

# ALL SOULS NEWS -February 2025

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church

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Watertown, NY 13601



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**SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10:30 A.M.**

"All Souls—the church that puts its faith in you"

## Phone Tree

The default method of notifying the congregation of cancellations is to put the information on the website and email it out. However, some people would like to also be called on the phone. Rather than trying to call absolutely everyone, we are putting together a list of just those who prefer to be notified by phone. If that's you, then either reply to this email or call 315-921-1162

## Snow!

In the event we need to cancel a service because of the weather, a notice will be posted on the opening page of our website [www.allsoulsuu.org](http://www.allsoulsuu.org).

**February 2 – The Rev. Marti Montovani: “Wintering Through.”** February 2 marks the midpoint between the Winter Solstice (December 21) and the Spring Equinox (March 20). Ten days prior to our gathering on the second of February, we will have celebrated the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 47<sup>th</sup> president of the United States will have been inaugurated. Talk about an ironic juxtaposition!

While the late Martin Luther King, Jr, sought and all faith traditions seek righteousness, justice, compassion, truth, and peace including all, in early 2025 we see the unraveling of our democracy and the movement of an oligarchy that is detached from reality and where misinformation and disinformation flood our media. How do we use our faculties (personal and spiritual) to think, evaluate, and discern truth from fiction, propaganda, and downright lies? Can shock and awe be overcome by surprise and wonder? Diana Butler Bass advises us to “look for the Spirit to surprise us, [and] ... create wonder from compassion and courage. We can be attuned to a sacred ‘shock and awe’—surprise and wonder—as a counter-force of faith, hope, and love.”

As we winter through our North Country lake-effect snow events, may we be mindful of the words of poet Wendell Berry: "It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey."

**February 9 - The Rev. David Weissbard: "Surely You're Kidding."** Everything these days is so serious. We need to find somewhere to help us lighten up. How about church? I thought that surely Liz James, the creator of the UU Hysterical Society would do it. I don't know about here, she was great, but not really very funny when she spoke in Canton. So, I feel as if I should step up. If you are someone who can't laugh at UU's, you probably shouldn't come to church on February 9th. I'm planning to make fun of us. I'm not kidding now, but I will be then. We need to laugh. Clarence Darrow said, "When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President. I'm beginning to believe it." As. Hugh Sidey once said, "A sense of humor. . .is needed armor. Joy in one's heart and some laughter on one's lips is a sign that the person down deep has a pretty good sense of life."

**February 16 - Eleanor Allen will facilitate this service with an online sermon by The Rev. Dr. Elaine Strawn: "Wise Choices."** As the proverb goes, we are surely blessed by living in interesting times! But a blessing? Joanna Macy writes of the Great Turning; Rutger Bregman's research reminds us that humans are evolutionarily decent and friendly. What kind of world will you create, will we create? Together, as we calm our fears, we recognize the deep Wisdom within. Together we develop our awareness and flexibility. And together we become a force for transformation. Rev. Dr. Elaine Strawn, is a member of the UUA Congregational Life Staff, Central East Region.

**February 23 - Kelly Sackheim : - Know yOur Rights Training: What To Do To Preserve Sanctuary If ICE Knocks on the Door** - This training will be attended by bilingual Mami and her Spanish-only-speaking family, Papi, Niña and Niño who will role play what we can do to restore safe spaces after an Executive Order has cancelled blanket protection from ICE raids in churches, hospitals, and schools.

## **From the President's Desk**

### **President's Message**

The most momentous news is that architects from Bernier Carr Associates have provided us a report on the condition of our building and what needs to be done. Basically it needs new siding, insulation, flashing, carpentry work around the rain chain, and possibly eliminating the stone wall on the north end of the sanctuary. As of this writing we are unclear on whether the sanctuary wall can be "pointed up" or has to be torn down. The tentative plan is to take the itemized list(s) of tasks to be done and give them to contractor (s) for estimates (with the architects price estimates left out). The costs in the report were very pessimistic. We will start with Diego Aguilar but to be responsible we will also get more estimates. The board will then have a formal congregational meeting to select a proposal to accept. Among the issues we discussed at a first meeting we also discussed the topic of supervising any contractor to ensure contracted work is completed properly. I will say that that the point of this is to understand the contract, be there a lot, and undramatically make sure the church gets what it actually wants, even if that miffs the contractor a bit. Taking lots of pictures is particularly important.

