

THE UNITARIAN NEWSLETTER a publication of

# THE Unitarian Church of Staten Island

Founded in 1852

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Vision We are an inviting spiritual community guided by our principles in all that we do.

Mission

The mission of the UCSI is to:

- open our hearts and home in order to enrich our community;
- extend ourselves to help make the world a better place;
- support and nurture people as they search for their own truth; and, share the responsibility for sustaining our cherished home.

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Director of Religious Education Coordinator, Megan Lloyd Joiner  
Director of Music, Dr. Carolyn Clark

Church Secretary, Stella Fishman  
Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds, Brian Fontana  
Building Attendant, Frank Caterina

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## UPCOMING SERVICES:

Our December services will include a multi-generational service on **Sunday, December 20th** entitled "**A Star Is Born: Celebration of the Light and Dark.**" Held at our regular service time at 10:45 am, this service is about our origins as "star stuff". It will include a Lion King skit, two musical meditations and another participatory story about how the ancestors are our stars and a "cosmic communion" at the end. Music offered by Dr. Carolyn Clark.

After the service, volunteers who can please stay and help wrap presents for the men in the homeless shelter at the church.

Our annual **Christmas Eve service** will take place at 7:30 pm. *Each Night A Child Is Born is a Holy Night* will include a short play adapted by Morna Martell, a number of Christmas carol favorites, a homily and closing with mitten tree offerings (see below) and a traditional candle lighting. This service remembers the spirit of love, compassion and forgiveness engendered by that holy night so long ago and the promise we each have for service, compassion and generosity.

Bring some cookies or a healthy snack for our Christmas Eve potluck immediately after the service.

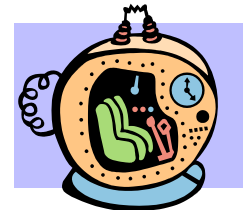
**Christmas Eve Mitten Tree:** Bring a pair of mittens or other warm apparel for a child or youth and we will distribute those donations to children in need. The offering on Christmas Eve will go towards the Minister's Discretionary Fund which provides for those from our congregation or others in our community who have temporary emergency needs.

Our New Year's service will take place on **December 27th** at the regular time, at **10:45 am**. Entitled "**The Flame of Renewal: A Burning Bowl New Year's Service**", we will join in burning the regrets, and shortcomings from this year and carry forward the promise and possibilities of 2010. Kiya Heartwood will share her musical talents with us once again.

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**January 3, 10:45 a.m.**  
"Devices for Time Travel"

*In the pulpit:* Daniel Gregoire  
Musician: Dr. Carolyn Clark



Time-travel is a frequent tool used by Science Fiction writers to create exciting plots for their movies and books. As a result, the idea of traveling through time has long been relegated to the special-effects realms of literature. However, all of us, for better or worse, engage in our own forms of Time-travel. This sermon will explore the effective use of our individual and collective forms of Time-travel for spiritual growth. We will look at the concept of "time" and its role in our lives, helping us in our journeys toward greater truth and meaning.

Daniel Gregoire is an MDiv Candidate currently studying full-time at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. Daniel intends on becoming a Parish Minister in the UUA upon graduation. For the past three years Daniel has been the Youth Advisor at Community Church in New York City. He is an active member of All Souls Church where he is currently Co-Facilitating a bi-weekly Prayer Group called Sacred Paths. Additionally, Daniel has worked as a consultant helping both the All Souls Young Adult Group and the Metro New York District Young Adult Steering Committee to develop Covenant Statements. He is also involved in other district level activities, including the annual Sophia Fahs Religious Education Camp on Shelter Island where he is the Youth Coordinator. Daniel enjoys painting, architecture, Star Trek and 19th Century British Literature.

