



THE COMMUNICATOR

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Society of Germantown
December 2008 Volume 46, No 4

In this issue:	FROM OUR MINISTER
From Our Minister.....1	Among other cultures, ancient Jews left certain pieces of land fallow every seven years. They called this the sabbatical year. This concept relates to the Sabbath, or the seventh day of the week, which is observed as a day of rest and worship for many Jews and some Christian sects. Based in similar Judeo-Christian traditions from their inception, Unitarian Universalist churches and ministers have practiced Sabbaticals. Currently serving in my seventh year, I am blessed to be taking a sabbatical from February 1 to July 30, 2009. During that time I will not come to the church, or communicate with our members. Of course, there will be exceptions in dire emergencies. Along with being fallow, my plans for professional development and spiritual growth during this time are exciting. By attending conferences, other churches, reading and more, I will focus on improving and growing in preaching and worship arts. I will also study ways to support and strengthen the faith development, caring and social justice outreach of our congregation.
Sunday Services Schedule.....2	I am very pleased with the excellent work our Sabbatical Committee has been doing to ensure that excellence in ministry will continue during my time away. In worship we will have excellent visiting UU preachers and strong leadership from within our congregation. Linda Smith and Debbie Ward are providing excellent logistical and spiritual guidance for our worship along with Mark Daugherty . In the area of pastoral care we trained over a dozen wonderful caring ministry associates to give support under the leadership of Sarah West, Jude Henzy and Mark Kaufki . In the area of administrative leadership the President of the Board, Sam Gugino and Chair of Buildings and Grounds Tom Schoonmaker will keep steady hands on the wheel. More details of how the church will run in my absence will be publicized in the coming weeks.
From the DRE..3	We have a strong, vibrant church. I look forward to recharging my batteries and receiving new training to be the best minister possible. I know this church will be charged with vibrant and joyous human interactions while I am gone.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday services begin at 11:00 a.m.
Childcare is available 9:15 to 12:15 p.m.

December 7 "Blessed are the Peacemakers" Rev. Kent Matthies

In the second chapter of the book of Luke Mary proclaims "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, And lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things." Mary and Jesus both dedicated their lives to bringing all people to a banquet of praise. As we enter the holiday season let us focus on the spirituality of making peace and justice.

December 14 "Navidad Nuestra" Mark Daugherty and the USG Choir

The choir presents Ariel Ramirez's tune-filled **Navidad Nuestra**. Composed in 1964, it is a cantata-like series of songs in which Ramirez gives each episode of the Nativity story a regional flavor. Each of the six songs is characterized by a different rhythm or dance type. Traditional Hispanic folk instruments are used, notably the charango, the leguero drum, and the accordion. Both the music and the subject have a universal appeal. You'll leave tapping your toes and singing this catchy music!

December 21 "KWANZAA" Rev. Kent Matthies, Jude Henzy, & Abayomi Awadesu

We will have a joyous time lighting candles, telling stories, and moving to the beats of African drumming. We will celebrate the principles of Kwanzaa: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

December 24, 4 p.m. "Christmas Eve Family Service" Rev. Kent Matthies

December 24, 6 p.m. "Candlelight Service" Rev. Kent Matthies

Sofia Lyons Fahs wrote the great Unitarian Christmas poem declaring, "Each night a child is born is a holy night, Fathers and mothers – sitting beside their children's cribs feel glory in the sight of new life beginning." Tonight we sing, wonder and worship.

December 28 "Why We Still Teach Poetry" Davy Preston Knittle

As Unitarian Universalists, we are actively working to instill ourselves and our communities with a sense of inherent worth and purpose of action. The energy from which much of our UU tradition comes, the energy of Emerson and Thoreau, is grounded in a cultural context in which poetry was both common and essential. Now, almost everyone is scared of it. What can we gain by turning back to poetry as a manner of understanding both ourselves as individuals and as Unitarian Universalists?

Davy Preston Knittle is a sophomore at Wesleyan University. His poetry has been published in *The Schuylkill Valley Journal of the Arts*, *Natural Bridge*, *The Claremont Review* and *The Mad Poets Review*.

