



THE COMMUNICATOR
The Newsletter of the Unitarian Society of Germantown
 December 2009 Volume 47, No. 4

In this issue:	
From Our Minister.....1	Dear Friends,
Sunday Services Schedule.....2	I am just getting over my blues from the Phillies losing to the Yankees in the World Series. I know I am not alone. Of course the Phillies had two tremendous seasons for which we are proud and grateful. But I was sad for the team and our city that they didn't accomplish that rare feat of repeating as champions. Fortunately, ministry offers me many opportunities to pay attention to other things. Sometimes I can't believe how privileged I am. I just returned from a magnificent Unitarian Universalist Convocation in Ottawa, Canada. Over 400 UU ministers gathered for among other things worship, preaching and music. We sang and grooved to some rocking hymns like: The promise of the Spirit; faith, hope and love abide; And so every soul is blessed and made whole; the truth in our hearts is our guide, We are standing on the side of love.
From the DFD.....3	Fortunately, our church community offers many opportunities to worship together. Here we can celebrate life when we are down about things like the Phillies losing and things ever so more important. This month our USG theme is compassion. In our small group ministries and worship services we will explore how we are called to be a people of compassion. How are you standing on the side of compassion with yourself as well as others?
Notes From the Board President.....4	The UU Association is taking the lead on a national campaign called, "Standing on the Side of Love." In local areas around the country ministers and congregations are working in partnership to reduce oppression with love and compassion. How are we called to try to understand the experiences and suffering of ourselves and other people? How can we find ways to join together in creating peace and justice in our world? If we can treat ourselves with true compassion -- even on the small things like being Phillies fans -- we will have good practice. I am not kidding.
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	In faith, <i>Kent</i>

SUNDAY SERVICES

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

December 6 "Missa Gaia" Mark Daugherty and the USG Choir

For the first time, Paul Winter's ground-breaking "Missa Gaia" will be performed at the Unitarian Society of Germantown. First performed on Mother's Day in 1981 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, this powerful work uses world rhythms, jazz harmonies and melodies, as well as the sounds of the wolf, whale, eagle, seal cub, and birds (and the human voice, of course) to create a spiritual experience that will resonate with many UUs. It is music that dramatically speaks of the oneness of all humanity with all of nature.

December 13 "Food, Friends and Home" Rev. Kent Matthies

Three ways to be compassionate to the soul involve food, friends and home. You don't need a feast at a five star restaurant. You don't need lots of friends. You don't even need a physical home. Taking the time to eat with others with whom you share affection is deeply compassionate. Finding a way to be "at home" with yourself and the world wherever you are is a way of taking care of your soul. May this religion always be dedicated to creating a world where all people have such opportunities.

December 20 "Kwanzaa" Rev. Kent Matthies, Jude Henzy, & Abayomi Awodesu

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

Disciples of Compassion: Celebrate a prophet who sent people forth to live lives dedicated to compassion. Celebrate a night of beautiful music, candles, peace and joy. Rededicate ourselves to being disciples of compassion.

December 27 "Creation and Creativity" Amy Anu-Birge

There is a national movement among parents and educators to make sure that children have more time for "free play." Free play nurtures the imagination and promotes healthy cognitive function as well as emotional development. But where is the "free play" movement for adults? How do we escape the structure that we've imposed upon ourselves -- upon even our recreational activities? How can we reconnect with our creative selves and hook in to that rich and boundless interior world without which we can become withered, tired and hopeless?

Amy Anu-Birge is a professor of English at Philadelphia Community College. She is a member of the Unitarian Society of Germantown who has spoken from our pulpit several times.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT

A Season for Compassion

We're all familiar with the winter holiday hype -- images of beautifully decorated homes, handsomely wrapped gifts, and warm family gatherings. We're told it's a season of peace, joy and good will. Certainly these are lovely ideals and even a reality for some of us. But for others, the period from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day is characterized by pain, loneliness and anxiety.

For those among us without close family ties, the holidays can bring to the surface feelings of isolation and grief. Even when we have loving family with whom to share the season, recent losses can feel more acute as the holidays cause us to notice who is missing.

Financial hardships are more noticeable at this time of year as well. It can be hard not to feel envy when people around us are exchanging luxurious presents or traveling to exotic locales. Even when we try to cut back on gifts, there are hidden added costs for everything from extra childcare while we attend holiday events, to postage for mailing gifts and cards. There can be extra expense for special foods, holiday decorations, and travel costs. A friend of mine describes December as the month where she hemorrhages money.