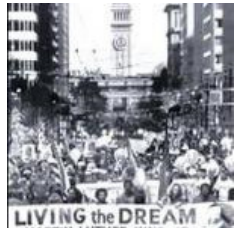
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**January 10, 10:45 a.m.****“Voices from the Staten Island Latino Community”***In the pulpit:*

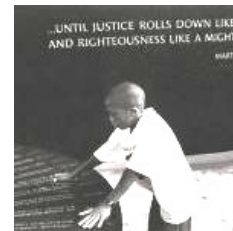
Join us for our sermon series “Standing on the Side of Love” about different Staten Island communities. This morning, we are pleased to have speakers from the Latino community share with us their experience of life here on Staten Island

**January 17, 10:45 a.m.****“The Fire Next Time”**

*In the pulpit:* Rev. Susan Karlson  
 Guest Music: Faith Music Ministry



<http://www.mlkonline.net/picturegallery/main.php/d/29-2/march2.jpg>  
<http://www.mlkonline.net/picturegallery/main.php/d/73-2/martin-luther-king-quote.jpg>



In his book, *The Fire Next Time*, African American writer, James Baldwin wrote about race and identity: “If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country and change the history of the world.” (quoted in Eboo Patel’s book, *Acts of Faith*)

Baldwin is not seeing through rose colored glasses but viewing race relations through a lens that he explored in many of his essays and novels. In this time, with the election of an African American president, some people say that this changes and heals the racial divide—we are in a post-racism world. Racism is still strongly with us despite all the legal and societal changes. This service will bear witness to the divides and the work we still have to do as “relatively conscious” people. Faith Music Ministry will provide the moving music for this service. Please join us as we honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream that still calls to us.

**January 24, 10:45 a.m.****“What Makes You Come Alive?” (Small Group Ministry service)**

*In the pulpit:* Rev. Susan Karlson and the active Small Group Ministry

<http://www.fotosearch.com/bthumb/DSN/DSN022/1815654.jpg>



**“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”~Howard Thurman**

The Rev. Howard Thurman, theologian and inspirational African American minister and activist, spoke these words that have been adapted and quoted by many others. This morning our service is about the meaning and purpose that calls to us and keeps us alive and engaged. Our active Small Group Ministry will be co-leading the service as we bring the Small Group Ministry program alive again.

**January 31, 10:45 a.m.****“Are We All LOST?”**

*In the pulpit:* Rev. Susan Karlson  
 Music Director: Dr. Carolyn Clark

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The popular television series, *LOST*, enters its final season in February. The show is of interest because of the transformation of the characters who have been in a plane wreck that leaves them stranded on an island – somewhere. The island is inhabited by people called “Others” who are often considered evil and untrustworthy. As the show continues, the viewer finds out about the island inhabitants and the painful and joyful parts of their lives pre-island that influence the people they are in the midst of chaos and tragedy. This service seeks to explore two questions—are we all simply a composite of our experiences up to this point or are we something more? And how do we understand what is at the heart of the human experience and our relationships with one another?

*The Congregational Art Show that hangs in the Sanctuary is the work of the Arts Committee in response to our annual theme of Deepening Roots/Spreading Branches. Enjoy it until December 27<sup>th</sup>.*

## *Simply Susan*

January 2010

The winter season has always impelled people to gather kindling and build fires to keep warm. It is the season where we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this country are most aligned with kindling the spirit of warmth and good will. These are all good metaphors and appropriate to the holiday season and the beginning of the winter season. You expect to hear about these things from the minister. I want to talk about magnificent fires of another sort though—the fire of a supernova for change set ablaze in this congregation.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, our service will be about this planet's birth in the natural combustion of fiery stars. Well, really, that service will be about how we all come from star stuff, from the whirling, swirling cosmos and all the elements that still are in everyday objects we see, hear or feel and indeed, in our molecules and every cell in our bodies, in the water we drink and the air we breathe. We are kinfolk to the cosmos. We are bound by common links that are almost unimaginable and incomprehensible.

That's on the macro level and we human beings often operate on the micro level. Let's just think a little about what fuels our passions and sets us ablaze. What sets your imagination to spinning and what fires your heart to action? Does it involve those close to you or wider circles that stir you?

In this church, we are beginning to stoke some fires that were kindled over a year ago—our small group ministry program. Begun in the spring of 2008, three small groups appeared on the Unitarian Church of Staten Island's horizon. They offered a kind of radiance and glow that could foster burning embers of all sorts in this congregation. We are re-kindling this program this winter and invite you to be a part of one of these small groups which will begin in February, 2010.

Some of you know about Small Group Ministries but usually I find there is some confusion about what makes these groups different from other groups and why they hold such promise for Unitarian Universalist congregations. Small Group Ministries are groups of six to ten people. Often, they form close bonds that connect members to the group, the larger church community and to the wider community. There are four unique parts to Small Group Ministries (they are also known as Covenant groups in some Unitarian Universalist congregations): 1. each group establishes its own covenant which guides how they will function in right relationship with each other, 2. group members commit to regular attendance —generally twice a month, until there is a period of open enrollment again, 3. each group does some kind of service project together that links them to the wider church or community, and 4. the groups have a trained facilitator or co-facilitators that attend regular meetings with the other facilitators and with the minister.

