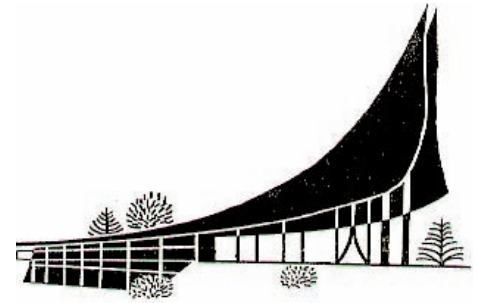


# SOUNDINGS

The Unitarian Church in Westport  
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A Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

**THE NEXT SOUNDINGS DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, DEC. 17**

Dec. 12 - Jan. 1, 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Dec. 12</b> <i>Share the Plate Sunday</i> Worship Service: 9 am Holiday Concert: 11am BOT Coffee Chat 10:15am & 12:15, Jan's Office Holiday Boutique E.W., 10:15 & 12:15 OWL Parent Gr., Library, 12:15 Rainbow Task Force., Ch...12:45	<b>13</b> Board of Trustees, Fellowsh. Rm., ..8:00 pm	<b>14</b> Senior Luncheon E.W., ... 11:00 am Social Justice Council, E.W., ... 7:30 pm	<b>15</b> Chant & Meditation, M.H. ... 7:00 pm Abolish Death Penalty, Fellowship Rm., ... 7:30 pm	<b>16</b> Teen Choir - 6 pm Bell Choir - 6:45pm Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary, ... 8:00 pm	<b>17</b> SOUNDINGS Deadline: 12 Noon Shawl Ministry, M.H....12:30 pm Pageant Rehearsal, Sanct ... 4:30 pm Partner Church Film, Sanct., 6:30 pm	<b>18</b> Small Group Facilitators, Meeting Hse., ... 10:00 am
<b>19</b> Service: 9 & 11 am BOT Coffee Chat 10:15 am & 12:15 pm Jan's Office OWL Parent Gr., Lib.- 12:30 pm Congregation Talk Back, Sanct., ...12:30 pm Classic Book Gr. Burnham Home, 12:30 pm	<b>20</b> NVC Practice, Youth Rm., ... 7:00 pm O&AF Rehearsal ... 7:45 pm	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> SOUNDINGS Mailing - 9:30 am Youth Group Reunion, Y.R., ... 6:00 pm Chant & Meditation M.H., ... 7:00 pm	<b>23</b> Teen Choir - 6 pm Bell Choir - 6:45pm Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal, - 8 pm	<b>24</b> Pageant Rehearsal Sanctuary,... 2 pm Christmas Pageant, ... 4 pm Candlelight Service ... 9 pm Candlelight Service ... 11 pm	
<b>26</b> Worship Service: 9 & 11 am No RE - Childcare available BOT Coffee Chat 10:15 - 12:15 pm Jan's Office Women of the Bible, Library, 4:00 pm	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Environmental Action, East Wing, ... 7:30 pm	<b>29</b> Chant & Meditation, M.H. ... 7:00 pm Men's Choir, ... 8:00 pm	<b>30</b> No Choir Rehearsals UU Movie Discussion group, M.H., 7:30 pm	<b>31</b> SOUNDINGS Deadline:12 Noon Shawl Ministry, M.H....12:30 pm	

December 12 ... 9 am ..... **Negotiating the Holiday Season** ..... Frank Hall  
*We have to negotiate the holidays in at least two senses: first, to succeed in getting through them - to survive the twists and turns without damaging relationships; and secondly, to negotiate by discussing the ways to 'do them' with family and friends*  
 11 am .....**Annual Christmas Concert Service**  
*The Annual Christmas Concert service will feature the Special Projects Choir with special guest musicians singing Conrad Susa's Carols and Lullabies from the Southwest, a festive holiday work that will begin your season.*

December 19 ... 9 & 11 am .....**"Scrooge Woke Up On Christmas Day"** ..... Frank Hall  
*Let's look again at the old story to see what new meanings emerge, combining short passages from Dickens' story with commentary.*

