



What's Happening

MAIN LINE UNITARIAN

DECEMBER 2017

LIGHT ONE CANDLE

Just as we light our communal flame, the winter holidays are infused with shared light. Some will soon light the circle of Advent candles. In Columbia, Little Candles Day celebrates the start of the Christmas season. Candles and bonfires illuminate Winter Solstice celebrations. And some countries have their own versions of the Solstice—the Nordic St. Lucia’s Day and Ireland’s Imbolc or Brigid’s Day — while flame and electric lights abound for the nights of Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Christmas.

Our chalice symbolizes many things, just as each culture has unique and unifying stories connected with their symbolic light. But whether you are calling back the light of spring or honoring light as a symbol of the divine, all are celebrations of hope for the world...of our belief that “even when the night is long, the dawn will come.”

All the year through, the flame we share is held; it is safe in our chalice just as each one of us is held safe in our community. And just as the flame illuminates the chalice—shining its light and warming with its love—each of us illuminates our community. In these coming cold and dark months, we may all light shared flames. This light serves as a symbol of our being held in safety, a reminder of our own power to illuminate, and a representation of our hope for the world.

- Leslie Wright-Riley, Board of Trustees



*Together,
We Transform Lives
through
Love, Service, and Our
Welcoming Faith.*

WHO WE ARE

Main Line Unitarian Church is a diverse and caring religious community engaged in a liberating ministry of spiritual growth, human compassion, and universal justice.

At our church we embrace all people, regardless of age, race, ability, politics, financial situation, or sexual orientation; encourage and nurture every individual in his or her own search for meaning in life; and commit to serve local and world communities in promoting peace, social justice, and responsible stewardship of the earth.

HOLIDAY WORKSHOP

Sunday, December 10, 2:00-5:00 p.m. at MLUC

Capture the spirit of giving and attend a fun-filled afternoon at the MLUC Holiday Workshop. As always, the workshop is a great way to make or purchase quality inexpensive gifts for the holiday season for teachers, friends, and family! The afternoon includes our favorite craft tables, holiday flea market, music, food, and MLUC community tree decorating! This event is open to the community so grab your family and friends and get into the holiday spirit!



We are still accepting some donations and looking for volunteers - visit us in the Atrium Sunday, December 3 to find out more or email Rebecca Polss (rivkahr@yahoo.com). Donations for the White Elephant Sale can be dropped off after 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and anytime on weekends to the "Donations Station" located on the lower level of MLUC.

Sign up to donate food at www.tinyurl.com/holidayworkshop1. Food donations can be dropped off in the kitchen on Sunday, December 10 between 11:30 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. Gluten-free and nut-free donations are encouraged.



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MINISTERIAL MUSINGS: SEPARATION OF CHURCH & STATE IN CHURCH

When I became a minister 31 years ago, one of the first things I did was join Americans United for Separation of Church & State (AU), a nonpartisan educational and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the constitutional principle of church-state separation as the surest way to ensure freedom of religion, including the right to believe or not believe, for all Americans. When I became the minister of the UU Congregation of Columbia, South Carolina, I started an AU chapter in the state capital. When our state legislature produced an explicitly Christian license plate, which implicitly signaled government endorsement of a religion, I served as one of six clergy plaintiffs in AU's successful lawsuit to halt the license plate. Then I was invited to serve on AU's national Board of Trustees, and I currently serve as President of the Board. Needless to say, the separation of church and state is a cause I am devoted to and know something about.



Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones
Senior Minister

The issue of political speech usually comes up in church at election time, but at MLUC, this has become a monthly issue with our Legislative Advocacy Sundays. On these Sundays, the sermon and entire worship service address a topic of social justice, after which members are encouraged to send postcards to their elected representatives urging action on relevant legislation.

What kind of political speech is legitimate for a nonprofit organization like a church? To maintain our tax-exempt status, I as a minister and we as a church cannot take partisan stands. That means that as a church, we cannot endorse or oppose candidates or political parties. It means that as a church, we cannot contribute money to or solicit contributions for candidates or political parties. However, churches can sponsor candidate debates and forums as long as all candidates are invited. Churches can conduct voter registration and education drives, publicize candidates' voting records, publish nonpartisan candidate surveys and voting guides, and discuss candidates' positions on public issues. Churches can advocate for referenda, constitutional amendments, and ballot initiatives, and speak out on political issues and public policy.

