



# FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO

## December 2017 Newsletter

First Unitarian Society of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637 (773) 324-4100

### Listening at the Edges

Rev. Teri Schwartz

When I was 33, I started wearing hearing aids. I have my hearing checked at least once a year. I sit in the waiting room until my audiologist calls me by name. We exchange pleasantries, and I follow her through the hallways into one of the small, soundproof booths. They are designed to eliminate—as much as possible—outside noises that could interfere with the accuracy of the tests.

I hang my coat on the hook and place my purse on a chair. I take out my hearing aids and set them on the table, and sit down in the chair with my back turned away from the window that connects to her room. That way I can't cheat, can't see her press the buttons and turn the dials. She smooths my hair back and gently places special ear buds in my ears: red on the right, blue on the left. She hands me a device with a button. It's a lot like a joystick. I hold it; I'm ready.

She walks out of my booth and shuts the heavy door. Whoosh. Now I hear the silence, the pronounced lack of background noise. I

thought it was quiet before. There were so many sounds that I could physically hear, but hadn't realized were there. I hadn't paid attention.

From the corner of my eye, I see her take her seat in her control room. She sits at an array of computer equipment to administer the test. She speaks through a microphone into my earbuds: "Ready? You'll now hear a series of tones, getting softer and softer. Each time you hear a tone, press your button. Got it?" I nod.

At first, it's so easy. I hear a pitch in my right ear, I press the button. Now the same pitch is just a bit quieter this time. Press the button. Third time: the pitch is soft, but audible. I press my button. Fourth time, the sound is so far away, like a star barely visible in the night; I press my button. I find myself hunched over in concentration; my eyes closed, my right hand holding my button, my left hand holding my forehead in effort. When did I move into this posture?

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The period of silence between sounds is longer now. Did I miss one? Wait, there it is. Quiet now. There's the teensiest bit of a pitch, there it was. No, maybe I just imagined that one. Ack! I pressed the button and there was no sound. It's a mix of aspirational audiological overachievement and insecurity; I'm beginning to doubt myself. Now I know there are sounds, but I'm not hearing them. Wait, I hear one. The process repeats for multiple pitches, and then all over again on the left side.

For each pitch, she tests a few different times for accuracy to find the exact threshold of decibels and frequencies beyond the edges of my perception. We play at the edges over and over again. At moments, I question not just my hearing, but my sanity. I sit there, having become Rodin's *Thinking Man* wired to earbuds and computers.

My senses are focused, but my thoughts stray. There are pitches I can't hear, but I know they are there. They are measurable. How much more in my life is at the edges of my perception? What dances in the periphery of my vision and on the edges of awareness? In the frenetic passing of busy days, what subtle moments of beauty did I miss? Have I cranked up the volume on the

minutiae of my life only to miss the still, small voice inside?

It takes time and quiet to turn down the noise of the self and the world, and to turn up the volume of wonder. It doesn't come all at once. Sometimes it doesn't come at all. But, sometimes...it does, like the pitches on the edges of my perceptions. This season, know that there's a quiet beauty waiting for us. May we turn down the noise in our minds, and turn up the volume to wonder at that still, small voice inside. May we listen at the edges.



May it be so,  
Rev. Teri.

### From Your Intern Thom Thomas

I have been thinking a lot this week about family. Specifically, I have been thinking about how families deal with stress. A church I know (not this one) has recently suffered from an email storm. You know what I mean. Someone forgot the first commandment of email—"Thou shalt not hit send when you are still angry"—and then someone else forgot the second commandment of email—"Thou shalt not reply all"—and before you know it everyone is dividing into armed camps. Well, maybe not armed, but certainly snarky. What I

absolutely know is that every person involved knows better, but they got into the fight anyway. The health of a family can be determined by how they handle these stressful events. I am confident that they will be okay eventually, because I know that they are used to talking to each other, and they are used to having disagreements. They have learned the vital lessons of civil discourse, and they all have strong spiritual practices that will help them each deal with their pain and get back into each other's good graces.

As I have been thinking about this, I have been wondering about how well I am modeling coping behavior. Do I have a strong spiritual practice that helps me cope with stress? In seminary we are advised to always maintain a good spiritual practice, and to pay attention to self care. We are not necessarily told how. I used to travel a lot, and I remember the flight attendant reminding us all to put our oxygen mask on first, so that we could then be able to assist others. My niece is a flight attendant, and she

offered me this part of her spiritual practice, which I adopted right away. At the start of every day, just after getting dressed, she sits for five minutes and considers how she will put her mask on that day. In other words, what one thing will she do today that will make her more able to help others by taking care of herself. She calls it “checking her oxygen mask.”

