

The Flaming Chalice

Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta

Located at: 1951 East Park Avenue
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2342
 Valdosta, GA 31604
 Minister: Rev. Fred Howard
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Tom Aiello – President	Carol Stiles - Vice-President /Program Chair
Rosie Asbury –Treasurer	Susan Bailey - Director of R.E.
Kimberly Tanner – Director of Membership	Jim Ingram –Director of Building & Grounds –
Tom Phillips – Secretary	Carol Stiles – Newsletter Ed.

Please contact us by e-mail at uuvaldosta@yahoo.com

What's going on... **December 2016**

Sun	Dec. 4	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – Rev. Fred Howard, “The Absolutely No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant” Meet & Greet after the service
Sun	Dec. 11	11:00 AM	Religious Education for children Service – Rev. Dr. Anna Hall, “Finding Ourselves in the Story: Sacred Stories as a Tool for Transformation.” Meet & Greet after the service
M	Dec. 12	11:00AM	Break Bread delivery
Sun	Dec. 18	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service -- Rev. Fred Howard, “The Moravian Lovefeast” RE meeting and potluck dinner! After the service!
Sun	Dec. 25	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – Carol Stiles, UU Holiday Service Meet & Greet after the service

December, 2016...

The winter holidays are upon us! Join us at UU when you can!

Mission Statement

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta is committed to building a community of acceptance and love, where all people may strive for intellectual, moral, and spiritual enlightenment. We offer a place to celebrate life's passages and to join in social action on behalf of local and global communities.

Sunday Services

Sunday, Dec. 4 – Rev. Fred Howard, “The Absolutely No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant”

This Sunday we will have our first ever Christmas Pageant. The presentation will be multigenerational, with the children reenacting the Christmas story as narrated by our youth and adults. The traditional story and music will be there, along with a distinct Unitarian slant and an invitation to a fresh interpretation. Come expecting a blessing of spontaneity and surprise!

Sunday, Dec. 11 – Rev. Dr. Anna Hall, “Finding Ourselves in the Story: Sacred Stories as a Tool for Transformation.”

Stories have the capacity to entertain us, inspire us, and provoke us. They can also be tools to transform us, if we are willing to find ourselves in the story in new and surprising ways. Rev. Dr. Anna Hall will use seasonal stories from different traditions and cultures to illustrate a lesson on this powerful method for change.

Sunday, Dec. 18 – Rev. Fred Howard, “The Moravian Lovefeast”

This will be our seventh annual Moravian Lovefeast. It is a simple service consisting of the singing of Christmas carols, a brief homily, and the serving of a homemade sweet roll and hot drink. The sweetness of the roll and the warmth of the cocoa are physical reminders both of our common human need for food and drink and the comfort and satisfaction we enjoy being a part of a covenanted community. Come and be a part of this tradition – sure to delight your taste buds and kindle a warm holiday spirit.

Share the Plate Sunday: Contributions to the plate, not otherwise designated as pledge, will go to UUSC’s Guest at Your Table program, as part of our annual congregational contribution. In addition, each family will receive a GAYT donations box and information on joining and supporting UUSC.

Sunday, Dec. 25 – Carol Stiles, UU Holiday Service

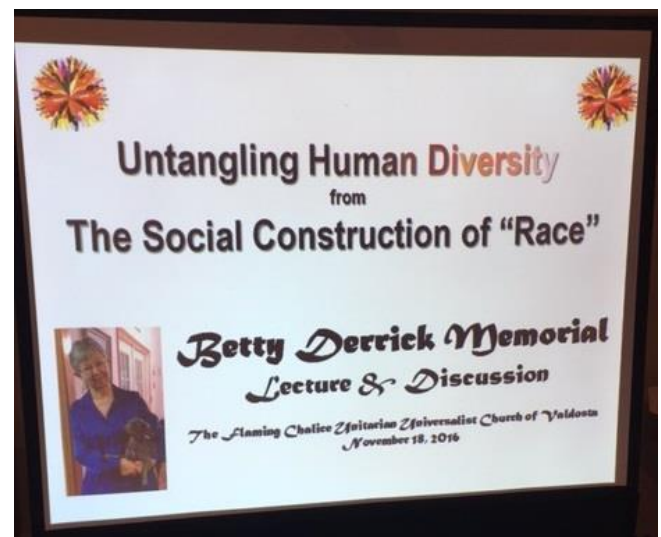
Although many may be travelling or with family, we will gather together in community this Sunday as usual. There will be a brief message and sharing of stories from various holiday traditions, along with music and singing and food! Consider bringing a special treat from your holiday traditions to share with the congregation.