What can make the holidays more meaningful and fulfilling is to celebrate them as a season of compassion. We can have compassion for others as we remember to call, visit or send cards to friends and family who can't get out much. Great Aunt Helen would much prefer a cup of tea and a 30-minute chat to a fancy new candy dish delivered by UPS. Gifts of time and attention usually cost less, and feel good to giver and receiver alike.

We can have compassion for ourselves when we slow down, eat well, and spend wisely. In addition to spending within our means, we can try to make purchases that are better for the planet and the workers who grew and manufactured the products we buy. In this way, we'll be showing compassion for the world.

Small, intentional steps like these can help make the holidays feel more sane and more special. The meaning of the season doesn't come from how things look on the outside -- the decorations, fancy clothes or multitude of presents -- but from how it feels on the inside. Make yours a season of compassion.

In faith,
Jude

USG STAFF

Minister: The Reverend Kent Matthies
Director of Faith Development: Jude Henzy
Office Administrator: Robin Falco
Music Director: Mark Daugherty

NOTES FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Please mark your calendar: **December 13, 2009** is a very important date. It is the date on which members of the congregation will vote on the adoption of the architectural master plan.

Over a year ago, the Strategic Planning Council began a serious look ahead to our future and an inquiry into the kind of facilities that would be needed to support the kind of growth we want. If we had 500 members instead of 300, how many Sunday School rooms would we need? What staff would be needed and where would they sit? What ministries would we support and how would our physical space need to change so we could be the kind of expanding, expansive, and even more welcoming community we dream of?

The result of their inquiry was the engagement of an architectural firm, Brawer & Hauptman, to evaluate our needs and create a master plan that can guide our development over the next 20 years. The plan is in three phases covering five, 10, and 20 years and is designed to allow us to expand and improve our facilities, when we are ready and in line with the church growth.

It is also designed in such a way that each step, each phase builds on the previous one. Because the plan has been thought through in advance, we can avoid waste in building activities and renovations that might not ultimately fit where we are in five or 10 years. But we don't lift a hammer or a shovelful of dirt until we are ready. Determining our readiness and developing a thoughtful, measured approach to implementation will be the next step.

The plan was presented to the Board of Trustees earlier this year and was approved by the Board for recommendation for adoption by the congregation. Since then there have been several presentations to the congregation explaining the details of the plan. If you would like to look at the plan again before the vote, there are two copies available in the office which can be signed out or you can go to our website and view the plan there: http://www.usguu.org/pages/church_news.

This is an important milestone for supporting the vitality and growth of USG for years to come. Please plan to attend this important vote and lend your support.
Berdine Whedon

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**. Please mark your calendar for **Sunday, January 3** 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.

EVENTS AND FELLOWSHIP

"Intentional Community": Continuing the Conversation

A group of USG members is exploring the possibility of creating a more intentional community at USG. There are many ways of creating intentional communities. For example, there could be more inter-generational, neighborhood-based activities and a more continuing support system for some of our older members who want to stay in their own homes as they age; this could mean actual shared housing arrangements. There are many other possibilities and options. If you are interested in participating in these conversations, please join us. The next session will be held after church on Sunday, December 6. Please contact Linda Brunn (lindabrunn@comcast.net) or Gale Gibbons (gigi3318@gmail.com) to RSVP and/or if you have any questions.

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., and all are welcome. Because the group has gotten so large, we have had to abandon our long practice of meeting in members' homes. We are experimenting with meeting in a classroom at Cathedral Village, which resident Sarah West has secured. Sarah has arranged for Cathedral Village to provide the group with coffee and bagels, thus there will be a small charge to attendees for this service.

On December 18, we will be discussing *My Life in France* by Julia Child. Bring a sandwich for lunch and fellowship following the discussion if you wish. Please e-mail Sarah a least a week in advance to let her know you are coming. For additional information, contact Cynthia Claus.

Winter Solstice Celebration and Potluck Dinner

The Winter Solstice Celebration and Potluck Dinner will be held on Sun., Dec. 20 at 6:00 p.m. We have a long tradition of celebrating an even longer tradition -- the observance of the winter solstice. Each year we gather in the grove and -- with song and poetry and a great flaming wheel and lots of noise -- we celebrate this marker of 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.) For information and to volunteer to participate, please contact Dennis Strain (dennis.strain09@gmail.com) or Berdine Whedon (bwhedon@gmail.com).

