



# Windmill

## Mount Vernon Unitarian Church

*To affirm and  
promote the  
inherent worth  
and dignity of  
every person*

January 1, 2012

*... MVUC is a loving and inclusive community. Our mission is to encourage one another on our spiritual journeys and to work together to build the common good.*

### *Taking Note . . .*

by The Reverend Kate R. Walker



We've had several deaths in our congregation since I've been with Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, particularly in the past few months, and including two Charter members. Recently, some of our members have had family members die as well. I know our senior members are feeling the weight of time and age as they bear witness to the passing of their friends.

Recently I was asked to officiate for the memorial of a newborn baby. I was honored to help this couple and their family, particularly in light of how the pain of the baby's death brought the family together. I told them in my reflection during the memorial that our hearts and bodies are made for love. Each and every one of us yearns for the connection to another person, and to be in a relationship. We seek intimacy in a life partner and joyfully commit to the care and nurturing of our children.

Through these relationships we learn to offer love without demands, to listen, and to receive love. We learn because we know we can't live without these life-sustaining connections.

And we do all this knowing we may lose it all. We take the risk of opening ourselves to love, even though one day the pain of loss will envelop us. Our hearts and bodies are made for love. But our hearts and bodies are also made to endure pain.

We do this through connections with each other, connections to what we hold as holy and precious, connections to nature and to the universe.

In a healthy and trusting relationship, we are brought closer together in times of pain. None of us walks this path alone. We are a part of the holy, a part of the universe. May we trust our connections. May we each hold our pain of loss for our beloved friends and family knowing we are deepened by the love we have felt for them.

With love and care, Kate Walker

Rev. Kate R. Walker

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**Program Highlights  
Mark Your Calendar!**

**Multigenerational Conversation**

Saturday, January 7, 3:00 – 5:00 pm

Commons

See page 5

**Lunch With A Book**

Sunday, January 8, 1:00 pm

Ruby Tuesday

See page 5

**Games Night**

Saturday, January 14, 5:00 - 9:00 pm

Hollin Hall

See page 3

**Special Congregational Meeting**

Sunday, January 22, 12:15 pm

See page 5



## Lifespan Spiritual Growth

### Meagan Henry, Director

Dear Friends,

Well, this will be my last newsletter column for a while because my sabbatical begins January 1. While this time away is bittersweet for me, I expect to return invigorated and ready to implement new programs. I will enter into the Religious Educator Credentialing program at the Master's Level, in addition to my planned study of several UU Religious Education programs. I'm pleased to report that between Jim Kerr, the Religious Education Council, and Rev. Kate, the majority of my staff duties will be covered while I'm away. If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Liz Bessel, the Chair of the RE Council or Jim Kerr, the RE Assistant. I'll be thinking of this wonderful community while I embark upon my studies and I'm already looking forward to my return!

Sincerely, Meagan Henry

#### **Announcements:**

##### **Games Night**

Families, individuals and friends, join us at -- Games Night, Saturday, January 14, 5:00-9:00 pm, Hollin Hall. It's a pasta potluck. Bring something to feed eight based on the first letter of your last name -- A-J - main dish; K-R - side dish; and, P-Z - drinks and desserts. More info, contact Jim at 703-765-5950 x108, or [reassist@mvuc.org](mailto:reassist@mvuc.org). \$1 or \$2 donation optional to cover costs. Games Free!

**Adult Spiritual Growth Classes** (See website and MVUC Activities Brochure for class details)

##### **Hungry For Change: Food, Ethics, and Sustainability**

Sundays, January 15-February 26, 7:30-9:00 pm  
Commons

Led by Wendy Burns and Kathy Seikel

##### **A Bright and Spirited Path: A Deeper Exploration of Unitarian Universalism**

Wednesdays, Feb 1-Feb 29, 2012, 7:30-9:30 p.m.  
Hollin Hall Fireplace Room (sign up by Jan. 25)

Led by the Rev. Kate R. Walker

##### **Popcorn Theology for Mature Audiences**

Second Saturdays, Jan - April, 7:00 pm, led by Kristine Erickson

Popcorn Theology for Mature Audiences takes the concept and popularity of movie night to explore issues of theology and ethics for Unitarian Universalists, and uses R-rated movies to explore these issues.

