

February
2007

Cobblestone News

Unitarian Universalist Church of Cortland: 607-753-0020. Web site: <http://www.uucortland.uuism.org/>



Self acceptance

Have patience with all things but first with yourself. Never confuse your mistakes with your value as a human being.

You're a perfectly valuable, creative, worthwhile person simply because you exist. And no amount of triumphs or tribulations can ever change that.

Unconditional self-acceptance is the core of a peaceful mind.

-St. Francis de Sales

Chris' Corner

"Our Vibrant Future"

The retreat last weekend gathered fourteen members and friends of the church at the YWCA. Anne Marie Alderman, our facilitator, did an excellent job of getting us focused on only a few priorities and only for next year. The group overwhelmingly endorsed bringing a part-time minister again next year. It was also decided that repairing and restoring the building, especially the belfry and removing the old chimney, were important. The third priority was creating a "caring community", which is a process that we will be learning more about.

Please attend the congregational meeting this Sunday, February 18 after the service. Members only will be asked to vote to authorize the Board to proceed in principle with bringing a part-time minister next year. Details of the cost and process will be provided at a subsequent meeting. In

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Barb's Column



Hi All,

As we enter what will likely be my last four months with you, I want to tell all of you how honored I have been serving as your minister these past nineteen months. We have accomplished a great deal together. Last year pledges doubled, attendance has more than doubled and we have welcomed almost twenty new members! There is renewed energy in applying for grants, new and energetic faces on the board and in committees and a general sense that this little church is beginning to function from a place of abundance, an abundance of community, activity and energy, rather than a place of scarcity.

The building needs work,

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always has and always will and so the work will continue. In some ways it is the history and the work that bonds you and good progress has been made with the grants. But, most importantly, it is the people inside who keep the doors open. Without all of you and your shared values and concerns, the building would be of little consequence.

One of the great challenges in a congregation is conflict management. Churches, after all, are human constructs. In such a place we each bring our baggage with us hidden in certain compartments of our lives. Our job is not to bury conflict and let it fester, but to welcome conflict with respect, and allow it to be transformative rather than destructive. There will never be an end to conflict, it is, by the very fact of our individuality, a force of who we are. The ongoing trick is to allow ourselves to open up and live our principles of justice, the democratic process and most importantly, the absolute belief in the worth and dignity of each individual.

A few weeks ago, we were challenged in an unexpected and somewhat uncomfortable way. A woman came in during the Forum in desperate need of money. She was elderly, her husband, who supported them, had had a heart attack and she needed money immediately. It was a stretch for many of us, including myself, after all she was interrupting my Forum! However, being a little familiar with the mind numbing lack of worth and dignity that real poverty can produce, I asked for money on her behalf. She then came again, unexpectedly, during the Celebration and again, it was uncomfortable. But she put a face on poverty in our own backyards. I think sometimes, we walk to the post office to put a check in the mail to a charity in Africa never seeing the homeless person on the sidewalk. Poverty in this country is the product of many factors, most of which are out of the control of the individual. It is not as simple as telling a person to get a job or go to social services as I have learned, unfortunately, from personal experience. But this is conversation for another day. Suffice it to say, nothing is ever as easy or simple as it may appear from the outside.

Ministry, so they teach us in seminary, is about more than Sunday morning preaching. It is about community building, pastoral care, in the hospital and also during Sunday morning fellowship. It is about caring for our children, our community and the world of which we are a part. It is about accessing the rich resources of our larger Unitarian Universalist denomination. Ministry is about creating a sense of spirituality and religion in a place and among the congregation. It is about challenging all of us to live our values, not simply espouse our views. It is about keeping people involved and interested in the work of the church. I have learned a great deal from each of you about ministry. I hope you have learned something from me as well.

Learning to live your values is the greatest challenge of all!!!!

I wish you all great peace and love.

In the Spirit of Shalom,

Barb

Some wise words to consider as we move along in the year 2007...

From THE FOUR AGREEMENTS written by Don Miguel Ruiz

-A gentle reminder-

BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD.

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean, avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY.

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be a victim of needless suffering.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS.

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement you can completely transform your life.

ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST!

