



THE COMMUNICATOR

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Society of Germantown

November 2009 Volume 47, No. 3

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Dear Friends,

Sometimes life just feels perfect. That was the case for me at our fourth annual USG Men's Retreat last weekend. As a male minister I have come to believe that a majority of men in our culture long for more deep friendships. Many of us just don't know how to find them. Our weekend together at the Murray Grove UU Retreat Center on the Jersey shore allowed old and new friends to connect. We had meditation, programs on listening, poetry and community building, worship and FUN! Did I say we had fun???? Yes, we had our supremely important Saturday night bonfire-drumming circle. We grooved with drums, saxophone, guitar, singing and dancing around the flames. Over the weekend we had excellent food, naps, two poker tournaments, walks in the woods, and plenty of laughs.

Most of us men know that we can benefit from more inner work on our spiritual lives. But we don't want to do it alone. Hence, coming together to share openly about our experiences, struggles and successes really helps us feel supported and less alone. Our companionship provides energy and solutions to solve problems that seem intimidating when on our own. Our fellowship brings us a joy and willingness to help each other and the world that transforms our own lives. We have already booked Murray Grove for October 8-10, 2010. All men are invited to this spirit-filled event. Book it in your calendar now! Also, know that the USG Program Council very likely will soon announce an all-church retreat for June 2010. All adults and children will be invited. Sacred time away from the regular patterns of life is invaluable. We are lucky to have a church that creates such opportunities. When our spirits are charged up like this we are more effective in bringing love to the world.

In Faith,
Kent

SUNDAY SERVICES

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

PLEASE NOTE THE RETURN TO EASTERN STANDARD TIME on Nov. 1

November 1: "Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead"

Rev. Kent Matthies

In the Mexican tradition, bring flowers and photos of deceased loved ones. We will have a large energized band playing classics. We will reconnect with the memories and souls of people who touched our lives and have now passed away.

November 8 "Choosing to Remember" Rev. Kent Matthies

The small group ministry theme for this month is memory. We are affected in endless ways by what we choose to remember and what we choose not to remember. With thoughtfulness and practice we can remember the aspects of our lives, which give us love, courage and hope for today and tomorrow.

November 15 "Buddhism: Experience Based Spirituality"

Timothy Loftus

Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy? Despite our best attempts, the Buddhist tradition does not fit neatly into existing categories. It deals with the fundamental questions of human experience but posits neither God nor external deity. This unique approach to the spiritual journey begins with answers, not questions. The Buddha instructed his students not to believe in anything simply because they heard it but, instead, to examine those teachings in the laboratory of their own direct experience. This experience-based approach to the spiritual journey is a distinguishing characteristic of the Buddhist path and Buddhist meditation practice.

Timothy Loftus is an ordained hospice chaplain at Penn Wissahickon Hospice. He holds a Masters of Divinity in Buddhist Studies from Naropa University and recently finished his Clinical Pastoral Education residency at Albert Einstein Medical Center. He is a student of the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche and practices with Nalandabodhi Vajrayana Buddhist community.

November 22 "Best Worst Thing" Rev. Kent Matthies

Join us for a worshipful celebration of Thanksgiving, the American Seder. Among the things we can be thankful for are the tough points in our life. Remember and appreciate the "best worst things" ever to happen to you. Please also bring bread for bread communion.

November 29 "Living Into Gratitude" Leni Windle

Cicero said, "Gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues, but the parent of all others." What is it about gratitude that makes it so important? Where is its power? What's in it for us?

Leni Windle has been a member of USG for five years, actively involved in stewardship. She works as a guidance counselor at Cheltenham High School. She is the mother of three grown children, and the wife of USG member Alan Windle.

FROM OUR DRE

Risking Happiness

A recent story on NPR talked about the relationship between taking risks and experiencing happiness. It turns out that some researchers found that people who engage in a moderate amount of “risky” behavior report greater satisfaction with their lives. They weren’t talking about extreme risks like cliff diving or getting rid of all your worldly possessions. These researchers were suggesting that doing things that entailed a medium amount of risk enhanced one’s sense of well being. Examples of moderate risk include moving to a different city, taking up a new sport, or even striking up a conversation with an interesting looking stranger.

It seems that when we try to play it safe we’re actually less happy. Being too cautious and trying to protect ourselves too much doesn’t really protect us after all. While we’re trying to avoid pain, we might actually be missing out on pleasure. Risk-averse people, the researchers found, tended to be more anxious and depressed and reported lower levels of contentment. Moderate risk takers, on the other hand, were more optimistic and perceived life as offering opportunities; in general they were more hopeful.

