



**CEDAR VALLEY
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS**

3912 CEDAR HEIGHTS DR. CEDAR FALLS, IA 50613

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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www.cedarvalleyuu.org



***** 2024 *****

- DECEMBER 1 10:00 A.M. HOLIDAY MEMORIES – CVUU Panel, Karen Impola ***
11:30 A.M. Adult Forum
- DECEMBER 8 10:00 A.M. YOU CAN'T STEAL MY JOY: ACTS OF RESISTANCE FOR THESE TIMES**
11:30 A.M. Adult Forum – Pastor Emma Peterson, Callie Amiday *
- DECEMBER 15 10:00 A.M. UU HOLIDAY PAGEANT – Pastor Emma Peterson; CCRE, Ronan Parker with the**
11:30 A.M. Adult Forum CVUU children; Kathi Bower *
- DECEMBER 22 10:00 A.M. REFLECTIONS ON THE LONGEST NIGHT – Karen Impola, Mollie Wallsteadt ***
11:30 A.M. Adult Forum
- DECEMBER 24 5:30 P.M. A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**
 (Hospitality after the service, see article) – Pastor Emma Peterson, Kathi Bower *
- DECEMBER 29 10:00 A.M. WISHES, HOPES, AND PLANS FOR 2025 – Pam Hays, Dick Warhol ***
Due to the holiday, No Adult Forum

* ~ denotes *Worship Associate*



The *mission* of this organization is to be an accepting and supportive community that nurtures spiritual, emotional, and intellectual explorations, articulates ethical values, and encourages actions based on personal beliefs. This community is a voice for religious diversity, human tolerance, improvement of the human condition, and preservation of our environment.

NOTES FROM THE PASTOR

I'm always curious what folks might say if asked, "What does Pastor Emma preach about most?" I imagine some would answer, "that Capitalism is bad!" or "I don't know, but she seems to like Jesus a lot for a Unitarian Universalist!" I hope the answer would be, "Pastor Emma preaches Community." If it is true that every minister has one sermon they preach over and over, mine is "Community is What Saves Us." I preach Community. There is a lot that is unknown right now. There is much that feels hopelessly out of our control. All indications suggest we are entering a dark, even dangerous period of collective history. Remember that it is always darkest before the dawn. It's time to get with your people; and then, let's make moves to save everyone and everything that we can.

Marginalized folks, mutual aid workers, activists on the fringes have a saying—"We Take Care of Us." But it isn't just a saying—it's an oath and a commitment. Beloved Community, if ever there was a time for us to make the commitment to Take Care of Us, that time is now. Ultimately, Community is all we've really got. It's time to hunker down, to look out for each other, to find hope, and never give up. Commit to Community Care. It is how we will all survive.

We Take Care of Us.

Take care of yourselves, too. This journey is going to be longer than we anticipated. You gotta eat. You gotta sleep. You gotta get up and walk around and go outside once or twice a day. Okay? If you are vulnerable to the immediate wrath of fascism, make sure you have a safety plan. If you are not in immediate danger, check on those you know who are. How can you help them stay safe and sane? And remember this, Joy is an Act of Resistance. Grieve. Rage. Hold your people close. Then get to work.

I love y'all. We Take Care of Us.

Pastor Emma



WELCOME TO OUR NEW CCRE !

Born in the Midwest and raised in the South, Ronan is no stranger to childcare and the importance of educating the youth about themselves and the community that surrounds them. From volunteering to care for children in daycare and foster care settings to working in the public school system of Jenison, Michigan, Ronan has always strived to nurture the hearts and minds of the children entrusted in his care. He is always open to asking and receiving questions about the world around him, and interested in the discussions of belief, education, and Social Justice.

Ronan is new to the area of Cedar Falls, Iowa and hopes to settle here and become an important part of his chosen community and congregation. When Ronan is not engaging in serious discussion or assisting in facilitating community and education, he can be found playing tabletop RPGs such as Dungeons & Dragons or creating art while he listens to one of the dozens of playlists he's made that gives him creative inspiration. He is grateful for the opportunity to be an educator to the youth of the CVUU, and excited to see what the future brings both for himself and the CRE program.