New Year's Eve Party for the Whole Family

The Men's Group is again sponsoring a New Year's Eve party for the whole family. Invite all those you'd like to spend New Year's Eve with -- friends, family and neighbors. Bring a dish to share and whatever you want to drink. Bring children and a DVD for them to watch (no organized child care). We'll have a DJ for dancing and Alethia Joniec will officiate the gift exchange at 10 p.m. You CANNOT buy a gift. You have to bring a gift of 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. This event helps to support the Men's Group annual retreat.

Womenspirit Song Circle

The Womenspirit Song Circle will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be on January 11, 2010.

Circle Dinners are a Blast! Join one on Saturday, January 23

Whether you are a visitor trying us out, a new member, or a long-time member, it is sometimes hard to meet everyone, particularly those at a different life stage. Circle Dinners are a great way to keep our community connected. Dinners are held in the homes of church members and friends. Generally, there are six to 10 participants. The host supplies a warm and inviting setting and organizes who brings what. Each guest brings a dish to share. These are casual, pleasant evenings where you'll have an opportunity to meet new people and perhaps get to know better someone you've known for years. It is possible to participate even if you choose not to host.

If you'd like to take part in a Circle Dinner, please contact Betsy Gabriel. Look for the "Circle Dinners" sign during hospitality hour following the service. We will begin registration in mid-December and you can register there. You may e-mail Betsy at bsgabriel47@msn.com, call at 215-376-0417 or talk to her at church. We will be taking reservations through January 11. We can always use hosts. Please let us know if you would like to host for either an all-adult or family grouping.

All-Church Retreat

Save the dates of June 4-6 for the All-Church Retreat: "Spiritual Practices." Be prepared for family fun, spirituality, awesome worship, sports, swimming, and fellowship as the church community spends the weekend together at Camp Innabah (www.innabah.org).

Worship:	Prayer Garden Music!
Enlightenment:	Yoga, meditation
Deepen Your Faith:	UU 103!
Nature:	Canoeing, swimming, hiking, 179 Acres of Meadow and Woodlands
Sports:	Soccer, Ropes Course, The Zen of Archery
Kids Program:	Hayride!

Planning is still in progress; speak to Mark Bernstein of the Program Council for more information or if you want to be involved.



15th Annual
Greater Philadelphia
MARTIN LUTHER KING
DAY OF SERVICE

MLK 2010

VOLUNTEERS PLEASE SAVE THE DATE

The Unitarian Society of Germantown will once again host the Martin Luther King Day of Service on the holiday - Monday, January 18, 2010 at their church at 6511 Lincoln Drive, Philadelphia.

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 bagels 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 worship service at 9:00. It's off to the work site at 9:30 and return to USG for a free lunch and wrap up at 12:30. There will be a selection of age appropriate projects to choose from. Details of all projects will be forthcoming in December.

If you have special needs, any questions and/or are interested in participating please contact Nancy Dearden at 215-836-1240 or at nancy.dearden@verizon.net.

Please consider making this you and your family's day of active citizenship.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

Future CommUUnicators: New Focus and New Title

Beginning with the January 2010 issue, the CommUUnicator will take on a new focus: reporting on the past month's events at USG. News of coming events will be the domain of the Weekly Announcements and can be quickly found on our web-based calendar: <http://usquu.org/pages/calendar>. Articles from Reverend Kent Matthies, Director of Faith Development Jude Henzy, and Board President Berdine Whedon, will continue to highlight each issue, but so will pictures and descriptions of the many events that are taking place at USG. Event organizers are encouraged to take pictures and submit short summaries to a new e-mail box devoted to the new publication: usg.editor@gmail.com. To emphasize the change in focus, we are also thinking of changing the name. Readers will be encouraged to suggest another title and submit it to the new e-mail box.

Holiday Angel Program

Please help us celebrate the season of giving by participating in our Holiday Angel program. The RE program has teamed up with the Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (NPIHN) to provide holiday gifts to needy families. During coffee hour, the congregation is invited to select an ornament from the tree with a description of a child and gift ideas. Please return gifts to church, unwrapped with the ornament taped to it, by December 6 or 13. Donation boxes will be located in the narthex and dining room to receive your gifts. Cash gifts will also be accepted. Our youth will wrap the gifts and deliver them to the families. We will bring holiday cheer to each family. Please contact Sandra Campbell at 215-688-0750 with any questions.

