



UU and You

*the monthly newsletter
of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden*

*Ours is a religion of covenant rather than creed.
Practicing Loving Community, Advancing Justice, and Nurturing Spiritual Growth
are how we seek to live this faith.*

Message from Rev. Tony - “A Season of Wonder and Awe”

Dear Holy Ones,

I don't remember how old I was, but I couldn't have been more than twelve or so. I had just finished delivering papers on my paper route. Yes, Gen X, the last generation to have experienced the door to door delivery of the paper route. My route ended at the top of a small hill, just up the street from my house. It had snowed earlier in the day and everything was covered with the type of snow that only seems to exist in Christmas movies and romantic winter scenes. Silver, sparkling, the newly risen moon and streetlight bouncing rays off the crystals. It felt incredibly appropriate, seeing as it was Christmas Eve. The air was cold and crisp and your breath made smoke like incense that rose to Heaven. I followed one big exhale up as it dispersed toward the sky above my head. It was then I noticed the stars. The sky was black and clear, not a cloud left over anywhere from the earlier snow storm. The multitudes of stars sparkled like the snow crystals in the moonlight. And there was one star, brighter than all the rest. Whether it was or not, or whether I needed it to be, or whether it was probably a planet and not a star didn't matter, then or now. That star was shining down on me, just like the star of Bethlehem. I was beginning to question the mysteries of faith of my Catholic upbringing, and I remember

wondering if stories about kings following stars to babies could be real. Yet, there I was caught in the mystery and the wonder of a star on Christmas Eve, and I remember being filled with a strange calm and *felt* more than *heard* something divine saying, “Yes.” Yes to what? Yes, to love and peace and belonging and feeling okay with everything. And that's how I felt in that moment. That was, I reflect each Christmas, the first time I felt touched by the profound mystery that is the divine and filled with an incredible awe and wonder. In my darkest times, the memory of that mysterious “yes” carries me through. Enter into the mystery of the story as it is told again this year, and may your holiday season be filled with holy light, wonder, love, hope and awe.

Blessings,
Rev. Tony



About the Newsletter

UU and You is the monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden.

328 Paddock Avenue
Meriden, CT 06450-6985
203-237-9297

www.uumeriden.org
www.facebook.com/UUMeriden/

Send newsletter submissions prior to the 15th of each month to: newsletter@uumeriden.org

Contacts

Our Minister

Rev. Tony Lorenzen
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Revtonyuu@gmail.com

President

Jane Dioguardi
president@uumeriden.org

Vice President

vacant

Office Administrator

Steven Nahas, our Office Administrator, is here on Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 am, Wednesdays, 9:30-2:30 pm, and Thursdays, 2-5pm.

Minister Hours

Rev. Tony Lorenzen is in the UUCM office Wednesdays 10 am. - 3 pm., and in the MUUS office, Woodbury, on Thursdays 10 a.m - 3 p.m. He will alternate between UUCM and MUUS on Tuesdays 10 a.m. - 3p.m., depending on which congregation he will preach at next. Monday is Rev. Tony's day off. Friday is his sermon prep day, working from home. He's available at any time other than Mondays by appointment.

Worship Services

Sunday December 1st

"Awesome!"

Sunday December 8th

"Awe Gone"

Sunday December 15th

"The Call of That Special Star"

Sunday December 22

"Awe Infinitem"

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

"The Face of a Holy Child"

Sunday December 29th

"Awe in the New Year"

(see pages 7-8 for full worship descriptions)

Calendar of Events

www.uucentralct.org/calendar

UUCM's Holiday Fair

Friday, Dec. 6 and Saturday Dec. 7

A Quiet Christmas

Wednesday, December 11 at 6:30

2nd Friday Fun Night

Friday, December at 13 at 6 pm

Special Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 15

Ongoing Meetings and Activities:

Gong Meditation

Mondays 7:30-9 PM

Community Drum and Dance Circle

Friday December 20, 7:30 PM

Philly Discussion Group

Wednesday November 18, 6:30-8

Women's Sacred Singing Circle

2nd, 3rd, 4th Tuesday, 7:00 – 8:30 PM

President's Column

You're a Mean One, Mrs. Grinch!