December 26 ... 9 & 11 am ..... **Celebrating Some Epiphanies, Big and Small.** ..... Frank Hall  
*In the Christian calendar the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being; it falls on January 6. A Humanist version celebrates insights into the deeper meanings, insights provided by poetry, music and art.*



## FROM THE BOARD

Dear Fellow Congregants,

As discussed in my November letter our congregation faces some major issues and your Board of Trustees has elected to focus on these important issues, and to plan ahead, thinking not only about the needs of current members, but of future members. As stated last month, this Board is resolved to focus on the following goals during the next twelve to eighteen months. As always we welcome and would appreciate your thoughts and input.

### Vision Progress

Mary Money is leading the congregation-wide process to create shared goals for Unitarian Church in Westport's future. Ably assisted by Board members Randy Burnham, Vice Chair, and John Mason, the results of the visioning process will be brought to a congregational vote at our annual meeting in September 2011. To contribute in this most important process, contact either Mary, Randy or John.

### Stewardship / Funding Progress

Unfortunately even after the tireless imaginative efforts of our Annual Giving A-Team, as well as member organized special fundraisers, increased space rentals and all of you who gave generously to our annual appeal, we raised \$150,000 less than we need each year to properly function as a church of our size. Our budget is slightly over \$850,000...but \$1,000,000 is required.

**-Year-Round Stewardship:** To succeed our congregation must foster a culture of ownership and generosity among ourselves. To do so, and to truly fulfill our potential, a church of our size must move beyond the annual pledge drive model, toward a process of Year-Round Stewardship. "Stewardship" is more than just fundraising, it means "taking care of" one another, building more connection and involvement. We are in discussions with a member and hopefully by late December we will announce the chair of the new Year-Round Stewardship Committee, who will be looking for volunteers to carry this process forward.

**-Legacy Giving Committee:** John Hooper, past Board Chair has agreed to lead a Steering Committee to initiate a comprehensive program of Legacy Giving. Gail Pesyna, Randy Burnham (Board Vice Chair) and Denny Davidoff (Board Secretary) will also serve. This is an important step forward in properly funding the Endowment and Operations,

**-Ways & Means Committee:** Little progress has been made on forming this group. A Chair is needed to form a committee with full responsibility to oversee and implement all fund raising events in support of Church operations. If interested in serving, please contact me at 203-952-8812 or [chuck@chuckcolletti.com](mailto:chuck@chuckcolletti.com).

### Communications Progress

**UU Matters:** Improving the relationship and dialogue between the Board, members and friends is essential. Transparency is critical. To this end, our UU Matters weekly informal meetings to hear congregational concerns started Sunday, November 28th and will be held after each service with trustees on duty. In addition to these weekly meetings, we will also plan quarterly feedback sessions for larger group discussion. Mark your calendar...the first formal quarterly feedback session is scheduled for December 19th after the 11 AM service. This effort was put in place by Board Members Kristen Leddy, Lyn Hamilton and Steve Axthelm. If you are unaware it will be because you are content to be unaware!

### Constitution / Structure Progress

Denny Davidoff (Board Secretary) and her task force (Randy Burnham, Sal Mollica, Ken Vogel, John Mason, Carolyn Lavender and Ted Yang) had their first meeting November 20th, and will report back by the May 2011 Board Meeting. Any changes to the Constitution will be ready for a vote by the congregation at the Annual Meeting September 2011.

### Ministry Progress:

We have not yet begun the work of answering the questions. Do we need an Associate Minister, or an Assistant Minister, to work with Frank Hall? If so, when can we fund that position? What is the right structure? What structure of ministry do we want/need when Frank eventually retires and we transition to a new future?

