

Windmill

Mount Vernon Unitarian Church

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

JANUARY 1, 2006

REV-ving Up!—Words from Our Minister

by The Rev. Louis V. Schwebius

*"We will open the book. Its pages are blank.
We are going to put words on them ourselves.
The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day."
—Edith Lovejoy Pierce*



Dear Friends,

Here we are in January of 2006—the first month of a new year! We have crossed a boundary, shedding the old year as a snake sheds its skin, leaping into something new and young and different, something full of risks and peril, something full of hope and promise.

What is it about the first days of January that somehow makes us more conscious of the future about to unfold before us? Tradition mandates that this is a time for a retrospective of our lives and a time to resolve to be better selves. I have mixed feelings about resolutions. On the one hand, I affirm the process whereby we evaluate where we have been and make certain efforts to take control of where we might go from here. On the other hand, the future will unfold regardless of whether or not we lose weight, regardless of whether or not we improve communication with our kids, whether we stick to new resolutions or not. We make resolutions, I think, because of our yearning for reconciliation with ourselves. We are taught to strive for perfection, but perfection is a stern taskmaster and most of us fall short of our own ideals.

It is helpful from time to time to examine our lives, our relationships, and to promise ourselves to be better selves. But we don't have to do this only once a year. I believe that this is a spiritual activity which beckons to us all the time!

The past is irretrievably gone; the future has yet to unfold. The now is largely illusory because there is actually no one precise moment that we can grasp and hold and name "NOW." For even the NOW immediately becomes the past. The past then has no objective reality—it is gone. The future does not yet exist. The now is mostly an illusion. We can only know that time and everything in it—our architecture, our institutions, our very lives are impermanent.

So, let's not wait until January 1st to decide how to build or rebuild our lives. Every day throughout the year is new—and always full of possibilities. Every new dawn opens to us a brand new day and the threshold of a new week, a new month, a new year. The opportunity to do so is always with us. Let us all resolve to live our lives fully throughout each and every day of 2006!

I wish you a joyous, healthy and grace-filled new year!

In faith and love,
Rev. Lou

Program Highlights

Partner Church Brunch

Sun, Jan 1, 11:00 am
Hollin Hall

Good Companions

Tue, Jan 3, Jay Holmes
11:45 to 12:45—BYO Lunch
12:45 to 1:45—Speaker
Hollin Hall

Open Meeting on Ft Hunt Pre School

Sun, Jan 8, after both services
Thu, Jan 12, 7:30 pm
Meeting House/Commons

Friday Nighters Dancing Club

Fri, Jan 13, 8:30 pm
Remington Chapel

Linda Buttery Memorial Service

Sun, Jan 15, 3:00 pm
Remington Chapel

Festival of the Fine Arts

Sun, Feb 5, 11:00 am
Remington Chapel

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50th Anniversary Activities



Religious Education

by Barbara Gay Stoddard, Interim Director of Religious Education

Are you new to UU? Are you new to MVUC? Have you been a UU all your life? Have you been coming to MVUC for several years? Do you live alone? Do you live with a Mom and/or Dad, 2 kids and a dog? Are you an empty nester? Are you part of the sandwich generation? Do you have grandkids that live so very far away? Do your grandkids live in your home? Does anyone in your family ponder questions of life, love, loss, money, relationships, respect, broken relationships? Are you part of an interfaith family? Oh, the questions keep coming to mind and they trigger new questions. I ask all these questions for a reason. One reason is to share a couple of wonderful resources with you, which I'll get to in a moment. Over the years I have heard a comment from different people, most recently my own daughter. I sometimes ask folks why they don't come to church very often or why they don't bring their children to RE classes. They respond by saying that Sunday is the only time they can do things with their whole family. I understand what they are feeling, why my own daughter says the same thing. In her hectic, crazy life she finds it hard to get things together to get the family to her local UU church. This is the daughter that I call my born-again UU. She started teaching her children the 7 principles when they were 2 years old. This is the mom that uses UU rituals around the dinner table and is one of Ferry Beach's favorite youth leaders. But Sunday mornings—don't even talk about it. Even when I point out that attending the church service and RE classes is in fact doing something as a family. In fact attending MVUC on Sundays is part of developing some rather wonderful family traditions. But even with that sometimes our lives just can't handle another ritual, another tradition.