For a long time during my adult life, Christmas was NOT my favorite time of year. Things I normally enjoyed, like buying presents for loved ones and baking my family's favorite goodies, started feeling more like chores than blessings. Like most people, I was taking care of a home and family and holding down a full-time job (as well as teaching English to adults two nights a week). You may know the feeling—managing to get it all done but being relieved when it's all over.

But gradually things started to change for me. As we hit late middle age, the adults of my family decided to pare down our gift-giving to each other, doing a Secret Santa in which each of us bought one carefully thought-out present for one person. My friends, many of whom were retired, also decided to cut down on gift giving. I looked at my long list of "mandatory" baked goods and reconsidered: Do we really eat all this stuff? (It should have been a wake-up call when I found a Tupperware container of leftover Christmas cookies in the freezer one July!)

Here's an idea: Let's "Marie Kondo" our holidays and only hang onto whatever sparks joy. Hate to bake or cook? The supermarket has the work done for you! Feeling "meh" about decorating the house? Put up a wreath and call it a day! (Or don't even bother!) Outsource as much as you can. One memorable Christmas, my daughter came home from college and I offered her a swap: I'd do all her laundry if she wrapped all my Christmas gifts (except hers). Win-win!

Doing this will leave us more room for what really fills us spiritually. This time of year, there are lots of fun and inexpensive things to do—holiday fairs, Christmas light displays like the beautiful free one in Hubbard Park, concerts at schools and churches, seasonal performances at

local community theaters. Don't want to go out? Be like the Icelanders and celebrate "Yule Book Flood," where people give each other gifts of books and stay home to read them and eat chocolate.

As UUs, we're conscious of the needs of others. One person told me that the first holiday gift she spends money on every year is an anonymous monetary one to someone she knows is in need. An easy way to do this would be to contribute to our Minister's Discretionary Fund. Rev. Tony is aware of who might be going through rough times, and will soon have a Pastoral Care Team to help him out with this important work. People are unusually generous this time of year, but that generosity tapers off once the new year begins, so let's keep our hearts open year-round.

In the meantime, I'll be getting out my Mrs. Santa outfit and baking cookies for our holiday fair. Those are things that spark joy!

--Jane C. Dioguardi

Board of Trustees Update

Dear Members and Friends,

On October 14, 2019, Tina Pedrolini Caplan announced her resignation from the office of Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden. Per the current bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden: "Vacancies in any office, except for the Minister or the Vice President, shall be filled until the expiration of the term by the Board. Should the office of the President become vacant, the office shall be assumed by the Vice President. The office of the Vice President shall be filled by a vote of the congregation at a regular or special meeting to be called within two months of vacancy."

At a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, November 19, 2019 the Board unanimously decided to endorse At-Large Trustee John Sepples for the office of Vice President. In accordance with our bylaws, there will be a special meeting on Sunday, December 15, 2019, immediately following the service for the purposes of the election of the Vice President. All members of UUCM are strongly encouraged to participate. If there are any other members interested in running for Vice President, please contact Jane C. Dioguardi, President, at (203) 213-1228 or at jane CDIoguardi@gmail.com at least a week in advance of this special meeting.

In faith,

Jane C. Dioguardi

President, UU Meriden Board of Trustees



A Quiet Christmas

Wednesday, December 11 at 6:30

Rev. Tony will host a special event for those having a difficult time dealing with the holiday season on Wednesday, December 11th 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. This is designed for people living through the holiday season for the first time after the death of a loved one, and for those dealing with depression, difficult family situations, illness, and any other situation that makes this time of year difficult and has you feeling at odds with the Good Cheer and makes the comfort and joy uncomfortable and difficult. There will be a short service of readings and music, followed by sharing as you feel comfortable, and light refreshments.

CYRE Update

Thematic Gateway - The supply closet doors in the sanctuary will become a place to display quotes, images, drawings, and artwork related to our monthly theme. If you have something to contribute for December and our theme of AWE, get it to Rev. Tony or bring it to church on a December Sunday.