For UUs, this latter right – speaking out on political issues and public policy – is not only a right but an obligation. Public policies frequently represent moral issues. I as a minister and we as a congregation would be remiss in performing our prophetic duty to “afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted” if we remained silent on the moral issues of our day. For instance, in the last three months, we have addressed gun violence, reproductive choice, and climate change on our Legislative Advocacy Sundays. We UUs honor the prophetic voices of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus, as well as our own Unitarian and Universalist ancestors who stood up and spoke out for abolition, women's suffrage, public education, organized labor, peace, freedom of speech, civil rights, the women's movement, and LGBTQ equality when we speak truth to power, as well.

The question is not whether we engage in political speech in church but what kind of political speech. If it is partisan, then we truncate our message into a pitch for a particular candidate or party and, in my opinion, lose our credibility as a steadfast moral compass for the larger community. But if we speak out against injustice and for freedom, equality, compassion, and dignity for all, then we are fulfilling our prophetic duty to seek the common good and represent those whom Jesus referred to as “the least of these.”

- Neal

DAWNING THOUGHTS

It's time for “The Holidays!”

For many folks, the winter holiday season can be tough. Hard memories can surface; some of us miss loved ones who are gone or struggle with loved ones who are here but with whom we are in conflict. It's a time when it's easy for people of any age to feel “less than.”

The best advice I've ever heard for moving through difficult holiday seasons is to replace traditions that bind and memories full of pain with new plans and the building of new memories. There are many holiday activities and services coming up at MLUC. Make us a part of your self-care practice this holiday season.



Dawn-Star Sarahs-Borchelt,
Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Personally, I love Christmas. I have always been deeply drawn to this story about the importance of a mother giving birth to a baby, no matter the circumstances. I don't even mind working every Christmas Eve to preside over the No-Rehearsal Pageant. As a family, we've adopted the practice of getting Chinese food for dinner that evening so nobody has to cook and everybody can get to bed so Santa can come.

This Christmas Eve, though, is different – because it's on a Sunday. There will be **NO 4:00 p.m. pageant. Instead, the 10:00 a.m. service will be the No-Rehearsal Pageant, followed by traditional Christmas Eve services at 6:00 and 8:00 p.m.** Stay tuned for information about how to be involved in the No-Rehearsal Pageant.

- Dawn Star

SUNDAY SERVICES

Services will be held at 10:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

DECEMBER 3: SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT "THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS"

Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones

Music: MLUC Choir

Another mass shooting, another round of "thoughts and prayers" for the victims' families. The passivity of this response infuriates some of us, but this humanist minister wonders if there is any legitimacy to offering thoughts and prayers.

DECEMBER 10: AN UNDECLARED WAR

Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones

In America, we can talk about the sex lives of celebrities but not economic inequality. Let's bring this taboo subject out in the open on this Legislative Advocacy Sunday.

DECEMBER 17: WINTER SOLSTICE

Nuala Carpenter, Terry Dixon, Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones

This Winter Solstice service will explore the interplay of lightness and darkness.

DECEMBER 24

Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones

- A No-Rehearsal Pageant at 10:00 a.m. | *Music: Multigenerational Choir*
- Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 p.m. | *Music: MLUC Choir*
- Christmas Eve Service at 8:00 p.m. | *Music: MLUC Choir*

DECEMBER 31: DON'T STUMBLE ON WHAT'S BEHIND YOU

Rev. Naomi Washington Leapheart

Music: Dr. Vincent Craig

What does it mean to be standing between what is behind (2017) and what is ahead (2018), and deciding to risk the new year, without stumbling or shame?

DECEMBER OFFERING OUTREACH

Delaware Valley Children's Charity (DVCC) is located in West Chester, PA. This organization is dedicated to bringing relief and assistance to children and families in need throughout the Delaware Valley. DVCC started with a holiday program thirty-one years ago, providing warm clothing, food, and gifts to a small number of children.

In 1991, it was formally made into a nonprofit organization, and activities were extended to provide for emergency needs throughout the calendar year. Staffed by volunteers only, DVCC has responded to requests for heating oil, food, clothing, housing, utilities, hearing aids, furniture, camp, daycare, preschool costs, and other needs for children and their families. They continue to have a large holiday program where sponsors provide a huge volume of warm clothing, food, and toys to underprivileged children and families. The volunteers of DVCC believe that, "A new winter coat or a bag of toys may not change a life, but it can change a heart, and that is where it all begins."

FALL COMMUNITY SERVICE

Saturday, December 2, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Do not miss MLUC's annual Leaf Raking Gala. See old friends and make new ones as we join together to clear up the leaves. Pizza in the Recreation Room will follow. Bring a well-labeled rake and a tarp if you have one. New ideas? Need more information? Contact Priscilla Osgood (pgo0420@gmail.com).