Please welcome our new Coordinator of Children's Religious Education, *Ronan Joy Parker* (He/They).



GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the days get darker and colder, I look forward to the many celebrations of light, warmth, and community here at the CVUU. At the time of this writing in the latter half of November, we have a few of those events coming up that are worth mentioning.

One of my favorites is the *Treats and Talents Auction*, a hilarious costume "gala" where we raise money for the church through offering dinners, game nights, excursions, and special services, as well as homemade treats, art, and handicrafts. What better way to chase away the darkness than to get together to eat, drink, laugh, and fill up our social calendars for the coming year?

Also, there is Thanksgiving, a special time when we pause to be grateful for all that we have, and to help those in need. Our church is always bright with autumn colors—fall leaves, pumpkins, apples, and hay bales. Although many of us celebrate the holiday privately with family and friends, the church again is offering an enormous potluck in the Fellowship Hall on Thanksgiving Day—complete with everyone's favorite holiday foods.

The winter holidays of light—Diwali, Hanukkah, Solstice, Christmas, and Kwanza—help us celebrate the eternal light within us and give us hope for longer, warmer days to come. As an inveterate heliophile (sun lover), I need every bit of light I can get. After Thanksgiving, I like to put an artificial tree up in my sunroom and string it with little white lights. I leave it up through Christmas, New Years, Valentine's Day, and sometimes through Spring Break. My rule is to leave it up until the last possibility of snow is past. If I have to decorate it with Easter eggs, so be it!

Instead of doing a Hat and Mitten Tree this year, the Social Action Committee has identified another important need in the community—toiletries and personal hygiene products. So, don't worry about buying extra socks, gloves, hats, and mittens this year. Donate to the CVUU Toiletry Tree and think about how we can make this new display as festive as possible!

The Accessibility Task Force (ATF) has been working tirelessly to explore ways we can make our church more physically accessible. As of this writing, I am looking forward to hearing their report on two possibilities: (1) the renovation of our current building to include an elevator, automatic doors, and larger spaces to accommodate new growth, or (2) the purchase of another church. Both options have many pros and cons, and it will take a long time to determine which way we should go. So please be patient and stay involved! Our church is primarily a group of like-minded people—but it is also a physical space that needs to serve everyone's needs.

As a final note, although our fall and winter celebrations are meant to bring happiness to all, some of us might not associate these holidays with peace and joy. In fact, some of us may have suffered significant losses this year. I hope that we can acknowledge this and continue to support each other with loving kindness throughout this holiday season.

Wishing you all the very best, *Carolyn Hildebrandt*
CVUU President



UU-related historical facts in our newsletters are contributed by *Mica Lorenz* and taken from *This Day in Unitarian Universalist History* by Frank Schulman – Skinner House Books.

William Channing Gannett, a Unitarian minister, author, and advocate of religious freedom, died on December 15, 1923 at age eighty-three in Rochester, New York.



DECEMBER SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 a.m. online and in person unless stated otherwise.

December 1st

Holiday Memories ~~ CVUU Panel, Karen Impola (WA)

A few members of the congregation will be sharing their memories of the holiday season and reflecting on the importance of traditions.

December 8th

You Can't Steal My Joy: Acts of Resistance for These Times

~~ Pastor Emma Peterson, Callie Amiday (WA)

This service will encourage us to find strength and resilience by intentionally leading joyful lives. How can we live joyfully amid genuine existential threats? How can we use our privilege to protect the joy of people who are most at risk at this moment in time? Let's create a joyful way together.

December 15th

UU Holiday Pageant ~~ Pastor Emma Peterson; CCRE,

Ronan Parker with the CVUU children; Kathi Bower (WA)
Get in the holiday spirit in the best way—by watching adorable children perform a holiday pageant! The performance promises to be hilariously hapless and surprisingly marvelous. This is sure to be a sweet and silly Sunday.

December 22nd

Reflections on the Longest Night

~~ Karen Impola, Mollie Wallsteadt (WA)

A look at midwinter customs in various cultures over the centuries.