If you find that it gets harder and harder to join us on Sundays or during the week, I would like to give you two on-line UU resources that might be of interest to you and that might provide you with things you can do at home with your family.

First, check out www.uua.org/clf. This is the site for the Church of the Larger Fellowship. CLF's mission is to provide a ministry to isolated religious liberals, and to offer a spiritual home within the Unitarian

Universalist movement. You will find some wonderful sermons, on-line chat rooms, religious education materials for adults, youth and children, and more. I use it from time to time as a resource in some of our programs at MVUC. My favorite part of the website is <http://www.uua.org/clf/kidtalk>. Check it out; even if you make it to Sunday services, there is a wealth of information that you may enjoy sharing together as a family.

The other site, developed by the Family Matters Task Force of the UUA, is www.uua.org/families/fam_faith/index.html. Here, you will find a wonderful on-line booklet series called *Taking It Home: Families and Faith*. The booklet was written for congregations and families to use at home and in the community to support them through life transitions and with spiritual and ethical challenges. The purpose of the booklets is to bring families together to talk about significant and complex life issues and to bring the gifts of our Unitarian Universalist faith to the many dimensions of family life. The titles of the six booklets are:

1. *Let's Talk About Respect.*
2. *Let's Talk About Time/Money Balance.*
3. *Let's Talk About Marriage and Committed Relationships.*
4. *Let's Talk About Divorce and Broken Relationships.*
5. *Let's Talk About Families and Loss.*
6. *Let's Talk About Interfaith Families.*

Check them out as well as the other wonderful resources on this great site.

I hope you'll find some use for these resources in your family—shared with you in love. Happy New Year and Blessed Be.

—Barbara





OUR LARGER WORLD NEWS

Social Justice Programs at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
Love is the Teaching of this Church ... And Service is its Prayer

Unitarian Universalists Confront Oppression
Unitarian Universalists have been at the forefront of some important political issues involving oppression this past month that require people of faith to speak out.

On December 12, the UUA opposed a Supreme Court nomination for the first time in our history based on a thorough review of Judge Alito's judicial record and his insensitivities to civil rights and civil liberties.

On December 14, UU clergy were arrested for "kneeling in" against the immoral budget. UU clergy and leaders gathered with 200 other leaders of faith, and 115 people, including three UU ministers, were arrested in an act of civil disobedience for a moral budget.

Congregations are also signing up to host Living Wage Sunday Services and events on **Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend** (January 14–16).

This is part of the **Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign** and **UU Justice Sunday** (March 26). The purpose of these events is to raise the minimum wage, which has not been raised in eight years!

Planned Special Collections for 2006
January 22, 2006: Rev. Lou will be preaching a sermon on same-sex marriage and will be assisted by **Rev. Terry Ellen**, Executive Director of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice.

February 12, 2006: Beacon House

March 26, 2006: Partner Church

April 23, 2006: Green Sanctuary

May 21, 2006: UU Affordable Housing Corporation

June 11, 2006: Minister's Discretionary Fund

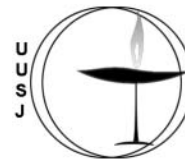
If you have an idea for another worthy group to receive funds from our monthly special collections, contact **Janice Fitzpatrick**, **Rev. Lou**, or **Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson**. The group should be external to the church and have values commensurate with Unitarian Universalism.