January 14 *Dogma* (What are we called to do?)

February 11 Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (The trouble with groupthink)

March 10 *Children of Men* (How hope for the future affects the present)

April 14 *Blood Diamond* (How can we exercise our power to do good?)

##### **Immigration As A Moral Issue**

Wednesdays, May 9 - June 13, 2012, 7:30 - 9:30 pm Commons (sign up by May 2)

Facilitated by Rev. Kate Walker

##### **Let Your Yoga Dance®**

1st Tuesday of each month from 5:45-7:15 pm  
Chapel

Session II: February 7, March 6, April 3, May 1. YogaDance is not so much about yoga or dance as it is about putting individuals in touch with their deep, spiritual inner truths through connection to their own primal energy system. There are no "dance routines" to learn or specific moves to master. Rather, the teacher, certified YogaDance instructor Cheryl Sabo, leads a warm-up and movements, progressively honoring each of the 7 Chakras, to awaken and open the energy body. Breathing, meditation, and post-class discussion deepen the practice. No prior knowledge of yoga, dance, or the chakras is necessary to benefit from YogaDance. Class is appropriate for any fitness level, ages 16-97. Tuition per four-week session: \$20 MVUC members, \$40 non-MVUC members.

## Monthly Worship Theme

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### FREEDOM

There is a famous Zen story that illustrates the way to spiritual freedom: Two monks are returning home. In order to do so, they must cross a river. When they reach the river, the water is running very high and very fast. A young woman also must cross the river, but she is unable to do so by herself. One of the monks picks her up and carries her safely to the other side. The other monk crosses the river by himself. The woman goes her way and the monks go theirs. Finally, the monk who crossed by himself can no longer contain his anger. "You know that it is forbidden to touch a young woman! You have broken your holy vows." The other monk answers him, saying, "Brother, I left that young woman beside the river. Are you still carrying her?"

Religious freedom, one of many forms of freedom, is not as easy as one might assume. Hard choices must be made every day. True religious freedom gives us the space to make these choices.

## Monthly Worship Services

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**Sunday, January 1**  
***"Beginnings and Endings"***  
**The Rev. Kate R. Walker**  
**10:00 am only**

In this multigenerational service we'll play with the reality that all things must come to an end.

## On and Off the Hill

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***Special Congregational Meeting***  
***12:15 pm, Sunday, January 22***

The Board of Trustees has called a special congregational meeting to consider authorizing the Meeting House Improvements Committee, under supervision of the Board of Trustees, to manage expansion and remodeling of the

Yet this opens the way for something bright, new and totally unknown. Our music is being provided by Evelyn and Bart Hewitt.

***Sunday, January 8***  
***"Sweet Freedom"***  
**The Rev. Kate R. Walker**

Our theme of the month is freedom. We'll honor the human need for freedom and recognize why we may never truly achieve it.

***Sunday, January 15***  
***"The Spirituality of Stuff"***  
**Eric Pourchot**

How do we separate trash from treasure? If you had to pack your family into a car in the middle of the night, what would you take with you? Conservators Kim Cullen Cobb and Wendy Jessup, with Eric Pourchot, explore how objects have the power to bring together families and communities and connect us to our heritage.

***Sunday, January 22***  
***"Lessons From a Child: Anne Frank"***  
**The Rev. Kate R. Walker**

January 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Humanity is still reeling from the trauma of WWII, but the words of one young girl have helped millions heal and find courage. What does she tell us about freedom?

***Sunday, January 29***  
***A special guest minister to be announced***

Commons, remodeling of the Kitchen, and construction of a new Stage.

The three proposals will be voted on separately. Members unable to attend may cast absentee ballots. Briefings to provide information about the three proposals will be held between services on January 8 and 15. Also see article on the

website, [mvuc.org](http://mvuc.org), "Congregation to Vote on Proposed Building Improvements."

### ***Lunch With A Book***

On Sunday January 8 at 1:00 pm at Ruby Tuesday Lunch With A Book will meet to discuss Cokie Roberts' *Founding Mothers, The Women Who Raised Our Nation*. All are welcome to attend. For more information please contact Louise Werner-Rhoades at [louron13@cox.net](mailto:louron13@cox.net) or at 703-619-1369.