December 24th -- 5:30 p.m.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service

~~ Pastor Emma Peterson, Kathi Bower (WA)

Enjoy a traditional Christmas Eve service. Listen to the story of the birth of Jesus, sing along to cozy hymns, and enjoy a few special musical performances. All are welcome. (See the article below on hospitality details for after the service.)

December 29th

Wishes, Hopes, and Plans for 2025

~~ Pam Hays, Dick Warhol (WA)



HOSPITALITY ON CHRISTMAS EVE!

Following the Christmas Eve service, join us for hospitality in the Fellowship Hall where hot apple cider will be provided. If you have extra cookies, candies, cheese/crackers, or other snack items (beyond what you need to leave for Santa or the reindeer!), please consider bringing a plate to contribute to the table. As in the past, we ask that you **bring your items already 'plated'** and take your plate home with you. This cuts down on clean-up for the kitchen folks. *Merry Christmas!*

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Forums take place following the Sunday services at 11:30 a.m. unless publicized otherwise. Most, if not all, are available on Zoom and in person at the church.

December 1st

Serving Health Needs in Black Hawk County

The Allen College Engagement-Salvation Army Partnership is a free health clinic which serves immediate health needs and acts as an access point for health services for underserved populations in the county. This forum will inform us about the vital service that they perform in our community.

December 8th

Facing the Future with Resilience

The City of Cedar Falls has adopted a Resiliency Plan which addresses future challenges to the community due to climate change and other environmental challenges. Ward 4 City Councilperson *Aaron Hawbaker* will discuss this plan with us. This is part of a follow-up to the Climate Justice workshop that was held at CVUU in September.

December 15th

Poetry with Vince Gotera

Vince Gotera is an internationally recognized poet who has served for many years as Editor of the *North American Review*, which is one of the oldest literary magazines in the US and which is headquartered at UNI. Vince will read and discuss some of his poetry and ideas with us.

December 22nd

Generosity

One of the Soul Matters themes for 2023-24 was *Generosity*, and it seems appropriate to revisit this during the holiday season when many of us are asked to be especially generous to others. This also provides a lead-in to our *Guest at Your Table* fundraiser for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. *Rob Boody* will lead the discussion.

December 29th

Due to the holidays there will be no Forum this day.

Al and Pam Hays for Adult RE



MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Sunday morning meditation will continue at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom. Find the link in the Weekly Update to join in with this group on Sunday mornings and look for group posts and updates on the Buddhist Path Facebook page.



COVID-19 NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

If we learn that there has been a possible COVID exposure at a CVUU event, we will send out an all-church email. To ensure that you receive these emails, verify that you are signed up on our newsletter and Weekly Update email lists.

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 in the days after attending an event at the CVUU should contact the CVUU office at <office@cedarvalleyuu.org>; the Vice President, *Karen Impola* at <vp@cedarvalleyuu.org>; and *Pastor Emma Peterson* at <pastor@cedarvalleyuu.org>.

BOARD BRIEFS

On November 14th your CVUU Board held its regular monthly meeting. Although the full Board minutes are posted in the Fellowship Hall, here are a few highlights:

- ✦ **Accessibility Task Force (ATF):** After many hours of detailed planning and discussions about how to make our current building more accessible (e.g. by adding an elevator, automatic doors, smoother pathways), we now have a second option—to buy another church that may be available in Cedar Falls. A Second Hour presentation and discussion about both options was on November 17th.
- ✦ **Music Director:** We still have no viable candidates for the Music Director position. To sweeten the deal, the Board voted to increase the wage to \$26.00 an hour. It also voted to make some tasks mandatory (i.e., playing the piano during Sunday services) and other tasks optional (e.g., singing, leading the choir and/or band). The position is still budgeted for eight hours a week, depending on how much time is spent on each task.
- ✦ **DCRE:** As *Ronan* is settling into their new job working with children and adult volunteers, we are still searching for another CCRE to split the position.
- ✦ **Shared Ministry:** There is a new policy outlining what the church will provide for memorial service receptions for church members. The policy is aimed at making this aspect of memorial services more equitable for all.
- ✦ **Social Action:** Instead of having a *Hat and Mitten Tree* this year, we will be collecting toiletries for individuals and groups in need. Our new tree this season will be a *Toiletry Tree!*



Another year is coming to a close in a few short weeks; where does the time go? There are lots of activities in the Cedar Valley and at the CVUU to enjoy this month. Think about asking someone who doesn't get out often, isn't very mobile, or who can't drive, to join you in the festivities.

