

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark (UUFN)
Congregational Meeting - November 15th, 2015
Minister's Report to the Congregation

Being a minister is a strange profession, a strange calling - and giving a report on my ministry inherently has that strangeness. You, the members of the congregation called me to be your minister, and I report to you as a body. Many of you know what I do and the ministry we share, but there are aspects which I either want to highlight or that otherwise may not be known. Those are the aspects of my ministry which I will share briefly with you.

I believe that ministry and worship specifically is heightened by shared participation. Just last week we saw the fruits of a combined effort with the celebration of our ancestors. The service came together with Minister, Music Director, three very dedicated lay leaders (Karen, Laura and Nancy), not to mention a pianist, sound support, RE Coordinator, choir, youth, ushers, altar guild... the list keeps going. And that was just an obvious collaboration - every week the service is the product of many hands together. So I want to highlight something the Worship Committee and I started this year, a Worship Working Group. On Tuesday, November 17th at 7pm, anyone who is interested can come and give input to the next two months' services. Is there a hymn, reading, story, topic or activity you think will fit with the themes? Come on Tuesday and give us that input.

Also coming up in the near future with worship is the Newark Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, a time of transcending faith boundaries to celebrate our common humanity. The service is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, November 24th, 7:30pm at Calvary Baptist Church. This year I is preaching the sermon and many of our choir members are singing in the combined choir. I hope you can make it!

Some other quick notes: I mentioned earlier this year my family's plan to have all UUFN members over to our house, in small groups. So far we have made and strengthened many relationships and I look forward to inviting you to our home. I am also very excited with the Chalice Circle program, a series of small group gatherings. There are about 80 people signed up for Chalice Circles for what I hope will be a great year of depth and connection.

Another exciting event happening is that a minister and his family from Transylvania are coming to visit at the start of the new year. The family will be staying with our family and he will be preaching on January 3rd. I have reached out to Fellowship, Social Justice and Worship to see what other congregational activities we may have to connect with our partners in faith from Transylvania. Look for more information about that.

As I have said, ministry is an odd profession - one where my report to the governing body includes both professional and personal items. The calling of being a minister is one which includes all of me, so I feel it appropriate to share when the personal and professional intersect and overlap. In that vein, Isabella recently started a new position with Planned Parenthood of Delaware! That's fantastic news, but what it means for our family and you is this: There are changes in my family's schedule with regard to day care, household chores, meal times and times spent together.

At our last congregational meeting I asked for your help in my work-life balance. And I feel the need to reiterate that request. With the changes in my family's schedule I ask for challenge, understanding and forgiveness. Challenge me to make sure I am spending enough time with my family, understand that my schedule is dependent on both my family and on this congregation and be forgiving when I make mistakes. Scheduling is difficult, and with an engaged membership with many groups know that I can't be at everything. But I want to be involved when I am needed, so here is a simple tip to have me involved in your meeting or congregational event. Schedule with me in the loop. If you want me to attend, it is best to

include me before a time and date is set, so we can work together to get a time that works.

Programs, logistics and family life... and my expectations of you. However, I left out what you should be expecting from me. Just last night I was thinking and reading some Patch Adams, and realized that life is good and people are special, but we sometimes don't recognize it. So I am resolving to be more loving. Sometimes that one more e-mail or that last call or meeting of the night can get pretty tiresome. So I am pledging to be ever mindful of my outlook and always strive for love and peace. And yes, you may remind me of this. Just expect a loving response.

With peace and love,

Rev. Andy L. West