

Powerline

*First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Niagara*

December 2023

639 Main Street
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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 Glen Herman, Marge Gillies, Shelley Baxter, and Erica Kopp.

Sunday Services

December 3: "The Shock and Awe of Christmas"

Over the millennia, Christmas has come to mean a great many things to the human family. The often unspoken question is... Is Christmas relevant anymore? Our speaker will share his answer to that question. It is a question that many Unitarian-Universalists struggle with, even today. Come prepared to have Orthodoxy turned inside out.

Speaker: Ron Skowronski

Coffee Hour: Joan Davis

Usher: Paul Brundage

December 10: "For the Birds"

Winter has come and the birds are heading south. We'll examine some religious beliefs about our fine feathered friends, and look forward to their return in spring.

Adult Education Class December 10, 12:30 - 1:30

Speaker: John Snodgrass

Coffee Hour: Erica Kopp

Usher: Paul Brundage

December 17: "Non, je ne regrette rien"

There is more than one way to age -- in fact we all approach it a little differently - - but if there is one motto we should all keep at the forefront of our minds, it is "Non, je ne regrette rien." Another way to put it is: "Alive until I die!" As we face a New Year, we also all face another trip around the sun. And if you think this sermon is just for older people, let me just say, the best way to face old age is to start preparing for it when you are young. It is when we're in our youth we begin choosing our lifestyles, and lifestyle means a lot as you age. Join us Sunday, December 17 to explore how we can all get to old age saying, "Non, je ne regrette rien." Hint: Unitarian Universalists already have an edge over folks of other persuasions.

Speaker: Donna Evans-Deyermond

Coffee Hour: Teresa Labuszewski

Usher: Paul Brundage

December 24: "Lessons and Carols"

Led by Rev. Susan Frawley with music by Patty and Max and Darah, this will be a heartwarming, fun and musical service. Don't miss it. Happy Holidays

Speaker: Susan Frawley

Coffee Hour:

Usher: Paul Brundage

December 31: "A Second Chance Life"

We often seek perfection in our lives. We make resolutions at the start of every New Year, only to be unraveled by our lack of success. In this reflection, our speaker will encourage us to look at the New Year in a more holistic way. Change can be fun... If we let it be.

Speaker: Ron Skowronski

Coffee Hour: Potluck

Usher: Paul Brundage

Christmas Eve 2014



President's Report

I hope this message finds you well as we approach the Holiday season. I wanted to provide you with some updates and important information regarding our church activities.

In preparation for the upcoming holiday season, we would like to inform you that we will be placing orders for Tops gift cards by December 8. This initiative is a fundraiser for the church, as these gift cards can be distributed as gifts during this festive time. Please consider participating in this effort to spread joy by purchasing Tops gift cards through our church.

I would also like to express our deepest appreciation to Bill Lisk for his exceptional dedication and service to our church community. Bill has kindly replaced lights in the sanctuary and has been instrumental in handling minor repairs around the building. His invaluable assistance contributes greatly to the overall maintenance and improvement of our church. We are grateful for his selflessness and commitment to enhancing our worshiping space.

On Sunday December 24, we will have a Cookie Communion during services.

Lastly, I would like to remind you that we are still collecting yarn for donations. We have received a positive response thus far, and we greatly appreciate your contributions. The donations will be used to create warm items for those in need within our community. Yarn can be dropped off at the church Narthex.

Thank you for your continuous support, participation, and dedication to our church community. As the holiday season approaches, let us embrace the spirit of giving and gratitude.

If you have any questions or would like to get involved in any of the mentioned activities, please feel free to reach out to me directly or any other members of the board.

Sincerely,

Erica

Science News by Glen Herman

On Oct 20, here was the title of an article in the New York Times:

“The Holmdel Horn, a Cosmic Shrine, Stays Put”

Let’s split this up:

“The Holmdel Horn...”

A 50 foot long microwave antenna located in Holmdel Township, New Jersey. It was built in 1959 by AT&T Bell Labs, the research arm of the old telephone company.

In 1965 two Bell Labs astronomers, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, got time on the antenna for a research project. But right away they found a problem. In the microwave frequencies they were interested in, there was a persistent background noise. No matter where they pointed the horn antenna, night or day, and regardless of the season, there was this background static that seemed to come from everywhere and would not go away.

“... A Cosmic Shrine...”

What Penzias and Wilson accidentally discovered is now known as the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB). It was coming from all directions because the theory is that this is the left-over radiation from the Big Bang, the point from which the Universe expanded 13.8 billion years ago.

The CMB is one of two pieces of very strong evidence for the Big Bang. Penzias and Wilson received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1978 for this discovery and its significance. The Holmdel Horn was accorded National Historic Landmark status in 1989.

“... Stays Put “

The Bell System was broken up into the Baby Bells in 1984. Ownership of the Holmdel Horn and the land around it passed to different companies, including Nokia. In 2021 the property was sold to a developer for the purpose of building townhouses. The landmark status of the Horn would not protect it from private development.

In June of this year the township of Holmdel, by popular demand of its citizens, voted to acquire and preserve the antenna and the land around it as a permanent park.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Garden Corner

Erica asked me to write a few lines for the Powerline. First UU has many fine gardeners. We can learn from each other. Anything you wish to contribute would be welcome including questions, interesting topics, and comments.

