

Powerline

First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Niagara

September 2018

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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 Teresa Labuszewski, Erica Kopp, and Betsy Diachun.

Sunday Programs

September 9: Water ceremony with John Snodgrass

We will again end our Water Ceremony with a flourish - a free ride on the Maid of the Mist. Before then we must have an exact count of attendees. We will have a sheet in the Narthex at the beginning of August for sign-ins or you can call Betsy Diachun 754-2830 or e-mail: ediachun@gmail.com. Please leave names of all planning to go on the boat tour! We will plan to walk or drive down and meet by the Maid of the Mist Ticket Booths.



September 16: Susan Frawley

September 23: Don Reidell

President's Message

This summer, I had the privilege of spending two weeks at the Chautauqua Institution. It is a unique place where outdoor lectures, concerts, dance and the visual arts are celebrated. Famous speakers (presidents and supreme court justices, lawyers, actors, musicians) discuss the week's chosen theme. The themes of the weeks I chose to attend were How Music Can Bring Us Together and The Documentary as Art and Storytelling. Both weeks had a similar message. The more we know about other people, the more we can see that they are human just like us and the more likely we are to get along. When we understand someone or some group of people, the more likely we are to not look at them as "the Other", as someone to be feared. I believe that it is fear that makes our lives smaller-fear of the unknown or different, fear of taking a risk, fear of taking on a task we might not be good at, fear of sharing what we have with others because we might not have enough for ourselves, fear of telling the truth or saying what we think because it may get us "in trouble", fear of interacting with someone who looks different from us because we don't know what to expect from them. Closing and locking one's door (or building a wall) does not really make one safer. Someone can always break in if they want to. And often that locked door indicates that there is something of value within. What makes us safer is taking the risk of unlocking that door, inviting someone in and getting to know them.

One of my favorite stories of the two weeks came from a former ambassador to Ireland. She was there during "The Troubles" as that explosive time in Irish history was known. There were daily killings and bombings. No one felt safe. Despite hard work, the parties involved would not get together and talk. They could barely get them in the same room. In frustration, President Clinton invited all the parties to a dinner-he spoke personally to them all to get them to come. No politics, just dinner and drinks. Everyone came and when Bill Clinton walked into the room, he was playing his saxophone. Everyone started laughing. He took requests, he took the risk of appearing foolish. But then they had dinner discussing music. She said it allowed people who regarded their rivals as the other, not as Irishmen, to see that they all loved the same things, that they were all human beings. It took several years to find peace, but that one night was the breakthrough that allowed negotiation to begin.

As I watched the memorial services for two very different American icons this week (Aretha Franklin and John McCain), I thought of the themes from my two weeks at Chautauqua. I could not help but think that they embodied the idea of not “othering” our fellow countrymen. Both of them worked very hard for justice and equality, both of them loved this country, and yet both could not have come from more dissimilar Americas. Yet they both had great impact on the US and its peoples. Aretha brought us together with her music, blending the gospel experience of African Americans to pop music, allowing people of other cultures a window into what it means to truly sing for joy and for pain. She rose to the top of her field in a country that favors white men. She had a voice and a presence that could not be ignored. She took a stand for equality when it could have damaged her career. The outpouring of grief and music at her death was a sight to behold. John, on the other hand, came from that white world of privilege. But he came to it with his future preordained—he was groomed for a life of the military and service to country. He spent five years as a POW and was tortured, having permanent physical disability from those five years. No matter whether you agreed with his politics, he was a man of integrity and also believed in what America could be. In his last year, he spent much of his time planning the well orchestrated memorial service that was designed to remind us that we are all Americans and that we need to work together. He asked his two greatest rivals, one Republican and one Democrat to speak at his service, not so much to eulogize him but to remind us that we are all in this together as countrymen. Presidents Bush and Obama took that task to heart. It reminded me of the saying, that we don’t need to think alike to love alike. When we look at each other and see ourselves in the face of the person we are looking at, it is easier to forgive and give, to move forward to make this country a better place for everyone in it.

Next week, we start a new church year. Let us come together and make it a year of service to each other and to our larger community. Let us learn from these two great Americans and find a way to continue their work. No matter how small the project, progress starts when we take that first step toward listening, helping and understanding one another.

I believe in you.
Teresa Labuszewski

Announcements

Please note: Our little free library needs children's books - all ages. You might ask at your library if they are running out of shelf space and would like to donate some older editions to the Little Free Library. Also adult paperbacks would be nice, we only seem to have hardcovers which are too heavy for some people to hold..

Thanks to Kathy McCunn and Wally Lamb for keeping the pots out front watered and looking good all summer. More thanks to Joe Ewing for mowing the lawn, both front and back, removing branches and keeping things neat and tidy outside.

Our People

On September 2, 2018 Ed Tormay passed away. Ed was a member of our church. He was on the Board and was Sunday school teacher with Erica. A memorial services has not yet been arranged.



Jean Speck and Ed Tormay

Photo by Erica Kopp

UUA

Bruh

By DeReau K. Farrar

August 22, 2018

“Aight, bruh.”

—Smiling stranger on the street

My father (whose name is Drake, for those of you who prefer to pray with names) has taught me a lot in the way of things one needs to know in order to survive life as a Black man in America. It was from him that I learned what it means to be pulled over by the police. I witnessed it happen to him, and he was wise and insightful enough to explain to my brother and I what had just occurred. That was an important, life-saving lesson.

Another important lesson he taught me was to always acknowledge the other Black folks I see around town. I was to greet those I knew with the highest respect and give them as much time as it takes. For those I don't know, a simple nod, smile, or “Aight, bruh” would do. You see, Black people are so accustomed to being ignored and invisible that a simple acknowledgement — a simple *I see you* — from a peer goes a long way. Also, Black people carry enough in their days that any lightening of the load is appreciated.

This lesson resonated with me, and I committed to “seeing” every Black person I come across in my daily life. I understood this practice in theory, but perhaps subconsciously believed it to be outdated. Since moving to Portland, Oregon (a city that's more than three-quarters White), I have come to recognize each Black face as precious, and each opportunity to greet them a blessing.

I'm not sure if the best word to describe the experience is joy or relief, but I can say that it is a sense of remembering that I am not alone. There's an immediate recognition that someone else knows, in a very real way, what my day has been like so far. And, from that recognition comes necessary peace and blessed assurance. Thanks, Dad.

Prayer

That which is in us, all around us, and which constantly draws us to our holiest selves, thank you for community that can exist beyond the need to know names and faces. At times when it becomes difficult to see the truth, remind me that my struggles are not unique. Remind me that, for the sake of those like me, especially those to come, it is important to keep going and show new ways to love.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/bruh>

A Bed 'n Breakfast Stay in the Poconos

*Inviting Other UUs in our District
To Experience the Natural Beauty of our Area*

Where: UUFP Members homes in Stroudsburg PA

When: Indigenous People's Day weekend October 5th-8th

What: Overnight accommodations with breakfast up to 3 nights, children welcome. All funds go to the church.

Cost: Family rates : 1 night \$85 (family = up to 3 people)

2 nights \$160,

3 nights \$225

Deposit of 1/2 required to secure reservation.

For More Information :

Contact: uupoconos.org or
barbara.harteis@gmail.com
484 619-6716

*A list of "things to do" will
be sent upon request.*

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



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<http://firstuunf.org>
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"Singles Social Club" established over 36 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

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