We currently have members who are dealing with health issues including surgery; some are in various stages of the healing process. We wish each of them a speedy recovery to good health. To those who have experienced the loss of a relative or dear friend, we send our deepest sympathy.

Contact the *Caring Connections Team* with pastoral concerns, or if you are in need of assistance.



CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGED?? DON'T FORGET THE CVUU!

Whenever your contact information changes, alert the office <office@cedarvalleyuu.org>, and ask that it be changed in the Directory—or you can change it in the online Directory yourself and the office will get a notification.

With Cedar Falls Utilities discontinuing their email service by next spring/summer, *please* remember the CVUU when you change to a different email address!

CHILDREN'S RE!!

The Halloween Party this year was small but mighty. All of the children had fun and took home plenty of candy! There was a story we created together about werewolves, and zombies, and spiders, and spiders, and. . .well, you get the idea. Thank you to those who donated their time and candy to the party!

December's Soul Matters theme is *Presence*—how to look upon the gifts that we already have and notice the presence of stillness within our lives. During a month that is abuzz with activity, it is important to find the moments of quiet within, while we explore how winter is celebrated.

Sunday the 15th will be the day of our *Winter Pageant!* It will be an interactive story that incorporates the "Toiletry Tree" drive and will be led by the children of our congregation. We are looking forward to presenting to you what we have planned!

There will be RE classes each Sunday in December into early January, with one reserved for the annual pageant and some time used within classes to prepare. It may be a bit more relaxed overall, to keep children and adults both from being overwhelmed. Additionally, we will now be offering childcare through the Second Hour, so if there are any parents who have wanted to stay for an Adult Forum but were unable, we hope this might make such things more accessible.

There are many firsts for me as I settle into my new role, but I hope to create an environment that is an inviting and important part of your children's lives. Thank you everyone for your warm welcome.

Ronan Parker

Coordinator of Children's Religious Education



NATURE LOVERS POTLUCK

The Nature Lovers Small Group will have its annual holiday potluck on Saturday, December 7th at 12:00 p.m. Join us even if you haven't been able to walk with us lately. We will meet at *Christine Carpenter's* home so please R.S.V.P. to her if you plan to attend. If you have questions, contact Christine or *Betsy Brant*. Hope to see you there!



FELLOWSHIP HALL ENTRANCE CONSTRUCTION

Magee Construction is currently planning to begin work on the Fellowship Hall entryway on Monday, December 2nd. They hope to complete their work on Friday, December 6th barring any weather delays. The Fellowship Hall entrance will be closed once construction begins and will be reopened once construction is completed.

Bill Brown for Building & Grounds

IUUWAN NEWS

Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness Advocacy Network has a new Facebook page. It can be accessed via the Facebook link on the website: <<https://iuuwan.com>>. It would be great if folks using Facebook would follow it and hit some likes. We have had to start over after losing an established account that can no longer be accessed by an administrator.

IUUWAN strives to build connections with Iowa UUs in acting for equity, fairness, and inclusion. Some recent posts include UUs in Dubuque who had a die-in to bring attention to gun violence, documentation of different Iowa churches' *Climate Revivals*, and a request for an urgent letter to Senator Chuck Grassley about the health of US political prisoner Leonard Peltier on World Political Prisoner Day.

Shirley Whiteside



HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR OUR CVUU MINISTER AND STAFF

Pastor Emma and our new paid staff, Leann Lockard (she/her) and Ronan Parker (he/him or they/them), work hard for the CVUU, and our beloved community wouldn't be the same without them. If you would like to show your appreciation for the great work they do for the CVUU by adding them to your holiday gift list, we want to make sure you know how to share your holiday spirit with them.