Apparently, we can learn to be more resilient and therefore happier. Risk takers hope for the best, but they don’t necessarily expect it. They are more able to bounce back when things don’t go well, and take another risk to try to improve a situation. Some of our risk comfort is probably hard-wired, but I suspect that we have some degree of control over it, too.

I maintain that having a safe “base” can make us more willing to take risks. Knowing that there are people there to pick up the pieces if the risk flops makes any endeavor a little less frightening. We see this at work in very young children who venture out into the world, then run back to the comfort of a parent’s lap. Being part of a faith community can be the source of safety that allows us to try new things. We can be for each other the net that gives us the courage to risk taking a step out onto the tight rope of life. And, we’ll be happier for it.

In faith,
Jude

USG STAFF

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

EVENTS AND FELLOWSHIP

The Tioga Mural Art Project Spaghetti Dinner and Cabaret Fundraiser

Join the Ending Racism and Green Sanctuary Committees for a spaghetti dinner and cabaret scheduled for Friday, November 6 at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room of USG. Be entertained by USG's homegrown talent and enter a raffle to win a tour of the mural capital of the world (conducted by the Philadelphia Mural Art's Program)! All attendees receive complimentary self-guided tour map of Philadelphia's world famous murals.

Your dining enjoyment will go a long way to generate funds for this important project. Supplies are needed to keep the project rolling through the fall and winter months, and more importantly, to help a blossoming partnership with the Tioga Community. To date, the project has produced the beginnings of a mural wall outside Tioga Arms Apartments on W. Tioga St. in North Philadelphia. Led by the creativity of USG's own Suzanne Matlock, we are seeing a true original mural "weave" unfold on the façade of a building adjacent to a children's playground. This "children friendly" project has also introduced USG members to a very special organization known as Gaudenzia, Inc. Gaudenzia helps women in recovery from substance abuse and provides housing assistance right at the mural location. What a perfect fit for the USG mission and our overall spiritual development! By spending the evening with us you will live in this creative process, recognize the efforts of Suzanne and an army of volunteers, and most importantly shine a very bright light on the women and children playing in the playground and living at Tioga Arms Apartments.

Tickets are on sale Sundays during Fellowship Hour (\$20 for adults and \$5 for children under 12) donations are also being accepted for those of you with a big heart and who have a conflict with this particular evening. The dinner is a BYOB event. Contacts are Susan Zingale-Baird (ERC) 215-848-1382 & Joe Walsh (Green Sanctuary) 215-836-9257.

Needle Exchange

The Needle Exchange is for people who knit or do any other kind of needlework. We meet at 7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. The next meeting will be on November 9 at Gale Gibbons' house. Please let her know in advance that you are coming.

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. There will be a small charge to attendees for this service. On November 20, we will be discussing *Netherland* by Joseph O'Neill. Bring a

sandwich for lunch and fellowship following the discussion if you wish. Please call Sarah at least a week in advance to let her know you are coming. For additional information contact Cynthia Claus.

Newer Members Potluck Dinner at the Church

Have you joined the church within the last year or three, and find you might like to share some conviviality with other newer members, remake some contacts, and generally enjoy the community you have chosen? Then mark your calendars for Saturday, November 21, and join us in USG's Dining Room by 5:30 p.m. Bring a potluck dish to share with the group: last names A-K bring a main dish or substantial side dish; L-Z bring a dessert or appetizer. Please email Elaine Hills at elaine.l.hills@gmail.com to let the Membership Committee know you are coming, how many, and, generally, what you plan to bring.

What is Intentional Community Anyway?

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. Please join us in looking at different models of intentional community, what might fit our needs as individuals and to speculate how USG could become more intentional in building our own community. The next session will be held after church on Sunday, December 6. The November session has been cancelled, so that members may attend the Congregational Meeting on the Facilities Master Plan; a meeting in January will be added. Please contact Linda Brunn (lindabrunn@comcast.net) or Gale Gibbons (gigi3318@gmail.com) to RSVP and/or if you have any questions.

Cookie Donations

Every year at this time the Membership Committee asks the congregation for cookie donations for our Fellowship Hour. Specifically, we would appreciate donations of the cans of butter cookies (usually in blue tins) that go on sale through the holidays. These cookies will hold up over the course of 2009-2010. So please pick up one (or two) the next time you go shopping and drop it off at USG at your convenience. Please leave it at the office during the week or in the kitchen on Sundays. Thank you.