Religious Education

For Children: The RE program for children under 15 years of age meets at 10:45 AM concurrent with the Sunday morning service. Older young people will remain with the adult service. Two adults are needed each Sunday to help with RE. Sign up on the volunteer list at the church or through Carol Stiles and the Worship Team.

Betty Derrick Memorial Lecture - and Discussion!

About 20 people attended the first Betty Derrick Memorial Lecture and Discussion on Friday, November 18, 7:00 p.m. at the UU Church! Dr. Leslie Sandra Jones, Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at Valdosta State University, presented the topic will be “Untangling Biological Diversity from the Social Construction of Race.” The presentation was followed by a discussion and questions for Leslie. Our thanks to all who brought snacks and helped set up for the evening.



Social Action Activities

Break Bread Together

On Sunday, Dec. 11, after the service we will prepare the gift bags for the individuals (about 5 or 6) on our delivery route. We will need small gift items, toiletries, etc., to place in the gift bags. Please see Sue or Carol if you would like to contribute.

We deliver meals with the Break Bread Together program on the 2nd Monday (and 5th when there is one) of each month. Let David Rodgers know if you are interested in helping with this service. Several volunteers make it possible to adjust to changing personal schedules. Please let David know if you are available to deliver meals. It is helpful to have two people on the route.



Ministerial Musings

Rev Fred Howard

We are entering into the season of darkness when we will be waiting for the light to return. No matter what our personal theology may be, the cycle of the seasons is a part of human experience. Awaiting the light has become a part of all the midwinter traditions. We await the light, whether we celebrate Solstice, Hanukkah, Christmas, or we're just a non-theist, an impartial observer of the cycle of the seasons.

The word advent is a version of a Latin word meaning "coming." Thus the season of Advent is a time of expectancy, of anticipative waiting, for the coming of light. Perhaps one of the reasons the nativity is so moving has to do with the pregnancy of Mary as the very embodiment of anticipation, of expectancy, culminating in the birth of Jesus, known as the "light" of the world. Christian traditions light Advent candles in Advent wreaths on the successive Sundays leading up to Christmas in a ritual of anticipation. No one has been able to trace the origin of these Advent rituals with any certainty, but they do bear a striking similarity to some ancient folk traditions where a wagon wheel was brought inside and decorated with boughs of greenery and illuminated with candles as a part of a midwinter celebration. Perhaps the ritual of lighting candles in a wreath long predated

Christianity. I have no trouble accepting that possibility. It neither detracts nor enhances the power of the ritual for me. The idea of lighting a candle against the darkness has an innate appeal to me regardless of which religions appropriate it and how they package it.

Advent can also be understood as a time of anticipation, of preparation, for meeting the divine, for welcoming the divine into our lives. Not only was Jesus called the light of the world, he also told his followers "You are the light of the world." For this Advent season, I suggest we dwell for a moment on these words of Marianne Williamson:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

May it be so for all of us this holiday season.

Fred

Rev. Fred Howard is our part-time minister. He may be contacted by email (preferable) at fredhoward3622@gmail.com. He is available for weddings and rites of passage ceremonies by prearrangement.

Games Night

Due to the holidays, the regularly scheduled Games Night will not be held in December – watch for the return of this and other activities in January.

Movie Night

Rev. Fred Howard is seeking input about continuing Pizza and a Movie Night in the future, please send him an e-mail message (fredhoward3622@gmail.com) or contact him at a service.