Affordable Housing Task Force

The Affordable Housing Task force met on December 18. We discussed impediments to the development of housing affordable to everyone. Most people think of Section 8 vouchers when they think of affordable housing. However, given the almost astronomical rise in housing prices, even professionals such as teachers, nurses, police, and firefighters have trouble qualifying to buy a house or finding an affordable place to rent.

The task force is planning to bring in a speaker to address some of the issues affecting the shortage of affordable housing. One of those factors is the **Dillon Rule**, which reserves all power to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and allows localities to do only what the state agrees to. We are also planning a forum on legal issues relating to housing, such as the Dillon Rule, which may be open to the larger community.

If you would like to participate, please contact **Ann Kaupp**, **Jack Hinman**, **Judy Stevens**, **Tina Bak-Brevik**, or **Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson**.



Transylvanian Trippers Planning Meeting
Janice and **Gary Fitzpatrick** and **Lisa Gillispie** have scheduled planning meetings for this summer's trip to Transylvania, Romania. The meetings will be on Sunday, January 22, between services and after the second service. We will distribute our planned itinerary and estimated costs for the trip, which will be held July 15 through 31. The itinerary includes a five-day stay in Szentháromság, our partner church village, as well as visits to a number of historic and Unitarian sites in Transylvania. This trip is a unique opportunity to experience the birthplace of Unitarianism as well as enjoy the rural simplicity of village life and homestays with partner church families. Please call **Gary** and **Janice Fitzpatrick** for questions related to the trip.

Construction Corner

Robin Roberts, Bill Clontz, and Ron Brandt

Board to Decide on Construction Plans

The Construction Task Force met with the Board of Trustees on December 13 to explain new developments in plans for improving the Meeting House. Because cost estimates prepared by the architectural firm (Cole & Denny) are higher than hoped, the Board and congregation will need to decide what to do. The congregation has shown strong support for the proposed design, so the Construction Task Force suggested staying with the plan but deferring part of the construction (probably the classrooms and Gath-

ering Room) for a few years so that in the meantime debt service does not become excessive.

At its January 3 meeting, the Board will discuss the situation and decide whether to call a Congregational Meeting later, perhaps in February. The congregation will be kept informed with announcements on Sundays and in future newsletters. Up-to-date information will also be available on the web at mvuc.org. Click on *[Building: Proposed New Addition](#)*.

Your Opportunity to Comment on Relations with the Fort Hunt Preschool

A committee appointed by the Board of Trustees to clarify relations between MVUC and the Fort Hunt Preschool will hold open meetings on Sunday, January 8 and Thursday, January 12. Interested members of the congregation are invited to comment on a draft report that will be available on January 3. After the hearings, committee members will prepare a final draft to be presented to the Board in February.

The open meetings will be held between services and after the second service on Sunday, January 8 and at 7:30 pm on Thursday, January 12. Childcare will be available to those who request it in advance. Com-

mittee members have been gathering information about such matters as:

- Effects of FHP's use of the Carriage House on the MVUC religious education program,
- The amount of the rental fee charged to FHP, and
- Qualitative benefits and liabilities to MVUC from presence of FHP.

The Committee welcomes input from as many people as possible. If you would like to give your opinion to the committee in writing, see **Wendy Burns**, chair, or any member: **Gioia Chilton, Jeff Gauger, Joanne Masterson, Ron Brandt, or Bill Clontz**.

MVUC's Immediate Witness Task Force

MVUC's Immediate Witness Task Force gathered 93 signatures on its petition to Congress to reconsider reauthorization of the USA Patriot Act and to give much more careful deliberation to any clauses of that act that they choose to enact again.

The petition noted that the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2004 adopted a statement of conscience urging that the act be repealed. The petition said its signers agreed and thus recommended that the law be allowed to expire in December 2005. But if some provisions are to be extended, the petition expressed preference for the Senate version as less threatening to our liberties than that under consideration in the House of Representatives.