Poinsettias Time Again: Order NOW!

Once again, our annual poinsettia display in the chancel will be set up early in December. Order a poinsettia now and honor loved ones in the Holiday and Christmas Eve orders of service! Contact Elaine Hills by Wednesday, December 2, and tell her how many, what color (red or white), 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 or friends of the church. Call or email Elaine to order, then 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. Elaine will confirm any orders she receives. Here's to the beauty and blessings of the season.

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 - 4:00
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 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 Delores Hill at hillott@comcast.net. 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 email announcement, which includes a calendar of events. Anyone interested in receiving these announcements or the monthly newsletter should contact the church to be put on the mailing list.

Membership Signing Ceremony

Please join us as our newest USG members participate in our membership signing ceremony on Sunday, November 15 at 12:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. All are welcome to observe. Anyone interested in becoming a member of USG should contact Tom Hecker at theckeriii@yahoo.com.

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://usguu.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 email 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 email box.

Calling All Editors!

Do you enjoy writing and editing? A few people are needed to edit our new church newsletter. Each monthly editor receives articles via e-mail organizes the articles under the proper heading, checks facts and figures and sends the file to the office, where the printed copies are photocopied and mailed and where the issue is emailed to those who prefer to receive it electronically. Being an editor takes 6-8 hours per issue, once every three or four months. It's fun and creative! If you are interested, contact Dennis Strain.

The **December 2009** *CommUUnicator* deadline is **Sunday, November 8**. Editor: **Cynthia Claus**. Send your articles to her at **cclaus@verizon.net**. Please submit items via email to the editor or place in *CommUUnicator* box by 12:30 p.m. on **November 8**. Flyers must be submitted to the USG office by the *CommUUnicator* deadline. Submit materials in 11 pt. Verdana when possible.

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Editor: Cynthia Claus

BOARD NOTES

Notes from the Board President

The theme of this year's leadership retreat was *Exciting and Inspiring Times at USG*. And this is surely true. Here are a few examples:

- We are moving ahead with presentations on the Architectural Master Plan that was approved by the Board last spring for recommendation to the congregation. On November 1 the architects who developed the plan will present it to the congregation (1:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary) and be available to answer questions. On December 13 there will be a congregational meeting and vote on the plan. Voting to adopt the plan means that we will have a framework in place to guide us as we move forward in expanding and improving our facilities, *when we are ready and in line with the church growth*. Determining our readiness will be the next step.

*****Please note: In order to have the information you will need to vote intelligently, please plan to come to the November 1 presentation. The congregational meeting will not provide the same in-depth coverage of the plan.*****

- Program Council is planning an All-Church Retreat for the first weekend in June 2010. We have not had a church retreat in several years and it will be great to once again have an opportunity to get together for an extended time of fellowship and spiritual practices.
- Suzanne Matlock is celebrating her 50th birthday in a very unusual (and exciting) way: she has issued a \$5,000 challenge to us in honor of her birthday and to encourage others to do the same. Suzanne and Norman will match donations to USG in this program up to \$5,000. The program will run through 2010. After that it will be someone else's turn!
- Sam Gugino has taken on responsibility for Development and will have exciting ideas also for enhancing church income.
- In addition, the Board has appointed two working groups: one to review and develop additional policies and procedures for financial matters (led by Susan Bockius) and one to work directly on budget development for the next fiscal year (led by Mark Bernstein). In these two areas the Board hopes to improve our overall financial effectiveness and our ability to operate and spend consistently with our values.

ThankUUs:

Thank you very much to **Marny Walsh**, her team, and all the participants in the USG Arts and Crafts Festival of October 18 (including the musicians). We have so much talent in this community, it was great to see – and hear – some of it.

Thanks also to **Barbara Dowdall** who contributed to us the matting and framing of the historic picture of the orchestra in the sanctuary (taken some time in the 1950s) and complete with tuxedos and formal dress. See if you can locate Barbara in the picture!

And many thanks to **Amy Anu-Birge** for stepping in last minute to deliver – brilliantly – a sermon by Forrest Church, in his memory and in acknowledgement of his great contributions to Unitarian Universalism. We are grateful to Amy for bringing alive his words and spirit.

TRASH TO CASH

Don't forget to bring in your spent printer ink cartridges and used cell phones for our Trash to Cash program.

Keep those Acme receipts coming in, also, for a 1% rebate.

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 door to the courtyard. Please mark your calendar for **Sunday, November 1**, 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.

Please check the Church Calendar on the USG website

www.usguu.org for events scheduled during November.