### Other Matters Progress:

**Sheila Lane Update:** A process involving the Finance Committee, Endowment Committee, and the Board (Ken Vogel, Treasurer, Sal Mollica and myself) hopes to have a clear set of choices about the property, the debt, and the congregation's vision for its future to put to a vote. The thorough research and necessary conversations will take time. The Endowment Committee has agreed to defer payment on the \$583,000 loaned to the congregation for the purchase of 3 Sheila Lane until September 2012.

Please feel free to discuss these issues – or whatever's on your mind – with any of the Board members. Remember, monthly Board meetings are open to observers, and the Minutes are publicly posted and Board members are available for discussion after services (see UU Matters above).

Respectfully,  
Chuck Colletti, *Board Chair*

December 6, 2010

Dear Friends,

Reflecting on the weekend with Mark Morrison-Reed the word that comes readily to mind is *moving*. He stirred our emotions, challenged our thinking and encouraged us in our work.

The weekend, sponsored by our Social Justice Committee, began on Friday evening with a film on the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, produced forty years ago by Bill Buckley, long time friend of our congregation, with illustrations from Westport's artist-in-residence, and social justice advocate, Tracy Sugarman.

Fannie Lou Hamer's inspiring and passionate voice, whether breaking out in song or a soul-deep demand for justice for the disenfranchised, reached down into the deepest recesses where mere words are neither adequate nor necessary. *Moving*.

Following the film Bill, Tracy and Mark engaged one another in meaningful, searching conversation, engaging those of us who sat in rapt attention as each of them touched on parts of their personal story that connected with Fannie Lou Hamer's inspiring life.

We reassembled on Saturday morning for a full-day exploration into what Mark titled **Torn Between Fuzzy Aspirations and Hard Realities: The Perversity of Embracing Diversity**.

One aspect of perversity is 'that which arises from stubbornness' – to embrace the goal of racial diversity in our mostly-white, middle-class Unitarian Universalist congregations requires us to be stubborn: to be persistent and hopeful, in spite of the seemingly unattainable or un-realistic goal.

At the workshop Mark had us break into triads asking us to reflect on the question, "Why is diversity so difficult for us?" He had the groups report on the long lists of responses – lists which will be reported to us soon, to remind those of us who were there and to inform and engage those who weren't able to attend, but are interested.

One of the aspects of Mark's presentation and his personal sharing that we appreciated most was the lack of accusation or blame...the absence of any attempt to have us feel ashamed of ourselves, our congregation or our association of congregations. Mark knows full well that *shaming* simply doesn't work, it doesn't do any good; on the contrary, it is counter-productive, creating a climate of defensiveness that results in divisiveness.

Our nation's long, history of racial prejudice and injustice is a *shame* in the sense that it is so unfortunate, so regrettable, so shameful. The word shame comes from an older word meaning *to cover*, or to cover up, literally or figuratively. In the absence of shaming we are more likely to remove the cover, to look at our own faults and failures and in consequence to be more willing to find ways to do better. We can do better, in spite of the hard realities.

Mark's sermon on Sunday, which he titled 'Dragged Kicking and Screaming into Heaven' was a personal reflection on what he referred to as his conversion experience, moving him to embrace the traditional Universalist theological affirmation: 'God is Love.' We were *moved*. He left us wanting more, and, to be sure, there's more to come.

Yours,



*From the Foreword of Mark Morrison-Reed's book, "In Between, Memoir of an Integration Baby", written by Bill Sinkford, immediate past president of the UUA.*

"Mark Morrison-Reed has been a pioneer of sorts throughout his career—one of the few black ministers in liberal faith traditions that are overwhelmingly 'white.' I am delighted that he has been willing to share his story because I know how important his presence has been to many ministers of color who came into the ministry after him, myself included. And although I am the first African-American president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, there are many who thought the honor should have been his.

"Mark's memoir is at once a personal tale and an analysis of the ways race plays out in our lives and distorts our very perceptions. Despite the attractive fantasy that our world is 'color blind,' race is always a part of the experience of persons of color. While white persons can forget racial categories and their place in them, people of color attempt to do this at our peril.