While the petition was being circulated, a House-Senate conference of Republican members of the committees working on the act agreed on a new version that included most of the House provisions, and that version was approved again by the House. It was pending in the Senate as of December 15.

Al Searle initiated the idea of the petition, which was developed by Al and **Jay** and **Bea Holmes** and reviewed by **Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson**, MVUC program council coordinator for Our Larger World. The task force would welcome new members, perhaps a few years younger. If interested, please contact any member. The petition was sent electronically to Virginia's two senators and Representative James Moran. Mr. Moran voted against the conference bill.

Sermons for Your Re-hearing and Reading

Each Sunday's service is recorded on audio tape. If you would like a copy for yourself, a friend, or one of our church's shut-ins, please speak to **Raleigh Romine** or **Joanne Ell**. The texts of most of Rev. Lou's sermons are also available at www.mvuc.org.

Stirrings From Windmill Hill

Deadline for the mid-month newsletter, *Stirrings from Windmill Hill*, is the 5th of each month. Material should be submitted to **Mimi Stevens** by email (newsletters@mvuc.org) or left in the Newsletter box by the Church Office. *Stirrings* is not published in July or August.

A Month of Sundays

*All services at 9:30 am and 11:15 am
(except where noted)
in the Remington Chapel*

January 1—10 AM

The Pursuit of Happiness

Rev. Louis Schwebius

January 8

In the Beginning Was the Speech

Rev. Dr. Ted Spencer

January 15

Realizing The Vision

Rev. Louis V. Schwebius

January 22

The Wedding Bell Blues:

The Same Sex-Marriage Debate

(Special Second Collection to benefit

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice)

Rev. Louis V. Schwebius

January 29

God The Problem

Rev. Louis V. Schwebius

Mt. Vernon
Unitarian Church
1909 Windmill Lane
Alexandria, VA 22307

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UUs Can Influence Legislation in Virginia

The 2006 Virginia General Assembly will soon be here and with it, our opportunity to influence Virginia's legislation, budgets, policies and regulations. Similar efforts exist in our neighbor, Maryland, as well as in California.

It's been a few years since anyone has tried to organize a statewide legislative coalition of UUs. We're organizing again with the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Virginia (UULM-VA). The mission of the UULM-VA is to provide a consistent and coherent voice for UU principles and traditions in the Virginia General Assembly decision-making process. And we will facilitate effective witness on priority issues in coordination with other progressive churches and faith-based groups, including the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.)

Plan to attend the UULM-VA meeting on Saturday, January 14, at the First UU Church of Richmond, between 9:30 and 3:00 pm. For additional information contact Laura Dely at ldely@yahoo.com or check out the UUSJ web site at www.uusj.org.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

On December 11 we officially welcomed into our church community the following new members:

Kevin Bradley and Kristi Graves began attending MVUC shortly after moving to this area last fall. They are new parents to a daughter named **Maeve**. It was while they were working on their Ph.Ds in psychology from Virginia Tech. that they first began attending the UU church in Blacksburg. When they moved to Lexington, Kentucky so Kristi could complete a Post Doc. at the University of Kentucky, they continued their UU connections with a church there.

Kevin has his degree in industrial organization psychology and works for the Federation of State Boards for Physical Therapists. Kristi is on maternity leave from Georgetown University where she is involved in research with clinical health psychology issues related to cancer. Kevin's interests are basketball and skiing, Kristi loves to read and exercise. Both enjoy traveling, with their most recent trip being to Scotland.

Lynn Kennedy and Joan Darrah were first introduced to MVUC when they attended the memorial service of member Toby Cedar, a neighbor of theirs. Since that time they have come regularly, ushering once a month and most recently lending a hand in the kitchen for Holiday Shop. They chose MVUC because it was "where we both felt comfortable and found everyone so friendly, interesting and accepting." Lynne and Joan have been partners for 15 years. Joan graduated from Hartwick College and joined the Navy where she was an intelligence officer for 29 1/2 years. During her career she had an opportunity to live in such wonderful places as Hawaii and Spain.