The building is not the only thing going on, but the most important one for me to tell the congregation about here.

Hey, how about Liz James, that was a great workshop and worship service from the founder of the UU Hysterical Society. I wish more people had participated. The church is what we make it.

## **Opinion**

**Robert South**

### **Politics**

So many words have multiple definitions. Unitarian Universalists are known for "liberalism," and not just the religious kind. We walk a fine line, keeping our "political" inclinations separated from our "religious" ones. The common overlap is "morality", but morality (even when learned rationally) acts emotionally, not strategically. Most UU congregations have groups highly involved in "social action" and "social justice." These lobby for "progressive" policies or take various kinds of direct action, which can be sporadic and disjointed as various passions lead people this way or that. The UUA has various pet causes and programs that try to provide a central focus, but these can't take local conditions and opportunities into account. They're mere offerings. Local congregations and task forces following their own interests are probably acting with best local knowledge (at best), but are uncoordinated with each other. Interfaith groups exist that address shared concerns, based on common moral sensibilities, even when they differ theologically. Some do things like essentially responding to right wing takeover (caused by overinterpretation of liberal political successes as mandates for things unrelated to the cause of the successes) by focusing on lobbying rare points of liberal success, such as blue states, to double down on the kinds of impractical overreach that just led to failure. Others try to lead panic responses, squandering troops on lost causes and frontal assaults. Real harm is being done right now to real people, but do we really need to get baited into a trap? Strategy, not passion is called for. Sure, that's what you would say if you just wanted to do nothing, but apply some critical thinking: sharing a quality is not being the same thing. All levels of leadership and organization fail because the nature of activism is that activists don't listen, they shout. There are leaders showing how to do the right thing. We should support and emulate them. Enemies make mistakes. Let them. If the wheel doesn't go around, then we can act in knowledge of what we are facing. We don't need to guess baitedly, based on partial similarities. Not to be overly vague.

## **From the Historian's Files**

### **Sarah O'Connell**

During Liz James' fabulous workshop on January 18, at one point we broke into small groups to talk about some pesky issue that was grabbing our attention. My particular group was Eleanor, Harriet, and me. Our topic became what to do about all our "stuff," particularly as we age. For example, Harriet has a lot of fabric from years of quilting. Eleanor was wondering how to keep a particular closet organized where hats and gloves and scarves and other items were running amok. I said I was trying to pick one drawer or shelf to go through at a time, because if I considered taking on a whole room, much less a whole house, it was just too intimidating. So I had recently gone through one file cabinet drawer - the one that happened to contain years of All Souls communications. A particularly timely discovery (and one that shows you how far back I've been keeping "stuff") was a copy of a sermon presentation I gave on February 12...2006! The presentation happened to be called "Jimmy Carter - His Faith, His Presidency." It was based on a book he had just written entitled "Our Endangered Values - America's Moral Crisis." Of course, we all know that President Carter just passed away. In the years since he wrote this book, he continued to live his faith and his values, but I am sure he was aware that we are more than ever in a moral crisis as we enter 2025.

## **Around the Church**

### **Resolutions Made During the Service by Robert South, "The Power of Resolutions."**

#### **Robert South**

I was asked to write a piece about the idea of asking others what resolutions they want made. We always make selfish resolutions about how to improve ourselves and our lives, and then we talk about how they went.

Why not instead ask people what resolutions they want others to make. So, at my January 29th service "The Power of Resolutions" many of us shared our requests.

- Joanne wanted drivers to use their signals.
- Pat wanted people to come to church more often, and also to tell each other when their feelings are hurt.
- Harriet wanted people to come to services on time.
- Karen wanted everyone to get at least one cancer screening test of some kind this year.
- Serena wanted us to grow our self awareness.
- Visitor Stacy wanted us to make a habit of asking for more information to close the gap when we disagree.
- Jo wanted us to make kindness a priority.
- Kelly wanted us to practice the revised golden rule, do unto others as they would have done unto them--by asking.
- Eleanor wants us to be kind to each other.