"Perhaps racial categories in the United States are beginning, just beginning, to blur and their power lessen. That is a 'glass is half full' hope...

"So many of Mark's stories recall stories from my own life, allowing me to revisit my own responses to the events through which we have both lived. Perhaps that will be the final gift of this book, that it will encourage many people to remember and tell their own stories once again. And we may dare to imagine, dare to hope, that one day our national narrative will make room for the reality of our lived experience, in all its richness and complexity."

*From Mark's Prologue:* "Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot. The prevailing mood among my fellow black students was boiling with radicalism. Whites were the enemy. Full of misgivings, I had slipped into the meeting of the Black Student Union.

"I had gone because I yearned to belong, to be one of them, especially following King's assassination. This was no time to retreat. It was a time for change, for organization, for solidarity, and everybody was supposed to show. That meant me.

"And yet, my sense of foreboding was so strong that I spent all afternoon convincing myself to go. I couldn't help feeling that I didn't really belong. How could I? My father was a research chemist at the University of Chicago and my mother was director of social work at its Bobs Roberts Memorial Hospital for Children; I'd been raised in a white liberal Unitarian Sunday School and later educated in a progressive Swiss boarding school. I had more white friends than black and everybody knew it.

"Now, at least, I'm ready to admit the truth: I was afraid. Stay away and they'll label me 'Tom.' So I went—only to be collared and branded.

"With the Dreamer dead, passions inflamed, and ghettos ablaze; with the antiwar message of Hair rocking Broadway, Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton in jail, and a hundred thousand war protestors marching on the Pentagon, the nation was in turmoil. I was unprepared for the transition: no more interracial solidarity, civil rights forsaken for Black Power, desegregation supplanted by separatism, nonviolence under attack by those arming for self-defense, naive notions of love and peace swept aside by brutal realities."

## Perry's Ponderings ...

"...Spirit catches fire and gives fire; let us say that spirit in-flames, in one or two words, both verb and noun. That which both catches (or takes) and gives is fire. The fire of spirit," says Jacques Derridain in *Of Spirit*. We certainly experienced that fire during a weekend visit from guest preacher Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed who encouraged us to expand our spiritual lives and invite more of the world into our spiritual home.

Rev. Mark asked us to interpret Unitarian Universalism for ourselves by understanding our history and getting in touch with our own hearts as we move through the living moment. Rather than questioning who is at fault, it is important to take responsibility for our power to move the world in a positive direction.

The K-4 children were empowered by learning about Heifer International, the organization that will receive the Children's Chapel offerings this year. The children learned about the uneven distribution of resources in the world and how one goat can change a family's life in the story *Beatrice's Goat*. The children voted for which animals they would like to purchase through Heifer for people in need.

The 5th-6th graders were talking about overcoming obstacles to help others as being an integral part of *Our Heritage's Calling*, the name of the session in their curriculum *Love Connects Us*. They related the story of Unitarian Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the U.S., to their own families and how unfair it would be for their mothers to be kept from their calls.

*Our Heritage's Calling* begins with a quote from Unitarian theologian Margaret Fuller, "If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it." The 7th graders lit Chanukah candles and learned to play dreidel after Rabbi Orkand shared his knowledge during the class's visits to Temple Israel, including a Friday night youth-led worship with various interpretations of the Chanukah miracles.

Much of the Chanukah story is about doing what you know is right in your heart even when the outcome is in doubt. Our season of light began with Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed sparking our inner lights with his knowledge passed through the fire of his soul and inspiring us to respond to the call without knowing the outcome. As he said, "We are not called to succeed; we are called to do our best."

## RE CALENDAR

### Sun, Dec. 12

12:30pm OWL Parent Group - Library

### Fri, Dec 17

4:30pm Pageant Rehearsal - Sanctuary

### Sun, Dec 19

9 & 11am Caring Congregation Project  
12:30pm OWL Parent Group - Library

### Fri, Dec 24

2pm Pageant Rehearsal - Sanctuary  
4pm Christmas Pageant - Sanctuary

### Sun, Dec 26

No RE, childcare available

## The Boxes Are Back!

By popular demand, the little Guest At Your Table boxes, from the UUSC (UU Service Committee) are back!