ABOUT OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Our condolences to...

- ❖ Dee Tait and family. Dee's son, Mitch, passed away in Colorado the week of Thanksgiving.
- ❖ Our condolences also to Anne and John Tait and family, on the passing of both of Anne's parents, Sylvia and Emory Warrick, in the past few weeks.

Keep in your thoughts...

- ❖ Our members and friends who are experiencing health concerns.

Congratulations to....

- ❖ Philip and Crystal Miller, who had a small, informal marriage ceremony on Halloween in their costumes. Lilith attended as a black cat and Kimberly attended as a witch, of course.

UU Valdosta Caring Committee

Dee Tait chairs this committee. If you would be able to help, when requests for help are received, please let her know. Other members include David Rodgers, Kimberly Tanner, and Carol Stiles.

UU Church of Valdosta Board of Directors Meeting News November 6, 2016

Highlights of the UU Board meeting:

- Made plans for RE meeting and potluck after the service on Nov. 20.
- We have registered for a table for the Azalea Festival in March, joint effort with CUUPS.
- Discussed moving the nursery to other back room. Need to plan another work day with a focus on this after the holidays.
- Next Meeting: Sunday, December 4, 9:30 a.m.

Communicating at UU Valdosta

Newsletter Editor: Carol Stiles,
Newsletter deadline is the 15th of the previous month!

If you prefer reading this newsletter on the website, e-mail the editor to remove your name from the mailing label list.

Worship Team Chair: Carol Stiles
Website Manager: Carol Stiles
e-Mail List: Contact Carol Stiles
Local Publicity: Dee Tait

Thank You! Thank You!

For providing beautiful plants and flower arrangements for the services: Amy Jackson

For lay-leading services: Doug Tanner, Carol Stiles, Stephen O'Kane, and Lars Leader

For speaking at Sunday Services: Pamela Johnson, Lars Leader

For providing music at services: Rhett Watson

For Meet & Greet: Rosie Asbury, Dawn Renner

For leading RE and nursery care: Sue Bailey and Teagan Dunn

For assisting with RE and nursery: Rosie Asbury, Rachel Gardner, Diane Holliman, Sean Richardson, Ashley Mills

For volunteering as visitor greeter: Joyce Rapier, Buddy Rapier

For folding and mailing the newsletter: Dee Tait

For sweeping sidewalks: Richard Watson, who often makes a trip early Sunday a.m. to finish this task!

For taking out trash and recycling: Dee Tait, Lars Leader, and others.

For delivering Break Bread meals: David Rodgers

For photos for the newsletter: Kimberly Tanner

For coordinating the Caring Committee: Dee Tait



Worship Team

Each Sunday, there will be a sign-up sheet on the table at the back of the sanctuary for sign up for the upcoming services. You can also send an e-mail to Carol Stiles and she will put you on the list for that task.

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in becoming a member of our fellowship, we encourage you to talk with our minister, Rev. Fred Howard or Membership Director, Kimberly Tanner. We welcome your questions, and we extend an open invitation to all who want to join our liberal community of faith.

At the Church-in-the-Woods...

Taoist Tai Chi – Monday and Thursday, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. **New Beginner Class Starting Tuesday September 6, 2016, Tuesday and Friday mornings 10:30 - 11:30 at the UU church.** The continuing Tai Chi class will continue to meet in the evenings, Monday and Thursday. Contact Dennis Bogyo or Luana Goodwin. You can e-mail the group at georgia@taoist.org

Sangha Tuesdays

6:00-7:30 PM at the church

The KTD Buddhist reading and meditation group meets on Tuesday evenings at the church. Everyone interested in Buddhist practice and meditation is welcome. Tea, 6:00 – 6:30: Buddhist shamata meditation, 6:30 – 7:00; Discussion of reading, 7:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Oaken Circle CUUPS Chapter

Wednesday evenings, 7:00 p.m.

