



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur



News and Notes

3773 N. MacArthur Rd. Decatur, IL 62526 Phone: (217) 875-5442 www.uufd.org



January 2017

Our services

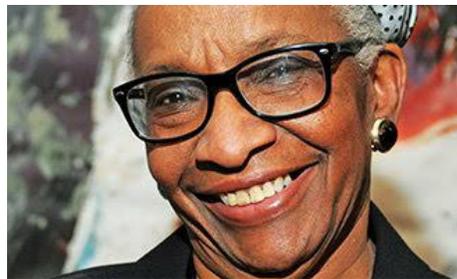
At **10:15 a.m.**, unless otherwise noted

We offer religious education for children and child care for babies.

Jan. 1 – No Service. Spend the holiday with your loved ones.

Jan. 8– What on Earth? - Rev. Michelle LaGrave. A Humorous New Year – Traditionally, the New Year is a time for reflections and resolutions, self-examination and celebration. Mostly serious-sounding stuff, right? Yes, and we can keep our collective sense of humor while engaging in all of the above. Special readings from Robert Fulghum.

Jan. 15 – A Shameful Affair: the 1908 Springfield Race Riot, Kathryn Harris. A regional historian and retired library services director at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Harris will relate the history of this event which made



national headlines and provided much of the impetus for the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Harris will also lead a discussion about current race relations in Springfield and the United States.

Jan. 22 – Across the Generations, Rev. Michelle LaGrave. We are living in an unprecedented time of long human life spans. In any one congregation, there are 7 or so generations, all participating in the life of the

church! Our eldest, from the Greatest Generation, through the Silent Generation, the War Babies, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, the Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha – all have different upbringings, outlooks, values, and levels of comfort with technology. How do we create a community which meets the needs of ALL the generations? Or can we?

Jan. 29 – More than a Newspaper: Community Journalism Today, Dick Zaker. New Herald & Review editor Chris Coates discusses the role of the



newspaper in the community and running a newsroom in a digital age.

January RE

New Year means new energy for our Religious Education program. Activities in January will build on past classes, and other topics will be introduced. Plus, Rev. Michelle will be in the class on Jan. 29. Come, see what we're dreaming up! And remember, there's babysitting for those under 3.



Mindfulness & Spirituality, 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 5 and 19. This UUFD group meets on the first and third Thursday of each month in the Sanctuary to have a session of silent meditation and to discuss a topic of spirituality related to meditation practices. We start promptly at 7 p.m. with the meditation, so please arrive early and enter the Sanctuary in silence. The group is open to any member or friend of the Fellowship or anyone in the community who is

interested in these topics. Contact Mel Weinstein for information: mel.weinstein.domehome@gmail.com

Board meeting, 12:15, Sunday, Jan. 8

Cayce Group Begins

Julie Lauper, a friend of UUFD, is starting an Edgar Cayce Search for God study group with dream work, study of the material and meditation. It will be 1 - 3 p.m. on a Sunday once a month. For information, contact Julie, writeaware@gmail.com or 791-3669.

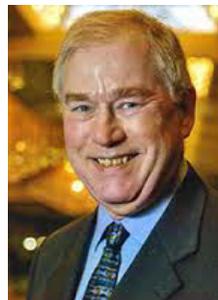
Humanist Discussion Group. Contact Kathy Sorensen for information.

The Women's Book Club. Contact Kathy Sorensen for information.

Gay and Lesbian Association of Decatur (GLAD). If you have any questions, please contact one of the co-chairs: Jerry Bowman, bufnjer@live.com, or UUFD member Rene Verry.

Hitting the Mark

The Illinois Library Association wants to nominate Mark Sorensen for the Library Luminary award, which honors those who have made a significant contribution to Illinois libraries. Mark has an outstanding resume, but compete peers to make donations total \$2,000 to Library Association Endowment in his name.



Tax-deductible donations may be made online at: ila.org/forms/contributions

[.htm](#). Be sure to select "Illinois Library Luminaries" for *Fund Name* and to list "Mark W. Sorensen, Library Luminary" for *Dedication or Additional Information*.

Donations by check should be made payable to "Illinois Library Association Endowment" with a note of "Mark W. Sorensen, Library Luminary" in the memo line. Checks may be sent to Illinois Library Association, 33 West Grand Avenue, Suite 401, Chicago, IL 60654-2544.