Any cards or gifts for Pastor Emma, our minister, can be mailed to her at the address provided in the CVUU Directory or sent to the church. Any cards or gifts for Leann, our Office Administrator, or Ronan, our Coordinator of Children's Religious Education, can be left in their mailboxes on their office door, which is the office upstairs above the foyer, or mailed to them at the church.

Tip: If you're thinking about giving a gift card, consider options that would help with gas, groceries, or other expenses.

This message is brought to you by the Shared Ministry Council.



COMMUNITY MEAL THANKS!

Thanks to Betsy and Lynn Brant, Bill and Moria Brown, Byron Plumley, Rosa Torres and Mollie Wallsteadt, Margie Miller and Pat McGeough, and Michael Jamosky for helping with the free Community Meal held at First United Methodist Church.



On October 29th we served 147 folks a cheesy chicken and rice casserole, green beans, applesauce, apples a volunteer brought from their tree, fresh vegetable tray, bread and butter, and assorted desserts. Helping every fifth Tuesday, the CVUU won't do this again until April 2025.

[Editor's Note: thanks also to CVUU's Shirley Whiteside who coordinates our church's participation in this activity. Shirley has done a great job this past year having taken it over from Ruth Walker who moved to Ohio.]

GREEN LIVING CORNER

Pollinator Garden Volunteer Event November 9th

Ten pollinator garden volunteers gathered on Saturday, November 9th to celebrate a tenth season of tending the native plant areas on CVUU grounds. See the photo below!

Tea and treats led to productive conversation, focusing on the large square garden that used to be fenced. In response to the question, "Who is the garden supposed to help?", we agreed on the need to make that area a more attractive and inviting space for people to use. Specific suggestions included improving paths through the garden for greater accessibility; controlling aggressive plants with more vigilance, and labeling plants more consistently. New projects for the future were proposed: perhaps a very dense planting of trees and shrubs, sometimes called a "tiny forest," in the neglected southeast corner of the property, or native shrub plantings along the south fence line.



As discussion wrapped up, volunteers came to the conclusion that efforts next year should focus on cleaning up what we have now and not undertaking any new grand projects. We recognize that future gardening decisions depend on plans to be presented by the Accessibility Task Force.

Other volunteers this year who were not able to attend on November 9th are Austin Evens, David Rutland, Jane Allen, Lizzy O'Loughlin, and Shirley Whiteside. A sincere "thank you" to Lynn Brant and Albert Browne for removing the fence last spring. We are deeply grateful to all the folks who have contributed time, sweat, enthusiasm, encouragement, constructive doubt, and money to the idea that establishing native plants on our grounds is a 7th Principle commitment.

Sally Browne and Donna Davis
for Green Living



Left to right are Mollie Wallsteadt, Rosa Torres, Sally Browne, Jill Miller, Betsy Brant, Elaine Hughes, Cathy Ryan, Sarah Moore, and Dawn Ask Martin. Not pictured is Donna Davis.

Christopher Sandius was born in Kreutzenburgh, Prussia on December 11, 1611. He studied divinity and then law at the University of Konigsberg, Germany, where he later taught. Sandius served as councilor of Brandenburg, secretary of the Supreme Government, and secretary of the Supreme Court of Appeal, in Prussia. His positions required him to look into the religious controversies of the time and his study of Socinianism led him to become Arian. When he made his views public, he was deprived of his offices and retired to private life. Sandius continued his study of religion and wrote numerous works of theology. He died on June 6, 1686.

IOWA CANTERBURY FORUM PROGRAMS

Canterbury Forums are held on Sundays—August through October and February through April—at 7:00 p.m. and are free and open to the public. The first Forum of 2025 will be in February so watch this space for more information.



The Soul Matters theme for December this year is *Presence*. What does this theme mean to you in your daily life and in the lives of those around you?

The Adult Forum led by *Rob Boody* on December 22nd will be a Soul Matters theme from November 2023, *Generosity*. Fitting for this time of year, join us in person or on Zoom to hear what Rob has to say.



REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION

Are you one of those who need to do your RMD before the end of the year? (Required Minimum Distribution from a retirement account for those non-senior people.) One way to complete this fiscal year's pledge to CVUU, and save money on taxes, is through a qualified charitable distribution (QCD).

QCDs can count toward an IRA owner's RMD for the year if they are at least seventy-three years old. The money must be paid directly to the charity from the financial institution. Please request that the check is sent standard USPS. Some companies have sent FEDEX or UPS and the checks were left on the ground by the front door.

Jeanette Talbert, Finance Committee



Mark your calendars for Sunday, March 9th when the Jubilee United Methodist Church in Waterloo will again serve the delicious *Le Christopher's* Southern Cuisine meal at their church. Think about gathering some friends and carpooling.



Russell Lant Carpenter was born on December 17, 1816 in Exeter, England. He was the son of Lant Carpenter, a prominent Unitarian minister. Russell Lant Carpenter grew up in a time when England was undergoing massive reform and riots. He studied for the ministry at Manchester New College in York under the prominent Unitarian scholar Charles Wellbeloved and served churches in Welburn, Bristol, Wareham, Bridgewater, Neath, Birkenhead, Halifax and Bridport. Carpenter was a learned, gentle, self-effacing man with a strong social conscience who worked for many civic causes. His sermons were often on social topics, unusual in that day, and he excoriated England for introducing the opium trade into China. He also addressed the evils of alcohol, slavery, and vivisection. Russell Lant Carpenter died on January 15, 1892.

Whoa! What a *great* idea for a delicious and filling lunch after the ATF presentation on Sunday, November 17th – a potato bar with all sorts of toppings imaginable! (Ahem, we noticed all the goodies but there wasn't much potential for crumbs!) When you see *Mike Knapp* and *Mary Day* (we heard she washed all of those potatoes) do thank them for their generosity and efforts in putting that all together for everyone's enjoyment!



The Church Mouse



DECEMBER DEADLINES FOR THE CALENDAR AND NUUSLETTER

The next newsletter will be the *January 2025* issue. The calendar deadline for this issue will be **Wednesday, December 18th** (send info to the office); the newsletter deadline will be **Friday, December 20th** (send articles to me). This information can also be found in bold type on the calendar page of this newsletter.

Mark your calendars now for **December 18th and 20th**—the calendar and newsletter deadlines for the *January issue*. There are paper copies left at the church each month—some in the acrylic wall holder in the front entry and some at the foot of the stairs in the Fellowship Hall.

Gerry Chamberlin, Editor
newsletter@cedarvalleyuu.org



IOWA MIGRANT MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE

I participated in a statewide Zoom meeting on November 13th. The meeting was attended by seventy-five Iowans representing organizations and individuals concerned about the welfare of immigrants in Iowa. A number of people were from towns that have experienced raids (Postville, Storm Lake).

Iowa MMJ was created by uniting *AFSC Iowa* and *Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors* and is an affiliate of the Immigration Law & Justice Network. Their mission is “to build a movement for justice led by immigrants and refugees in Iowa by providing high-quality legal services and community empowerment through organizing”.

They are launching Phase I of the response to Trump's stated intentions to deport immigrants immediately. They are putting together and distributing a packet of resources focused on 1) Constitutional rights, 2) safety planning, 3) legal consultation from “trusted” legal advisors, and 4) connecting with local groups working on this issue. The second phase will involve community outreach and preparing communities, and identifying “safer spaces” (schools, churches, hospitals).

Their website is <<https://iowammj.org>>. Their Facebook page is Iowa MMJ. Incidentally, they have a 96% 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator.

Kate McElligatt

ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS

On Sunday, November 17th, the entire service and forum were devoted to accessibility. Attendance at this event was excellent. After an inspiring service from *Pastor Emma*, during Second Hour, I made a presentation about the work and recommendations of the Accessibility Task Force, including the two options before us: 1) adding an elevator and making some additional valuable changes to our building, and 2) purchasing and moving to an existing fully accessible building, a possibility which has come up recently. There was wide-ranging and thoughtful discussion on this subject. In an informal straw poll at the end of the discussion, the attendees overwhelmingly agreed that more information should be developed about the purchase-and-move option so that down the road, we can make a well-informed decision.