There is a lot of stress in our lives these days. What is the state of your oxygen mask?

## Greetings from the Director of Religious Education (RE)

Beth Moss

This month I want to update families about the great work your kids are doing in the classroom Sunday mornings. Please enjoy!

### Pre-K to Grade 2 Class

In the past few months, students have continued to learn about faith, home, and love. Students examined the idea of what makes a home welcoming, and they discussed animals' homes in nature. They also discussed the story, “And Tango Makes 3,” about two male penguins who raised a hatchling from an egg at the Zoo. They discussed how each family member plays a role in their lives, and how it is love that makes a family whole. Kids also discussed the meaning of having a meal together and the joy of the ritual of blessing a meal together.

**Taking it home:** Discuss with your child what makes your dwelling a home. For instance, what does your family do before meals? Do you say any type of blessing? If so, where did that tradition come from for you? If not, is the very act of eating together as a family when you can the core of your practice?

### Grade 3-5 Class

In the past few months, students have been using the Harry Potter and UU curriculum to

connect with social justice issues. Our first issue (or, as the curriculum calls it, Horcrux) was illiteracy. The kids created a book drive, and thanks to everyone who donated, it was a huge success! Books were donated to [www.pilsencommunitybooks.org](http://www.pilsencommunitybooks.org).

The October Horcrux was poverty. Kids learned about how poverty is not just a problem somewhere else, but an issue for kids everywhere, including here. Classes focused on awareness and compassion. The last class in this set focused on what we can do to help via *Guest at Your Table*, a UUSC program that does many things to help refugees and others in need.

The November Horcrux was environmentalism. Lessons focused on understanding how the small things we do (good or bad) add up even if we think, “well, everyone else is doing that, so I can too.” We brought the idea home by thinking about the small ways we can conserve energy at home. Lessons explored the practical ways kids can make an impact on the environment, including understanding the impact of reducing, reusing, and recycling.

**Taking it home:** Come see the posters the kids made to help raise awareness for *Guest*

at *Your Table* in the Pennington center hallway, and if you are so inclined, the website for donating to this cause can be found at [donate.uusc.org/checkout/donation?eid=75595](https://donate.uusc.org/checkout/donation?eid=75595). Find the DRE for other options.

Other than that, what things do you currently do in your home that show respect for the interdependent web of which are all a part? What things could you do to help your community? Could your child's school get on board with having recycling bins in public areas including outside? Could your family work on prioritizing reducing and reusing over recycling with fun useful projects? Let me know what you come up with!

### Grade 6-9 Class

Kids have discussed if they think of God as an interventionist being, the relevance of the ten commandments, the value of going to church or not, the presence of the soul, and the importance of listening, and more. Are angels real? What about miracles? Extending this to their daily lives, in what does your youth find truth and meaning? How do you find it? Unitarian theology is so self-made

and unique, it can be important to help your child formulate what their source of truth is.

**Taking it home:** This curriculum focuses heavily on how religion is hidden in pop culture. Encourage your youth to discuss other instances of this with you. You might also help your youth by discussing the nature of truth, as one late November lesson did. This is a hot button issue right now—there is SO much information out there, it can be very difficult for an adult to know what is true, let alone a kid. How can we tell? What things are opinion, choice, or conjecture, and where is there fact in what is read?

### In RE this Month

December 3: Regular scheduled classes.

Pageant rehearsal after services. OWL parent orientation.

December 10: Regular scheduled classes.

Pageant rehearsal after services.

December 16: OWL nighttime session with overnight option (4-9)

December 17: Holiday pageant! No RE.