Let's help Mark get this prestigious award!

Pitts to speak at MLK luncheon

UUFDF is honoring slain civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in a big way this year. We have two tables for the luncheon on Saturday, Jan. 14, where the speaker will be nationally syndicated columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Leonard Pitts Jr. The event will begin at noon that day at the Decatur Conference Center & Hotel. (Note the change of venue.)

If you want a ticket for the UUFDF table, please talk to Rev. Michelle. Tickets will be issued on a first come first-served basis and will not be sold at the door on the day of the luncheon. A ticket costs \$30.

In a career spanning 40 years, Pitts has been a columnist, a college professor, a radio producer and a lecturer. Pitts won

the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary and today serves as a nationally syndicated columnist and writer for the Miami Herald with millions of readers. Pitts' syndicated columns appear locally in the Decatur Herald & Review.

Pitts just published his first novel, *Before I Forget*. A book signing will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 13, at the Walmart located at 4224 N. Prospect Dr.

UUFDF will also participate in this year's annual Freedom March to begin at noon Monday, Jan. 16, at the Decatur Civic Center. Marchers will proceed north to the Church of the Living God Temple #1, 1915 N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Wear your new UUFDF t-shirts, but dress for the weather!

Getting 'on Board'

On Dec. 1, Mark and Kathy Sorensen played host to a special meeting of UUFDF Board members.

We enjoyed a thorough discussion of the Fellowship's Three-Year Plan for charting our future. We concluded that we're on track – but have a lot of work to do, as a Board and Fellowship.

The big news is the Board resolved to offer Rev. Michelle a contract through the 2017-18 church year. Meanwhile, we will be monitoring the finances, particularly our pledge income, to make sure we can keep her on full time without asking more from the Trust.

By September 2017, we will decide on how we will proceed with leadership.

We intend to have a follow-up meeting to create goals to measure whether we're accomplishing our Plan. More than three years may be needed to show numerical progress in membership and pledge income.

Board members also talked about the responsibility all of us have to fully act like a "fellowship". We have to reach out to first-time visitors and make more of an effort to get to know others with whom we have merely a nodding acquaintance. Social events can be valuable for us to get to know others more deeply.

In Michelle's words

Dearest Ones,

Happy New Year! I hope you have all had a happy and safe holiday season!

With this New Year, I would like to introduce something I call "a culture of covenant". As contemporary Unitarian Universalists, we collectively hold a variety of beliefs about that which



we value most highly. For some of us, that is a form of the divine, possibly called God; for others, it may be a belief in Doing Good, or keeping to Love as an ultimate value. Whatever the case for each of us, we are keepers of a living tradition, open to change, and thus without creed, dogma, or doctrine to bind us together. Instead, we make agreements about how we will behave together, about how we will encourage and support each other in our individual quests for growth. In other words, we form our community on principles of action rather than belief. In order for this to work well, we need to be in right

relationship with each other. One way to keep in right relationship is to make covenants. The Board has already begun this process and will finalize their covenant together later this month. Our children already did this at the beginning of their church year.

The long history of covenants in our tradition is actually Biblically based. God made covenants with Abraham, Noah, and Moses. Humans made covenants with each other with God as a witness. Later, when the Pilgrims and Puritans came to these shores they formed congregations based on covenant. (The Pilgrims and some Puritans are our spiritual ancestors – the first Pilgrim church remains a UU church today.) What makes a covenant different from a regular promise is that we bring our highest values to bear in the process of forming, keeping, and returning to covenant. For some of us, that will mean God; for others, Good; for others, Love, and so on. Our living tradition has grown and changed much over the years. By the time of the Fellowship Movement, when UUFD was founded, many no longer organized based on covenant, but the

tradition has remained an important part of UU culture in terms of maintaining right relationship within working groups e.g., a Board, a Religious Exploration class, a committee, etc.

Once our Board has finalized their covenant, I will encourage them to share it with you so that we might learn together how best to cultivate a culture of covenant, one which fits well within our UU living tradition.

