



Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation

The Capital Letter

VICTORIA, BC

2016

Photos throughout the Newsletter are from the wonderful Christmas Eve Potluck, hosted by John & Sara.



All services are held Sundays at 10:00 a.m. at The James Bay New Horizons Centre, 234 Menzies Street, Victoria, BC. Child care is provided free of charge with our Children's program.

Sunday Services in January

January 3rd Ben Dolf "Can our brains handle democracy?"

Democracy, industry, even environmental actions require citizens to act rationally. So what should we make of the massive outbreak of irrationality in the US? How do we deal with the growing evidence that our use of reason is very sketchy? We will explore the issue and discuss ways to improve our chances of making good decisions.

Ben Dolf is a long time member of Capital and is more passionate about democracy than ever.

Children's Program



January 10th Amanda Tarling "Integrity"

C.S. Lewis was correct when he wrote, "Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching." Our first principle is the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Perhaps it should be the inherent integrity of every person. What does it mean to be a people of integrity? Join us to explore integrity.

Children's Program



January 17th Peter Scales "Earthquakes: What is geology telling us?"

On this date in 1994 a magnitude 6.7 earthquake hit Northridge, California; on this date in 1995 a magnitude 7.3 earthquake occurred near Kobe, Japan. Are the gods trying to tell us something about January 17 or can reason and science help Unitarian-Universalists understand and prepare for earthquakes?

Children's Program



Services continued on the following page



Services in January - Continued

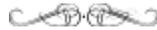
January 24th Rev. Samaya Oakley “**Giving Life the Shape of Justice**”

One of the gifts that humanism provided Unitarians is idea that whatever happens, it's in our own two hands to create the kind of life we envision for all living beings on the planet. Join us as we explore what Unitarian Universalism call us to do in the world, our communities and ourselves.

Rev. Samaya Oakley is the Development Minister at the First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo. She received her Masters of Divinity at the Vancouver School of Theology in the spring of 2013, the only Unitarian Universalist at the School of Theology, she won the award for best sermon at the school in 2012.

Samaya’s vision of ministry is embodied in our living tradition. It is by standing on the side of love, of compassion, of generosity, and by taking the time to truly listen to the other to make sure that all points of view are taken into account, that we engage our living tradition.

Children's Program



January 31st Jenelle Yonkman ” **Freedom over Dogma**”

While Unitarian Universalism has no creed, congregations agree to affirm and promote seven Principles that reflect a preference for freedom over dogma. This service will reflect on past and modern understandings of religious freedom while exploring the history and values behind our current Principles.

Children's Program



Birthdays in January

Jan 11 th	Kimiko Hymans
Jan 12 th	Margot Garmsen
Jan 15 th	Alex Campbell
Jan 17 th	Brooke Taylor
Jan 23	Rustom Patel Rita Wittman

If your Birthday is missing
Please tell Amanda
250 382-6828





Board Notes

CUUC Board Report for January 2016

Alfred Ernest Crawley (1867-1924) was an English sexologist, teacher and anthropologist. In a 1902 book called *The Mystic Rose: A Study of Primitive Marriage*, Crawley wrote of primitive relationships between the sexes ... and declared that each individual is separated from others by a 'taboo of personal isolation', and that it is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them. Later writers picked up on this concept, and Freud called it the narcissism of small differences. It is one way to understand splits within religious groups over issues that seem minor to outsiders. Roman Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, Shia, Sunni, Unitarian, Universalist, Jewish... there have been historical and current hostilities within and on the fringes of these groups. Feuds and ridicule can lead to division and even violence.

Happily, the two UU congregations in Victoria seem to share a theology and even most practices. We are little affected by the narcissism of small differences. When eight Unitarians met in the fall of 1995 to create Capital UU Congregation, they had no theological differences with the 'big church' which had recently moved to West Saanich Road. When Capital had its first service, twenty years ago in March 1996, members of both congregations attended. The same hymnal is used in both, and even today the order of service is essentially the same in both locations. Within each congregation there are small differences among members... some UU's are theists or deists while others tend toward humanism or agnosticism, for instance. I am thankful every day that an informal rule of UUism rests upon a statement by Methodist founder John Wesley, which was later attributed to Unitarian cleric Francis David: "We need not think alike to love alike." I think that our little religious community thrives on small differences of belief and non-belief.