MAIN LINE UNITARIAN CHURCH
816 S. VALLEY FORGE ROAD, DEVON, PA 19333
PHONE 610-688-8332, FAX 610-964-1195
DEVONU@MLUC.ORG
WWW.MLUC.ORG

Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones
Senior Minister
ext. 12, neal@mluc.org

Richard Fritzson
Executive Director
ext. 15, rich@mluc.org

Dr. Vincent Craig
Music Director
ext. 22, vincent@mluc.org

Dawn Star Sarahs-Borchelt
Director of Lifespan Religious Education
ext. 23, dawnstar@mluc.org

Jessica Hirsch Lynn
Membership Coordinator
ext. 26, jessica@mluc.org

Brianna Johnson
Communications Coordinator
ext. 14, news@mluc.org

Jan Cauffman
Parish Nurse
ext. 16, jan@mluc.org

Mary Heil
Administrative Assistant
ext. 10, mary@mluc.org

Laura Lilick
Childcare Coordinator
childcare@mluc.org

Bill Mullen
Accountant
ext. 17, bill@mluc.org

Ron D'Annunzio
Facilities Coordinator
ext. 20, ron@mluc.org

Tom Brady
Facilities Associate

Will Quay
Assistant Custodian

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY HEALTH

On January 7, 2018, COMH members are looking to connect with a particular subsection of our members and friends. While the response to the community check-in survey in November was strong, over 60% of the more than 200 respondents were over 60 years of age. Those voices are valuable, but we would like to hear from our younger congregants as well. Without hearing directly from you, we can only guess and make assumptions based on a very small number of responses.

If you are under 50 years of age, please join members of COMH on January 7, prior to the service for coffee and a light breakfast, and share your views on how well we, as a faith community, are doing at providing opportunities for spiritual enrichment, and which aspects of life at MLUC serve you best on your path as you seek spiritual meaning. We will use the questions from the survey to frame our discussion. The gathering will begin in the McGinness Room at 8:30 a.m. for coffee, food and a brief social time. The discussion will begin promptly at 9:00, and end in time for service. Childcare will be available for anyone who needs it.



Further opportunities for **all** members and friends to discuss particular topics raised in the survey will be scheduled in January and February, once all the results have been analyzed. Watch for dates and times, and join us as we dive a little deeper into the topic of spiritual growth and enrichment at MLUC.

SHORT ON CASH, BUT MANAGING WELL

For years we've hung the monthly financials on a bulletin board by the office door for anyone interested to read. This quaint practice is important because our financial reports should always be visible to all of our members. You donate most of the church's money; you vote on how we should spend it; you should be able to see that it is being spent correctly and effectively.

Going forward, we'll still make paper copies of these records available in the office for anyone who wants to see them, but we'll also be regularly posting them to an online repository, linked from our website, where you can read them with a computer or a smartphone. If you go there, you'll find the regular monthly operating statements, along with the annual reports for the fiscal year which ended in June 2017. You can learn a lot about the church's end-of-year financial state by browsing these documents. The annual operating statement contains the budget as approved by the congregation back in May 2016. It shows that for the last fiscal year we anticipated receiving about \$916,000 dollars in revenue, and spending about \$917,000. However, the operating statement also shows what actually happened during the year. It turns out that we only received \$876,000 in revenue. This \$40,000 shortfall was primarily the result of unpaid pledges along with lower than anticipated auction income in October 2016.

Fortunately, instead of spending our anticipated \$917,000 the operating statement shows that we ended the year spending only \$807,000. Much of this reduction was achieved by not filling key staff positions as quickly as we'd planned. We didn't hire a full-time Executive Director until January and we didn't hire a DLRE until after the fiscal year ended. In this way, we avoided ending the year with a deficit. By reading the operating statement, you can learn more about our financial activity and see how we did during the year versus what we had planned.

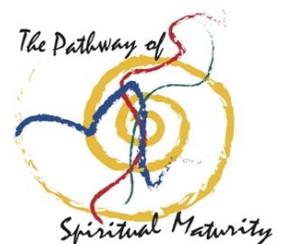
Also in the repository is the Balance Sheet for June 30, which shows a working cash balance of around \$60,000. This is uncomfortably low because it represents only about one month of expenses. During months when pledge receipts are low, this balance provides only a thin cushion for our staff to work with when managing our cash flow. That's why it is especially important for members and friends to make their pledge payments on a regular basis and not wait until the end of the year.

If you have questions about these reports, please contact our Treasurer, Carl Stevens, and be sure to thank him, and the members of the Finance Team, for driving this effort to make our financial information more easily available to all of us.