Poinsettia Display in the Sanctuary

Our annual poinsettia display in the chancel will be set up after the first week of December. If you haven't ordered a poinsettia yet, call Elaine Hills to see if any are still available. Contact Elaine Hills ASAP, and tell her how many, what color (red or white, or possibly pink), and what the brief dedication should be for publication in the orders of service. Claim your plant(s) after the Christmas Eve service, or tell Elaine that you want to donate the plant for continued display at USG, or as a gift to shut-ins, staff, or friends of the church. Pay before delivery by cash or check (made out to USG with "poinsettia" in the memo line); send payment to Elaine at home or in her mailbox at church. BUT BE SURE TO CALL HER ABOUT AVAILABILITY FIRST! The cost per each large plant is \$22. Elaine will confirm any orders she receives. Deck the halls and join in the beauty of the season!

Greening the Sanctuary

Come to USG on Saturday, December 12 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 ASAP. When you come to either of the Christmas Eve services, bring some favorite cookies for sharing. Come celebrate the season with our entire congregation on Thursday, December 24, at 4:45 p.m., just after the Christmas Eve Family Service. Reception continues until the 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Winter Coat Drive

Gently worn and new coats in children's and adult sizes are being collected again this year to be donated to a family shelter. Coats can be brought to church and left in the box located under the name tag board beginning January 3 through January 18. Consider bringing it when you volunteer on Martin Luther King Day of Service taking place at USG on January 18, 2010. Please help warm someone this winter and it's guaranteed to warm your heart. Contact is Nancy Dearden at nancy.dearden@verizon.net.

New Women's Group

Based in the awareness and understanding of the value of a support/process group for women, a new women's group is forming. Anne Ream, a therapist, and Maggie Chapman, a social worker, recognize the value of this type of group and have decided to start one. Become part of the beginning of this group; help us form a new group that will assist women as they form deep and long-lasting connections with each other. Call Anne (215-753-2519) or Maggie (215-743-0219).

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: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
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 Faith Development: 215-844-1157; usgre@verizon.net

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee encourages all visitors to stop at the Visitor Welcome Table during coffee hour after Sunday services. A committee member will be there to greet visitors, answer questions, and provide information about ways to make connections at the Unitarian Society of Germantown (USG). Visitors may also pick up a Welcome Packet, which contains information about USG, Unitarian Universalism, children's religious education, membership, and much more!

Individuals who are thinking about joining USG or would like more information about what it means to become a member should contact Tom Hecker at theckeriii@yahoo.com. Membership at USG has many benefits and involves mutual commitment.

The church commits to provide members:

- Excellent worship experiences
- Caring and outreach
- Faith development opportunities
- Opportunities for service
- Spiritual education for all ages

Members commit to provide the community with their:

- Regular attendance at worship services
- Work on personal faith development
- Financial generosity
- Volunteer service to USG
- Service to the larger community

Individuals not ready to become members may still become involved in the church. In fact, visitors are encouraged to get to know us by becoming active in our community before they make the commitment to membership. The church sends out a weekly e-mail announcement which includes a calendar of events. Anyone interested in receiving these announcements or the monthly newsletter should contact usguu@verizon.net to be put on the mailing list.

"Getting To Know You..." New Member Profiles

Below are thumbnail sketches to introduce you to new members of USG, often written by the new members themselves. These folks joined the church on September 20, 2009.

Delores Hill is one of those people who wrote their own profiles. She grew up in an ethnically diverse family and has lived in Germany and the U.S. She moved to Philadelphia in the 1970s and has been a long-time resident of West Mt. Airy.

Delores works at the University of Pennsylvania and currently serves as Director of the Educational Talent Search Program. Prior to her work at Penn, Delores worked at Community College of Philadelphia. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, a master's from Drexel, and is currently enrolled in Penn's Graduate School of Education.

At USG, Delores has been an editor for the *CommUUnicator* for almost two years, and she recently assumed the role of chair of the Membership Committee. (She has also helped with numerous projects, such as the Lingelbach dinner, which is where this writer first met her. Dealing with a shortage of flowers on the tables, I had quickly picked some of USG's rhododendrons. Delores was so complimentary of my hasty efforts and so helpful that the warmth of her personality was immediately clear.)