In faith, love, and
compassion,

Rev. Michelle

**Rev. Michelle LaGrave
Minister
Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Decatur, IL**

**michellelagrave@gmail.com
or minister@uufd.org**

860-539-3248 (cell)

**Office Hours:
Tuesday: 3-5 pm
Wednesday: 1-5 pm
Thursday: 1-5 pm
Also by appointment**

**Mondays: Day Off
Fridays: Reading and
Writing Day - phone calls for
urgent matters welcome**

Thoughts from the PreZ

There are many of us who will have great difficulty saying "Happy New Year" this time.

2017 will post a formidable challenge to people whose beliefs run counter to those of the new national leadership.



What guideposts, then, do we have to face this future, to be the best people we can be (which is all we have ever been able to do, under

any president)?

You could begin with respecting the inherent worth and dignity of every person. That's a stout task – especially when we're convinced others are doing anything but that.

How about observing justice, equity and compassion to the best extent we can? "Justice" and "equity" probably are our default mindsets, but, ah, that "compassion". Stay focused on that.

Let's resolve to accept one another and encourage spiritual growth in our

congregation. That person sitting next to you in the Sanctuary may be hurting and in dread of the future. Oh, you say you're not in the Sanctuary? Well, perhaps look into your heart to make a greater effort to be there with regularity. You, after all, ARE the Fellowship, even if you sometimes think the reverse isn't true.

We also could use this new calendar to search for truth and meaning, freely and responsibly. This will require us to put the blinders away and get out of fetal position over the future. Cultivate your mind as you've done up until now – then share your insights with friends and ask theirs.

The media will remind you to exercise as part of healthy resolutions: Also exercise your right of conscience, to always "do the right thing", as Spike Lee urged. At the same time, cling to the ideal of the democratic process as the best way to forge progress.

Oh, this next suggestion is simple enough: Work for peace, liberty and justice for all. That reminds us again to stand up for what we believe in, but pick our battles wisely. It also suggests we remember that the vast majority of people on Earth have it worse than we do.

Among these recommendations, it may be easier to bear in mind that "interdependent web" of which we are an important strand. You will have consistent reminders that the web maybe rent by this or that project. How will you respond?

Whether or not you tack a new calendar on a wall or place on a desk, 2017 will debut Jan. 1. Some people see signs of Orwell, but it's our job to see that it goes well.

Spiritual History of the Alphabet Jan. 25

Rev. Michelle will teach a class called "From Aleph to Tav: A Spiritual History of the Alphabet" at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 25. As Unitarian Universalists we rely heavily on "the word" whether written in books, articles, scientific papers, poetry or sacred texts. How was the alphabet (aleph bet) invented? And what, if anything, does it have to do with religion?



Going through old photos on the day Larry Klugman died, Mark Sorensen found this photo. It's the 1985 Richland Community College faculty softball team with Mark Sorensen top middle with glove and Mel Weinstein, bottom middle.

Groceries and presents were delivered to a needy Decatur family of seven on Dec. 21. Because of your monetary gifts and the work of the RE kids, their parents and grandparents, the family received school clothes, a toaster, \$110 worth of food, a \$150 Kroger gift card and all of the presents on the 5 kids' lists.

Jasmyn Zaker will be turning 14 on Jan. 8. Instead of having a party or accepting gifts, she is collecting money for the St. Jude's Children's Hospital. If you want to participate, you can give a donation to Dick, Lorelei or Jasmyn at UU before the end of January.

Would you like to buy a UUFD t-shirt? Tell Joyce Throneburg or Dick Zaker. If there's

enough interest, maybe we can open up sales again.

Reaching out

President Dick Zaker: president@uufd.org

Vice President Rene Verry:
vicepresident@uufd.org

Treasurer Mark Sorensen: treasurer@uufd.org

Secretary Melissa Hendrian:
secretary@uufd.org



Jasmyn Zaker	Jan. 8
Ada Elder	Jan. 15
Mark Sorensen	Jan. 20
Caius Pajer	Jan. 21
Hadrian Pajer	Jan. 21
Amy Stockwell	Jan. 22
Mary Cleave	Jan. 31

Lorelei Zaker is the editor of this Newsletter.
The deadline for the February edition is Jan. 26.
UUFDNewsletter@gmail.com

Find us on the Internet

Facebook page: UUFD - Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur, IL

Twitter: UU Decatur

Thank you for helping us raise awareness of UUFD via social media.