And later, this poem from Joanne Harter.  
Too many causes,  
Not enough time.  
Learned to say no, eventually.



### Liz James of UU Hysterical Society Presents Service and Presets Workshop

Liz presented her workshop *Steering Into the Volcano* on Saturday January 18. This was a participatory workshop. The next day she preached in our pulpit.



Liz James' w  
Sat. January 18.



-Harriet McMillan

### Church Cleanup

There is a fine layer of dust left from the repairs. I would love to clean the minister's office, as a starter. Another task is to clean the chairs in the sanctuary. Speak to me on a Sunday and we'll set up some time.

### Craft Night Rescheduled

Craft Night has been rescheduled for Saturday Feb. 8, from 1-3 PM. This will feature the same crafts originally planned for January.

## **CUUPS Update**

**Joanne Harter**

At our first Friday meeting in January, we worked on our agenda for our 2025 meetings, and decided to meet twice a month. The third Wednesday of the month will be our second meeting. So, if you're interested in discussing/learning about earth-centered spiritual practices, please join us on the first Friday and third Wednesdays of the month. We arrive and chat informally from 6:30 to 7 pm, then get down to the evening's activity for the next 1 to 2 hours. Our Facebook page, Chalice Circle CUUPS of Watertown NY contains information about upcoming meetings.

## **Heather's Kitchen**

This is something that I have brought for social hour in the past. It is something that I came up with in my own kitchen as a way to use up leftover taco meat. This could also be made meatless. you can add in whatever veggies or toppings that you enjoy. In my kitchen we like to experiment with different flavors and combinations. I always encourage people to use the recipe as a foundation and then try new things. I usually make it by the recipe the first time and then make it my own. This recipe came out of experimentation and I hope that you enjoy it as much as my family does.

### **Enchilada Bake**

1 box Rotini noodles (or noodles of choice)  
28 oz enchilada sauce (red or green. both are delicious)  
2 cups Cheese ( I like Monteray Jack)  
1 can Black beans ( or Pinto beans, or both)  
1 can or 1 bag corn (can be used as a topping if you have picky people)  
1 lb Taco meat fresh or leftover (Beef or chicken is good)  
Sliced olives, sour cream, cilantro for toppings

- Optional mix ins : tomato, mushrooms, bell pepper, other peppers (such as jalapeno, serrano, or poblano), and onions

Mix everything together except toppings. Top with toppings.  
Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes until everything is melty and bubbly.

### **Every Month at All Souls**

#### **CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans)**

meets the first Friday of each month and the third Wednesday of the month.. Gathering and chatting begins at 6:30, the meeting begins at 7 PM.

### **And Every Week at All Souls**

The basket for your donations to the Urban Mission Food Pantry are always available for your donations.

We collect clothing and household goods to donate to the North Country Veterans organization.

We serve fair trade coffee during our pot luck coffee hours.

As always, Joanne Harter, our CDO (Chief Decorating Officer) appreciates help with the altar decorations.

## Generosity Project

Every year we choose two organizations to share half of our uncommitted plate collections. It works as follows: the collector tracks the uncommitted funds, and the congregation selects the organizations. At the end of the church year, we divide the uncommitted funds in half, retain one half, divide the remainder in half and send those monies to the chosen organizations. This year we chose Hospice and Planned Parenthood. Each organization receives 1/4 of the uncommitted funds for the year.

## Unitarian Universalist Association

### Hands Off

I can't believe I have to say this in 2025



[KIMBERLEY DEBUS](#)

JAN 22, 2025

I want to drop a reminder today: despite all that's happening in the US right now, we who are engaged in various forms of organized (or disorganized) liberal religion are in fact extraordinarily countercultural.

By which I always mean we follow teachings about connection, honor, compassion, justice, kindness, and generosity. We are anti-fascist, anti-corporate, anti-racist, anti-all the things that separate and harm others.

