



Windmill

Mount Vernon Unitarian Church

*To affirm and
promote the
inherent worth
and dignity of
every person*

January 1, 2011

... MVUC is a loving and inclusive community. Our mission is to encourage one another on our spiritual journeys and to work together to build the common good.

Taking Note . . .

by The Reverend Kate R. Walker



As I write I have on a layer of long underwear, wool socks and L.L. Bean winter boots to keep my feet extra warm. It's winter, and being comfortably warm is the goal, of course. Six months ago it was staying comfortably cool in 100-degree temperatures.

But staying comfortable is more than just an extra layer or removing all layers as needed. We also need furnaces, air conditioners, fans and the fuel that powers them. In order to get that fuel, to feel comfortable, we ask people to crawl into the sides of mountains and live on an exposed platform in the ocean. These people risk their lives, and we all risk our environment so that we can be comfortable.

Frankly, I'm not comfortable.

I'm so proud that our church is changing our fuel source from fossil fuels to ground temperature and the sun. The only way this has happened is by other people realizing they were uncomfortable too and deciding to do something about it.

Recently Mark and I bought a new car. Our well-loved Subaru fell victim to the salt of Pennsylvania's winter roads (despite repeated repairs, the mechanic was concerned for our safety and didn't need the summer house he could have bought from our repair bills).

Mark did the research for the new car. I wanted certain things, including safety and space for the two big dogs with which I'm often seen. We got the safety, but not the space because of our discomfort with lower miles per gallon on a bigger car. We bought a small car with high mpg. We are not always comfortable with the two big dogs in that little space, but I'm more comfortable knowing that the risk for our earth and human life is just a little lower.

Comfort is a relative condition. It's relative to our physical needs and our ethical desires. It is not an easy balance. In fact, it's really uncomfortable. To play it out, we prioritize and let go of a perceived need. It's a good time of year to reflect on those needs. Are you comfortable? Willing to do something about it?

Love, Kate Walker

Rev. Kate R. Walker

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Program Highlights Mark Your Calendar!

Wednesday Fellowship

Wednesday, January 5

Dinner 6:00 pm, Vespers 7:00 pm

See page 5

Lunch with a Book

Sunday, January 9, 12:45 pm

Noodles and Company

See page 6

Games Night!

Sunday, January 9, 5:00-9:00 pm

Hollin Hall

See page 3



Lifespan Spiritual Growth By Megan Henry, Director

Adult Spiritual Growth – New Classes to Begin!

***A World of Health: Connecting People,
Place and Planet Sundays, 7:30 - 9:00 pm
January 9 - February 27
Hollin Hall, Fireplace Room***

Wendy Burns (MVUC) and Kathy Seikel (St. Aid-
en's Episcopal) will again facilitate a Northwest
Earth Institute class this winter.

Participants in this discussion course will:

- Explore the connection between human health and the environment
- Examine the roots of Western medicine and how it has evolved in an industrial society
- Learn about the places where our personal health intersects with the environment – our food, our living spaces, our communities, and ultimately, our planet
- Identify actions that promote good health and in turn promote a healthier environment

Each participant will be asked to buy and read the text used in the class (\$20, payable to "MVUC" at the first class) and to commit to attending at least most of the sessions. Class will be limited to 15 participants. For more information about the Northwest Earth Institute and this class, see http://nwei.org/discussion_courses/course-offerings/a-world-of-health-connecting-people-place-and-planet.

***Building Your Own Theology (BYOT)
Thursdays, February 3 – April 7, 7:30 –
9:00 pm, Hollin Hall Blue Room***

This course is a rite of passage for many on the path to becoming a UU. We are offering BYOT beginning February 3, with Bill Clontz as our facilitator.

This is a long-time program, updated regularly, that invites us to think about what it means to be a UU and what we believe. For many of us, this was our first real examination of being a UU. It's a small-group activity, with materials provided to foster discussion and thinking in an inviting and open atmosphere. Participants can expect to develop a clearer vision of their own beliefs and an appreciation for those of others. It's a ten-week program best enjoyed in its entirety; but each module is independent, and participants are welcome as their schedules allow. Come join us and let's learn more about who we are and what we believe.

***Introduction to Islam, Mondays,
January 3 – February 28, 7:30 – 9:00 pm,
Hollin Hall, Fireplace Room***

Meagan Henry leads this basic 101 course, an introduction to the religion of Islam – what Muslims believe, where and how they worship and perceive God. Class is lecture format, with some video and slides. We may also take a field trip to visit the National Mosque for a tour!