December 24: No RE (winter break)

December 31: No RE (winter break)

## Thoughts on Hope

Beth Moss

Some people love winter. I am not naturally one of them. Even when I was a kid, and most especially when I was a teen, those short, dark days of winter seemed to drag on forever. Short days with no light and biting cold made me yearn hopelessly for summer before the first snowflake even hit the ground. This is not so very uncommon in the northern U.S...but it is uncommon in Norway. I was taken aback when I first heard that—Norway? Surely their winters feel and look like ours? What could be different? Well, according to Laura Vanerkam<sup>1</sup>, an author who spent some time in Norway, the

difference is mindset. People in Norway don't get together and complain about the winter. Instead, they share with each other what they love about it from hot drinks and shining candles to cozy sweaters and winter treks in a snowy wonderland. Vanerkam also mentions that getting out and sharing the joy

<sup>1</sup> Vanerkam, Laura. 2015. "The Norwegian Secret to Enjoying a Long Winter." *Fast Company*, November 6, 2015. [www.fastcompany.com/3052970/the-norwegian-secret-to-enjoying-a-long-winter](http://www.fastcompany.com/3052970/the-norwegian-secret-to-enjoying-a-long-winter).

of winter with festivals and other activities added to the positive spirit of the season. When you think of all the good that the season brings, it can change your outlook significantly.

Now, you don't have to live in Norway to love Winter. Not sure what sorts of winter fun Chicago offers for families? I looked up all the family activities going on in the area this season and I was FLOORED by the number of options featured at websites such as [www.timeout.com/chicago/kids/fun-winter-activities-for-kids](http://www.timeout.com/chicago/kids/fun-winter-activities-for-kids). Want to see some lights? Head up to the Lincoln Park Zoo and check out the zoo lights until Sunday, January

7. Outside not your thing? Check out the Winter Wonder Fest indoor carnival at Navy Pier from Friday, December 1 through Sunday, January 7; or head over to the Nature Museum for a Wild Winter Animal Showcase on Tuesday, December 26. Looking for a low cost or high energy option? Get out there and get physical with ice skating at Chicago's parks, sledding on nearby hills, and snowshoeing at the nature centers.

No matter what you do to make it so, may your holiday season be merry and bright, and may the joys of winter bring you hope for a good season.

## December Worship Services

December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10 AM  
*Hope Gets the Last Word*  
Rev. David Schwartz

In this moment of history, and many of our individual lives, it's easy to despair and be overwhelmed. A service of hope for each of us and all of us.

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*Light a Candle of Laughter*  
Rev. Teri Schwartz

This week marks the beginning of Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights during a season of short days and dark nights. There is a long tradition of humor in Judaism from ancient times to the present, often taking on establishment forces and offering relief to the oppressed. We'll explore the festival of lights and a tradition of laughter as we celebrate this holiday together.

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*Pageant—Would You Like to Hold the Baby?*

Join us for our multigenerational Christmas Nativity Pageant in word and song by Joyce

Poley. It revisits the timeless story of Mary and Joseph, the Kings and the Shepherds, with the addition of a new character—a young stable girl. As Mary invites the girl to hold her baby, so we are invited to embrace the deepest meaning Christmas holds for each one of us.

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*Find a Stillness*  
Rev. David Schwartz

A warm and cozy morning service in Hull Chapel celebrating the winter solstice and this season of darkness, quiet, and waiting.

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM  
*Christmas Eve Vespers*

Come join us for the cherished tradition of Vespers on Christmas Eve: A contemplative, yet joyful worship service of readings, music, carols, and candles, and a time to gather with our extended church family. Our resident musicians will be joined by a guest organist. We open our doors to the neighborhood and to many returning to the city for the holiday. Child care is available.

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 PM

*Christmas Eve Communion in Hull Chapel*

In the late hours of Christmas Eve, break bread together in memory of Jesus of Nazareth. In today's climate of fear and hate, his message of revolutionary love and peace in the face of empire speaks to us today. We will use the church's 19th century silver communion set. This table is open to people of all beliefs; whether it is your first communion service or a cherished tradition, you are warmly welcomed to this

contemplative and intimate communion service.

December 31<sup>st</sup>, 10 AM

*Intergenerational Kwanzaa Service*

Joe Harrington and Jim Proctor

We will light the Kinara and lift up the seven principles of Kwanzaa with words and music in this intergenerational service. Whether Kwanzaa is a long family tradition, or you've never celebrated before, you are warmly welcome for this intergenerational service.

## Action Plan for 2017–2018

### Green Sanctuary Group

#### **Worship and Celebration**

Hold 3 environmentally oriented worship services during this church year. (Joan Staples will be the lead and liaison with our co-ministers)

#### **Religious Education**

Offer environmentally oriented curriculum for children and youth on a periodic basis. This is already being accomplished this church year, as Children's RE is using the environmental curriculum "Creepy Crawlies" this summer. (Allan Lindrup, as an RE teacher, will serve as liaison to the MRE on this matter).