LGBTQ+ 101

Sunday, December 3, 11:30–1:00 p.m.; Led by India Dixon

If you've ever felt like the LGBTQ+ acronym is growing by the minute and you can't keep up, you're not the only one. In this workshop, our own YRUU president will review terms, misconceptions, and FAQs on everything LGBT from sexual orientation to transitioning to polyamorous relationships to being intersex and more. Email register@mluc.org to sign up.



PARTNER CHURCH NEWS

MLUC's partner church, the Várfalva Unitarian Church in the village of Várfalva in Transylvania, Romania, will begin renovating and restoring its historic 700-year-old building.

The church received a European Union grant to cover the cost of renovation. Kolozsi Orsolya (Orsi), who visited MLUC along with seven other members of our partner church in October 2014, wrote recently to tell us that three firms submitted bids and one has been chosen to undertake the work. "We are very happy that this step is over, and the work itself can begin," she says.

When the church was built, it was Roman Catholic, but it became Unitarian in the 16th century when the people of Várfalva became Unitarian. According to Orsi, a Latin inscription on the church announcing that renovation was undertaken in 1613 reveals that the congregation was wealthy and that religion and spiritual life were important to them.

Like Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist churches all over the world, in a special service in January, MLUC will celebrate the 450th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Religious Freedom and Tolerance, known as the Edict of Torda.



A 19th-century depiction of the Transylvanian Unitarian Francis Dávid at the Diet of Torda in 1568 by Aladár Körösfői-Kriesch. The diet culminated in the issuance of the Declaration of Religious Freedom and Tolerance.

LEGISLATING UU VALUES

On December 10, following the service, you'll have another opportunity to let your legislators understand the UU perspective of current legislation. The topic will be economic justice and is based on the UU Principles: "The inherent worth and dignity of every person" and "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations." We recognize that economic justice affects lower income communities disproportionately and we will work to increase awareness and take action on legislation advocating for practical, common-sense policies that would promote economic justice in our country. A brief overview of basic talking points will be given during the service. Please take 5 minutes after the service to sign postcards on this important issue. Assistance will be provided to help you find your representative's contact info. Donations for postcards and stamps are appreciated. Let's work together to put our faith in action! Find your legislator here: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

LEGACY CIRCLE CELEBRATES BEQUESTS AT MLUC

Over the years MLUC has been the beneficiary of members and friends who have remembered the church in their will. Whether large or small, these bequests have provided a strong base of support for our UU community and its programs. Bequests continue to be tremendously important to the vitality of our church and its work today and in the future.



MLUC's recently-established Legacy Circle celebrates the commitment of congregants whose impact will be felt long after their passing. Please take a minute to peruse our new Legacy Circle roster in the Atrium, and help yourself to a Legacy brochure. We hope you will consider joining this ever-expanding circle of friends acting on their conviction that our UU congregation and its work for compassionate justice and religious freedom are important now—and will be important long after we are gone.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DOROTHY (D.B) TEMPLETON

Saturday, December 2, 2:00 p.m. at MLUC

Quite a few of us were unable to attend the memorial service held last summer at Kendall Retirement Community for long-time member and friend, D.B. Templeton. Thus, as she was so much a part of our church community, a service will take place here at MLUC on December 2. All are welcome.

Psssst! ... Making Your Annual Pledge is Easier Than Ever!

Visit mluc.org/support-your-church, fill out a quick form, and follow the instructions based on your preferred payment method. If you've already pledged, manage your payments/information anytime from tinyurl.com/mlucpayments.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH: TIAN TIAN LI

Love Me More is a series of watercolor paintings by Tiantian Li, a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Her interest lies in the subject matter of women's emotions. She explores sensitivity, depicting women's unique feelings with light, color, and textures of fabric.

Li combines classical portraits and modern fashion elements using water-based materials to express her thoughts directly. For portraits, she aims to portray every minute detail of a character, even down to the subject's eyelashes and fur coat hairs. The precision of these realistic depictions and the breeziness of the fabrics create visual contrast. The women's lingerie plays with themes such as security, restraint, and inseparable emotions. Li aims to express the universal beauty underneath these emotions in *Love Me More*.



DECEMBER LECTURE LUNCHEON

Wednesday, December 13, refreshments at 11:30, luncheon at noon

All members and friends of MLUC are invited to our traditional Holiday Luncheon. There will not be a speaker, just extended conviviality. This month's luncheon is **free** of charge. Reservations are **MANDATORY**, as we must know how many meals to prepare. **RSVP by Sunday, December 10 to tim.conahan@gmail.com.**

MULTIGENERATIONAL CHOIR

The Multigen. choir will sing on December 24. Rehearsals take place December 10 and 17 at 11:00 a.m.; and December 24 at 9:00 a.m.