This year though, think of UUSC as standing for **UU Supper Conversation!**

Just place your Guest At Your Table box on your supper table and let it remind you and your family and friends to connect as you share about the 4 stories offered on the box or really any stories of hope and goodwill.

## Special Holiday Event!

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11**

**5PM - CRAFTS - GINGERBREAD HOUSES**

**6PM - POTLUCK SUPPER**

*(Bring a hearty dish to share!)*

**7PM - ED'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY CAROL SING-ALONG**

RSVP to (203) 227-7205 ext. 20 or [ucwevents@gmail.com](mailto:ucwevents@gmail.com)

## HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP...

*Lily Rappaport, Youth Program Dir.*

How much do you value your education? Imagine being denied the opportunity to go to school and develop basic educational skills. Where would you be? When asked the question in youth group, most of us admitted that we take our education for granted.

Education is a big part of American culture. In fact, most states require children from ages five through sixteen to attend school. Unfortunately, the majority of young people around the globe do't have this option. In many underdeveloped countries, education is considered a luxury.

We as Unitarian Universalists feel that it's important to be of service to the outside world. Everyone deserves the same basic rights and to be treated equal. Our responsibility is to help correct injustices through enlightenment. An example of this would be our involvement in Ghana, a small country in West Africa where AIDS orphans are unable to attend public school. Because we feel everyone deserves an education, we have joined the UU-UNO program, Every Child is Our Child, to achieve the goal of educating them.

Through generous donations and fund raising our congregation has raised enough money to support eight children to attend school for ten years. Additionally, this past month, we were able to purchase a new HP laptop computer for one of the schools in Ghana. Ultimately our goal is to provide computers to two other schools.

Stephen Axthelm explains the process of bringing internet into the school. "We still need to raise the \$140 installation fee for broadband," he says, "plus commit to the \$50 per month fee. Then members of youth group will be able to contact and communicate with the students in Ghana." Stephen's daughters, Emma and Charlotte, plan to build a connection through Facebook, and then nurture the relationship through blogging, photos, videos and sharing life's experiences.

A simple donation of \$120 will support one child's education and provide health care insurance for the student and the foster family for an entire year; \$1200 supports one child's complete education for 10 years. For more information and to find out how you help, contact Stephen at [saxthelm@gmail.com](mailto:saxthelm@gmail.com).



## Amnesty International: WRITING FOR RIGHTS

We're doing an Amnesty International letter-writing Sunday after services on a Sunday in January. Join us in demanding that the rights of individuals are respected, protected and fulfilled. Help us show solidarity with those suffering human rights abuses, as we work to bring about real change in people's lives. Would you like to help plan the event? Please contact David Vita, david@uuwestport.org or 203.227.7205 x14.

## Environmental Fair: *Are you interested?*

Our Environmental Action Group is planning an Environment Fair for Saturday, April 14, 2011-- speakers, films, vendors, solar panel installers, beekeepers, green products, electric car and much, much more. We would love to have your input. Interested? Please contact David Vita, david@uuwestport.org or 203.227.7205 x14.

## VILLAGE CORNER: Partner Church News

Our Partner Church in Transylvania is in the process of selecting a new minister. Biro Mihaly has retired at the age of 65 as required. Mihaly and his wife Erzsébet are now living in nearby Székelykeresztúr.

You can show your support of our partner church by sponsoring a student through scholarship. Our scholarship program has been a very important way to connect on a personal level with high school and college youth who might not be able to continue their studies without financial support. Education is the key to the future – both here and there.

We will be finishing the scholarship drive by showing Sumner Glimcher's film *'In the Shadow of the Vampire'* at 7:30 on Friday, December 17.