### ***Multigenerational Conversation Saturday, January 7, 3:00 - 5:00 pm***

This is an afternoon tea, which will be supplied. Please bring a snack to share as we engage in dialogue about generational differences and the future of liberal religion.

What year were you born? Do you understand what products are being sold on all the commercials? Do you know how to tweet? Do you want to join a church committee and make important decisions about the church? Did you graduate from college with no debt or \$40,000 in debt?

Join Rev. Walker in the second conversation for all ages about generational differences and similarities. How do different generations perceive the church community and the secular world?

### ***Holiday Shop 2011 Thank You***

We celebrated this year's 50th Anniversary of Holiday Shop with a glorious quilt show in the Meeting House, a display of picture boards from previous Holiday Shops and a special door prize event. The net profit from Holiday Shop was greater than \$20,000. Congratulations to our church community!

Holiday Shop is a labor of love which begins in January with a planning group which meets throughout the year. Special thanks to the following: Sandy Peterson for coordinating Mansion activities and organizing the quilt show and the picture display in the Meeting House,

Betty Panyik for recruiting volunteers, Anne Ulm for publicity and creating the door prize event, Terry Bradley for being our expert jeweler, Ruth Ann MacCleery for managing the Country Kitchen, Betty Davis for managing Helene's Attic, Mike Walker for managing the Lunch, Dorothy Brandt for assisting Mary Barnett with the Crafters and Vendors inside and outside the Meeting House, Birgit Robbert for being Treasurer, Bill Burns for managing parking, Marty Bredeck for managing the clean-up, Wendy Burns for organizing the Salute the Sunset Ceremony, Betsy Stephens for Sunday Sales, Mimi Stevens for making 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary buttons and the Quilt Raffle tickets, and finally, to the Every Thursday Group from which Holiday Shop originally sprang, especially Dotty Ann McClelland, Karna Schwimmer, Jo Jackley and Pat Jackson, without whom there would be no Holiday Shop today.

Thank you, MVUC Quilters, led by Nancy Barkume, for this year's quilt, Kathi McNeil for making the Gingerbread Castle, Chris Reidy and his crew for helping with the Monday set-up, Farhat Chaudhry for putting away the nursery, Norman Comfort and Leah Choudhury for further transforming our indoor and outdoor spaces into Holiday Shop.

THANK YOU ALL who helped with sales, greeting, baking and in all ways to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Holiday Shop. Mary Barnett

### ***Holy Order of Boxwood Pickers***

Thanks to all of this year's "Holy Order of Boxwood Pickers" – Nancy Barkume, Dorothy Brandt, Meg Clontz, Jean Elliott, Al Macomber, Ruth Heimborg, Mary Barnett, Sandy Peterson, Carl Lohmann, Betsy Stephens, Annie Montanari, Sonja Bloom and Wendy Burns, who provided the boxwood for the Holiday Workshop wreaths and wreath-making for MVUC friends in need. Boxwood picking is a very satisfying activity and one that some say is their favorite time on "The Hill." We pick the boxwood to provide boxwood for our needs, but it is also necessary to pick it to keep the boxwoods healthy. We are a very welcoming group and will quickly induct you into

the holy order with just a little instruction. Please join us next year! Thanks to all who helped!

Wendy Burns

### ***The Search for Next Year's Leaders***

The Nominating Committee is currently seeking input for creating the slate of nominees to fill the following positions:

Board of Trustees - three members plus one youth rep

Nominating Committee - two members

Program Council Coordinator – Social Justice (current coordinator would like to continue)

Program Council Coordinator – Our Home Community (current coordinator would like to continue)

The congregation will vote on people to fill these key roles at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 6. If you know of any fellow MVUCers who would be well-suited for any of these positions, please contact one of the current members of the Nominating Committee (see below). *If you are contacted by the Nominating Committee to potentially serve the church in one of these positions, we thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of such a request!*

Nominating Committee: Laurie Hayden (chair), Tony Barkume, David Napier; Sandy Peterson and Carolyn Slenska.