Multi-Generational Event of the Month

***Games Night! Sunday, January 9, 5:00-
9:00 pm, Hollin Hall.***

Fun for All Ages! Families, individuals and friends, join together at Games Night. After the holidays, join together for a relaxing – but sometimes competitive – evening of board, trivia, and performance games, as well as food. It's pasta potluck. Bring something to feed eight based on the first letter of your last name -- A-J main dish; K-R side dish (such as bread, salad, fruit); and, P-Z (drinks and desserts). More info, contact Katherine at akatjohn@aol.com. Please sign up in the Commons. Please donate a dollar or two to cover costs.

Monthly Worship Theme

COMMITMENT, BY THE REV. KATE WALKER

Feminist theologian Carter Hayward writes that commitment is a critical component of love. Love does not just happen, she notes. It requires commitment. Likewise, justice comes from love and therefore commitment. All of this is a choice, not necessarily rational, but a willingness to be open to conversion.

Poet Mary Oliver writes, in her popular poem "The Journey," of listening to the one voice inside that compels us to save the only life we can save ... it requires determination, commitment, and a willingness to change.

In love and commitment, Kate

Monthly Worship Services

Sunday, January 2 "No Turning Back" the Rev. Kate R. Walker

We launch the new year and the month of January with the theme of Commitment. A word that can trigger people to run, in all directions, away from and toward unknown places. What promises have we made to ourselves and others? Why do we keep them?

Sunday, January 9, "Utopia or Reality?" the Rev. Levente Lázár, and the Rev. Erika Demeter

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48

Sometimes we realize we fail in our quest to be perfect because we are human – created and not the Creator. But, is only God perfect?

We are created to reach perfection. Our daily experiences, our inner and external growth carves us and reshapes us toward perfection. We only need to see, hear, and understand eternal and perfect values. Love, truth, happiness, mercy, forgiveness, and the ability to accept differences and act upon them. Our failure is usually in the

practice. But we do not have to give up, for our strength is also one of the inner values which helps hold our finger to reach and touch eternal perfection.

Is perfection just a utopia, or is it reality? You make the decision.

The Rev. Levente Lázár is the 2010-2011 Balázs Scholar at Starr King School for the Ministry, and is minister to congregations in Szováta and Csokfalva, Transylvania.

The Rev. Erika Demeter is minister to congregations in Erdőszentgyörgy, Gyulakuta and Havadtó, Transylvania.

Sunday, January 16 "Evolution of Morality" the Rev. Kate R. Walker

A look at little white lies, moral impulse and hope for humanity. We'll welcome our newest members during the service.

Sunday, January 23, "Lets Say Grace," Intern Minister Kären Rasmussen

What is this word "grace" that we hear and use so often in our lives? Come and explore some different meanings of the word "grace" and how it moves in and out of our lives like a gentle breeze.

Sunday, January 30 "Gays Cry Too" the Rev. Kate R. Walker

Recent news about suicides, punishment and isolation of youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender has shocked the country. The pressure to assimilate into the norm can be enormous and crippling during critical years of formation. How can UUs help?

On and Off the Hill

Spiritual Retreat

Spiritual Retreat February 18-19; Wolf Run, about 2 hour drive west of D.C. off I-81. Join Rev. Kate Walker for a one-night retreat to learn techniques on meditation, explore the art of spiritual reflection and listening with the ear of the heart. Begins at 7 p.m. Friday evening, and continues to 5 p.m. Saturday. Three meals included in \$40 cost. Scholarships available. Limited to 10 people, shared bath and rooms. Contact Kate for information and to sign up.

Wednesday Fellowship January 5, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

Wednesday Fellowship, January 5: Please join us for a communal dinner at 6 pm. We will have hot winter soup and a casserole. At 7:00 pm, Vespers service led by Rev. Walker. At 7:30 pm, other activities start, including choir and yoga. Dinner \$7/person, maximum \$21/family. Child care available upon request, \$5/family. Contact Georgia Pourchot for details, gpourchot@yahoo.com.

Holiday Shop Thank-You

The 49th Annual MVUC Holiday Shop was a grand success. Shoppers were lined up in front of the Mansion and Meeting House before the opening. In spite of the recession, net profits were over \$20,000, more than any previous year. This could not have happened without the overwhelming support of our church community. Congratulations!