For more information please contact Cheryl Paul, 203-336-9326 or CDixonInteriors@aol.com.

## About "In the Shadow of the Vampire" (see above)

The Unitarian religion began in Transylvania in the 1500's after the Protestant Reformation when a group of theologians defined the deity as a 'unity' rather than the previously called 'trinity.' It was quite remarkable when this doctrine embraced a whole spectrum of believers from the faithful to agnostics and atheists. Several decades ago when the political atmosphere in Transylvania, now part of Romania, threatened the Unitarians the Unitarian-Universalist Association, headquartered in Boston, created a "partner church" program. Individual UU Churches in America partnered with churches in Transylvania and through joint visits and financial assistance. The Unitarian Church in Westport became the partner church of the small village of Alsoboldogfalva in Transylvania. A trip was organized and ten people from our church traveled to Alsoboldogfalva for ten days. Filmmaker Sumner Jules Glimcher, a member of our congregation, recorded the trip. This documentary is a record of that event. This film is a turning back of the clock to one hundred years ago and how people in this village lived as most Americans did around the year 1900. The travelers also visited the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler, the real life person who became the model for Dracula. We see the primitive traffic jams of fifty cows each morning and afternoon as they travel to the nearby hills to forage; the horses and wagons before the arrival of the automobile, and the simple life of an agricultural community. The film concludes with a visit to a nearby gypsy community as they party and dance on a locals hillside. Interviews with locals show a lifestyle long disappeared in the USA.

## UU Supper Conversation

It's been said that "home is where the heart is" but imagine if you could not go home for years. Opoka, (on your Guest At Your Table box), is now able to return home to his village in Uganda after years of living apart from his family due to a brutal war. How do you go home and rebuild a life after so many years away? Opoka and at least 8,500 other villagers have begun to figure out, with the help of the UUSC how to re-build their lives.

### Conversation Starters

- What does "home is where the heart is" mean to you and your family?
- What would it feel like to have to leave your home for a long time?
- What it would be like to be separated from your family for a long time?
- Imagine what a family reunion would feel like.



Please send us a picture of you and your family at the table with the Guest at Your Table box and tell us a little of your Supper Conversation pertaining to this story or any stories of hope and goodwill in your lives.

Send emails to:  
[ucwsupper@gmail.com](mailto:ucwsupper@gmail.com)

# Neighborhood Circles of Care

We are off and running! Since our big push to expand our congregations awareness of the existence and purpose of our Neighborhood Circles of Care in October, I am happy to report that we have most of our circles up and running. A variety of activities are emerging as we delve into the second phase of this effort's direction. In this phase we are about creating meaningful connections between folks who live within a geographical area where we can develop a sense of "village". Being known and recognized is an important part of community building. Here are some examples of the activities in motion.



Frank Hall & friends at WAC tour

Circle 18 had a very nice meet and greet on Sat. Oct 23 with coffee, tea fruit and coffee cake. Great conversation! They gathered again before the Jazz for Justice concert on Nov.12th at the meeting house for a pot luck supper. Great connections are being made under the facilitation of Marie Grady.

Our monthly Neighborhood Circle Facilitator meeting takes place on the first Saturday of each month in the meeting house.

Normally 18-20 folks are in attendance. After a quick check in from each circle we have focused discussions on the issues that are emerging and share the learnings of this journey with each other. At our last meeting Ted Yang presented an emerging plan for a UCW-NCC electronic bulletin board that would offer the opportunity of congregants to ASK/OFFER. ASK = to make requests for service, support etc. / OFFER = the response of others to meet those requests. We hope to have a prototype of this effort to be tested after the first of the year. Ron Taylor has been very supportive of these administrative meetings.

As people share their stories of success, the energy of the NCC group is fed with new ideas, and passion for going forward. It is our hope that the members of UCW find these efforts to be likewise.