Soulful Home - Our Church has subscribed to "Soulful Home" - a monthly magazine of resources for families related to our monthly theme. If you would like a copy, ask Rev. Tony, pick one up in the foyer beginning in December, or visit this link: https://uucentralct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/sm_2019-12_soulful-home_awe.pdf

2nd Fridays - The 2nd Friday of each month from 6-8 p.m. there will be an intergenerational activity at the church. The activity will relate to our monthly theme and be a time for fellowship, learning, and fun. People will take turns facilitating and organizing. If you know you will attend, please let Rev. Tony know so there will be enough materials and/or snacks for everyone. Here's the initial schedule.

Month - Theme - Name of Coordinator - Activity/Topic

December - Awe - Angelique Metivier Santa Lucia Holiday Traditions Welcoming Light

January - Integrity - TBD...

February - Barbara Kline Candlemas/Imbolc preparing for rebirth

March - Wisdom - Rev. Tony - Fairy Doors-The Wisdom learned from fantasy & imagination

April - Thresholds - Amanda Plummer - Earth Day

May - Play - Rev. Tony - Game Night!

Social Justice News



Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about key

human rights issues. UUSC is a different type of helping organization in that they partner with organizations already on site, taking their lead in what is needed.

This is an opportunity to celebrate grassroots partnership with organizations led by women, and learn about just four of these women – the “guests” in Guest at Your Table. Four guests represent this year's theme: Pelenise, a climate activist from Kiribati who is responding boldly to climate change in the Pacific; Marta, who is working to support victims of violence and eradicate violence against women in Honduras; Wai Wai, who is helping prevent violence and bridge ethnic and religious divides in Burma; and Monica, who is using the arts to bolster resiliency and leadership among migrants in Mexico and the U.S. Please refer to the “Stories of Hope” booklet for more information about each and their work.

By now you have received the special "Guest at Your Table" box handed out at the November 24th service. We hope you are regularly filling your box with coins and currency, which will be sent to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) for their good work in supporting justice-seeking missions around the world. We will collect this money in February 2020 when we have

our annual Stone Soup Luncheon, date to be announced.

Message from the Minister - Memorial Service for Meiden's Homeless

Dear Holy Ones,

I want you to join me at a special inaugural event in Meriden highlighting the issue of homelessness in our community. As we stop each year to remember those who have been killed for being transgender, so we are asked to stop and remember those who have died from homelessness. We have served as a sanctuary church space and while they were here, Sujitno and Dahlia were homeless. Not only can we make a difference in drawing attention to the need to address homelessness in Meriden, but we can teach our community about those living in sanctuary. Any homelessness, living on the street or in sanctuary, is due to our society turning its attention away from need and the pain of others.

The Meriden Clergy Association, of which I am a member, along with New Opportunities and The Salvation Army will host the First Annual Memorial Service and Candlelight Vigil for the Homeless on Sunday, December 15, 2019 at 23 St. Casmir Drive in Meriden (The Salvation Army) from 4-6 p.m. Light refreshments will follow. We will remember the homeless among us and those homeless who are deceased, and we invite you to join the fight to end homelessness.

You are invited to bring a hat, pair of gloves or scarf that will be distributed by The Salvation Army during the winter months. Please join in solidarity with local friends and neighbors in honoring our friend and colleague, Pastor John Blossom, who died unexpectedly this summer. He was a passionate advocate for the homeless,

and to honor him, we take time in this busy season to remember the homeless.

I sincerely hope you will join me on December 15th. Perhaps we can help make homelessness in our community an issue that is remembered on more than just one a day a year or during the winter season.

Blessings,
Rev. Tony

Practicing Loving Community for Our Homeless Neighbors



For a number of years, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden has given back to the larger community during the

holiday season by remembering the men who are at the Homeless Shelter NOW in Meriden. Few groups give gifts to the men who are homeless. We have stepped up in the past to fill this void.

The men need hats, gloves, white athletic socks, and thermals (tops and bottoms - sizes medium, large and extra-Large, 2X, 3X and (1) 5X) are appreciated. Several members have bought underwear in advance and we need only sizes 3X and 5X t-shirts and underpants in regular underwear). The rest of the underwear sizes have already been purchased for this year.

Please bring to the church no later than Sunday, December 22nd your donation of clothing or money for us to purchase items. Use the box in the foyer to drop off clothing donations.