Holiday Shop is a labor of love involving many people and groups. Space limits me from mentioning everyone, so I will list only a few of the 100 plus volunteers by name.

Our work began in January with a planning group: Sandy Peterson, Meg Clontz, Terry Brandley, Ruth Ann MacCleery, Pat Jackson, Betty Davis, Joan Wamsley, Anne Ulm, Marge Witting, Betsy Stevens and Dorothy Brandt. We met periodically

throughout the year. Their creative thinking and hard work was the foundation of our success.

Without the knowledge, leadership, and support of the Every Thursday Group, there would be no Holiday Shop. From cherished recipes E.T. members produce delicious chutneys, sauces, Boursin cheese, quick breads, gingerbread for gingerbread house kits, fudge cups, bean soups, monthly birthday cakes, and much more.

There were many, many Country Kitchen helpers. Some participated in Thursday evening baking and candy making sessions. Others helped as cashiers and greeters. Still others were bakers of cakes, pies, cookies, as well as, making cheese snacks. Again Kathi McNeil created a beautiful Gingerbread House which was raffled off.

The Holiday Shop Lunch crew led by Mike Walker served a delicious lunch of cheese pies, soup, sandwiches, cookies and drinks.

Many thanks to all who donated discarded jewelry and decorative household items. Our earnings from jewelry nearly tripled last year's! Other MVUC groups involved in Holiday Shop sales included Partner Churches, Green Sanctuary, Greenhouse Group, and Book Nook. Thank you so much, MVUC Quilters, for creating this year's gorgeous quilt "Morning Glory" and managing its raffle. Thank you again Golden Slausen for selling the most tickets!

Our 6th through 8th graders coordinated by Donna Gold again sold hotdogs and other goodies making a good start towards funding their trip to Boston next year.

Transforming the Meeting House, Mansion and Holy Hill into Holiday Shop requires a major effort. It includes putting away all the nursery toys and equipment, setting up and arranging 50 rented tables led by Chris Reidy and his work crew, arranging chairs, positioning screens, taking down staging, setting up the sound system and electrical extensions, installing signs and draping tables.

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Finally, it included a parking plan with crew on board the entire day led by Bill Burns.

The Napier family camped out in the Meeting House the night before Holiday Shop to ensure security. Coffee and donuts were served early in the morning by Becky Brandt. "Burma Shave" signs were posted along Ft. Hunt Rd. and Mason Hill Drive to make sure the shoppers could find us. Clean-up was done efficiently by Marty Bredek and helpers in time for us to enjoy the Celebration of the Sunset Ceremony organized by Wendy Burns.

Many thanks to all for a job well done.

--Mary Barnett

Holiday Shop Proceeds

Requests for funding through the Susan B. Anthony Fund should be submitted in writing by Sunday January 23. Include who wants it, why, cost, where it is available, where it will be stored, and any other helpful information. Please put information in the "ET-Women's Group - SBA" mailbox. The SBA Committee will meet in late January or early February to consider requests and make recommendations to the Board on the disbursement of the funds. No money may be spent until Board approval is given. For more information, contact Joan Wamsley (lipiczky@gmail.com).

January Youth Birthdays

Kenna Murphy	January 3
Raina Pilkenton	January 7
Ariel Villa	January 10
Julia Lager	January 13
Charlotte Keeler	January 13
Laurel Sampsell	January 17
Benjamin Stone	January 25
Georgeanna Hoey	January 31

Holy Order of Boxwood Pickers

Thanks to all of this year's "Holy Order of Boxwood Pickers" – Oma Cox, Dorothy Brandt, Lisa

Guide, Dolly Rowe, Henry Bobotek, Jean Elliott, Mary Paden, Birgit Robbert, Meg Clontz, Nancy Barkume, and Wendy Burns – who provided the boxwood for the Holiday Workshop wreath making and wreaths for MVUC friends in need. Boxwood picking is a very satisfying activity and one that some say is their favorite time on "The Hill." We pick the boxwood to provide boxwood for our needs, but it is also necessary to pick it to keep the boxwoods healthy. We are a very welcoming group and will quickly induct you into the holy order with just a little instruction. Please join us next year! Thanks to all who helped!

--Wendy Burns

Lunch With A Book

January's Lunch With a Book will be meeting Sunday January 9 at 12:45 pm at Noodles and Company in the Hybla Valley Shopping Center, which is north of Sherwood Hall Lane on the left hand side of Route 1. The restaurant is located in the block of stores that faces TJ Maxx and Home Depot.