Jim Francek, *Coach for the Neighborhood Circles of Care* / Email: jimfrancek25@gmail.com

Circle 12 under the facilitation of Mary Elizabeth Peterson has held four gatherings since last spring. Recently they gathered at the home of Peter Lourekas and Elaine Weinmann for wine and cheese followed by a behind the scenes tour at the Westport Art Center. The outcome of these activities has been great conversation and increased relateability.



NCC Facilitators at work

## UU Movie Discussion Group Thursday, Dec. 30



The UU Movie Discussion Group will meet on Thursday, Dec. 30th to discuss 3 films. They are "Fair Game", "The King's Speech" and "The Tourist". Potluck dessert at 7:30; discussion at 8. At the Meeting House.

## MINISTER'S DISCRETIONARY FUND



An envelope is enclosed for your contribution to the fund which our ministers use at their discretion to provide assistance to people in need, or in ways that enhance their work.

## Attention Newcomers!

Please join us on Saturday December 11 from 9:30am-12:00pm in the downstairs chapel for Part I of our 3-part Newcomer Orientation series.

In Part I we welcome you, answer any questions you might have and suggest some ways to connect with others in the congregation as you continue to get to know us. One or more ministers and staff members attend this session and join others in the group in sharing the stories of how we came to this church and to Unitarian Universalism. You'll receive a packet of information that identifies specific ways to get involved, as well as an informative DVD and other materials introducing you to Unitarian Universalism.

There will be opportunities to participate in Parts 2 and 3 in February and April.

## Business Matters

### WHAC-A-MOLE

Staying on top of the church facilities, equipment, heat, electrical issues, plumbing, lighting and grounds issues is like playing that well known carnival game, **Whac-a-Mole!** No sooner do we fix one thing and something else pops up! Last week we learned that all the spot lights illuminating the walkway up to the church were not on at night. People had to feel their way along the railings to come and go. No it wasn't the timer that turns the lights off and on. No it wasn't a circuit breaker. It was a short in the underground wiring (30 years old). Too expensive to dig up and rewire.

We could have ordered expensive lamp posts and lights, wait for them to be delivered, installed, and wired. That, however, would leave upcoming evening events, meetings and choir rehearsals in the dark. The quick solution, although not the most esthetic, was to buy three 12' treated lumber posts, dig the holes, pour in the cement and get electrician's in to run wiring out to them and install lights. The stairs are well illuminated.

So you might be asking "what is your point, John?" My point is that this community is exceptional in taking care of its members' spiritual well being. We need to take care of the church's physical well being too! Hopefully we are **INSPIRED to CONNECT** the "dots" that we are a big church with big programs trying to run on a small budget. We need to **ACT** to change that. How? (1) Make sure we fulfill our pledge commitments, (2) Make sure that all who are able to pledge indeed do pledge. Don't leave the pledging to others. (3) Get involved in fund raising activities.

**Whac-a-Mole.** The game isn't fun after a while and we suffer in the long run. This church has capably served multiple generations of congregants. It needs to be physically ready for future generations.

Have a great Christmas time and may we be surprised by what we can do here in 2011.

John Carroll

*Business Manager/ Church Administrator*

## Westport Shawl Ministry Goes Abroad!

Two weeks ago Jan Braunle and Marjolijn de Jager were invited by Margie Allen to make a presentation to members of her congregation in Stony Brook, Long Island. They are preparing to start their own Shawl Ministry.



After a delightful crossing on the ferry from Bridgeport and a quick bite of dinner we were introduced to a small but enthusiastic group of knitters. We described our own meetings that begin with a half hour of silent knitting and music, followed by a reading and knitting with conversation. We brought several examples of shawls made to be given away and then we settled into knitting together and answering questions. There was much interest in some of our extra projects such as raffling a hand knit blanket to support the safe water project in Kenya or the hats and gloves recently requested by a teacher and knit for a class of first graders at Beardsley School. The evening flew by and we closed the meeting by gathering all knitting in progress, placing our hands on that soft pile and reciting our shawl blessing:

