

May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society Newsletter



We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world



December 2023
Volume 86
Issue 11



The Holiday Time Has Come

My mom, Teresa, died a few years ago. And shortly after that, my Aunt Mary (who had been keeping our family together) moved away from Ohio (where we often gathered for Thanksgiving) to North Carolina. There isn't really anyone left to keep the extended family together. Most of my extended family treated me and my mother very badly, and after all of these circumstances changed, I did not feel like I owed anyone anything. And to be honest, I don't think my extended family cared one bit that I was no longer attending any family functions.

Family is hard. We often endure abuse of all kinds from those we love. Emotional abuse, mental abuse... the kinds of holiday abuse that many folks allow to slide by. The thing is, my loves, your mental health matters! So, like I said last Sunday morning, none of you are obligated to anyone if they do not make you feel healthy and happy and loved. You are not obligated to your mother if she is constantly putting you down, you are not obligated to your grandparents if they don't agree with your parenting choices. You have no obligations to anyone who is abusing you in anyway, to anyone who makes you feel less than.



Rev. Jo with her late mother Teresa Wilmes
at her ordination on 4.23.18

And I know this is complicated. This could look a number of ways. You could say "We can come over between the hours of 12 and 2" or you could say "We are going to spend this holiday with other people" or if you do decide to go and the situation gets bad you can say "This is not a healthy environment for me and I'm leaving." Folks, you can love your family and ALSO have good and healthy boundaries with them.

Isaac (my husband) and I are spending Thanksgiving with our friends Elise and Mike and their son Zach, and whomever else might show up to their home that day. I do miss some of our family traditions, playing shang hi (card game), and some of the special dishes I have had since I was a child. And I am spending some time grieving all of these things this year because it can feel really lonely when it feels like you don't have a family any longer. And I have so many wonderful friends that DO love me and want to spend time with us. If you need help having hard conversations with your family or need ideas, please call me, I'm here for you.

This time of the long darkness is an invitation to reevaluate what is good and wonderful in our lives. I hope you will spend this holiday time, this time of darkness, to consider that in your life which you are thankful for, and also to grieve for that which you no longer have. Let us all use this quiet invitation to rediscover who we are and what we really want for our lives in the coming year.

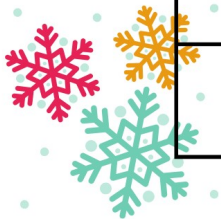
And just in case you need a reminder,

I love you, and there is nothing you can do about it.



Hello December

12/3	Hanging of The Greens First Sunday Lunch	Rev. Jo VonRue and Stacy Sceiford, Director of Religious Education
12/10	The Mystery and Joy of the Dark	Rev. Jo VonRue and Worship Associate JoJo Higgins
12/17	Music Sunday	Director of Music Glenn Kime and Worship Associate Eliza Bailey
12/24	Caroling in Clinton Square	Rev. Jo VonRue and Rev. Molly Hammerhand
12/31	Seeds for the New Year - pre-recorded service by Rev. Dr. Sofia Bentancourt	Worship Associate Ruth Yanai



<https://zoom.us/j/91720743841?pwd=ZFdlbVNsYW1za3RWN29SVldUMDV5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 917 2074 3841

Passcode: 801542

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• +1 646 931 3860 US

Meeting ID: 917 2074 3841





December at MMUUS

Sunday Dec 3

Hanging of the Greens

First Sunday Lunch

Sunday Dec 17

Music Sunday

Thursday Dec 21

Solstice Service at 8pm

Sunday Dec 24

Caroling at Clinton Square at 10:30am

No Rehearsal Pageant 6pm

In the Ink of Night 8pm



HISTORY CORNER



In the 1830s a group of free thinkers and liberal Christians started holding religious discussions in people's homes and listening to itinerant Unitarian preachers who traveled from New England to the small frontier town of Syracuse. In 1838, 14 people signed a covenant establishing the UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY OF SYRACUSE. They started collecting money to build a church and asked the Boston Unitarians for help finding a minister. In January 1839, a small wooden chapel was completed at 317 East Genesee Street. That spring, Rev. John Storer moved to Syracuse to become the congregation's first minister.

The Unitarian congregation soon outgrew its small chapel. In 1843, a new Grecian-style building with Ionic columns and a square bell tower was built on the southeast corner of Lock Street (now State) and Burnet Avenue. It was called the Church of the Messiah.

