

The Beacon MONTHLY



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery Newsletter

2810 Atlanta Highway, Montgomery AL 36109-3402

Rev. Lynn Hopkins, Minister

January 2016

Sunday Service

January 3: Doing a new thing

So, it's a new year. What's so new about it?

January 17: MLK Birthday

Dr King's title for April 7, 1968, was "Why America May Go to Hell." The draft is worth reading.

January 10: Finding my religion

The promised second part to the story I started in December

January 25: Affirmative Consent – presented by

Amy Campbell

Wednesday Service

1st Wednesday

This month, we will view *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity*, a film used extensively in UU and nonchurch spaces to open dialogue on this bewildering topic.

3rd Wednesday

Quaker Reflection and Sharing: A short reading will be used as the opening for those present to share reflections using the Quaker contemplative method.

2nd Wednesday

Vespers Service: This is a brief service of quiet reflection, prayer and meditation. Afterwards, we join for an informal potluck style supper.

4th Wednesday

Metaphysical Teachings: Rev. Maureene Bass shares wisdom and insights from her extensive study.

Church Events

Every Monday:

7PM Course in Miracles

Every Tuesday:

6PM Choir

Every Wednesday:

7:15PM Meditation/Discussion group

Every Saturday:

8PM Young People's AA Meeting

Every Sunday:

9AM Quaker Meeting

Sat 2 Jan: 10:30AM Philosophy Club

Mon – Tue 4-5 Jan: Minister's day off

Wed 6 Jan: 6PM First Wednesday Forum:

Cracking the Codes

Thu 7 Jan: 7PM Committee on Ministry

Mon 11 Jan: Minister's day off

Wed 13 Jan: 6PM Vespers

Wed 13 Jan: 6:30PM Community Supper

Wed 13 Jan: 7PM Finance Committee

Thu 14 Jan: 1PM Social Action Committee

Thu 14 Jan: 6PM Sisterlight

Fri – Sun 15-17 Jan: OWL Training

Mon 18 Jan: 6:30PM CoCo Meeting

Thu 21 Jan: 6PM Board of Trustees Meeting

Sat 23 Jan: 4PM Bennett Wedding Reception

Fri 29 Jan: 6PM Publicity Committee

Fri 29 Jan: Minister's day off

Sat 30 Jan: 6PM Variety Show

Sun 31 Jan: 11:30AM Congregational Meeting

Notable Announcements

Share the Plate for January

Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ)

Founded in 2006 and galvanized after the 2011 passage of Alabama's HB 56, the nation's harshest anti-immigrant law, ACIJ has become a major progressive organizing force locally and nationally. In just a few short years, our coalition has evolved from a small group of organizations into an active statewide coalition of major progressive policy groups and newly-developed community organizations. ACIJ is creating a strong grassroots base through an unparalleled organizing and leadership development campaign in immigrant communities across the state, while building alliances with other marginalized communities and non-immigrant allies.

Thanks,

Hiram "Hank" Moore

Congregational Meeting

It's that time of year again. 31 January the Board will host the Congregational Meeting instead of second hour. Members should expect to see a mailing sometime between now and the meeting with details on the agenda.

Newsletter submission

Submissions for the November newsletter must be submitted no later than 29 January, 2016. Submissions can be sent to Andre Goheen at goheen100@yahoo.com and Janice Wood at jrwood.montgomery@gmail.com

Help Wanted!

Your Publicity Committee is short on membership. We need individuals interested in all forms of communication that have some time and desire to help distribute information both to members of this congregation as well as potential new members in the community. Join us on 29 January @ 6PM.

Ministerial Musings

By Lynn Hopkins

Liminal space. It is a phrase used often in theology. Coming from the Latin for 'threshold,' it refers to the times of in-between-ness. There is wisdom in the adage, "When one door closes, another opens – but it's hell in the hallway." It's the time between losing a job and finding another, between the court hearing and the final ruling, between conception and birth, between terminal diagnosis and death.