Delores' hobbies and interests include biking on the Schuylkill River Trail with her husband, Tom Ott; participating in her book club; cooking for family and friends; and dining at Philadelphia's restaurants. Delores is also an enthusiastic Phillies and Eagles fan! Delores and Tom's daughter, Kate, lives in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia but visits Mt. Airy often, particularly for dinner with her parents!

Delores, who was raised Catholic, was drawn to USG because she was looking for a spiritual home with no dogma that would encourage and support her in choosing her own spiritual path.

Frankie Jueds writes that "I attended USG on Lincoln Drive all through my childhood, and was married in the Sullivan Chapel -- and am very happy to be back as a member. The warm and welcoming feel of the church is very much as I remember it from so long ago. I left Philadelphia in the 1960s to be married, and lived in various places (New York, Miami, London, New York again) with my husband and two daughters until I returned to Philadelphia in 2003, after my husband's death. I do some volunteer work these days, belong to USG's book group, and take painting classes which I love. It is such a good feeling to be back in the church where I started out many years ago, with such an interesting, vibrant community of people."

Wesley Smith, in a modest paragraph, writes, "I moved to Mt. Airy about 1 1/2 years ago, from West Philadelphia where I taught in Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania for 40 years. Greek and Roman poetry and history of medicine were my emphases. I now live near my daughter and three grandchildren. I have been attending services at USG and singing in the Choir. I look forward to participation in the activities of the USG community as well as the Mt. Airy community."

Scott Smith is a September joiner who is allowing this writer to swash her pen about. Scott was a mystery, at first, often mentioned by his wife, Gloria, but never present. I understood that he was in show business and worked on the stage crew (specifically, he's the Sound Man) at the Academy of Music, where he's been for eight years... and that explained why he was rarely seen in the mornings.

It wasn't until I was struggling with a computer-run slide-show at USG one morning that he actually appeared and quietly, kindly came to my technological rescue.

Scott lives in Glenside with Gloria and their children, Benjamin (8) and Carlton (5). He enjoyed a "colorful childhood" in Willow Manor, the corner of Upper Dublin where three townships -- Abington, Upper Moreland, and Upper Dublin -- come together. That childhood was also traditional: he has two brothers, and his parents are still in the same house after 50 years.

Scott had a broad array of jobs from high school through college, ranging from managing a gas station and working in a greenhouse to printing tee-shirts on the Ocean City boardwalk. He was an accountant briefly after college (at Temple University) and then landed in show biz: he became the Sound Man at the Walnut Street Theatre for 15 years.

Scott enjoys playing guitar, snowboarding, fishing, boating, and cycling. (And now we know where the boys get some of their brim-full energy!)

Beth Lazer, with her husband Misha, moved in August of this year from Asheville, North Carolina, to Mt. Airy, in order to be closer to children and grandchildren. In their blended family, three of the four children's families live in New Jersey; the other family is in Los Angeles.

Beth spent her childhood in Connecticut and made her home in various states since then. She took degrees from both Tufts and the University of North Carolina. She worked in IBM's marketing division and in an Asheville law firm as a paralegal. After retirement, Beth served in many, many volunteer positions, most significantly at the UU church in Asheville and at the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement, helping to develop a five-year "Livable and Aging-Friendly Community Plan." It's not surprising, then, that one of her beliefs is "in sharing one's gifts and talents with family, friends, and the community." Her loves include walking, reading, theater, and quilting.

Raised Roman Catholic, Beth has been a UU since the late 1970s. She writes, "My spiritual journey has deepened as I've gotten older and currently focuses on developing spiritual practices such as meditation and journaling."

USG is delighted to have these lovely people as fellow members. Please give them a warm welcome. If you, too, are interested in becoming a member of the USG community, please contact Tom Hecker at theckeriii@yahoo.com.

AMONG US

Marjorie Annapav, now living in Santa Monica, California, advises that she spent the month of September in Amsterdam, Holland, and attended a UU service there. She considers USG her "home church" and misses everyone. Marjorie plans to visit in May. She has joined a writing group and is working on her memoirs.

Please check the Church Calendar on the USG website, www.usquu.org, for events scheduled during December.