Oaken Circle, a chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, meets each Wednesday evening, with an officers meeting on the first Wednesday of the month.

You can contact the group by e-mail at: valdostaoakencircle@gmail.com or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/oakencircle/>

Guest at Your Table (GAYT 2016)

Lars Leader kicked off our Guest at Your Table (GAYT) 2016 program on Nov. 27. Guest At Your Table is a program in which information about various human rights issues around the world is made available to members of the congregation, who can then share this information with other family members and friends. Information available includes *Stories of Hope*, featuring people around the world who UUSC works with to turn human rights into realities." There is also a fundraising component to GAYT - donation boxes and more information available at the church.

The following information is from the UUSC website about GAYT:

Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is UUSC's annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about our work to advance human rights.

This year's program theme is Defying Hate, based on the recent release of the Ken Burns documentary about UUSC founders Martha and Waitstill Sharp, *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War* (on PBS). The Sharps defied hate by helping Jews and dissidents escape Nazi Germany using brave, creative methods, many of which could have caused them to be imprisoned, tortured, or worse. Learn more about the Sharps and UUSC's beginnings: <http://www.uusc.org/the-history-of-uusc/>

UUSC is proud to carry forward the Sharps' legacy by continuing to defy hate and protect the lives and rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and other marginalized groups, both here in the United States and throughout the world.

On the following page, you can read the message provided by the UUSC for the 2016 GAYT Sunday Service, which Lars shared with us as part of the service on Nov. 27.

UUSC Guest at Your Table Sermon 2016 (excerpted)

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Joan Javier Duvall, Minister in Montpelier, VT

A familiar biblical story to many of us is the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this age-old teaching tale from the Gospel of Luke, a man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he is attacked by robbers. He is beaten, stripped of his clothes, and left on the side of the road.

First, a priest comes across him. The priest crosses to the other side of the road and keeps going. A Levite then comes across him and does the same. These were supposed to be especially religious and pious men in the Jewish community, so the story takes a twist when a Samaritan, someone an ordinary Jewish person would have regarded with contempt, stops and helps the man, bandaging his wounds and taking him to a nearby inn where he can recover.

With his simple action, the Samaritan defies hate in that moment.

The Alamours [one of the families, featured in *Stories of Hope*] fled their home city of Daraa, Syria, after the government responded to protests against Bashar al-Assad with tanks, helicopters, and troops. They escaped to Jordan just before their home was destroyed by the civil war. In Jordan, they were safe, but they couldn't work or gain legal status. After three years in limbo, they were resettled by the United States to southern California, but they still face isolation in a new country and are haunted by the violence and fear that caused them to flee their beloved home.

Engaging with the story of the Alamour family, we must grapple with the reality of trauma and exclusion faced by many people who are displaced. One of our central religious tasks is to put ourselves in others' shoes to try to understand the particular suffering they might be facing. The Alamours carry with them the trauma of leaving behind all that is familiar and witnessing violence and terrorism in what was once their safe home. In addition to being in a new and unfamiliar land, they now face a society where many regard them as suspect and their religion as reprehensible. ...

We can also defy hate by taking responsibility for the culture we live in and resisting those voices that speak from a place of hate and fear instead of acceptance and love. Speaking out against hate, especially in this politically charged atmosphere, is an important action. Our words matter, and we can choose whether they will be used as weapons to tear people down or as tools to build Beloved Community

To defy hate is to promote an expansive notion of inclusion and welcome with our actions and with our words. It is to extend the universal love that is in us and surrounds us to all we encounter, especially those who live on the margins of society. We can speak out, both in our public and private lives, against hateful rhetoric that maligns Muslims, recent immigrants, and refugees. We can fill the nooks and crannies of public and private discourse with words of welcome and inclusion, saying with conviction that there is room for all, that there is no one way to worship, and that our differences are not to be feared but embraced.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- The inherent dignity and worth of every person,
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations,
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations,
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning,
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large,
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all,
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Grateful for the religious pluralism, which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant promising to one another our mutual trust and support.