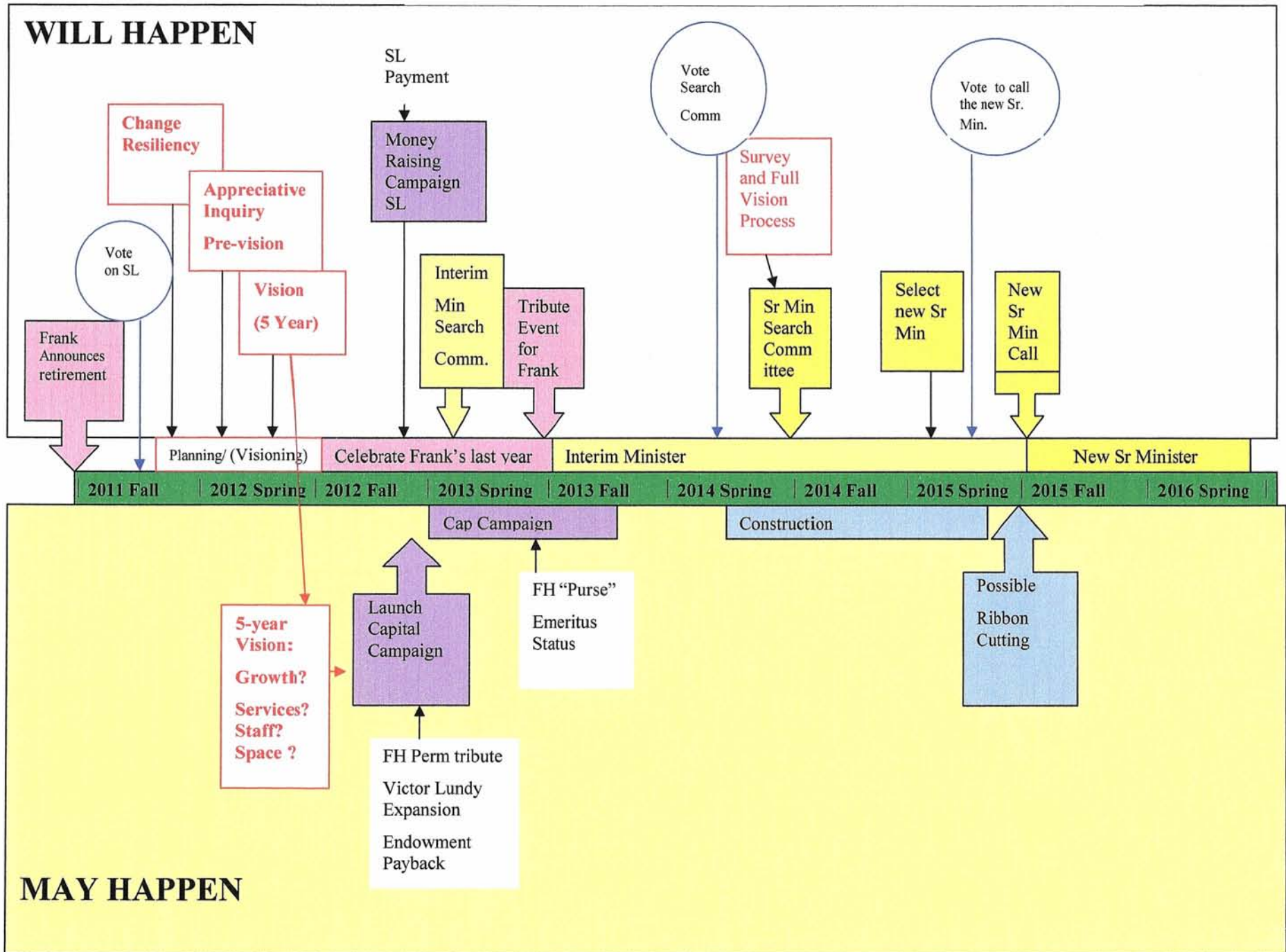
1. A campaign to pay off the expected shortfall resulting from the planned sale of the Sheila Lane property, and hopefully to reimburse the Endowment.
2. Perhaps combined with the above, depending on decisions yet to be made, a possible capital campaign to fund a church expansion to meet our space needs for the next 10-15 years, and possibly including a permanent tribute to Frank Hall.