FROM THE DRE

Unsung Heroes of Children's Faith Development

I think most members of USG are aware that running a Sunday School program takes a huge amount of coordination of dozens of committed volunteer teachers and advisors. Truly, without them we couldn't function. But fewer people know about the other behind-the-scenes folks who support our programming in significant other ways.

Sunday school is one aspect of our faith development curriculum at USG. But we believe that a complete church experience includes more than classroom time. For one thing, children need to have friends at church, just as their parents do. And so, we have monthly family fun events designed to strengthen both our Unitarian Universalist values and build community among our church families. Those activities, which include Sundaes Sunday, the pumpkin carving party, the hayride, greens workshop, Easter hunt, and more, are all organized by one volunteer, **Kim Killian**. With the support of the Children's Religious Education Committee and help from parents at large, Kim makes sure all these events are advertised, organized and supplied with food and materials so that all may enjoy a good time.

The Children's RE Committee also thinks it's important for children to have opportunities to put their faith into action—social action, that is. Each month, **Nancy Dearden** organizes a Social Action Sunday to teach our kids about needs in our community and world, and ways that they can make a difference. From cleaning up the grounds at Land Stewardship Day, to cooking, assembling and freezing meals for a local food pantry, our children are getting their hands dirty and their minds opened.

A third role for a Children's RE Committee member is to participate in Worship Arts. **Donna DiStefano** sits on both the RE and Worship Arts Committees to help ensure that children's needs are met in our worship services. She helps plan the time for all ages and brainstorm ways to make multi-generational worship services meaningful for all ages.

All of these "extra" activities, plus running the Sunday School program, fall under the auspices of the Children's Religious Education Committee, chaired by **Ilene Klein**. **Jeff Jaeger** keeps us on task by taking minutes and overseeing our budget so that we can bring to USG programs that help our children grow in faith and feel connected to their church community. Hats off to these unsung heroes.

In faith,
Jude

USG STAFF

Minister: The Reverend Kent Matthies
Director of Religious Education: Jude Henzy
Office Administrator: Robin Neill
Music Director: Mark Daugherty

EVENTS AND FELLOWSHIP

Join USG in Honoring Baby Matthies

Many in the congregation have asked how they can help celebrate the birth of Kent and Kristin's first baby. To commemorate this wonderful occasion in their lives—and the lives of all of us in the church—everyone is invited to celebrate on Sunday, December 7, with coffee and cake during the Fellowship Hour following the service.

All are invited to join in the celebration and help send warmest wishes to Kristen and Kent! Your presence and good wishes for the new baby are more than enough. But for anyone who wants to do more, you are invited to honor the new baby in three ways:

- A gift of cash, which will be split between the Matthies baby, families in need in our own congregation, and the Maternity Care Coalition, an organization that serves mothers and children in the local community.
- Purchasing an item through the Matthies/Shipler registry at Babies R Us, # 86543834
- Go in with a group or on your own for the purchase of a gift card at Target, Babies R Us or the venue of your choice.

Just bring your gifts or donations to the celebration on December 7 and place them in the specially marked box. Questions? Please contact **Berdine Whedon**.

Ushers Needed For Christmas Eve Services

Any USG parents with a college-age son or daughter who would like to usher for the 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service should contact (or have them contact) **Lynne Kalish** or **Steve Conrad** for more information.

Men's group activities:

The December 16 meeting will include service work with the building and grounds committee (wear clothing to work on a project).

New Year's Eve Party

Join us to celebrate the New Year with a New Years Eve Party at the Unitarian Society of Germantown hosted by the USG's Men's group.

Bring friends and family. Bring children and bring a DVD for them to watch (no organized child care). Invite all those you'd like to spend NYE with. Bring some food and whatever you want to drink.

We'll have a DJ for Dancing and a gift exchange at 10:00 p.m. *You CANNOT buy a gift.* You have to bring something you already own that you do not want (gag gifts are great). Please wrap the gift. We'll ask for a \$10 donation or \$20 for a family. If can't afford that still come: you are still welcomed here.