Offer multimedia and multiformat environmental education for adults (movies, guest speakers, book readings, discussions, and perhaps tours.) Allan will take the lead on movies. Ellie and Nadia will co-lead guest speakers and other environmentally oriented Community and First Forums (Nadia's focus is on practical matters for sustainable living). Bill Bassin will coordinate an environmental book reading and discussion group, which will meet once or twice a month.

#### **Environmental Justice**

Work with the SE Chicago Environmental Task Force to fight environmental threats

facing the southeast side of Chicago. (Lead person Ellen Larue, with Dan Bader also significantly involved)

Ellen (perhaps along with others) will research environmental justice projects that we might work with on the broader/global level.

#### **Sustainable Living**

Promote recycling at all events involving church members. Get more signage posted, make sure that both recycling and waste containers are present at social hour and other events involving significant number of church members. (Richard Pardo lead, with Kennie James to assist)

Household Hazardous Waste and computer electronics collection, targeting the mid-southeast side, to be held on the first Saturday of December. (Allan Lindrup to lead; see details in Meetings and Events.)

Focus on personal actions that promote a sustainable environment. Nadia will follow up on the survey that Arianna Lambie organized a couple years ago, then build on that base. (Nadia Pierrehumbert to lead)

Connect more with the work of the UU Ministry for Earth. We will renew our church membership with that organization before initiating that. (Dan will lead that effort)

Clothes recycling. We will seek to secure a box to collect clothing that can be used either in undeveloped countries or for rags. (Nadia to lead this effort)

Improve our church's landscaping, while assisting with carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere, by purchasing and planting hardy aronia (choke cherry) bushes in place

of bushes previously tried which did not survive in Chicago's climate. (Irene will have the lead)

Note: The long-deferred installation of the commercial kitchen dish washer (and related electrical work), for which we have collected \$5,000, is expected to be among the projects in the upcoming capital campaign, but may not happen until the 2018-19 church year.

## Activity Update UU Christian Group

At our monthly meeting in October we viewed "Early Modern Christianity," the first lecture of a video course, *The History of Christianity in the Reformation Era*, covering the main period of the Reformation from 1500 to 1650 CE. It focuses on three forms of Christianity in this era: Catholicism, Protestantism, and radical Protestantism, the latter from which Unitarian Universalism derived.

At our November meeting we did an analysis of chapters 1 through 4 of the Gospel According to Matthew. We discovered an interesting lack of clarity on whether the writer saw Jesus as being the actual Son of God. Then we viewed "The Landscape of Late Medieval Life," the second lecture of the Reformation course. This lecture explained the social, economic, and political factors in the early modern period that gave rise to the Reformation. We also heard a report on the exciting trip six of us took to the Newberry

Library, where a medieval scholar led a tour of an exhibit showing how documents and books that fostered the spread of the Reformation were the result of new technologies such as the printing press.

We are planning a requiem/communion program featuring Christian and neopagan elements as well as our annual showing of two videos, the Nativity Story and the Christmas segments of the Handel-Jenners-Klein Messiah. The dates and times of these activities will be announced.

Lastly, we are going to try to expand our membership to other UU churches in Chicagoland.

For more information, see the Meetings and Events section of this newsletter, or contact [PhieferBrowne@comcast.net](mailto:PhieferBrowne@comcast.net) or [FinleyCampbell5222@comcast.net](mailto:FinleyCampbell5222@comcast.net).

## December Meetings and Events

### Household Hazardous Waste Collection

12/02/2017 Saturday 9:00 AM-1:00 AM  
Alley by Church off 57th Street  
Sponsored by the Green Sanctuary Group of First Unitarian Church of Chicago.

Hazardous items accepted (if properly sealed): mercury-florescent bulbs, used motor oil, oil based paints, gasoline, paint thinner, aerosol paints, car batteries, rechargeable batteries, herbicides, lawn chemicals, antifreeze, insecticides, pesticides, solvents, drain cleaners, pool chemicals, hobby and photographic chemicals, mercury thermometers, and household fire extinguishers. Computer electronics will also be accepted, but not non-computer electronics.

Not accepted: incandescent bulbs, appliances, alkaline batteries, biohazardous products and needles, commercial or industrial fire extinguishers, water based paints (such as latex or acrylic), freon, caulk, cleaning products, and items that you can clean up or dissolve with water.