We will be discussing Kate Braestrup's *Here if You Need Me*, the inspiring story of a woman who after her husband's death became a Unitarian minister and served as a chaplain on Maine's Search and Rescue team.

We do hope you will join us. For more information contact Louise Werner-Rhoades at louron13@cox.net or 703-619-1369.

Community Health Screenings

In March, MVUC will host preventive health screenings for members and the local community.

Life Line Screening, the nation's leading provider of preventive health screenings, will offer their affordable, non-invasive, painless health screenings on **March 28th**. Five screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to: blocked arteries, which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms, which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries

in the legs, which is a strong predictor of heart disease; atrial fibrillation or irregular heart beat, which is closely tied to stroke risk; and a bone density screening, for men and women, used to assess the risk of osteoporosis. Register for a Wellness Package with Heart Rhythm for \$ 149 .

Add Disease Risk Assessment with blood testing & biometrics for \$79 more. Screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. Call 1-800-324-1851 (code HSC3549) to pre-register.

Contact Nancy Fox for more information, nancyefox@verizon.net or 703-780-3815.

Spiritual Journey Conversations

We are a church, after all! Talking about your spiritual journey should be a part of your experience here.

Have you ever had that experience of being totally engrossed in a conversation about your beliefs that left you feeling energized? ...ever found yourself feeling connected to the universe? ...ever known why you're on this planet and what your purpose is? ...ever wanted to go deeper into your faith but didn't know how? ...ever felt inspired by the ocean, a river, a mountain or acorn? ...ever wanted to explore what is God? ...ever wanted to know about that spark that is within you?

If any of these questions, or perhaps another one about your religious beliefs or faith, are of interest to you, come and have a conversation about it. During January, February and March, several facilitated conversations are being held at the church and at members' homes. Surely one of these will fit your schedule. Sign up in the Commons, or contact Peg Bartel, Chair of the Worship/Arts Committee, and member of the Board of Trustees at: mbartel@verizon.net.

News from the Writer's group

Writing is a great way of discovering your inner voice, exploring your values, and defining your theology. It can also be very healing and forgiving. In the Small Group Ministry we have been learning more about ourselves and each oth-

er through writing for the past year. The group meets twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. At each session, we begin with a reading followed by questions that introduce a topic such as revenge, pets, or racism. We then write in class for 10 to 15 minutes, and end by sharing our writings if we wish. We have 7 regular members in this group and would like to have a few more. If you have any questions about the group please call, Sandy Peterson at 703-768-2565 or e-mail me at sandypeterson2010@gmail.com.

MVUC and FHP Sign a New 5-Year Lease

On Friday, December 10, a five-year lease was signed between MVUC and the Fort Hunt Cooperative Preschool which offers weekday morning classes for 2 year olds, 3s, and 4s in the Carriage House. Signing the lease for MVUC was Joan Darrah, Chair, BOT. FHP was represented by its co-presidents, Jessie Auten and Kristin Levine, and treasurer, Heather Jenquin. This new lease will ensure that the positive relationship that has existed and benefited both for 48 years will continue.

Cooperation between MVUC and FHP has recently focused on building a more natural playground. The large play structure, made of 25,000 recycled plastic bottles, the sandbox area with improved drainage for the Carriage House, the bog garden, the giant's chair and small amphitheater, and other improvements have made the Carriage House grounds very welcoming and a lot of fun for all. See the Playground Brochure in the Commons for more information.

Open enrollment for next year's classes of the FHP begins January 29, 2011. However, there is priority enrollment for members of the MVUC which begins January 4. If any MVUC members are interested, they are advised to get their applications in before January 29. See the FHP website for details www.forthuntpreschool.com

Question Box Sunday Leftovers

From August 8, 2010

Q. What makes a person truly spiritual?

A. Self-judgment. It's in the eyes of the beholder.

**Q. Regarding diversity discussion in UU World:
Is MVUC diversified to your satisfaction?
What are the [sic] variables do you consider
in thinking about diversity?**

A. I'd love to see more diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, class, and physical ability at MVUC.

As an environmentalist I recognize the inherent value of diversity in the strength of a living system. UUs have been striving for diversity for decades with little success. It's a critical conversation with lots of opinions, but little real insight.