We now have a Small Group Ministry Coordinating Group consisting of Jill Hueckel and Judith Davison who are working with me to insure that this program has widespread support and burns brightly from here on out. Please contact me ([PSKARL3@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PSKARL3@GMAIL.COM) or (347) 466-0864) if you are interested in the Small Group Ministry program or if you have any questions, concerns or joys about this area of church life. Registration forms are available in the Library or the Parish Hall (or complete the one below). Having been involved with Small Group Ministries in several other congregations, I know the spontaneous combustion and spiritual growth they can bring. Our service on January 24<sup>th</sup> will be coordinated by the remaining Small Group Ministry and me. We're excited about lifting up this pulsing program and offering it anew to our community.

In this holy season when the light outside is dim, may you each find the brightest star within to guide you through the dark night,

*Susan*

**Rev. Susan Karlson will be away on spiritual retreat from Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> – Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The Rev. Alison Cornish will provide emergency pastoral coverage from Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>. The Rev. Carlton Smith will provide coverage from Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> – January 6, 2010. Rev. Karlson's voice mail, cell: 347-466-0864, Parsonage: 718-442-1012, will list their cell phone numbers.**

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**I am interested in the Small Group Ministry Program.** (Leave form in the basket in the Church

*Please print:* entrance way or Parish Hall.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

The best days and time for me are: (please circle) S M T W Th F S am pm

Days/times I cannot meet are: (please circle) S M T W Th F S am pm

The following issues need to be addressed to help me participate in Small Groups (please give details below):

I need child care  I need help with transportation  Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information we might need to know to help you join a Small Group: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, contact Rev. Susan Karlson at [PSKARL3@gmail.com](mailto:PSKARL3@gmail.com) or 347-466-0869.

**RE News:**

As we finish a season of thanks and enter the season of giving, we can't help but reflect on the many blessings the Religious Exploration program has received this year. We are thankful to those who have so graciously given their time to be spirit guides, sharing their creativity and wisdom with the children. We are thankful to the volunteers, parents and members who help form our caregiver co-op and welcome Vanessa Mancero, our new caregiver working with RE on the first Sunday of each month. We are thankful to our children and youth who are the heart of the program. They give more to us than they realize, helping us to think critically about our own beliefs, while challenging us to stretch our boundaries.

**Highlights**

In December's First Sunday RE Chapel, children and youth learned about the history and meaning of the flaming chalice and created their own chalices. Check out the RE bulletin board to see them! Mary Campbell joined the spirit play classroom as a guest sharing her yoga skills with the children. I happened to see the children as they walked out of their classroom and couldn't help but notice how calm, refreshed and peaceful they appeared. However, when sharing this observation with my daughter, she promptly disagreed (as she often does lately...) Instead she responded, "I felt energized." And so, the child teaches the parent. I humbly stood corrected.

One day, the youth and I found ourselves in the memorial garden, engaging in a kind of stream of conscious discussion derived from three statements engraved on one of their bracelets. What emerged from this journey was a conversation regarding what it means to be decided or undecided regarding the existence of God. We also considered the concept of church/spirituality extending beyond the confines of one place. The youth continued their discussion this month asking critical questions regarding what it means to be Unitarian and how one explains to the general public what our faith and spirituality means. The concept of a bible and its function in other religions was explored as the youth wondered, "What if we created our own bible?" Might a collective book of writings contradict what it means to be a Unitarian or might it serve as posterity for generations to come? These are questions our youth posed.

Other highlights involved a trip led by Reverend Susan, Morna and Viv to the Unitarian Congregation of Brooklyn. The Soulful Sundown was a great opportunity for youth from both congregations to connect. We hope it will be the first of many exchanges between the youth within our two congregations.

**Upcoming Events:**

**Annual Spaghetti Dinner—Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010 5:00 pm to 8:45 pm**

*The spaghetti dinner is the Religious Exploration's annual fundraising event! The dinner which is organized, compliments of Sara Dolinar and Linda Santlofer, is a multigenerational affair that never disappoints.*

**The UU Experience and Your Child—Saturday, February 13, 2010, 10am to 12pm**

*This introductory workshop, led by Reverend Susan, is a unique opportunity to explore questions regarding the Unitarian experience over the course of our children's development.*

We are thrilled at the number of multi-generational service and activities this holiday season. We look forward to seeing you and your family at many of the upcoming events!