Liminality is disorienting, sometimes even terrifying. It can also be exciting, even exhilarating. It is often exhausting, physically and spiritually. If you have a need for stability and security, it can be hell. Surviving it well requires faith. Some people are sustained through belief in a higher power, or the worthiness of a cause, or the love of family. It helps to have company, friends to walk with you. Ultimately, though, no-one can walk it for you or take away the seeming interminable discomfort of the situation. It just is, until it isn't anymore.

I have had a strong feeling of in-between-ness over the past few weeks. The calendar is part of it – there is a time between Thanksgiving and New Year when it seems almost as though everything is happening at once and nothing can be accomplished. Contradictions abound: people are very busy but not working much, strapped for cash and spending like mad, eagerly anticipating and yet dreading family gatherings. My specific circumstances play a role as well. After agreeing that we would publish a combined Dec-Jan Beacon, I scrapped my drafts and put off writing until early December; in early December, I was knocked down briefly by flu and did not recover strength until a day or two before Christmas. As a result, this piece was already late before I actually started writing it. The Circle of Trust practice group ended its run in October, expecting to start again in 4-6 weeks, but has been delayed by emergent events in individual lives and the life of the congregation. Wednesday evening sessions that seemed to be gathering steam in November all but disintegrated in the holiday season. Several key committees of the congregation are apparently stalled or faltering in their work, even as their work becomes more important for the success of the whole.

Today, I sit in an office without internet access, waiting on the second service call of the day. The disconnection is maddening, and yet it gives me space in which I can write without interruption or distraction. As I prepare for the first Sunday in January, for talking about the new year and asking, "what's so new about it?," I find an optimism rising within me.

2016 is the year of the Fellowship's 50th anniversary. We stood up and stood out in the community over the last 12 months, and recent weeks have brought more and more visitors into our space. First Wednesday Forum has been enormously popular even with minimal publicity. The AA group that started meeting here a few weeks ago has about 40 members, and the MCC congregation began meeting in their refurbished space downstairs. In a few weeks, we will host training for Our Whole Lives human sexuality course facilitators from around the region. A few weeks after that, we will gather for a semi-annual congregational meeting, face some hard financial realities and make some difficult decisions, together. I don't know yet what will come in 2016, but the view from the hallway isn't so bad after all.

DRE Corner

Towards the end of the year, we see expressions of gratitude everywhere. People are doing 30-day gratitude practices on Facebook. Stories about gratitude are in the media. But then it stops. We get through November and we move on. It's not like we stop being thankful on November 30th!

Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., is the world's leading scientific expert on gratitude. He is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, and the founding editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. Dr. Emmons has spent more than a decade researching the benefits of gratitude. He gives us four main reasons that gratitude is good for us:

- Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present.
- Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions.
- Grateful people are more stress resistant.
- Grateful people have a higher sense of self-worth.

Taking time to be grateful helps us see the positives in our life. Often we can get bogged down in the bad things that happen, so taking time to celebrate the goodness can balance the scales. Cultivating a culture of gratitude can help us all find the good things in our lives.

What can we do to bring the power and warmth of gratitude into the rest of our year? Here are a few simple things we can all do in our homes to help us grow our gratitude:

- Our ritual of sharing Joys & Sorrows often gives us an opportunity to share something we are grateful for. Take that ritual home with you. It doesn't have to be saved for Sunday mornings. Share them with your loved ones every day; share something you are grateful for.
- Start a family gratitude journal. Keep a notebook in an easily accessible place in your home and jot down the little moments of thanks that happen in your day. Encourage the whole family to write theirs down too.
- Tell someone that you are grateful for them. It can be someone close to you or it could be the cashier at the grocery store. Thank those around you. Gratitude is contagious, it is learned. It is a relationship-strengthening emotion because it requires us to see how we've been supported and affirmed by other people.

There is no reason to limit our gratitude to the holiday season. There are moments in everyday to be thankful for and we can take time to recognize all those positive moments all year round. Expressing that gratitude in whatever way works best for you is a way to give it back to the world.

Below is a link to ideas to try in your home. They are designed for families and children but would be a beautiful addition to everyone's home.

<http://www.rhythmsofplay.com/lessons-in-thankfulness-year-round-gratitude-activities-for-kids/>

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