

Welcome to Adult Faith Development Ministries, February-May 2015

This booklet includes descriptions of Adult and Family Faith Development events and programs at First Unitarian Church for early 2015.

Programs and events are open to all and no fee is charged. In some cases, donations are welcomed to cover program costs and specific pre-registration may be required. See each description for details. Times and room locations are listed in individual event descriptions.

For questions or to register for those activities where registration is suggested, please contact Deborah Levering at dlevering@firstunitarian.com or 508-757-2708, ext. 105.

Please check the church website for additional programs and events as they are added to the winter/spring schedule. <http://www.firstunitarian.com>

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Sundays @ Noon Lecture series

After worship and social time, please join us at noon in the Chapel for this twice-a-month series of lectures and conversations on compelling local and international issues. Meet folks who are making a difference in our Worcester community, as well as, in the war-ravaged and unjust places around the world.

All lectures take place in the Chapel at noon.

February 8

From Osama to Obama: What Is to Be Done in the Middle East?

When Barack Obama moved into the Oval Office in January 2009, he vowed to reinvent U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, scrapping George W. Bush's global war on terror, withdrawing from Iraq, and jumpstarting the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Six years later, ISIS controls much of Syria, Gaza has become a charnel house, and American drones fill the skies from Pakistan to Yemen. What went wrong? And can Obama do anything to fix it?

Douglas Little is the Robert and Virginia Scotland Professor of History and International Relations at Clark University. The third edition of his most recent book, American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945 (University of North Carolina Press), appeared in 2008 and was translated into Arabic in 2010.

February 22

Irish Rebel, American Patriot

Progressive immigration, religious tolerance and freedom, innovations in social welfare, public health, and medical education, abolitionist, supporter of women's rights, rebel leader and practical politician, Dr. William James Macneven's life and teachings offer profound lessons for today's world problems. Randy Ingham will present some of the important insights of this great humanitarian, as they relate to these critical issues.

Randy Ingham's political activism in the 50s and 60s brought him into contact with such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Betty Friedan, and to the Peace Corps in India. He received honors for his 45 years providing services to people with social, substance abuse, and mental health problems.

March 8

LGBT Asylum Task Force

The violence resulting from homophobia and anti-homosexuality laws in many countries in the world is rampant. There are laws against homosexuality in 88 countries around the world. Pastor Judith Hanlon from the LGBT Asylum Support Task Force will speak about the support provided to those who are seeking political asylum in the U.S. based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. As of October 2014, the Task Force has helped more than 80 individuals. Volunteers contribute to the financial, housing, social, and spiritual needs of asylum seekers.

***Pastor Judith Hanlon** is minister at the Hadwen Park Congregational Church, a United Church of Christ congregation located on Clover Street in Worcester. Speaking with Pastor Judy will be two asylum seekers who have fled their home country because of fear for their safety.*

March 22

Worcester Area Opioid Crisis

Sheriff Evangelidis has focused on education and prevention as the best way to keep our youth out of prison. He will talk about the rise in the use of opioid pain killers and heroin in Worcester County, a problem that has risen to crisis proportions. Heroin, once a drug only seen in poor urban neighborhoods, has moved dramatically into rural and suburban, middle class communities throughout Worcester County.

***Lew Evangelidis** was elected as Sheriff of Worcester County in 2010. Prior to this, he was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives for 8 years, a member of the Holden Board of Selectmen, an Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County, a State Attorney in Dade County Florida and an assistant in the Dade County, Florida State Attorney's office.*

May 29

Restorative Justice and Curbing Youth Violence.

Professor Laurie Ross of Clark University will chair a discussion of restorative justice, an innovative approach to law enforcement that changes the model of crime and punishment and instead brings victims and perpetrators together to explore ways to make restitution and repair broken relationships. Restorative justice also has the potential to improve school disciplinary procedures, to reduce suspension rates and to reduce delinquency.