*May divine grace be upon this shawl...  
warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing.  
May this mantle be a safe haven...  
a sacred place of security and well being...  
sustaining and embracing...  
in good times as well as difficult ones.  
May the one who receives this shawl be cradled  
in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace and  
wrapped in love.*

It's a busy season in the world of music. The Youth Choir will be joined by their colleagues in the RE program to present the annual Christmas Pageant. As the story unfolds and the songs are sung, so unfold the lives of each of these young persons. And persons they are, complete with personality and preferences. Each year the Pageant is different and yet the same because each one brings something different to the table, or should I say stable. Each year they take something different from the stable. Yes, it is about education and about teaching them traditional stories. It is also about teaching them about themselves, a lesson which can only be gleaned several years down the road.

The Special Projects Choir will sing Conrad Susa's Carols and Lullabies. The ten pieces of this set are not original music, rather, Susa took ten traditional carols from Spain and Mexico and put them together in such a way as to tell a story. The genius part of the work is his arrangements and the resulting humanistic perspective. While we hear about the Nativity story, we also hear about culture and perspective. There are no drummer boys or angels or Magi in this version. There are emotions, mostly happy ones. We sing about birth, heritage, getting kids to sleep, dancing fish, life in a small town, and a host of other things that we encounter in daily life. Interestingly, the last carol ends: "Sing for joy the blessings that this night has given." And that is a part of our holiday 'lesson'. Each 'night' has a blessing to offer. It is up to us to become aware of it and give thanks.

### MUSICAL SCHEDULE

**Dec. 12,** 11:00 annual Christmas service/concert with the Special Projects Choir

**Dec. 19,** the Chamber Choir sings holiday music at both the 9:00 and 11:00 services.

**Dec. 24,** 4:00 Pageant

9:00 Candlelight service with the Christmas eve choir

11:00pm Candlelight service with Tiffany Jackson and Kyle Sherman (trumpet)

For those interested in joining the Christmas eve choir, please be in touch with Ed Thompson.

## First the THANKS, then the GIVING

**41 UUs** from our congregation gathered in the Meeting House on Thanksgiving Day to share a pot-luck meal, conversation, fun and music.

**The THANKS:** Before folks began lining up to fill their plates with turkey and all the trimmings, Carolyn Lavender read a Thanksgiving Blessing written by her beloved late husband Bob. It began, in typical Bob Lavender fashion,

*Pocahontas wasn't invited, nor anyone else from Virginia.*

*The Dutch in New Amsterdam might have come, but no one thought to ask them.  
Nor to advise King James, though I'm sure he had other plans...*

Families came. Singles came. There were young people and old people. Also three turkeys, a truck load of stuffing, mashed potatoes, vegetables of many varieties, cranberry sauce, salad, rolls, breads... did I mention desserts? Mince pies, and apple pies and pumpkin pies, brownies, cookies and even ice cream. Did I mention wine? There was that too. There was even music as Tom, Ed and Paul brought out their guitars.

**The GIVING:** The organizers of this event had asked for contributions of \$5 per person to cover expenses including wine and such. After expenses were deducted, \$175 remained and was turned over to David Vita to use for our Social Justice ministries. The funds from our feast have been earmarked for The Fresh Start Program of Family ReEntry in Bridgeport.

So, if you want to avoid non-stop football games, having to cook everything all yourself, and family drama - mark your calendar for Thursday, November 24, 2011 for the **Second Annual Thanksgiving Pot-Luck** at the church.





## Toy Drive for Family ReEntry

### Fresh Start Program

For the **23<sup>rd</sup>** consecutive year our congregation is collecting toys, games, clothing and/or cash for the children of prisoners.

Please bring your **unwrapped gift(s)** to the church on **December 12 or 19**. Checks should be made out to the Unitarian Church in Westport memo line **Family ReEntry**. **Gifts of cash** will be converted to gift certificates for teens redeemable in Trumbull Mall Stores.

## 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/cominghomeforgood.html>