Q. How does one obtain wisdom? What is the process?

A. By living, reflecting and acting upon the lessons learned. In other words, it's a continuous process of taking action and reflecting on our actions. I've observed and experienced that it's common for us busy humans to skip the reflection stage; we just keep on moving forward without pause to reflect on lessons learned. A dose of humility also helps.

Q. Illegal immigration is a serious problem. Illegals have children here that often grow up disadvantaged. Our population is growing, especially the Hispanic element. Many Hispanics are born of illegal immigrants. Should we amend the Constitution to allow citizenship to children born only of legal immigrants? A growing population, especially as it has grown in the past 250 years of the U.S.A., seems to be unsustainable.

A. This is a serious question that deserves a level of expertise I do not have. I like the DREAM Act legislation allowing for a path to citizenship for children brought here at an early age. This may help alleviate some of the disadvantages immigrant children are

experiencing in the cycle of poverty. But changing the Constitution is a huge deal requiring a lot of discussion and study. I defer to the experts and the wisdom of time.

Unitarian Universalist History

January 5, 1835: Olympia Brown was born in Prairie Ronde, MI. Raised as a Universalist, she graduated from St. Lawrence University Theological School and became the first woman ordained to the ministry by a full denominational authority on June 25, 1863.

January 7, 1800: Millard Fillmore was born in Lock, NY. He was a lawyer who served in the New York State Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives. Elected vice president of the U.S. in 1848, Fillmore became president on July 9, 1850, when President Zachary Taylor died. He held that office until 1853. Fillmore was a member of the Unitarian Church in Buffalo, NY.

January 16, 1826: The idea of creating a Boston Sunday School Society was proposed. The Society coordinated the development of hundreds of Sunday school books and teacher-training conferences until 1912, when the Department of Religious Education of the American Unitarian Association took over most of its responsibilities.



Social Justice Programs at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church

Love is the teaching of this church, and service is its prayer.

Compost Talk

An old Romanian proverb says that the successful farmer fixes his plough and harvest tools in winter, and builds his family a sleigh in summer. (If the translation does not make sense, ask...) The key issue is that in the dead of winter, it may be a good time to start thinking about spring. Many of you have asked about further resources on composting, something you can do no matter what season. Here are a few basics:

Aside from diminishing the amount of trash we contribute to the landfills, composting is a resource for your yard. Here is a list of what you can compost: kitchen waste such as vegetable and fruit peels, eggshells, coffee grounds, tea bags; grass and lawn clippings during the summer; leaves in the Fall; wood chips and sawdust; weeds that have not gone to seed (the seeds can survive the composting process).

Some of the things you should *not* compost are chemically-treated wood products; human and pet waste; meat, bones, milk products or fatty foods, which attract wildlife; diseased plants, since not all the pests may die and you risk infecting next year's garden; and pernicious weeds (morning glory, sheep sorrel, ivy, and any grasses or plants that can re-sprout from their roots), which may in fact thrive in your compost and you may end up with lots more of them!

The more frequent question I had was about the best compost bin to purchase. The rotating bins are expensive, but they produce compost in a fraction of the time of the static bins. The composting process is accelerated by air and water, so if you invest in a rotating bin, you start by filling the bin a third of the way, then turning it every day for about a month. At the end of the month, you have compost ready to be used in the yard.

The disadvantage of the rotating bin is that once you started the rotating process, you cannot add more waste to the bin. So while your month of rotating is going on, you need to find a new way to dispose of your compostable material. A static, one-box bin is more affordable, or you can build it yourself. We will return next month with more compost talk.

Information from Georgia Pourchot, gpourchot@yahoo.com.

Reproductive Rights: The Conversation Goes On

MVUC has been an advocate for women's reproductive rights for many years. We wrote petitions, lobbied our legislators in Richmond, held informational meetings and educated our young – and not so young – on the issue. Recently, Eva Molnar proposed that there were other aspects of reproduction that merit attention. Hence the Social Justice Council organized a series of round table discussions with guest speakers.