Steve Chamberlin
Accessibility Task Force Chair



NEW HORIZONS BAND

Each December the Cedar Valley can experience a live band concert, thanks to the New Horizons Band! They will hold their winter concert on Monday, December 16th at 7:30 p.m. in the Great Hall of the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center.

No tickets are needed. Many of our friends and neighbors play in the band, so you won't want to miss this terrific evening that is always enjoyed by a good-sized crowd. . .and afterwards, there are treats in the lobby, too!



Our family understands there will be various treats after the Christmas Eve Service this month, so in the spirit of sharing we hope that means some holiday cookie crumbs. (We also heard *Moria's* in the kitchen, so that may make any potential for crumbs impossible!) Please be generous and Merry Christmas to everyone! *The Church Mouse*



FIRST FRIDAY DINNERS

In case you missed the announcement in the October newsletter, due to the busyness of the holidays, the next CVUU First Friday Dinner is scheduled for Friday, January 3rd from 5:30–7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Mark this date on your 2025 calendars now!



This will again be a family-friendly beloved community potluck dinner so we hope everyone will join us and bring their family and friends. Everyone is welcome!

Christopher Crellius, a Unitarian minister in Krezelow, Poland, died on December 11, 1680. He served as rector of the School of Luclavice, Poland, and as a Unitarian minister. He moved to Silesia when Unitarians were exiled from Poland.



Still looking for a gift or two? If you haven't done so yet, do take a look at the online UU Book and Gift Shop called *inSpirit*. If books are on your list for family, friends (or maybe even a gift for yourself), check out this shop as there is some great reading material! Leisurely browse for clothing, jewelry, cards, and much more, at: <<https://www.uuabookstore.org/>>.



SOME OBSERVANCES FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER INCLUDE:

- National **Fruitcake** month
- National **Write a Business Plan** month
- National **Pear** month National **Tie** month
- National **Impaired Driving Prevention** month
- National **Car Donation** month National **Human Rights** month



SUCCESS WITH GOING SOLAR!

Many UUs know about or have experienced the lovely *Prairiewoods*—a Franciscan ecospirituality retreat and conference center—south of us in Hiawatha and just north of Cedar Rapids.

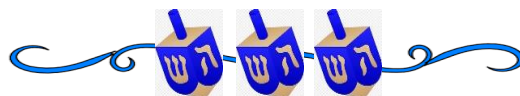
In December 2023, *Prairiewoods* added seventy solar panels to their existing array. This allowed them to go 100% solar, reducing their reliance on fossil fuels and increasing their sustainability. Foundress Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, said, “Many minds, hearts, muscles, and donations over the last thirty years have helped to complete this coveted dream to power all of *Prairiewoods'* buildings with solar energy.” In the first six months of relying entirely on solar energy, they have offset 21.3 tons of carbon, the equivalent of 2,170 gallons of gas!

Taken from the *2024 Prairiewoods Gratitude Report*



CARING CONNECTIONS TEAM

The members of our Caring Connections Team are devoted to serving this congregation month after month in various ways as the needs arise. Many thanks to each of them! The contact person for assistance in *December* is *Carolynn Hartsfield*.



SOCIAL ACTION COLLECTIONS

The Social Action Collections are an important activity for the CVUU, and we have continued to do well in supporting worthy charities that are chosen annually by this congregation.

The charity for October was the *Iowa Abortion Access Fund* and a generous \$635.00 was collected!

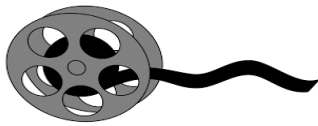
November's charity was for our own *CVUU Little Food Pantry*, and we'll have that figure for you next month.

December's charity is for *Iowa Safe Schools*. As a reminder—in the spirit of the holiday season, instead of collecting those donations at the last Sunday service of the month, this will occur at the Christmas Eve service.



Thank you to all who participate in supporting the charities each month in the name of the CVUU.

