

Powerline

First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Niagara

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February 2020

Learn, Love, Build a Better World

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The Powerline is a monthly publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara. It is free online to anyone who wishes to subscribe- members, friends, and anyone else anywhere in the country and beyond.

It's a simple one step process: Just email your request to uuniagara@gmail.com or click the link. Please spread the word.

Many thanks to our contributors Peter Diachun, Erica Kopp, and Betsy Diachun.

Sunday Programs

February 2: A previous long time member will be with us to discuss Climate Change. Diana, as an activist for the Sierra Club, will bring us her ideas and stories on this timely topic. Diana may be a quiet listener but when she has a cause to promote, promote it she will!

Diana Strablow

Coffee hour host: Marie Spears-Howard

Usher: Paul Brundage

February 9: "The Water Beetle"

In the Cherokee tribal creation story it is not a god or goddess who begins the work of creation, but a humble water beetle. What is this tiny creature's message about living on the land, and what can we learn from this ancient story?

John Snodgrass

Coffee hour host: Patty and Bill Lisk

Usher: Wally Lamb

Adult religious education discussion

February 9, 12:30PM -1:30PM

February 16: "Charlottes Gift: an Adoption Story "

February contains Valentine's Day and National Adoption Day. This sermon is a personal tale of love, searching and saying thank you.

Susan Frawley

Coffee hour host: Joan Davis

Usher: Betsy Diachun

February 23: "The Power of Guilt"

How far have we evolved from the religion of sin and guilt? How have we replaced it?

Don Reidell

Coffee hour host: Pam Smith

Usher: Marge Gillies

President's Message

Observing the impeachment process causes me to stop, and think, and try to figure things out.

Each of us can feel overwhelmed at the size and importance of the many issues we each face today: the division in our country, environmental threats which move us near to the extinction of all life, the world's growing over population, substantial numbers of fanatically dangerous people. It is a wonder that we do not all suffer from clinical depression.

Being in a community of like minded people can help us maintain an appropriate perspective, combine our efforts and make them more effective, and allow us to laugh together when we most need to. Our Church can be that community for each of us sometimes.

Look at some of the advantages we have over other religious groups:

- We do not have to figure out an eschatology, a part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity. This concept is commonly referred to as the "end of the world" or "end times".
- Defining a doctrine is not a need we have.
- We do not expect conformity with in our community. We celebrate diversity.
- We are free to think for ourselves.
- Our answers to the "big questions" do not have to be same as others or unchanging in ourselves.
- We can look to any source for enlightenment.

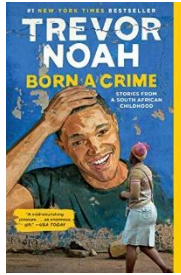
What we have to be cautious about is to taking the attitude that because the world's issues are so big and important and that we are free to neglect them, that we should. We must avoid this trap if we are to have hope of having any impact on these issues at all.

Part of the fun and joy of being in this Church is knowing that this community supports us even as we stumble and do not get very far. Remember everyone needs the encouragement you can give them.

Peter

Announcements

Book Group



The next meeting of the Book Group will be on Wednesday, March 11, at 4:30. We will be reading "Born a Crime" by Trevor North

All are invited to attend our meetings since the philosophical discussions which are brought up because of our reading tend to range far from the subject and can be participated in by all.

NOAH

NOAH hosted a Building a New Niagara conference on December 12th. The organizers asked each member congregation to host a "house meeting" to listen to the community and gather feedback on NOAH's proposed 2020 campaigns:

- 1) Child Care/county subsidies;
- 2) Criminal Justice reform;
- 3) Local Job creation, and enforcing Community Benefits Agreement with Niagara Falls.

Another conference will be held on February 8th to get a readout of community interest and concerns.

Tentative "House Meeting" after coffee hour on a Sunday. February 2nd at 12:30-1:30.

Linda Hurley

WhaleCoast Alaska 2020, UU Fellowship of Fairbanks, Alaska

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2020** is for you! 4 Alaska UU congregations invite you to experience our unique environmental/ cultural/spiritual program this summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, sea lions, etc. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships -- our program is truly the best way to visit Alaska! Tours led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime. For complete info go to: www.WhaleCoastAK.org, [email dfrey@whalecoastak.org](mailto:dfrey@whalecoastak.org) or call 907-322-4966. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

I'm a Little Too Fat, a Little Too Giving. I Think I Know Why.

Using the hunger I experienced as a kid to teach mine the power of generosity

Kristine Levine

Jan 17, 2019

I was five years old when my mom took off with me to the coast. She said she needed a do-over. We were starting fresh, with no belongings, no toys, no furniture. She said we had empty hands so that we could catch new blessings.

We also had empty pockets, and she had no job. She'd drunk our whole life away, and the booze had left us washed up in a tiny beach town called Rockaway, Oregon. She was hoping the ocean would catch her tears and loosen her chains.

My mother loves the ocean. She is more herself when it is nearby. She believes that it sees and knows, that it moves and feels. It inspires her wonder and fear. She revels in the uncertainty that it could become angry at any moment and take lives at its will. To my mother, the ocean is God.

"Don't you ever take it for granted, Krissy," she would say to me. "When you look at that ocean, remember there's always something bigger than you. Respect her."