**In inclement weather, please call the church office (718) 447-2204, or the parsonage, at (718) 442-1012 to find out if services or a particular program will be canceled.**

**Sunday Service Reminder:**

Please note the following times for Sunday services:

Musical Prelude: 10:45 am

Worship Service: 11:00 am

***The deadline for Announcements or Inserts for the Order of Service is 9 a.m. each Tuesday***

**JUST A REMINDER:** Please update change in address, phone number or new e-mail addresses by informing the church secretary, Stella Fishman, at 718-447-2204, or, e-mailing her at [uucsi.org@verizon.net](mailto:uucsi.org@verizon.net). Thank you.

**PLEASE NOTE: The office is closed from Dec. 23 thru Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.**

**Greeters are still needed**, people should e-mail me at [Oltari67@gmail.com](mailto:Oltari67@gmail.com) to sign up, speak with me at church or call the church office to leave me a message. – Maureen Curran, Greeter's Chair

**UPCOMING EVENTS:****Building & Grounds:**

The Buildings and Grounds Committee will meet in the Vestry on Sunday, January 10th at 1:00 p.m. Anyone interested in serving on the B & G Committee is welcome. – John Adrian

**CIRCLE SUPPERS:** Please sign up with Sarah Dolinar and Susan Flynn, membership co-chairs, to participate in circle suppers – groups of eight members/newcomers that will meet once a month for potlucks in each others homes (or alternate locations) to get to know each other better. The groups will be reorganized after four months or so. We need a few more participants to move forward. Expected start date for the program – January 2010.

**ARTS PROGRAM COMMITTEE NEWS!**

Exploring our feminist roots and in preparation for our Goddess Reclamation Project Workshop on February 6, 2010, nine UCSI members gathered at the Brooklyn Museum to spend time with Judy Chicago's "The Dinner

Party". Risa Anderson is leading this project and was joined by Athena Huckaby, Carol Lodato, Patricia Murphy, Larry Schwabacher, Diane Sorowitz, Mike Anderson and Loretta Choquet. The exhibit is beautiful and brilliantly displayed with rich material support describing the significance, iconography, and its creative process with posters, banners and a video. Catch the flavor of the exhibit by going to [Brooklynmuseum.org](http://Brooklynmuseum.org) and click on the exhibit.

**Ministerial Relations Committee**

The MRC was appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve as a liason between the congregation and the minister. Members are Linda Santlofer, Claudette Duff, and Jill Hueckel, chair. Rev. Karlson serves as a member ex-officio. It is our purpose to listen to the concerns of the congregation as they relate to the church and minister, as well as the concerns of the minister, and to provide feedback. Our main goal is to strengthen the means of communication in order to support the mission of the church. We believe this will enrich our community and help sustain our cherished home. Members are available during coffee hour (look for the name tags with blue doves coming soon) or may be contacted at the following numbers:

- Jill Hueckel 718-448-1431 [hueckel@si.rr.com](mailto:hueckel@si.rr.com)
- Susan Karlson 347-466-0864 [pskarl3@gmail.com](mailto:pskarl3@gmail.com)
- Linda Santlofer 718-447-5736 [lsantlofer@aol.com](mailto:lsantlofer@aol.com)
- Claudette Duff 917-699-1259 [directo@integrityseniors.com](mailto:directo@integrityseniors.com)

George Pratt, long time member and former president of the Unitarian Church of Staten Island, died on Wednesday night, December 9th. There will be no funeral service, but please send cards or condolences to his wife, Ellen Pratt.

**Report of Jolly Holly Fair Receipts:**

Another successful Jolly Holly Fair. As of 12-06-09, the Fair receipts grossed \$6,272.06. Harry Hicks, Treasurer

**Reminder:** To be tax deductible for the year 2009, church contributions must be received by 12/31/09.  
- Kate Nielsen, Steward

**Summary: Board of Trustees Meeting 12/9/09**

**Treasurer's Report – May 31 through Nov 30, 2009:**

Total Income YTD	\$48,096.73
Total Expense	\$73,709.39
Deficit	(\$25,612.66)

**Buildings & Grounds:**

John Adrian, chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee reports that the work on the parsonage roof has been completed and that leaks in the parish hall roof have been repaired at additional expense of \$2,900.