Your best is going to change from moment to moment. It will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

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addition, Committee Chairs will give status reports on their committees' activities.

The funds to support a part-time minister come almost exclusively from our pledges, so the pledge campaign or canvass is important to realizing our goal. The Canvass Kick-off Dinner will take place Saturday, March 3rd, at 6 pm in the social hall. This is designed to be a fun event for fellowship, good food and a good time. You will not be asked for a pledge at the dinner.

The next step in the canvass will be a series of small group dinners hosted by members or friends of the congregation during March. If you would like to host a dinner, please sign up on the board in the social hall. Hosts are responsible for providing the location, a main dish and beverages. The guests who sign up to attend each dinner will bring the rest of the food. A Finance and Pledge Committee member will attend each dinner to gather suggestions for what people want to see next year, to provide background information on the canvass, and to answer questions. Attendees will receive a pledge card but will not be asked to complete it that evening.

Once all the pledges have been received, the Board will propose a budget to the congregation to vote on for next year. Please help us keep the momentum going by supporting our vision as best as you are able. Contributions of time and energy are also very important to our future. Together, finances and creative energy will manifest the vibrant future we desire.

Chris Ogden,
Board President



"Life is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects."

-Thomas Berry

Reflections

Now is the time of solitude. The winter months seem to encourage this, though we may not always welcome it. In the quiet moments, if we let it, we can come face to face with ourselves. The solitude can be experienced as loneliness or aloneness, the first uncomfortable, the second less so. Either way there is a helpful practice (excerpted from the Yoga Journal, Nov. '05) that can bring you spiritual healing

First, find a place where you won't be disturbed. Get in a comfortable position and keep a journal handy. Begin by making an intention. It could be something like this: "I'll spend (time allotted) alone with myself, consciously exploring the experience, and making space for insight and peace to arise".

You might want to spend time exploring an issue or question you have. Let's suppose that you want to work with loneliness. You could start by silently asking yourself the question, "Where does my loneliness come from? Or just work with the words, "My feeling of loneliness."

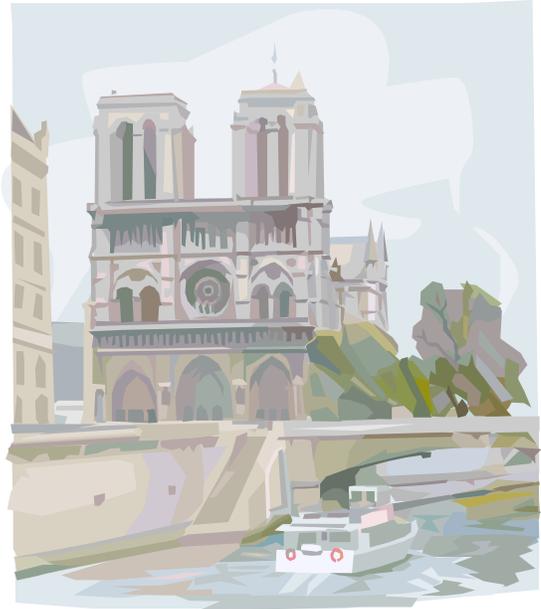
Holding the words in your mind, notice the feelings, images, and memories that arise. Write down anything that you want to record about this. The best way to do this is with gentle curiosity.

Now take the inquiry into contemplative space. Close your eyes, focus on your breath, and sit for a few moments, centering yourself. During this process, if a thought arises, label it "Thought" and let it go.

When you feel centered, ask this question, feeling that you are asking it of your deep intuitive self: "What can you tell me about loneliness and its antidote?"

Then write whatever comes up, without censoring. The words that arise may not be so different from the words that came from your earlier inquiry. But often you'll find that when you take the inquiry into the contemplative

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Newsletter Editors

Chris and John Ogden

space, surprising insights arise.

You can use this process with any question or decision you might have. As you do, you should notice how much insight your soul is capable of giving you when you allow yourself the time to engage the healing spaciousness of solitude.

May peace be yours.

Chris Ogden

A final thought . . .

You can either complain that rose bushes have thorns – or rejoice that thorn bushes have roses.



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*Congregation active
since 1813
Building dedicated
in 1837*