Drumming

Come and participate in a spiritual drumming circle at USG on the second Sunday of each month, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. The next workshop will be Sunday, December 14. All are welcome. Bring drums and other percussion instruments if you have them. If you have any questions, contact **Wally Moyer**.

Friday Morning Book Group

Would you like to expand your reading choices and discuss them with witty, intelligent people? If so, the book group is for you. It meets monthly on the third Friday at 10:30 a.m. (please note new starting time) in members' homes. All are welcome. On December 19, we will meet at the home of **Ingrid Brown**. We will be discussing ***Funny in Farsi*** by Firoozeh Dumas. Bring a sandwich for lunch following the discussion; the hostess provides dessert and beverages. Please call Ingrid a few days in advance to let her know you are coming. For additional information, contact **Cynthia Claus**.

Save The Date : MLK Day of Service

Please join us at USG on the January 19, 2009 King Holiday. USG is planning various service projects to take place onsite and around the community that everyone can take part in. We'll gather for coffee and doughnuts at 8:30 in the dining room while you sign up for that special project that you'd like to participate in, followed by a short service at 9:00 a.m. It's off to the work site at 9:30 a.m., then return to USG for lunch and wrap-up at 12:30 p.m. There will be a selection of age appropriate projects to choose from. Please contact **Nancy Dearden** with any questions or if you are interested in becoming part of the planning team. Consider making this you and your family's day of active citizenship.

Shop Amazon, Help USG

Will you be shopping at Amazon this holiday season? If you start at usguu.org and click the Amazon link on the right side of the page, 4% of your purchase price will be donated to USG. Your cost will be exactly the same — the donation is coming from Amazon. What could be easier?!?!

Singles Group

There has been some interest expressed in the congregation for attention to issues of single people. **Donna Cotzen**, as a representative of the Program Committee, would like anyone who wants to discuss this further to contact her for further inquiry into what peoples' needs and interests might be and to see where it might lead.

Earth Honoring Traditions Meeting: Prayer Sticks for the Winter Solstice

In preparation for the winter solstice, the Earth-Honoring Traditions group will make Native American prayer sticks at the December meeting to be held on Monday, December 1, at 7:30 p.m in the Sullivan Chapel. **Wally Moyer** will lead us through the process of making the prayer sticks, a winter solstice rite observed by many Native American tribes.

Winter Solstice Celebration & Potluck Dinner Sunday December 21

This date marks the winter solstice, and we at USG have a long tradition of observing this important turning point on the wheel of the year.

Each year we gather in the grove and - with song and poetry and a great flaming wheel and lots of noise - we mark this pivotal point on the earth's journey around the sun. We celebrate our precious and beautiful planet and our connection to all the life on it.

Please come. (And, oh yes, bring great food for the potluck that follows.) Bring your potluck dishes to the dining room starting at 6:00 PM. Ritual starts at 6:30 p.m. For information, please contact **Berdine Whedon**, preferably by email.

Poinsettias to Decorate the Sanctuary

Do you want to order a poinsettia or two, and just haven't gotten around to it yet? Please contact **Elaine Hills** directly, as there may still be plants available. The cost is \$22 per plant. Call her or email her ASAP, to order and to give her the memorial/dedication wording that you want in the order of service.

Greening the Sanctuary

Come to USG on Saturday, December 13 at 10 a.m. for an hour or two of decorating the sanctuary with greens. Please contact **Elaine Hills** if you are coming. Fun, fast, and it adds so much to our holiday services!

Christmas Eve Cookies and Punch Reception

Volunteers are desperately needed to set up and serve; contact **Elaine Hills** no later than Sunday, December 14. On Christmas Eve, bring some **favorite cookies** for sharing: come celebrate the season with our entire congregation on Wednesday, December 24, at 4:45 p.m., just after the Christmas Eve Family Service until the 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Sharing the Plate in December

On Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24, half of our collection will be given to support the Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (NPIHN) and the great work they do for the homeless and needy in our community.