Thank you for your generosity and for “practicing loving community,” a core element of our mission.

Donna Stimpson and Angie Swanger, Social Justice

Pastoral Care Team

Members of the congregation met with Rev. Tony this past week to formally coordinate a pastoral care team. Initial members of the team are Jane Dioguardi, Harriet Gottlieb, Kathy Lindberg (coordinator), and Donna Stimpson. If you would like to join the team, contact Kathy Lindberg or Rev. Tony.

The UUCM Pastoral Care Team embodies the congregation’s mission to practice loving community. We assist the minister in caring for members of our church family. We call and visit those who are homebound or ill, organize rides to church and appointments, arrange for meals to be delivered during times of illness or emergency, and send cards and flowers as need arises. The Pastoral Care Team will meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. in the Nursery beginning December 5, 2019. All are welcome.

You need not be a member of the team in order to help us care for one another. We need to know who is available to help us with the following tasks: making phone calls, visiting people at home or in the hospital, providing rides to church or appointments, and writing cards. If you can help with one or more of these things as need arises, please contact Kathy at 203-269-9169 or muffy295@aol.com.

Look for forms at church in the foyer and the sanctuary that let us know if you (or someone else) needs help or if you can volunteer to help us help each other.

Thanks,
The Pastoral Care Team



Treasurer’s Report

The results for the first four months (July through

October) of Fiscal Year 2019-20 show us with positive net income. Here are the details.

Our gross operating income was \$38,803.90. Our total expenses were \$33,665.39. Therefore, net income is \$5,138.51. The gross income includes pledges, collection plate, rentals, fundraising, special donations. Pledges make up 77% of our income. Thank you to all for your generous donations. Please continue to make every effort to meet your financial commitment.

The Faith Duffy Challenge is going well. Members and friends have donated \$3,890 in cash donations and pledges. We're close to closing the budget gap, so if you haven't contributed to the challenge fund, I hope you will do so before the end of the fiscal year. And THANK YOU to those who have already contributed.

Other Finance news:

- We earned \$332 from the Book and Bake Sale. Our next fundraiser is the Holiday Fair on Dec. 6 and 7.
- On Oct. 27, a special collection was taken at the Sunday worship service for the newly created Minister's Discretionary Fund. We received \$534.09 in donations. Thank you for your generosity. The Fund's purpose is to help members in times of need. Rev. Tony and the Pastoral Care Team together administer the fund.

Trish Schneider, UUCM Treasurer



December Worship Service Descriptions

Sunday, December 1, 2019

"Awesome!"

Service Leader: Jeff May

Worship Assistant: Lisa Urso

Awe is a feeling of wonder, amazement, and / or reverential respect brought on by something beautiful or sacred. We use the word "awesome" for many things, but what is it that truly inspires wonder and reverence?

Sunday December 8

"Awe Gone"

Service Leader: Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Worship Assistant: Lynne Grobsky

Rev. Tony Lorenzen reflects on how we replaced the mystery of the winter holidays with merchandise and how to replace commercialism by joining The Advent Conspiracy.

Sunday December 15th

"The Call of That Special Star"

Service Leader: Lynne Grobsky

Worship Assistant: John Sepples

We find our daily work interrupted by the holiday season. We have to listen to the singing angels, we have to deal with the call of that special star. What precious new beginning are you seeking at this time?

Sunday December 22nd

"Awe Infinitum"

Service Leader: Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Worship Assistant: Barbara Kline

Rev. Tony Lorenzen reflects on the 1st spiritual source of Unitarian Universalism - "direct experience of that transcending mystery and

wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life." The winter holiday season gives us many opportunities to experience mystery and wonder.

Tuesday December 24th

"The Face of a Holy Child"

Service Leader: Rev. Tony Lorenzen

Worship Assistant: Jeff May

Rev. Tony Lorenzen reminds us that we are all holy children.

Sunday December 29th

"Awe in the New Year"

Service Leader: Lynne Growsky

Worship Assistant: Anita Sanders

Optimism for the future is a choice. To be of the earth encompasses many things. How do we focus on the joys in our lives without getting embroiled in the chaos? As we begin a new year, how can we grow our sense of awe so that we enhance our ability to feel optimism?



The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden

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