### ***Big Year on the Holy Hill***

A lot of work has gone into making MVUC tread lightly on the environment. Let's see what birds think of the habitat on the church grounds. In 2012, we are going to see how many bird species we can identify on church grounds. You are encouraged to keep a pair of binoculars in your car and use it when you come to church, whether for a meeting, worship, or just to sit and relax. If you spot a bird, report it using the link on the MVUC website to "ebird" (this is an online bird checklist program accessible by anyone). We will kick off this year-long event with a brief birdwalk on the Holy Hill at 8:00 am on Monday, January 2,

led by Ben Jesup. Information from Ben Jesup, breep@aol.com, and Georgia Pourchot, gpourchot@yahoo.com.

### ***New Group: Foreign Moviegoers***

Come one, come all lovers of foreign movies! We meet on Saturday, 1/7/12, in Shirlington, to see a phenomenal "Indie" flick. We hope and encourage parent(s) of young children to participate. Contact Ana Shannon, 703-799-7248, [Littleimpysmom@yahoo.com](mailto:Littleimpysmom@yahoo.com).

### ***Update from the Committee on Ministry***

The Committee on Ministry is responsible for assessing the work of our minister and the ministry of our church as a whole. We do these assessments in alternating years.

Last year, we assessed the ministry of the church as a whole. This includes the activities and programs that serve our vision and mission and advance our UU principles. With guidance from the Board of Trustees and Rev. Kate, we focused on three aspects of ministry: spirituality, membership and financial stewardship. We used a process of Appreciative Inquiry, guided by Sue and Howard Lamb. About 40 congregants – adults and youth – participated in small group sessions.

Interestingly, many participants did not consider themselves spiritual. Others found that community, social outreach, the grounds, the music, the services, our values, and the role of lay leaders spoke to their spiritual development. This affirms the vibrancy of our community. There were positive views for adult and youth religious education, especially including the "Building your own Theology" class. Comments about membership emphasized common values and a feeling of "connectedness" in social justice, during services, and when volunteering at MVUC. Participants were proud of their personal connection to MVUC as a member or friend. As to stewardship, there was a clear consensus that the "Fair Share Guide" is useful and is used to make pledge decisions. Follow this link to view the

Congregational Assessment Process:

<http://tinyurl.com/89rjgon>.

This year, we assess our minister's work. In order to do the assessment, it helps to remind everyone of her responsibilities. High on the list of attributes are leadership and communications skills. We believe our minister should lead us by her personal example of honesty and ethical behavior. She shares with the BOT the hiring and dismissal of staff, and she supervises all staff and any intern minister. She works closely with lay leaders offering support and guidance. She is expected to present at least thirty sermons each year, which are her personal statements and are expected to be intellectually and morally challenging.

The minister encourages membership growth, writes a monthly newsletter column, helps us define our mission, represents MVUC and liberal religion in our larger community and serves as liaison with the Joseph Priestley District and the UUA. We want the minister to be a good listener, counselor and mentor, involved with our children and youth, offer adult RE, and support our social justice programs. Not least, we look to the minister to address our spiritual needs and to guide us to constructive responses to life's challenges. In this regard, she provides pastoral care in conjunction with the Caring Associates, and she officiates at such important events as child dedications, weddings and memorials.

This is a broad list of responsibilities. Given so many congregants with diverse opinions, conducting an assessment is a challenge. We will be using multiple tools in a healthy and constructive process. Feel free to contact the Committee on Ministry ([rdesrosiers@verizon.net](mailto:rdesrosiers@verizon.net)) with questions, concerns or comments.

***Moment for Membership  
Just Be You!***

Did you know that each of you is doing your part for membership just by being you?

Each time you interact with another person while at church, in RE or in a meeting or an activity,

you're making that person feel welcome with a word, a smile or with a hug. Embrace the differences among us and help everyone, young and old, feel welcome. **JUST BE YOU!**

***And it's just that easy to just be you at the Greetings Table. Volunteer today to help greet visitors at the 9:15 OR the 11:15 am services.***

***Check with Sandy Peterson in person or by e-mail at [sandypeterson2010@gmail.com](mailto:sandypeterson2010@gmail.com) Thank you!***

**Correction:** Please note that compliance of the Contribution of Record requirement went into effect in this church year of 2011-12. December's column, "Moment for Membership" reported the incorrect date. We apologize for any misunderstandings this may have caused. Dianne Brown, Chair, Membership Development Council.