INSIGHT BOOK GROUP

MLUC's Insight Book Group has planned three new novels and a holiday dinner for the winter months. On December 14, we will once again gather at Asiana Thai restaurant (232 Wayne Avenue, Wayne) for dinner and our annual book exchange. If you'd like to join us, RSVP to Sally Fritzson (sfritzson@gmail.com) to reserve a place. Please bring along a book you've enjoyed and would like to share.

On January 18, we will discuss *Forest Dark* by Nicole Krauss (Harper Collins 2017). Krauss' work of fiction has been described as elegant, provocative, and mesmerizing - the story of life-altering trips to Israel by two Americans whose lives are in transit.

The February 15 selection is Isabel Allende's newest novel, *In the Midst of Winter* (Atria Books 2017), another story of travel and change. Her book has been praised as the sweeping saga of three very different people brought together in journeys through time and countries - another triumph of extraordinary storytelling.

For March 15 we will read *Manhattan Beach* by Pulitzer-Prize winning author Jennifer Egan (Scribner 2017). This historical novel has received rave reviews as a riveting crime story set in the transformative days of WWII New York. Insight welcomes all interested MLUC readers and meets one Thursday per month at 7:00 p.m. For more information, please contact Eileen Andrews (jricka@verizon.net).

If MLUC is like family to you, please include it in your will. Bequests of all sizes will support the church community and its work on behalf of justice, equity, compassion, religious freedom, and spiritual growth. For more information on planned giving, email endowment@mluc.org

JOYS AND CONCERNS

We express our support and concern for ...

Mildred Levine, who had eye surgery in October.

Barbara Hayes, who is recuperating from a fall at the Health Center of Quadrangle.

Martiena Evans, whose mother Shirley Anderson had hip surgery in November.

Rich Fritzson, who buried his father Israel's ashes at sea in Florida on October 29.

Ann Miller, whose husband Stanley died on November 4.

Al Little, who is recovering at the Health Center at the Quadrangle.

Rachel Warner, who is recuperating from a fall at Broomall Presbyterian Home.

Mary Stromquist, whose lifelong friend Susan Lively died on October 23.

Gary Merken, whose brother was hospitalized for pneumonia and is recovering his strength in rehab.

Tom and Betsy McIlwain, whose grandson Luke, age 4, has been diagnosed with pediatric leukemia.

Bobbie Potsic, whose cousin Renee died after a 16-month battle with cancer.

We express our appreciation to ...

Everyone who volunteered to host homeless families here at MLUC for a week last month as a part of our church's participation in the **Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)**.

Sabine Rehm, Priscilla and Frank Osgood, Sue Smith, Carolyn Jaeger, and Alexis Margraff for transferring and planting new shrubs and bushes in our church yard and removing dead limbs and plants.

Gene Ramsbottom and everyone else who helped to make this year's auction on November 4 one of our most successful. We raised approximately \$35,000.

We express our congratulations to ...

Marian Caraselli and John Mason, who welcomed grandchild #11 into their combined families on October 13.

A DEEPLY HEALING RETREAT

December 8-10 at Murray Grove Retreat and Renewal Center, Lanoka Harbor, NJ

Are you feeling overwhelmed by a personal loss? Anxious about the uncertainties of our global crises? These experiences need not result in despair or helplessness. We invite you to become part of an exploration of community grieving. Throughout, we will learn to involve nature in our healing process, as well as share deeply our grief within the container of everyone's support. Learn more at www.murraygrove.org/grief-rituals-retreat

CAREGIVERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Are you a caregiver looking for a place to share with others who are in your boat? This group meets on the first and third Mondays of each month throughout the year. The group gathers from 1:00-2:00 p.m. in the McGinness Room and is facilitated by the Parish Nurse, Jan Cauffman. Questions? Email jan@mluc.org.



MAIN LINE UNITARIAN CHURCH

816 SOUTH VALLEY FORGE RD · DEVON PA 19333

PHONE 610-688-8332

FAX 610-964-1195

WWW.MLUC.ORG



ON THE WEB

The complete MLUC calendar of events is online at www.mluc.org. Members can click the front page icon to request a room for their meeting or event.



WHAT'S HAPPENING

The newsletter of Main Line Unitarian Church is published 12 times a year. Submissions of 225 words or fewer are due on **December 10** for the January issue. Submit material to news@mluc.org. To learn more about communications at MLUC, contact Brianna Johnson (brianna@mluc.org).