Rev. Samuel Joseph May came to Syracuse in 1845 to become the second minister of the Unitarian Congregation. Rev. May was a tireless and dedicated preacher, activist and community leader, and during his era, the congregation grew rapidly. The Church of the Messiah had to be renovated and enlarged twice.

In 1883, a railroad company wanted to buy part of the Unitarian Society's property. Because the congregation needed more space, the trustees settled with the railroad in order to move and build a larger church.

The congregation's third church, built at 472 James Street, was a gray stone building with a black slate roof and a high tower. The pews, pulpit and paneled ceilings were made of dark wood, and it had stained glass windows. The new church, dedicated in 1885, was named the May Memorial Church in honor of the congregation's beloved second minister, Rev. May.

The Evolution of our Congregation's Name



By the 1950s, the James Street church and adjacent parish house, used for religious education, were experiencing serious overcrowding and safety issues. After years of complications and many discussions, the congregation decided to relocate, eventually finding the East Genesee Street property at the edge of the city. Construction began in September of 1963, and the congregation moved in a year later, even though there were no pews, and the organ had not been built.

At a 1964 meeting, the congregation discussed whether they should keep the name May Memorial. They associated the name with the gray stone building and dark paneling of their old church, but when they learned more about Rev. May's work and social justice causes, they felt that the name should be kept.

Although the church was called May Memorial, the official (corporate) name of the society was still the Unitarian Congregational Society of Syracuse. It was not until 1968 that the name was officially changed to MAY MEMORIAL UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

Our congregation's last name change came in 1993 when the name MAY MEMORIAL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY was officially adopted, reflecting the merger of the two denominations that had taken place 30 years earlier. In his annual report, President Don MacKay wrote, "On November 7, 1993, the congregation voted ... to change our name to May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society to honor and formally include our Universalist heritage."

Mary Louise Edwards

MMUUS History Committee (history@mmuus.org)



MMUUS Writers' Group



Tuesday, November 14
10:00 AM-12:00PM
Teen Room
New members welcome.

Questions?
Contact Ann or Dick Pearson.



Going Green and Seeking Social Justice

Contributed by Bess Kamerance



How To Be An Ally To Indigenous Peoples *

- * Give thanks frequently. Care for the Earth
 - * Respect and support Indigenous sovereignty – Learn about treaties
 - * Remember that treaties are the Supreme Law of the United States (Article 6, U.S. Constitution) Demand that our nation honor its treaty commitments
 - * Consider future generations in all your actions
 - * Question and resist stereotypes, including team names and mascots
 - * Learn about and reject the “Doctrine of Discovery”
 - * Reach out to your Indigenous neighbors
 - * Slow down and listen more than you talk – Notice where you are
 - * Live with gratitude – Live lightly on the Earth
 - * Work to end global warming
 - * Support renewable energy – Stop hydrofracking, dirty coal and uranium mining
 - * Don’t co-opt Native cultures or ceremonies – Return sacred objects
 - * Support Indigenous women at the center of decision making, leadership and care for the Earth
 - * Read and promote the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
 - * Celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ Day every October 12
 - * Learn about the people Indigenous to wherever you are
 - * Read Native Authors
 - * Support Native craftspeople, businesses and events
 - * Remember that all beings (animals and plants) are your relatives, not your resources
 - * Appreciate the diversity of nations, cultures, and people
- *(copyright 2017, Syracuse Cultural Workers)*

DECEMBER
Artist

Zachary Chakin

"How it Feels"

A NEW EXHIBIT BY A TALENTED YOUNG PAINTER

COLORS, TEXTURES, AND EMOTIONS

This exhibit features the work of **Zachary Chakin**, a local, young and immensely talented painter, whose neurodivergent perspective infuses his work with a truly unique dimension. **"How it Feels"** is a testament to the artist's ability to translate his inner world onto canvas, employing vibrant colors, rich textures, and evoking intense emotions. Each piece offers a window into the artist's talent for capturing feelings and sensations.