The first round table was held in November, and the discussion was led by Professor Verle Headings of the College of Medicine at Howard University. The discussion centered on a less mainstream topic: technology and ethics in reproductive choices. We learned that technology now gives humans choices not dreamed of since *Star Wars*. If a single woman wants to be a mother at a later period in her life, she can harvest her eggs and freeze them for later use. If a couple wants to have a baby, technology allows them to pick an egg or sperm based on a list of donor characteristics. While technology cannot insure that the baby will inherit all the features of the donor, say high IQ, at issue is the fact that we now have

choices of what type of people we bring into the world. This can become a slippery slope on any number of fronts, and we need to remember that technology can be used - and abused - as history has shown on other occasions. It is thus imperative that the ethical implications of our reproductive choices are fully understood. While this may sound like a self-evident proposition, the reality is that many singles or couples who take advantage of technology do not always know, or fully understand the ethical implications of their choices. A few recent movies made that point, and we encourage everyone interested to watch *The Kids Are All Right*. We also have handouts and two articles for those with further interest.

We continue our conversation on Tuesday, February 15 at 7 pm, on the topic of Socio Politics and Socioeconomics of Human Reproduction. Dr. Fariborz Rahbar, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Child Health at Howard University College of Medicine, will lead the conversation on how socioeconomic factors influence reproductive choices and outcomes. A brief review of past and present population policies around the world from China to Romania shows that governments have intervened in the human reproductive process for reasons of ideology and economics. Two additional professionals with considerable experience from the Hospital's Newborn Nurseries will be present for this event. Please join us! Contact Eva Molnar, evamolnar@aol.com, or Georgia Pourchot, gpourchot@yahoo.com.

Transylvania Pilgrimage--Summer 2011

The Partner Church Committee is sponsoring an intergenerational group trip to Transylvania July 20 to August 2, 2011. The trip will include a 3-4 day stay in Szentháromság, our partner church village, as well as visits to sites of Unitarian and historical significance. We will start in Budapest, one of the glittering jewels of central Europe, and travel over land to Kolozsvár, the center of the Unitarian church in Transylvania. The trip will be led by John Dale, UUPCC travel coordinator. John and his wife Csilla have escorted hundreds of pil-

grims on these trips, and they are expert in their knowledge and capability. We will be joined by our minister, Kate Walker for this exciting trip. The land costs are \$1,485 double occupancy + \$150 registration fee. The cost will potentially be reduced by \$100 if we have 11 or more travelers. Contact Lisa Gillispie for more information, an itinerary and/or to register, (703) 799-1847, lisagillispie@earthlink.net.

Thanks, Lisa Gillispie

Immigration Advocacy Program

On Saturday, February 26, from 8:30 am - 12:30 pm, UUSJ will sponsor a program on immigration advocacy at Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria, VA. The program will open with worship led by our host minister, Rev. Kate Walker, and a plenary with the Reverends Nancy McDonald Ladd, Carlton Smith, and Scott Sammler Michael. Workshops will have resources and speakers from programs such as Immigrants First, Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations, Casa de Maryland, Capital Immigrants Rights Coalition (CAIR), and Standing on the Side of Love.

Church Life

Update on Building Renovation

During our recent Stewardship Revisit Campaign, several members and friends asked our visiting stewards about the status of our building renovation project. Here's an update.

First, some financial facts. In the fall of 2004, MVUC conducted a capital campaign that produced commitments of about \$1,280,000, of which \$1,065,000 has been collected. About \$300,000 of that was used for renovation of Hollin Hall, minor improvements to other buildings, and fund-raising expenses. Another \$320,000 was spent to prepare construction documents and obtain County approvals. \$4,800 was used to construct a stained glass window, intended to be eventually installed in the building addition and currently on display in the Commons. Recently, \$15,000 was used to install eleven reinforced sod parking spaces around the circle in front of Hollin Hall. The remaining \$440,000 is invested pending further action.

Planned construction included a meeting room entry; expanded Commons; and renovated offices, kitchen, and restrooms. The available funds, even if outstanding commitments were to be paid in, would not be sufficient to cover the costs. The project would have required borrowing a substantial sum. In 2007, when faced with a go/no-go decision, we realized that our budget could not be stretched to cover debt service on the required mortgage. Accordingly, the building project was put on hold.

During 2009, several congregational meetings were held to explore the feasibility of restarting the building process. We decided then that we had to complete at least two very successful stewardship campaigns before we could consider restarting the process. Unfortunately, while we got good results in the Spring 2010 stewardship campaign, falling wedding revenues due to the economic recession created an unexpected hole in our budget. The recent Revisit Campaign filled that hole, but did not provide enough of a cush-

ion to allow us to take on debt service at this time.