Donations will be accepted to help defray the costs of renting a truck and driving the collection to the city of Chicago's hazardous waste collection site on Goose Island. For more information, call 773-595-4921 or email [uusj@sbcglobal.net](mailto:uusj@sbcglobal.net) (before Dec. 2.)

### Young Adults Winter Potluck

12/2/2017 Saturday 6:00 PM-9:00 PM  
Chris Moore Parlor  
The First U Young Adults will gather for a potluck dinner—all are welcome.

### Winter Pageant First Rehearsal

12/3/2017 Sunday 11:30 AM  
Young people taking part in the pageant and members of the pageant choir should attend. Play participants will meet in the Sanctuary. Choir will meet in the music room.

### Social Justice Council First Forum

12/3/2017 Sunday 11:30 AM  
The SJC's forum topic this month is "Recycling Today," sponsored by the Green Sanctuary Group.

### Black Lives Matter Task Force Meeting

12/5/2017 Tuesday 6:30 PM-8:30 PM  
Hull Chapel  
All task force members are requested to join us for a task force training on the policy agenda for the Movement for Black Lives. Come learn how #FightFor15, CPAC, #NoCopAcademy, reparations and more are all part of the agenda. For more information, please contact Andrea Freerksen at [afreerksen@gmail.com](mailto:afreerksen@gmail.com).

### Criminal Justice Task Force Meeting

12/7/2017 Thursday 6:45 PM  
Chris Moore Parlor  
At this meeting of the Criminal Justice Task Force, our guest will be David Olson, Ph.D., co-director of the Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice and a member of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform. We will continue our push for no-money bail bonds, especially for poor people. All are welcome. For more information, please contact Evan Freund at [efreund@chicagobooth.edu](mailto:efreund@chicagobooth.edu) or 773-624-0333.

### Annual Christmas Bazaar

12/9/2017 Saturday 9:00 AM-6:00 PM  
Hull Chapel  
Co-sponsored by the Racial Justice Task Force. Benefits the Afghan Women's Fund.

### Winter Pageant Dress Rehearsal

12/10/2017 Sunday 11:30 AM  
Sanctuary  
Young people taking part in the pageant and members of the pageant choir should attend.



**First U Christian Group**

12/12/2017 Tuesday 7:00 pm–9:00 pm

Chris Moore Parlor

Open to all church members and friends—of any religious beliefs—with an interest in learning more about the Christian faith. The group will continue its study of world Christianity, viewing the opening lectures of a Teaching Company course, *The History of Christianity in the Reformation Era*, taught by Professor Brad S. Gregory, Assistant Professor of History at Stanford University. Bible study will focus on the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. For more information, please contact Phiefer Brown at PhieferBrowne@comcast.net or Finley Campbell at FinleyCampbell5222@comcast.net.

**First U All Ages Sunday Brunch Bunch**

12/17/2017 Sunday 11:30 AM

The First U Sunday brunch bunch is back! Join us for food, friendship, and fellowship on the third Sunday of the month. We'll meet at the back of the church directly after the service and walk over to the Medici together, 1327 E. 57th Street. All ages are welcome, hope you can join us! For more information contact Margot Horn, 773-860-1718, margot.horn1@outlook.com.

**History of the Rise and Triumph of Neo-Racism in U.S. Culture**

12/17/2017 Sunday 1:00 PM–2:00 PM

The Nature of Racism is an annual course with a different focus or theme each year. This year's course is a personal/historical analysis of the impact of neo-racism within the UUA, with some impacts that reach further. Sponsored by the Racial Justice Task Force. For more information, please contact Finley Campbell at finleycampbell5222@comcast.net.

**First U Men's Group**

12/18/2017 Monday 7:00 PM–9:00 PM

RE Resource Room

This group is open to men at least 18 years old. Men in the group come together to share their experiences, help each other work through problems, and identify opportunities to support the church and its individual members. Some discussion topic for meetings have been "Politics in Chicago and Illinois," "God Is a Question, Not an Answer," and "The Beloved Community." For more information, please contact Joseph Harrington at joseph\_harrington@att.net.

**Church Office Hours**

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Co-Ministers' Office Hours**

Rev. David Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday

Rev. Teri Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday

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©2017 The First Unitarian Society of Chicago,  
Published monthly.

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