As the gardening season ends, there are a few things to consider. Have you added mulch such as shredded leaves? Not only does mulch shelter plants, but it also invites beneficial insects, and other little critters.

If you purchased something new for the garden, be sure it is marked with a tag. It is worthwhile to record anything new for reference. Creating a garden journal is a fun thing to do on a dreary day.

Look through your garden books for those you want to share, perhaps for the Little Free Library in the church's front yard, a donation to the BookCorner, or as a gift. One of the toughest tasks is to let these treasures go but the satisfaction expressed by the recipient is itself a treasure.

Marge Gillies



Thanksgiving 2023



The Snodgrass Family



Betsy and Nadja



Peter



Paul, Peter, Bill, Patty and Teresa

Nadja

Nadja Helen Bohug was going to marry Theodore Graca a Polish American soldier that helped liberate Dachau Concentration Camp. Nadja had no idea what America was. She lived in a very small world! Educated into eighth grade and an orphan at fourteen in the middle of the holocaust!

It is May 1946.



In the aftermath of historical turmoil, Theodore went into town and had a woman make Nadja a wedding dress.

Nadja took a bike to go get her hair styled in Dachau. She was preparing for her wedding. She didn't put on the brakes going down a hill. She fell and hurt knees pretty bad. The kindness of a German woman helped her up and taped her knees. Nadja managed to return the bike she took. She did get her styled before the fall.

Nadja picked wild flowers for her hair and wedding bouquet which added a touch of natural beauty to her wedding, symbolizing simplicity and the resilience of nature amidst the complexities of her past.



A military vehicle took Nadja and Theodore to the nearby Catholic Church. The scene at St. Jakob in Dachau, surrounded by soldiers and with former camp prisoners playing music, adds a poignant layer to Nadja and Theodore's wedding—a union marked by both celebration and the echoes of a challenging history.



Afterwards Theodore took his bride to France and put her on a military ship filled with soldiers and other brides going to America. Theodore had to stay and finish his tour in Europe. Nadja had seasickness for the entire trip to America. Theodore's brothers met her at the ship to take Nadja home to her husband's family in Niagara Falls, New York.

Nadja's mother-in-law (having three sons) enjoyed stepping in to take her shopping for clothes as a heartwarming gesture, bridging the gap and weaving family ties in a new land for Nadja.

Theodore finishes his WW II tour and comes home to his bride, adding another layer to their story of love and resilience.



Shelley

UUA

Inviting the "Aha"

By JD Stillwater

November 29, 2023

“What history has shown is that when you are granted a perspective bigger than the one you had been harboring, you end up thinking differently about the world. For the better.”

—Neil deGrasse Tyson

All I said was, “Science requires all five senses.” This gentle mentor of mine smiled indulgently, paused, then replied, “Only five?” After establishing that he was not referring to psychic abilities, within minutes I was amazed to “discover” two additional human senses. By the next day, I had three more. They were obvious. We routinely refer to them as “my sense of ___” without ever connecting them to “the five.” (I’ll let you experience the Aha! on your own. There are many.)

A woman with graying hair and medium-dark skin holds a molecule model in her hands standing in front of a classroom whiteboard with chemistry notations written on it. She's smiling at a student, seen from behind, who is raising their hand.

In that moment I felt three very different emotions all at once: I felt stupid for not seeing the obvious, wonder at what else I might be missing, and determination to find other mental blocks I might carry.



“The five senses” were described by Aristotle some 2,350 years ago. Since then, textbooks and teachers alike have simply repeated the phrase without question. Kindergarten teachers pass it on to children as self-evident. It’s conventional wisdom, and it’s wrong.

I became obsessed with uncovering other examples of cultural inertia, especially in science. Critical thinking and self-questioning are the essence of science—more essential than any concept in the curriculum. I encouraged my students to question authority, especially my authority, because only rarely can we recognize our biases without help.

Those biases get installed early in our lives. Studies of implicit bias show us that racism, sexism, and all kinds of binary thinking are deeply-ingrained habits of thought. Like “the five senses.”

When I’m lost and don’t know it, I need someone else to point out that I’m on the wrong road. When someone does this (or gently asks, “Only five?”), it can be tempting to lash out at them for exposing my ignorance or bias. But if I take a pause to self-question, it can reveal vast new vistas to me.

Then it takes humility to admit my error, and effort to get back on track. ^[1]_{SEP}Experiencing the world clearly and openly, with all our many senses, requires vulnerability and authentic self-questioning. I think it’s a spiritual practice.

Prayer

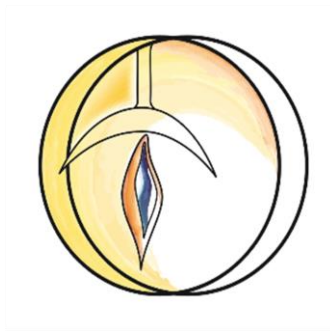
Source of all truth and clarity, bless us with companions who disrupt our inertias, curiosity to hear them out, and courage to seek the truth.

About the Author



JD Stillwater (he/him/his) is a Science Educator, presenter, and writer, on a mission to promote science as an interfaith source of profound inspiration and cultural shift. After teaching in the classroom for 24 years, JD now shares his awe and wonder with global audiences, and the spiritual depth available from a science-based worldview.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/inviting-aha>



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December 2023

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