The Social Action Committee



MOVIE DISCUSSION SMALL GROUP

The Movie Discussion Small Group will be meeting this month in the sanctuary on Monday, December 9th at 1:00 p.m. The movie being discussed will be *Rams* which can only be rented for \$3.99 on Prime Video or Starz. If you don't have access to it, possibly someone who does would host a viewing.

If this Small Group sounds interesting to you and you'd like to be added to the email list, or you have questions, contact *Nancie Groszkruger*.



WhaleCoast Alaska - A More Authentic Travel Experience

Two unique, exciting fundraising tours organized by four Alaska UU congregations are being offered again next summer by WhaleCoast Alaska. Experience majestic scenery, wildlife, Denali National Park, Alaska Native culture, glaciers, and UU homestays. For thirty-one years, WhaleCoast Alaska tours have been the BEST way to visit Alaska. Register now for this amazing experience!



Details at <www.WhaleCoastAK.org>. For questions our email is <info@whalecoastak.org>.



William Farwell died on December 11, 1823 at the age of seventy-four. He converted to Universalism as early as the late 1780's in Charlestown, New Hampshire. He was the first Universalist preacher in Vermont and a pacifist who was jailed for his principles during the Revolutionary War. Farwell preached all over New England, but his greatest influence was in north and central Vermont.

TOILETRY TREE FOR THE HOMELESS

November 17th through December 31st

What would you do without toothpaste, toilet paper, and a warm blanket? The homeless population in the Cedar Valley is growing substantially, and their basic needs can be desperate.

This year instead of a mitten tree for children (*Moria* tells us that the schools have enough of those already donated), for our Social Action Holiday Giving Project, we decided to focus on the needs of adults. So, we have set up a **Toiletry Tree** (or a ToiliTree or a Tee Pee Tree) in the Fellowship Hall and we are asking our members to load it up with personal items for the homeless and underserved. Homelessness and access to basic care items are an increasing problem in our community, and the need for help is dire.

The goods will be donated to the Hospitality House/Warming Center in Waterloo and the ACE-SAP program (Allen College Engagement and Salvation Army Partnership) free clinic in Waterloo. These programs are open to anyone but primarily serve the homeless and very low income. They have suggested the following for donations: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, razors, deodorant, body wash, toilet paper, tissues, sanitary pads/tampons, incontinence pads (female and male), and pull-on adult diapers.

One easy way to remember a donation is to simply buy two or more of these items when you do your regular shopping. You can also go online and order some of these in bulk. It can be a little pricey, so two or more families might want to place a bulk order. Dollar stores might be good sources of items. People who shop at Costco might want to buy some extra for the Toiletry Tree. You could possibly get members to reimburse you as their contribution.



Finally, we will bring this project to a close on New Year's Day (January 1st, 2025) with a **FABULOUS** opportunity called **Tied Together: A Community Connection and Service Event**. Interdependence and Generosity are two of our core values as Unitarian Universalists. We are asking that you put those values into action by joining us for fleece tie blanket-making, food, drinks, and FUN!

The Why: Blankets are desperately needed as the days get colder, and the Warming Center in Waterloo cannot keep enough in supply to meet the needs of the community. Our hope for this event is to come together with our creative and generous forces to make and donate blankets to this cause (and have fun, build connections, and do good in the world!)

The What: Tie blankets are made of fleece, and no sewing is needed—just scissors, knot tying ability, and YOU! We also ask that people bring a brunch food item to share. Drinks will be provided.

The Who: Adults and children over the age of six.

The When: January 1st, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

What we need:

FLEECE! Anyone who wants to contribute fleece material (at least six feet long) from their "someday" fabric collection—or is willing to buy fleece while they are purchasing other sewing or crafting supplies, donations are lovingly accepted.

HELP! If you would like to help manage this project—either on the day of the event or in planning it, please contact *Kathi Bower*. **SIGN UP LINK** for those reading online: <[Tied Together: Jan 1](#)>.

During this time of thanksgiving and love, let us be aware of our infinite privilege and blessings and share a little to make life's necessities available to others.