At a recent meeting of board members from both of Victoria's UU congregations, all affirmed that Capital members are welcome to First Unitarian Church events (Sunday mornings plus non-Sunday things), and vice versa. Familiarity with each other can strengthen UUism in our city by dispelling perceptions of small differences.

Capital members and friends have small differences about how Sunday services should be conducted, and the Sunday Service Committee (SSC) works hard to please everyone. More music, less music. Candles or pebbles. Story for all ages, or no story. Inspirational sermons about hope, or scientific talks about climate change. Talks given exclusively by congregation members, or outside speakers, or UU ministers, or "read sermons" in which one of our people adapts a text that was written by a UU minister somewhere else. The SSC is open to your ideas, and to your support. If you would like to be involved in CUUC's Sunday services, speak to any board member (Jan, Frank, Peter, Rita) or to Amanda. There are 52 Sundays in a typical year... what would you like to experience at Capital?

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Board Notes - continued and Counters

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Each new year gives us a chance to look back and look forward. We can look back on twenty years of lay-led Unitarian-Universalist community in the heart of James Bay. Looking ahead, we can welcome the newcomers among us, say farewell to those who depart, help those who are recovering from surgery or illness, lend a hand to those who ask, and contribute to spiritual deepening for those who are on a questing path.

For the Board,
Peter Scales



Counters in January

January 10 John Pullyblank and Dyanne Linegar

January 17 Kimiko Hymans

January 21 Frank Bowie and Mike Riess

January 31 Rita Wittman and Jim Rogers

Thanks to these great folks for taking care of our money! If you would like to donate a half hour of your time once a month, please join our counting team! You'll make new friends and improve your math skills. Please talk to Rita or email her atwittmanr@gmail.com



The Moment of Magic - Rev. Victoria Safford

Now is the moment of magic, when the whole round earth turns again towards the sun,
and here's a blessing: the days will be longer and brighter now, even before the winter settles in to
chill us.

Now is the moment of magic, when people beaten down and broken,

with nothing left but misery and candles and their own clear voices,

kindle tiny lights and whisper secret music,

and here's a blessing:

the dark universe is suddenly illuminated by the lights of the menorah,

suddenly ablaze with the lights of the kinara, and the whole world is glad and loud with winter singing.

Now is the moment of magic, when an eastern star beckons the ignorant, toward and unknown goal,
and here's a blessing

they find nothing in the end but an ordinary baby,

born at midnight, born in poverty, and the baby's cry, like bells ringing,

makes people wonder as they wander through their lives, what human love might really look like,

sound like, feel like.

Now is the moment of magic,

and here's a blessing:

we already possess all the gifts we need;

We've already received our presents:

ears to hear music,

eyes to behold lights,

hands to build true peace on earth

and to hold each other tight in love.



About the author - Rev Victoria Safford is the Minister at
White Bear UU Church in Minnesota.



Refugee update and UUIIN news

Refugee Project

Many have asked how they could help the refugees coming to Canada escaping war and destruction in their countries. First Unitarian Church of Victoria has committed to sponsoring a Syrian Family and we are invited to support this project however we can. Approximately \$52,000 is needed for a family. Three quarters of that has been raised and we should have our family assignment soon.

Once all the funding is in place for this family, we are hoping to raise more money to bring one or two designated at risk LGBTQ refugees.

Please feel free to share this message with your families and friends. Everyone is welcome to join in.

If you would like to contribute, please contact Colin at 250 656 1436
colin_nelson_2000@hotmail.com or Rita at 250 382 2169 wittmanr@gmail.com

Tax receipts will be issued. All monies will be used for the refugees. All the organization, etc. is being done by our very able volunteers.

Once we have been matched with a family, we will let you know what else is needed (furniture, clothing, etc.)

We will keep you informed of our progress through email and announcements on Sunday.

There is no them, there is only us.

Happy New Year From the UUIIN

The Unitarian Universalist Islands Network would like to wish you and your loved ones a wonderful new year.

What could be more wonderful than supporting the UUIIN's mission to fostering new connections between Unitarians in our area and widening our shared beloved community?