***Circle Suppers Update***

The December Circle Suppers were well attended; over 65 members and friends got together in individual homes, had dinner, got to know one another better and made new friends. This is a significant number, considering that the holiday season tends to eat up all our weekends. That may be the reason why we were unable to have families with children participate this time, but we hope they return for the February Suppers. Mark your calendar if you want to participate; the Suppers meet every other month, on the second Saturday. For February 11, the sign-up sheet is already available in Commons. Contact Mike Walker, Sandy Peterson or Georgia Pourchot.

**January Youth Birthdays**

Julia Lager	January 13
Charlotte Keeler	January 13
Naomi St. Hilaire	January 24
Benjamin Stone	January 25
Georgeanna Hoey	January 31

## From Our Board of Trustees

### Becky Brandt, Chair



Especially at this time of year, we hear stories from around the world. Some are inspirational: individuals who have overcome adversity or are models of excellence. Some are

heart-wrenching: stories of incredible need or injustice. And as we enter into a new year, there are also stories of anticipation and hope. MVUC could be viewed as a microcosm of the world at large; we have examples of each type of story in our own community. By and large, though, we are blessed.

At the December board meeting, we were presented with the church's current financial picture. The information, while not unexpected, should be viewed as a "wake-up call." Our annual operating expenses are significantly above our income. The reasons are fairly clear: the annual budget was based on an expected growth of new members who would begin to contribute. Our staffing is also based on that expectation of growth, but unfortunately our membership is not growing as we had hoped. Another factor is that rental income, which for awhile appeared to be recovering, is lower than anticipated; the nation's recurring economic downturn is again taking its toll on rentals.

We need to decide what this means and what we should do about it. Unitarian Universalists do not blindly follow a doctrine; we live our covenant. Daily we make choices reflecting our beliefs. The coming months will be crucial for our church. Individually and as a community we will be asked to demonstrate our commitment and priorities. In the next few weeks we will make decisions regarding some "next steps." On January 22 we will have a special congregational meeting at which members will vote on three fairly substantial improvement projects. We will decide whether to proceed with these projects: an improved Chapel platform, renovation of the Kitchen, and expansion of the Commons. Funds

for this would come not from the operating budget but from the building fund, to which members made separate pledges a few years ago in a capital campaign.

But the annual budget remains a concern, especially because some members continue to contribute generously while others are not paying their fair share. In some cases they probably cannot; the recession is much harder on some than others. But we ask all members to assess what is important to them. At this time of reflection and renewal, may each of us see our church community as a priority and let that influence the decisions that lie ahead.

With an open mind and heart, Becky

#### UU History

1 January 1735 Paul Revere was born in Boston. Boston's leading silversmith was official courier to carry the message that General Gage was to attack, signaling the start of the American Revolution. He was a leading member of the Second Church in Boston (Unitarian).

2 January 1769 Joseph Priestley, who discovered oxygen, published *The Theological Repository*, possibly the first Unitarian magazine in England, before fleeing to America to escape death by enemies.

5 January 1835 Olympia Brown, a Universalist, was the first woman ordained to the ministry by a full denominational authority.

12 January 1737 John Hancock, a leading American patriot, was born. He inherited his uncle's mercantile business, was the president of the Continental Congress, and became the first to sign the Declaration of Independence. He was chair of the building committee of Boston's Unitarian Brattle Street Church, of which he was a member.

24 January 1556 The second Synod of the Reformed Brethren (Socinians) in Poland adopted Unitarian positions and rejected the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.



## Social Justice Programs at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church

*Love is the teaching of this church, and service is its prayer.*

### **Winter Activities**

As we “recover” from the holiday season, life goes on around us, with all the social justice responsibilities we have undertaken as a church. The hypothermia project to feed the homeless is in full swing (Thursday nights through March), as is the on-going food collection. A Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity (ADORE) continues, and for the first time, we host a monthly JPD district meeting of the Journey Towards Wholeness team that discusses racial justice (February 11). We partner again with UUs for Social Justice (UUSJ) to host a workshop discussing economic justice and the Occupy Movement (February 4). The movie series will tackle a variety of issues (first Fridays). The Harmony Heritage Singers chorus offers a performance to benefit United Community Ministries (February 19), and Partner Church continues its series of dinners (March 17).