Amber Waves (2023) Acrylic, 24"x36"

Artists Reception

Friday Dec 1 from 5-7

Join us for light refreshments and meet the artist

Gallery Hours:

Sunday: 8am-1pm

Monday: 8am—1pm

Thursday: 8am—1pm

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fyi,

Hangin' of the Greens and First Sunday Lunch

December 3

Come participate in our multigenerational event, "The Hanging of the Greens" during worship, then stay for a tasty lunch brought to you from Religious Education! We will have pizza, casseroles, salads, desserts, and more! First Sunday Lunches are fundraisers for the church and a portion of the proceeds from December's lunch will be used for staff holiday bonuses.

Dec 24th Caroling!



Join us on Sunday Dec 24th at 10:30am in Clinton Square in Syracuse for caroling!

This will be a joint service with First UU

We will not meet at church and there will not be a Zoom component to this service



50% of the non-pledge money in our collection plate each week is designated for Change for Change. For the months of November and December our donations will go to "In My Father's Kitchen". This program offers non-denominational and non-discriminatory assistance to homeless people through direct street outreach.



Twisted Sisters will meet at 7:00pm on the second Monday of each month in the Teenz Room. Join us for conversation, camaraderie and support as we navigate this life together. Bring a beverage or snack to share (if you feel like it).

Twisted Sisters is a social group open to adult women and those identifying as female.

No commitment is required.

Mark your calendars for December 11, January 8, February 12, March 11, April 8, May 13 and June 10.

Vespers

Join us on Wednesday evenings at 8pm for a short 30 minute time of connection and reflection. We will listen to a short reading, a piece of music that expands on the topic, and we connect with one another through check-ins and conversation.

<https://zoom.us/j/96509877539?pwd=ZmZPQllhTlhkSFNETW5yQmszMXdYZz09>

Meeting ID: 965 0987 7539

Passcode: 513494

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As you may remember, we are trying to help Gethsemene Methodist Church on Syracuse's Northside in their mission of assisting their low income neighborhood of mostly immigrants. They provide a food pantry, a personal items program, a diaper bank and a thrift store which both helps to fund the other projects and provides very inexpensive clothing and household items for people in the community to purchase. At this time, they are requesting the following items:



- Men's and women's "stick" deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Winter outerwear for children, men and women, new or gently used
- Towels, new or gently used
- Books for infants, toddlers and preschoolers
- Baking supplies such as cake mixes, vegetable oil, flour and sugar (These families would like to be able to bake birthday cakes too!)
- We will have boxes in the foyer for your donations labeled Gethsemene.
- If you have other items you'd like to donate or have questions about the Gethsemene projects, please see Julie, Kevin or Mardie. We'd love to tell you more about what great things are happening there!

Long-time members of May Memorial will be sad to learn of the passing of Rev. Dr. John Baros-Johnson. When John and Irene Baros-Johnson moved to Syracuse in about 1980, they were both student ministers. As a ministerial intern, John was a Chaplain at Syracuse University and preached for us several times. Irene co-authored our 1988 history, *May No One Be A Stranger*. Both John and Irene were actively involved at May Memorial throughout the 1980s. After receiving a Master of Divinity degree from Meadville Lombard, John was ordained by May Memorial in September of 1990. The following year, he completed a Doctor of Ministry Degree.

In 1997, John became minister of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax, Nova Scotia. He served until 2006, retiring because of early onset dementia. He died in November 2022, at the age of 74. John is survived by Irene, who still resides in Halifax, and by their son Nicholas.

John Baros-Johnson's obituary, published by the UUA, will be posted on the history section of the bulletin board at May Memorial. It can also be found at the following link, immediately after the contents page:

https://www.uua.org/files/2023-06/Obituaries_Professional%20Religious%20Leasders%202022-2023.pdf



The Folkus
Project of Central New York

The Folkus Project presents [The Ebony Hillbillies](#) on Friday, December 8 @ 8pm. The Ebony Hillbillies are the premier African-American string band in America--the only string band based in New York City keeping an almost forgotten American musical legacy alive. Consisting of fiddle, banjo, washboard and bass fiddle, they have successfully created a following that has bridged a gap in audiences of pop, country, bluegrass, folk, jazz, blues and beyond, while maintaining their grassroots credibility. For tickets and more information go to folkus.org.