Summer had just ended, and the quaint coastal town had begun to fold up. We found a small cottage—really a motel room with a kitchenette. We never said it was our home; to us, it was just "Number Six." My mother paid the first month's rent, enrolled me in kindergarten a block away, and bought us a sack of potatoes and some ketchup. And we began our new life.

"If I were a thief, I would go over there and steal those rotten cabbages for you. But I am not a thief."

I don't remember being excited about school. It seemed so frivolous, and I thought I should be getting a job. "I could get a paper route," I told my mother one night as we walked back to Number Six from the pay phone, where she'd called my dad, begging him to send the \$75 child support check. He promised he'd send it as soon as possible, but I knew the potatoes were running low.

My mother looked for work, but the car we'd used to get to the town had broken down, and there were only two or three restaurants within walking distance of Number Six. She didn't want to get a job in a bar because she was trying earnestly to stop drinking.

Maybe two weeks passed and still no child support check—no money at all. I sat at the kitchen table one night, watching Walter Cronkite deliver the evening news with his objectivity and journalistic integrity. He said something like, "Here is the news at this supertime." I remember this because I was so surprised by it. His words were

otherwise so dry, so metered, but his mention of it being dinnertime was almost friendly. I wondered if he could see us; how did he know it was time to eat?

My mother was staring out the window with her back to me. I said to her, "Well? He's right. It is dinnertime. Right, Mom?" I thought I was being clever in catching Cronkite's sincerity.

She let out a sigh. Without turning around she said, "Do you see that out there? Those people have let their garden grow over. The cabbages have gone to seed now. They'd never know or care if I just snuck over and took one for you."

The quivering in her voice scared me. She turned to me and wiped her eyes. With a look so cool I thought she might have been mad at me, she said, "If I were a thief, I would go over there and steal those rotten cabbages for you. But I am not a thief."

Without another word, she passed me and walked out the front door of Number Six. She left it open, and I followed her. She walked down five cottages and knocked on the door to Number One—a larger cottage, where an old man and woman lived. Even though they were our neighbors, we had no idea who they were. The old lady opened the door, and I wove around my mother so I could see inside.

"This is my daughter, Kristine," my mother stated. "We have no food. She's had nothing to eat but potatoes for a month, and now we don't even have any of those left. I don't care about myself, but could you please give her something to eat?"

The old woman was short and fat with dark skin and black hair twisting around her head. Her name was Anita Vanover. Her husband was a tall white man who was just called Van. I could see into their cottage; the table was set, and Anita and Van were obviously just sitting down to eat. The smells coming from inside made me drool.

I don't remember Anita saying anything to my mother or even asking her husband first if she could give us something, but I remember her packing up her table: the pot roast, the carrots, the gravy, the potatoes. She handed it all to my mother.

It turned out that the couple had friends who owned one of the restaurants where my mom had tried to get a job. Anita talked to them, and they hired her. Anita and Van became my caretakers in the evening.

They saved my mother and me.

At that moment, though, I don't think Anita and Van thought they were saving lives or forever changing the path of a child. I think they thought they were doing what they were supposed to do when a woman with a little girl comes to the door and says she needs to eat. What more needs to be said or done? They probably figured that it's just food.

When you give the best you have to someone in need, it translates into something much deeper to the receiver. It means that they are worthy.

Anita gave so effortlessly and so quickly that I doubt she ever thought about it again. But that one moment taught me a lesson about giving that I have never forgotten. There came a day 30 years later, when I passed that lesson on to my own children.

My daughter's school had a food drive, and she was excited to collect food for it. Even at 10 years old, she had a strong sense of community. She wanted to be either a police officer so she could help people or an astronaut so she could protect the planet from wayward asteroids. We had to keep her from watching the news because it moved her to the point of tears. Her heart would break for the human condition.

She went to our pantry and started bagging up the canned and dry goods. All the while, she talked. "Oh, I'll put in the green beans, I don't like those... I'll save the Kraft macaroni and cheese. We can give them some no-name brand." And I realized that my daughter—as generous and good as she already was—knew nothing about giving. I felt like I had taught her nothing.

She didn't know about Anita and Van. She didn't know about Number Six. She didn't know that she could see the face of a hungry child if she looked long enough at her own mother.

So I told her. I told her that my kindergarten teacher thought I was "retarded" because I was so hungry that I didn't perform well in school and was always slower than the rest of the class. I told her that Anita could have just gone to her cupboard and made me a peanut butter sandwich, and my mother and I would have been so grateful. But she didn't. She gave the best she had.

The biggest problem with poverty is the shame that comes with it. When you give the best you have to someone in need, it translates into something much deeper to the receiver. It means they are worthy.

If it's not good enough for you, it's not good enough for those in need either. Giving the best you have does more than feed an empty belly—it feeds the soul.

<https://humanparts.medium.com/i-am-a-little-too-fat-im-a-little-too-generous-i-think-i-know-why-e97cd25b7eeb>

"Singles Social Club" established over 40 years ago. We are a friendly group that welcomes newcomers to our activities, game nights, dances, picnics, restaurants and much more....come join us! (Ages ranging 50 to 80 years old now, but all welcome) Call for more info 716-550-1232. Find us on facebook: Singles Social Club

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara
Facilities available for Wedding Services,
Receptions, and Celebrations



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