Today, let's add anti-skeezy.

It seems like a small thing, in the scope of all that we're facing, but this is important: how we talk/engage with

other humans we might (or might not) find attractive in our various religious settings matters.

Now I'm sure all of you are thinking about the female-presenting people who get comments about their hair, their weight, the cut of their dress, the height of their heels, the fry in their voice, their youth, etc. etc. etc. Women are experts in fielding inappropriate-to-downright-skeezy comments from others in their congregations - whether or not they're religious professionals.

Did any of you think about the male-presenting people? No? You should. I know of many who get comments about their appearance, their weight, the depth of their voice, their fashion sense. One reports being compared to the "Hot Priest" played by Andrew Scott in *Fleabag*.

You may also not have thought about spouses/partners either; one colleague mentioned his husband being called

“Hot Santa” at Christmas services. Another talked about how his partner stopped attending because of comments about being the ‘vicar’s sexy wife’ and a third was chastised as ‘the cause of men’s temptation.’

And you probably haven’t thought about how handsy people can be with others they are religiously intimate with. They know their pastor, they know their RE director, they know their fellow board members... and so the unwanted touches, the surprise hugs, the cheek kiss in greeting (what is that called?)... they all come out unbidden.

Almost every time I’ve witnessed someone being called out on these things, they respond with innocence and often the excuse of having a connection. They think they’re close to the other person, or at the very least being innocently complementary. They don’t see it as a problem, so why do you?

These things happen all the time in communities where consent, and boundaries, and respect are taught. Are valued. Are a foundational part of who these communities claim to be.

This is the slippery slope, folks. This is how we get from an internal appreciation (that should not be spoken or acted upon) to

objectification. And once we’re objectifying, we’re dehumanizing. And when we dehumanize... well, you know that line you’re not supposed to cross? Look behind you.

By the way, this skeezy behavior is exactly what the [bro ‘alpha male’ culture](#) is trying to teach your young men to emulate. The dehumanization in these posts and videos is not just creepy, it’s downright scary. And remember, this is a step in how dehumanization of entire groups of people begins. And once they’re dehumanized, well... they can be dealt with in ways that are absolutely offensive to what we know to be true about other humans - that they are human, with a right to exist. We HAVE to combat this in our congregations, and we have to start now.

Back to the skeezy comments/touch stuff: I know that many people wind up meeting their partners in congregations, but it almost never starts with a skeezy comment or touch. It’s demoralizing, and off-putting, and just plain awful, especially in places where we want people to feel like their whole selves belong. Keep doing this and they’ll keep withdrawing.



Just... don't do it. Resist the urge.  
Make better choices for yourself and  
those around you.

### **All Souls UU Church Board of Trustees**

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Custodian: John Crupi  
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Office Volunteer: Robert South

Newsletter Editor, Harriet McMillan, [harriem@allsoulsuu.org](mailto:harriem@allsoulsuu.org)

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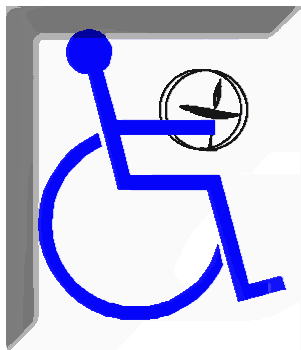
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PLEASE SUBMIT ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER NO LATER THAN THE 15<sup>TH</sup> OF THE MONTH. ITEMS ARE APPRECIATED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

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## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

### Our Principles

#### **Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:**

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
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### Our Mission

- The mission of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church is to create an environment in which personal and spiritual growth is encouraged; and where each of us is free to explore our individual beliefs and search for meaning.
- We strive to be a warm, supportive, nurturing and inclusive religious community where all people are respected and honored because of their uniqueness.
- We promote acceptance, diversity and social justice through our dealings with each other and our actions in the local and global community.

Visitors are welcome! If, as a visitor to our church community, you find yourself in agreement with Our Principles, please consider joining our church community. Just sign our membership book in the presence of two board members.