If you are a leader, consider taking action to ensure your congregation has bursaries available for Island families to attend UUIIN summer camp in August of 2016. We'd like to see every deserving family on Vancouver Island and surrounding Islands get the chance to attend this year. Our goal is to engage 100 happy campers.

We welcome you to start the new year with a commitment to connecting with others at UUIIN summer camp in August of 2016. This is a New Year's resolution that will be easy to keep!

Peace, health and happy connecting to you.

Sharon Fulton



Who Stole Christmas? T'was the Unitarians

By Julie Brock, Ministerial Intern, First Unitarian Society of Madison

Before Christmas became about peace, love and department stores it was the at the crux of a culture war. The Unitarians were able to put a stop to the debate by taking Christmas into their own hands in the 1800s.

Christmas, before its 19th century Unitarian makeover, was very bacchanalian. Christmas became a thing in the 4th century when the church wanted to attribute Pagan winter festivals to something Christian.

During the winter months agrarian cultures with bountiful food and little work to do... liked to party. They would have huge festivals, drink heavily, and commit lascivious acts. It was so pervasive in the culture, that the church at the time felt it had to have a stake in the celebration game. They named December 25 Jesus' birthday and declared that all winter celebrations were in his name.

The party followed Christendom throughout its European expansion and over to Puritan New England, where folks were not at all keen on acts of gluttony and lust being committed in Jesus' name. In 1659 Massachusetts declared it illegal to celebrate Christmas, and a culture war ensued. Preachers would urge congregants against the evils of Christmas, while bawdy tunes were sung outside the church doors.

It was clear by the mid-1800s that the 200 year-long war against Christmas was being lost. Many who were not Puritan at all had moved into New England and they quite enjoyed the celebrations. A new religious ruling elite, the Unitarians, had taken the place of the Puritans as the arbiters of what was good culture, naming many great authors, poets, politicians, and speakers among their ranks.

The Unitarians had few objections to Christmas on terms of it being historically inaccurate, or too much of a good time. They did, as members of the wealthy elite, have some problem with the looting of the rich, and destruction of property that had become common to the holiday.

The Unitarians decided that they would use their power of cultural persuasion to make Christmas about peace, goodwill and quiet. Suddenly, Christmas songs were all about silent nights and angels sleeping. "Peace on the earth and good will toward men... the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing," wrote Edmund Sears, Massachusetts Unitarian turned carol writer.

"T'was the night before Christmas when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse," wrote Clement Moore, another Unitarian Minister. In this poem you have your first description of St. Nicolas, as what we know now as Santa Claus. St. Nick was a Turkish clergyman who, wearing his cardinal red robes, had given all of his wealth to the needy during the cold winter months in Turkey. Moore turned him into a jolly toy maker.

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Who Stole Christmas? T'was the Unitarians

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The Unitarian's strategy didn't stop there. Knowing that children were the key to keeping families indoors, the Unitarian-led culture began to focus on goodness and giving as a key element to the season. Charles Dickens, another Unitarian, wrote what might be considered the new Christmas gospel when he composed "A Christmas Carol," denouncing Scrooges everywhere. Children were encouraged to be "nice" in exchange for presents. Families who couldn't afford lush presents were made gifts by wealthy, often Unitarian families, and the children were told simply that Santa brought them.

The crowning cultural achievement was when Charles Follen, another Unitarian Minister, unlocked the secret to keeping the children indoors. In the tradition of his Germanic heritage, Follen was accustomed to keeping evergreen things inside and adorned with candles. In 1832, he brought an entire tree indoors and decorated it. Seeing a tree indoors and all lit up fascinated the children. Follen's sister wrote for a popular magazine at the time, the *Godey's Lady's Book*, in which she instructed women on how to get their children to behave well, and stay inside using the trick of a "Christmas tree." The next year several families had one.

In a few short years the Unitarian cultural elite transformed Christmas from a celebratory ruckus, to a calm occasion that focused on decoration and gift giving. If you are one of the many who laments that Christmas is not about family values or the birth of Jesus... well... it never really was. And if you feel that now it's a bit too culturally pervasive and focused on consumerism, we have only ourselves to blame.