UPCOMING Events

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Friday	Dec 1	December Artist Reception	5pm	Social Hall
Sunday	Dec 3	Hanging of the Greens	After service	Whole Church
		First Sunday Lunch	Noon	Social Hall
Tuesday	Dec 5	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	Dec 7	Bookenders	1:30pm	Memorial Room
		Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Practice	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Friday	Dec 8	FOLKUS	8pm	Sanctuary
Sunday	Dec 10	Soul Matters Sharing Circle	12:15pm	Teenz
Monday	Dec 11	Twisted Sisters	7pm	Teenz
Tuesday	Dec 12	Writers Group	10am	Teenz
		Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	Dec 14	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Practice	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Tuesday	Dec 19	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30pm	Zoom only
Thursday	Dec 21	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Winter Solstice Service	8pm	Sanctuary
Sunday	Dec 24	Caroling in Clinton Square	10:30pm	Clinton Square
		No Rehearsal Pageant	6pm	Sanctuary
		In the Ink of Night	8pm	Sanctuary



CONTACT US

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 Board President
 Book Keeper
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Gentle Requests from your Finance Committee November 2023

Greetings all! As generally happens around this point in time in our fiscal year, the expenses to date for the general operation of May Memorial are starting to exceed the revenues received to date. The reasons are not alarming: the majority of our fundraisers are held in the spring, and many members choose to send in their pledge amounts in the spring.

Many of you pay your pledge in monthly or quarterly installments, which keeps our cash-flow

healthy. For those who haven't yet made a pledge payment and if you are able to do so we ask that you consider sending a 2023-2024 pledge payment prior to the calendar year's end on December 31, 2023. We will be sending statement reminders out in the next few weeks to assist you.

We would also like to share the fact that we are 96% complete in paying off our beautiful, safe, attention-getting, rental-inspiring parking lot! We have until August of 2024 to finish the last little bit of the NYSCU loan amount, which stands at \$13,333. If we need to do fundraisers in the spring, we will be advertising for someone who is willing to take that on, but, how wonderful would it be if everyone who enjoys the ice-free, slant-free, danger-free walk into church in these coming winter months would just send an extra donation marked "Parking Lot"? As always, if you have experienced a change in your financial circumstances do not hesitate to let us know.

You can contact Jennifer Newman at 315 378-4605 or at

mamaslash@twcny.rr.com.

Tax-Friendly Ways to Donate to MMUUS

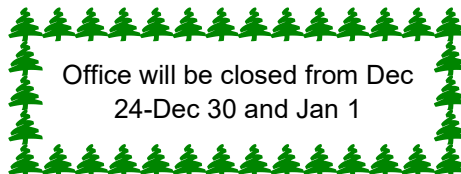
There are creative (legal!) ways to maximize the dollars you're able to donate to MMUUS and get tax benefits, as well.

Make a direct transfer from an IRA. This is for those of us who are making mandatory distributions (RMDs) from retirement accounts. A direct transfer to MMUUS is tax-free, effectively giving you the benefit of a charitable deduction even if you're taking the standard deduction. This applies to traditional IRAs, but not to 401(k) or 403(b) plans.

Time your donations. In December, MMUUS will accept contributions for NEXT YEAR. Depending on your circumstances, making extra donations may allow you to itemize deductions for your income taxes in the current year.

Donate appreciated stock. This is a way to avoid capital gains taxes on sale of stock held longer than one year. Donate the appreciated stock to May Memorial, and receive the benefit of an untaxed capital gain. If you are able to itemize deductions, you'll get a double tax benefit - a charitable deduction for the market value of the stock AND no tax on the capital gain.

Talk with your tax professional to see if any of these suggestions will work for you. Contact Jane Fagerland (jane_f@sbcglobal.net or 315 504-1024) for instructions on donating stock or for questions/comments.



May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society

3800 East Genesee Street
Syracuse, NY 13214
315.446.8920
office@mmuus.org



New Office Hours:

Sunday: 8am-1pm

Mon - Thurs: 8am-1pm (other times by appointment only)

Days off are Friday and Saturday

- **Calendar Items:**

All zoom meetings must be scheduled through the Office Administrator.

- **Deadlines to remember:**

E-Blast and Order of Service need to be to me by 5pm on Wednesday.

- **Newsletter:**

Deadline 20th of preceding month, please adhere to this deadline to allow for the newsletter to be sent out in a timely fashion.

Please keep word count to 300-400 to allow room for everyone to have a voice in the newsletter