In this season of giving, please give generously!

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

The Nietzsche Collection on line

We received notice recently that the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) in Boston has launched their "finding aid" to the George E. Nietzsche Unitariana Collection. (A finding aid is essentially a list of the items in a collection, with a brief description of each.) The finding aid may be viewed at www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fa0304.

There is also a link to the finding aid on the USG website (www.usguu.org/).

MHS was chosen as a repository after research into possible venues for this collection of papers of Unitarians and other liberal thinkers, compiled and given to USG by member George E. Nietzsche in 1954.

MHS also has an in-depth look at one of the items from the Nietzsche Collection, a letter written by Margaret Fuller to her friend Mary Peabody. The "Object of the Month" feature is at www.masshist.org/objects/. "Miscellany", the MHS publication, will feature an article on the collection in the near future: www.masshist.org/periodicals/miscellany.cfm.

--Susan Bockius

Board & Councils 2008-2009

Board of Trustees:

Sam Gugino, <i>President</i>	term expires 2009
Susan Bockius	term expires 2011
Charles Gabriel	term expires 2009
Deanna Kemler	term expires 2010
Eli Scarce	term expires 2010
Rudy Sprinkle	term expires 2011
Marny Walsh	term expires 2009
Berdine Whedon, <i>VP</i>	term expires 2011
Alan Windle, <i>Secretary</i>	term expires 2010

Administrative Council:

Dennis Strain, <i>chair</i>	term expires 2010
Susan Bockius	term expires 2011
Carolyn Cotton	term expires 2009
Rudy Sprinkle	term expires 2011
Alan Windle	term expires 2010

Program Council:

Mary Lee Keane, <i>chair</i>	term expires 2011
Donna Cotzen	term expires 2009
Emily Joy Goldberg	term expires 2011
Deanna Kemler	term expires 2010
Jonel Sofian	term expires 2009
Berdine Whedon	term expires 2011

Strategic Planning Council:

Charles Gabriel, <i>chair</i>	term expires 2009
Mark Bernstein	term expires 2010
Carolyn Cotton	term expires 2010
Sam Gugino	term expires 2011
Lynda O'Gwynn	term expires 2010
Eli Scarce	term expires 2010

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Update on Share the Plate

In September this congregation gave \$ 911.30 to the Neighborhood Interfaith Movement and in October we collected \$ 1390.39 to support New Directions for Women. This is a level of giving that we should all be proud of! The task force is always seeking nominations of organizations to receive a collection. Nomination forms are available in the office or on the web site and will be available during coffee hour.

The task force has two new members. **Edna Jones** and **Tom Stupak** have joined **Mark Isaksen**, **Linda Bernstein**, and **Grant Fox**, chair.

The January 2009 CommUUnicator Deadline is **Sunday, December 14**. Editor: **Edna Jones**.

Please submit items via e-mail to the editor or place in CommUUnicator box by 12:30 p.m **December 14**. Flyers must be submitted to the USG office by the CommUUnicator deadline. Submit materials in Verdana 11 pt when possible.

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BOARD NOTES

At its October meeting, the Board approved the selection of Brawer & Hauptman as the architectural firm to lead us in the development of our Master Plan. B&H was one of three firms, which made presentations to a church group that included the Strategic Planning Committee, members from Buildings & Grounds and Rev. Kent Matthies. B&H was by far the most impressive firm interviewed. It has done a lot of church work and its references were all extremely positive.

In the coming weeks, you'll be hearing more about how B&H will conduct its research in helping us formulate our Master Plan. One of the most important aspects of this research (and a major reason why B&H was chosen) includes congregational involvement, asking individuals and committees what each thinks our physical plant needs (and doesn't) in the coming years. Please give these folks your well considered and forthright assessments.

One of the many physical plant improvements will involve energy saving. But we can't wait until those improvements are made to save us energy. We have to do our part now. Please think about energy conservation at USG in the same way you would for your own home.