**UCSI Gift Policy:**

The Board reviewed two gift acceptance policies and guidelines which encourage gifts that will provide permanent funding to help the Church fulfill its mission. The proposals will be directed to the Finance Committee for their review and recommendations.

**Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Team**

Rev. Karlson reported that she has been honored with an invitation to join The UU Trauma Response Board. The UCSI Board members discussed this role and agreed to write a letter of support for her participation. Rev. Karlson reports that the requirements of her dual role as an active member of the Trauma Response Team and a member of the UU Trauma Response Board will not conflict with her role as minister of the UCSI; there is no obligation to assist at any specific disaster or traumatic event. Additionally, her service on this team and on its Board will reflect on our congregation's ability to participate in the wider Unitarian Universalist Association.

**Small Group Ministry:**

The Board agreed to a reinvigoration of the Small Group Ministry, which was begun during Rev. Edmund Robinson's tenure as interim minister. Judy Davison and Jill Hueckel, current members of the one remaining Small Group, have agreed to coordinate this effort with Rev. Karlson.

**Concrete Goals for Board/Church:**

The Board discussed its top priority for the Church: the launch of a Capital Campaign to address needed improvements to the physical space. The Board agreed to the establishment of an ad hoc capital campaign planning committee to determine the mission-driven goals of such a campaign.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth Benson, Board Secretary

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**By-Laws Committee:**

After a very thorough and thoughtful line by line analysis of the church by-laws, the by-laws committee of the church will shortly present to the congregation for their consideration their proposals for alteration. The major alterations include a new definition of membership, reduction in the number of trustees, and alteration in the terms of office. The congregation will be asked to vote the alterations up or down at a special congregational meeting devoted solely to considering the issue. Copies with the alterations will be distributed to the congregation in advance of the meeting.

Richard Currie for the By-Laws Committee

**January, 2010 Volunteer Schedule:**

- Greeters:** For the month of January, 2010:  
Virginia Allen and/or Steve Nutt
- Hospitality:** 1/3:  
10: Jennifer Korten and  
Brendan Spillane  
17: Janet Wassmuth  
24:  
31:
- Flowers:** 1/3: Loretta Choquet/  
Diane Sorowitz  
10: Lucy Morton  
17: Marilyn Brook  
24: Precious Hayes  
31: Ellen Pratt

# WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION

Sunday **Dec. 20**  
6:30 p.m.



Featuring  
Mummer's Play  
Wassailing - Carols  
Sword & Rapper Dancing

Goodwill donation requested at the Unitarian Church of Staten Island  
312 Fillmore Street

## Social Action regarding legislation in Uganda

Recently, legislation on a bill proposed in Uganda has moved forward. I have contacted the Unitarian minister that I met at General Assembly this summer, the Rev. Mark Kiyimba. Mark affirms that this situation is very dire for his country and specifically for all gay people and anyone who cares about or helps them. This includes Mark's church which provides an orphanage for children who have HIV/AIDS. Please read the message below and consider taking a moment to write the Ambassador.

Many of you may be aware, but many are not aware of the horrific legislation that has been introduced into the Uganda legislature and expected to pass within the next month. If passed, the president of Uganda has promised to sign it into law.

Here are the facts: If a person is gay and HIV+ they will be executed.

If a person is gay, that person will be imprisoned for life.

If a person knows of someone who has engaged in homosexual activity and does not report it within 24 hours, that person will be imprisoned for three years.

His Excellency Professor

**Perezi K. Kamunanwire**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Tel: (202) 726 4758

Fax: (202) 726 1727

[pkamunanwire@uganda](mailto:pkamunanwire@uganda)

Mark also writes that he will be visiting the United States again in October and November of 2010 and will be coming to the Unitarian Church of Staten Island. I will be selecting a time when he can come and preach at our church. Mark is getting a party together for the children in the orphanage. I know that this is the season of giving and that your generosity has been tapped to the maximum but if you are able to make a donation to the children in Uganda, it would mean a lot to them. You can contact me if you are able to help and we will gather checks together and wire the money to Uganda.

Thank you for your care, concern and compassion for those in need in Uganda.

Blessings,

Susan

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