Lynne earned her BA from Marymount College in Tarrytown, NY in Political Science, got her Master's degree in International Relations from Georgetown University, and spent 3 1/2 years as a Catholic nun. She then began work as a reference librarian with the Congressional Research Service in the Library of Congress where she worked for 30 years. Early in her career, she earned her Library degree from Catholic University. Both retired in 2002. They are staying very busy with all kinds of activities including volunteer work with UCM. They are both very involved in the New Alexandria Citizens Association where they are both co-captains. They also usher at Arena Stage and Signature theaters and have been helping out the Democratic Party.

Through Vince Patton, Joan learned about the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and she is now on its board working to change the law so gay servicemembers can serve openly in the military. Joan also teaches sailing at Belle Haven Marina. Lynn enjoys water aerobics with several other MVUC member and golfing. They both enjoy traveling. Their most recent adventure was an barge trip in southern France. They share their home with K.D., their two year old Boxer.

Michael and Miriam Snedecor discovered UU through the Belief-o-matic web site. They saw our sign on Ft Hunt Rd and began attending during the summer.

They were looking for an open-minded experience for themselves and their children, and are pleased that they have found it. Their daughter, **Audrey** is 4 1/2, and son, **Jace** is 2 1/2 years old. Michael is a physician in the Air Force and received his

training at Baylor Medical. Miriam is a graduate of the Air Force Academy in engineering sciences. They met when they were both stationed in Texas. Miriam is now a stay-at-home mom. She enjoys running, just completed the Marine Corps Marathon, and qualified for the Boston Marathon in April. Her latest interest is learning to play the piano. Michael loves to be on the computer when he has free time.

Nancy Pickering has been attending our church for about a year and a half. Born in NJ, she grew up in many different states, and has lived in VA the longest—more than thirty years. She graduated from Radford, has a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from George Mason and is working on her second masters. She taught kindergarten for 22 years in Arlington and is now teaching pre-school in the public school system through the Virginia Pre-school Initiative. Her favorite pastime is line dancing and she travels sometimes for long weekends just to dance. She loves the exercise that she gets from dancing and enjoys the social experience as well. In fact, she used to attend a line dance class here at MVUC years ago. Nancy is especially happy to have found a church home, as she is coping with the recent loss of her mother, with whom she was very close. She made goodies for our recent bake sale and is planning on getting more involved by volunteering with UCM.

Ilene Gillispie, a sophomore at West Potomac High School, has been attending MVUC with her parents, Lisa and Michael Gillispie, since she was 2 years old. She has shared her talent for singing and her willingness to volunteer when needed (most recently the Christmas Holiday craft workshop) here at MVUC. Presently she is co-chair for the Youth Steering committee at MVUC and workshop coordinator for the district. At West Potomac High school she is a member of the Colonial Singers and active in drama. Ilene has a strong attachment to our Romanian partner church and the families of our village, as a result of visiting there 4 times, and plans to join the group going there again this coming summer.

Jane Elkin is a life-long Unitarian. While growing up in Montgomery county, she attended Cedar Lane UU church and later while working as a patent examiner for the US Patent & Trademark Office she was a member of Arlington UU church. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, and holds a master's degree from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. She joined Mt. Vernon because she wants her two children **Jack**, 8 and **Jefferson**, 3, to have a religious education. After ten years away from a UU church, she is ready to fit into a new church home. On Sunday mornings here at Mt. Vernon, she sees her sister, Annie Stewart. Jane works full time at home-making, managing her children's activities, and volunteering at Westridge Elementary school. She enjoys traveling, fitness, cooking and skiing. Jane and her husband live in Woodbridge.

The Grimmer family who were also introduced would like to say thank you to everyone for extending such a warm welcome to them and they look forward to becoming an active part of this church community.

—Sandy Peterson, New Member chair