- Make sure the lights are turned off when you leave a room.
- Keep doors and windows closed tight and report leaks or cracks that let in cold air to our Buildings & Grounds Committee, which, by the way, has done a super job in keeping our building in good shape.
- We may also have to tolerate cooler rooms this winter as well. So don't forget those warm sweaters and other cozy apparel when you come to church for committee meetings or Sunday service.

Saving energy not only helps the environment, it will help to keep our operating costs down. We should also be mindful of other church resources we use, from paper towels (use only what you really need) to running water (don't leave faucets on unnecessarily).

You can help increase church income as well:

- If you enter Amazon.com through our web site (www.usguu.org), USG gets 4% of how much you spend. Remember, Amazon.com sells just about everything these days, from jewelry to gourmet food.

- Donate used printer ink cartridges by dropping them in the collection box near the nametag boards. USG gets paid for them by Full Cycle Inkjet & Toner, Inc. (www.fullcycleinkjet.com).
- When you register with Escrip, a portion of what you spend at selected merchants, such as Genuardi's, Macy's, Eddie Bauer, and Barnes & Noble, will go to USG. To find a complete list of participating merchants and to sign up, go to the Escrip web site, www.escrip.com.

Thank UUs this month go to:

- The 36 volunteers (especially coordinators **Joe Walsh, Howard Silver** and **Tom Schoonmaker**) who participated in the October 18 Work Day, which saved USG some \$13,000.
- All those who helped put on the 5th annual Artisan Fall Festival on November 1 and 2.
- **Gloria Smith, Alan Windle,** and **Ursa Vincent** for their countless hours of work on the new office software system.

--Sam Gugino,
Board President

CONTINUING OUR FOOD CUPBOARD TRADITION

Church members and friends are asked to continue our tradition of bringing food to the church on the first Sunday of each month. We need nonperishable food to fill our community cupboard, now housed in baskets **located at the dining room exit to the courtyard and next to the coat rack**. Please mark your calendar for **Sunday, December 7** as a reminder to purchase food for the hungry in Germantown. Collected items will be taken to St. Vincent's Food Pantry for distribution to those least able to make ends meet.

HOW AND WHEN TO REACH USG STAFF

Office phone 215-844-1157 FAX 215-844-1159
 E-mail usguu@verizon.net USG website www.usguu.org
 Church office hours: Mon.-Fri. 9:00 - 3:00

Rev. Kent Matthies 215-844-1157 kmatthies@verizon.net
 Office hours:
 Tues. 9:30 - 11:30 & 1:30 - 4:00
 Wed. 9:30 - 11:30
 Fri. 9:30 - 11:30 & 1:30 - 4:00

Jude Henzy Director of Religious Education 215-844-1157
usgre@verizon.net

USG DECEMBER 2008 CALENDAR

Monday	12/1	7:30 p.m.	Earth Honoring Traditions
Wednesday	12/3	12:30 p.m.	Out to Lunch
Wednesday	12/3	7:00 p.m.	Green Sanctuary
Sunday	12/7	12:30 p.m.	Greens Workshop
Sunday	12/7	12:30 p.m.	UU History
Wednesday	12/10	7:30 p.m.	Buildings & Grounds Committee
Sunday	12/14	9:30 a.m.	UU 101
Sunday	12/14	9:30 a.m.	Meditation Circle
Sunday	12/14	6:00 p.m.	Drumming Circle
Tuesday	12/16	7:30 p.m.	Men's Group
Wednesday	12/17	7:00 p.m.	Ending Racism
Wednesday	12/17	7:30 p.m.	Just the Two of Us...
Sunday	12/21	9:30 a.m.	UU 102
Sunday	12/21	6:30 p.m.	Winter Solstice
Monday	12/22	7:30 p.m.	Exploring Deep Ecology
Tuesday	12/23	7:30 p.m.	Board of Trustees
Saturday	12/27	8:00 a.m.	Chapel of Sacred Mirrors field trip
Sunday	12/28	8:30 a.m.	Buddhist Meditation
Wednesday	12/31	8:00 p.m.	New Year's Eve Party