We partner with Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light to offer a legislative preview of clean energy issues expected to come up during the General Assembly in Richmond (January 18). The Ethical Eating group will demonstrate some of the recipes in the new cookbook (January 22), and organize a spring green fair, complete with CSA information, demonstration of cooking raw, tasting new foods, and maybe bring a “bee-keeper” as well (March 25). A new class is being offered on Sunday nights, Hungry for Change, on the general theme of “you are what you eat.” As you can see, there is plenty going on. Just jump in and get involved!

Sincerely, Your Social Justice Team.

### **Easy Green!**

We are at that point in the year when many make New Year’s Resolutions. So, it will be plastics again for me in 2012. Yes, we have stopped using plastic bags – pretty easy. We have stopped using single-use plastic bottles – a little harder, but still a no brainer. Now, I am trying to look at each purchase to decide whether I can get this item without

plastic, or if I really need the item if I can only get it in plastic. I am trying to differentiate “smart” plastic from “stupid” plastic. Each purchase needs to be a conscious one.

I recently read an article from The Sierra Club that stated that plastic use has doubled in the past ten years. Yes, doubled in ten years. Now, that is scary! Each piece will be here for thousands of years, only degrading to substances which are even more chemically toxic than when they were made. And, production is very oil-intensive. What are we thinking? It seems that we are not!

I hope we all have a happy, albeit thoughtful New Year!

Just a thought ~ Wendy

### **Movie Night: Friday January 6, 7 pm Hollin Hall Fireplace Room**

We will watch *Farmageddon* (2011). Americans’ right to access fresh, healthy foods of their choice is under attack. This movie tells the story of small, family farms that were providing safe, healthy foods to their communities and were forced to stop, sometimes through violent action, by agents of misguided government bureaucracies, and seeks to figure out why. Information from Georgia Pourchot, 703-721-0494.

### **Clean Power Legislative Briefing**

Join us **Wednesday, January 18, at 7:00 pm** Hollin Hall, Fireplace Room, for a briefing from the Chesapeake Climate Action Network to learn about this year’s clean energy priorities and how you can take action. Contact Georgia Pourchot, 703-721-0595.

**ADORE, A Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity**  
ADORE continues, second Mondays at 7 pm. ADORE is an opportunity to talk about race until it loses its power to separate us. In January, we watch and discuss “Up From Slavery,” a movie about slavery’s beginnings and how it became an integral part of US economy. Contact Sarah Klein.

## A Month of Sundays

**Two services at 9:15 am and  
11:15 am unless otherwise  
noted**



**Sunday, January 1**  
10:00 am only  
*"Beginnings and Endings"*  
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

**Sunday, January 8**  
*"Sweet Freedom"*  
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

**Sunday, January 15**  
*"The Spirituality of Stuff"*  
Eric Pourchot

**Sunday, January 22**  
*"Lessons From a Child: Anne  
Frank"*  
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

**Sunday, January 29**  
*A special guest minister to be  
announced*

See Page 4 for Sermon  
Descriptions

**Mount Vernon  
Unitarian Church**  
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Alexandria, VA 22307

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### **Caring Associates**

Contact information for the Caring Associate for the week and Caring Associate Coordinator (CAC) can be found each week in the Order of Service and in the Church Life section of the church website. As always, MVUC staff is willing to assist you during normal business hours. Please direct any questions or concerns to Betsy Stephens [betsys@cox.net](mailto:betsys@cox.net).

Drivers are needed for occasional rides to appointments in our area. Kindly contact Betsy Stephens if you can help the Caring Associates. Thanks.

### **Please Tell Us When Your Email Changes**

If your email address changes, please notify Esther Dickinson [esthergertrude@verizon.net](mailto:esthergertrude@verizon.net).

**Thank you!**

### **Sermons for Your Re-Hearing**

Each Sunday's service is recorded and available within a few days on the MVUC web site ([www.mvuc.org](http://www.mvuc.org) - worship/sermons). The services are also available on CD; to request a copy, see **Raleigh Romine**.