We welcome your feedback on this chart! It is a proposed draft, a beginning roadmap for our journey together. We hope you find it helpful. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss them with us. As a reminder, all Board meetings are open for observer comments, and there are informal conversations with Board members ("U Matters") after every service in Jan's office. You will definitely be hearing more about all of these plans as they evolve.

Respectfully, *Board of Trustees*

Chart on following page

TUCW 5-Year Timeline (Draft)





My colleague and friend, Dr. Eileen Hunt (Director of Music at Greens Farms Church) asked me if I would arrange some Christmas music from Brittany. She was interested in the Celtic nature of the music. As I began to work with the music, several issues began to emerge. I also suggested that we might take a larger view of the project and turn it into a Celtic project, not just a Brittany project. After further research, I found a carol from Ireland and one from Wales that would form the background of a group of pieces that shared Celtic roots.

The next part of the 'puzzle' was to musically portray the story line of the traditional Christmas story. There simply were no carols from the Celtic world that provided most of the details. It became obvious that I needed to fill in with some original material. In order to do that I needed to listen to a lot of music in that genre. There are rhythmic patterns, modal formulas and melodic contours in this music that make it what it is and which can be traced back for centuries. It was within that framework that I knew I needed to compose.

And so it was born, a Celtic Noel. It is scored for Uilleann pipes, tin whistle, harp, organ, and choir. It is a story about birth, angels, shepherds, and some extraordinary circumstances that happened in the darkest season of the year. Much of the music has a bright characteristic because it is written with the intention of bringing hope during the cold, dark, winter season, as well as to the dark periods of our personal lives.

The Nativity story has been carried down through hundreds and hundreds of years because the virtues and characteristics of those events (bravery, humility, courage, fortitude, love, and endurance) are real. They can be evoked through the re-telling of this story, and we can experience them. Anyone who has raised a child can attest to the need for these gifts!!

The morning of its Unitarian premier will be Sunday, December 18th at 11:00am. The Special Projects Choir has been working hard on this music and is very excited to share it with you. I hope that you will be there to hear this very unique work., and to catch the holiday spirit from their enthusiasm!



UU Movie Discussion Group, Friday, Dec. 30th

The UU Movie Discussion Group meets again on Friday, December 30 to discuss 2 films: "The Decendants" and "Hugo". Potluck dessert at 7:30; Discussion at 8. At the Meeting House. All are welcome.

You are invited to join Small Group

The mission of Small Group Ministry is to facilitate spiritual growth through personal connection. Groups meet once a month for two hours to discuss common topics. These discussions can lead to personal insights as well as insights into other members. It is through this knowledge that friendships can be formed and deepened. Groups meet on different days, and at different times and locations. They are perfect for new members as well as for those who have been attending for years. Join as an individual or as a couple. For more information, contact

SOUNDINGS

*Newsletter of the
Unitarian Church in Westport*

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Carol Porter Editor/Design

visit our website at
www.uuwestport.org

The next SOUNDINGS deadline is
Friday, Dec. 16, at noon (or before).
Please e-mail your copy to:
carpo@optonline.net



Toy Drive for Family ReEntry

Fresh Start Program

For the **24th** consecutive year our congregation is collecting toys, games, clothing and/or cash for the children of prisoners.

Please bring your **unwrapped toy(s)** to the church from now until **December 18th**. No time to shop? **Gifts of cash** will be used to purchase **mall gift certificates** for older children and teens. Checks should be made out to the Unitarian Church in Westport memo line **Family ReEntry**.

Family ReEntry

Empowering Individuals and Strengthening Families for Change

The **Fresh Start Program** at Family ReEntry in Bridgeport is a ground-breaking demonstration project that helps soon-to-be released prisoners before leaving prison, during transition, and after “coming home.”

The program places emphasis on:

- post-employment;
- strengthening families; and
- giving back to the community.

Learn more, get involved.

<http://www.familyreentry.org/>