***Laurie Ross** is an Associate Professor of Community Development and Planning in the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment at Clark University. Ross engages in collaborative research with community partners on youth and gang violence and youth worker professional development. Ross coordinates the HOPE Coalition, a youth-adult partnership in Worcester.*

April 12

Life in Palestine

Octavia Taylor and her husband Stephen spent the fall 2014 semester living and volunteering in Palestine. Stephen taught a computer programming course at Birzeit University and Octavia worked with Jeff Halper, Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. She will report on the complexities of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and look at how daily life for Palestinians has been affected by the Israeli Occupation.

***The Taylors** have lived five semesters in the Middle East, including a time in Syria for the 2009-10 academic year. Octavia has worked as a community organizer and manager of grants primarily for environmental and social justice projects at Clark University. Stephen teaches Computer Science; his research in applying computers to the Arabic Language has brought him to the Middle East.*

April 26 - TBD

Faithful Practice: Opportunities to nurture your spirit

Our Unitarian Universalist faith challenges us to love our neighbors and ourselves with abiding gentleness, eagerness for relationship, and a fundamental notion that we are of worth. These programs offer support and community for our growth and unfolding.

New UU –are you?

Led by Jesse Anderson

4 Sundays, March 8-29, 9-10am in the Chapel

Are you new to Unitarian Universalism or would you like to know more about the faith tradition? The New UU conversations are for you. All newcomers and new members are welcome. It is important to make a commitment to attend all four sessions.

- Session 1 - Your religious journey
- Session 2 - UU (and you) theologies
- Session 3 - UU history –denomination and our church
- Session 4 - Church Ownership and Governance

Please RSVP by March 1 to dlevering@firstunitarian.com

Embracing a Life of Meaning

Led by Michelle Przekop and Liz Gustavson

5 Mondays, March 30-April 27, 7-9 PM

Embracing a Life of Meaning with best selling author Kathleen Norris on discovering what matters. Each of the five DVD sessions begins with a 10-15 minute introduction video followed by a filmed group discussion on these topics: belief, bible, community, place and we matter. Then we will discuss these topics in a respectful, loving, and supportive environment during our group sessions.

Michelle Przekop is a new member at First U. and has been nominated as Assistant Treasurer. She has 20 years of church leadership and small group ministry experience.

Liz Gustavson is an active member of First U, on the nominating committee, a Caring Circles leader, and is the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) volunteer co-coordinator at First U. She is a middle/high school teacher.

Minister's Lenten Series

Reverend Sarah Stewart

Feb. 24; Mar. 10 and Mar. 24

On three Tuesday evenings in Lent, Rev. Stewart will offer opportunities for meditation through community involvement and prayerful discussion. We will meet outdoors at different locations in the Worcester community for engagement, and then move indoors for reflection. The activities and discussions will help connect us to the struggle and questions we must face as we prepare for the rebirth and joy of Easter. Come open your spirits and join together in silence, activity, and shared reflection. Come bring the life of the church into the city.

Sign-ups for individual events will be available in February.

First Friday All Ages Fun

Start your weekend right by joining your church friends and family at our First Friday events in the Bancroft room. Bring a snack or drink to share if you'd like. Dollar-a-slice pizza will be available for a light supper.

Games Night for Everyone

February 6 Pizza at 6:30pm, Games from 7-9pm

Let's have a good old-fashioned game night! Whether you are young or old(er), join us for an evening of fun, silliness, and maybe even a little competition. We'll have plenty of games—board, cards, large group, charades--but feel free to bring your favorite, too. All are welcome.

Worcester: Fun Facts and Firsts

March 6 Pizza at 6:30pm, Trivia fun from 7-9pm

Join Worcester native and author CJ Posk for an evening of trivia fun. From Pulitzer Prize-winning poets to packaged pizza pie, dive into the amazing history of Worcester and discover something extraordinary about the unassuming city you thought you knew! All are welcome. Posk's book *Worcester Stacks Up: Firsts and Fun Facts* will be available for purchase.

Proceeds from the sale of the book and any freewill donations will be used to help support the Alden Family Gallery, a new section dedicated to children, at the Worcester historical Museum.

Special evening for Parents: Dessert and Coffee with Sarah and Deb

April 3 7:00-8:30pm

Parents of children in our nursery through teen programs are warmly invited to a sweet evening of quiet conversation about the joys and challenges of parenting and how our church community and staff can support you in this most precious journey.