Early next year, the Board of Trustees will hold a series of meetings for interested people to further weigh our building renovation options. The major decision to be reached is to continue to defer action until we can launch a major renovation or to proceed with smaller-scale projects that can at least partially remedy the shortcomings of the existing facilities. Chief among these are a Commons that is inadequately sized for post-service coffee hours and kitchen and restroom spaces that could use some attention. In either case, we might consider another Capital Campaign to increase the available capital funds and reduce the required borrowing. Please be prepared to add your voice in these deliberations.

- Al Robbert

From Your Intern

Brrrrrrr.....as I write this the winds are a-howling, the trees are a-bending and it seems to get dark way too early. Even our Labrador Retriever Mad-die wants to stay in bed for as long as she can. But it's worth it to get up and out!

It's worth it to bundle up and come to church. When it seems darkest and coldest, what can warm your heart more than to be in worship together, sing together and be with your friends?

Feel the warmth of community and kibitz a little with folks. Come to a new class or join a group you've been thinking about. Check out a committee you've wondered if you might be a good fit for. No one's asking you to take on the world, but find something that intrigues you. Find something that sparks your curiosity and come on over.

The fire is burning in our hearts—come and be warmed by it!

Along the path, Kären

Exciting Sustainable Energy Project Has Begun

At a brief afternoon ceremony on December 21, MVUC announced our partnership with Shenandoah Sustainable Technologies (SST), Harrisonburg, VA, to dramatically reduce the church's dependence on fossil fuels. Local public officials and reporters attended the event marking startup of the project. SST expects to reduce use of conventional energy for heating, cooling, and lighting the Meeting House (including the parking lot lights) to at or near "net zero." Over the next several months, the company will be installing new ground-source (geothermal) heat pumps and photovoltaic (PV) solar panels.

The geothermal heating and cooling system will require extensive trenching of the grounds near the Meeting House for the pipes circulating the fluid to and from the heat pumps. Members of the Property Committee approved the locations for the trenching, which is now under way. While some of our property will temporarily look like a construction site, SST will restore our grounds and paved drives to their original condition once the pipes have been buried.

The solar panels will be mounted on the newly re-shingled south roof of the Meeting House. All the work is expected to be completed by April. This is truly a significant milestone for the church and one we should all be especially proud of. For details, see an article about the project on our website, mvuc.org. Expect more updates as the project continues. If you have questions or concerns contact me at 703-473-6861 or kenpilk@gmail.com.

-Ken Pilkenton, Project Liaison

The Search For Next Year's Leaders

The Nominating Committee is currently seeking input for creating the slate of nominees to fill the following positions:

- Board of Trustees - four members

- Sunday Services - program coordinator
- Administration/Property - program coordinator
- Religious Education - program coordinator
- Communications - program coordinator
- Nominating Committee - three members

The congregation will vote on people to fill these key roles at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 15th. If you know of any fellow MVUCers who would be well-suited for any of these positions, please contact one of the current members of the Nominating Committee (see below). *If you are contacted by the Nominating Committee to potentially serve the church in one of these positions, we thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of such a request!*

Nominating Committee: Ken Pilkenton (chair), Tom Griffin, Laurie Hayden, Paula Mathis, Sandy Peterson

Katie Tyson Fund

Our special collection for December was for the Katie Tyson Fund. This fund is held by the UUA in memory of a young adult member of MVUC who tragically died in a car accident in July, 2009. The fund is for the purpose of youth and young adult leadership training. Rev. Walker serves as an advisor for the fund. If you'd like to support this fund, please make a check payable to MVUC, and write K. Tyson Fund in the memo line. A special collection taken on December 12 yielded \$2,430.

From Our Board of Trustees

Joan Darrah, Chair



Happy New Year! I continue to be amazed at all of the great things that are happening at MVUC. A few highlights include our revisit campaign where we actually came closer to \$70,000, even more impressive than we previously reported! This was indeed a team effort and I thank each of you for the part you played. Now, the key is to keep the momentum going and to remember that we need to continue to be as open and honest about our financial conversation as we are about the importance of contributing our time and talent in our stated commitment to being responsible stewards of MVUC.

As you have noticed, the geothermal solar conversion of the Meeting House is well under way. I want to extend a special thank-you to Al Weinstein for his generous donation of \$10,000 and also for having the vision and passion to push us to move toward sustainable energy on a truly grand scale. With this initiative, we will reduce our greenhouse gas production by over 1,446 tons and become the first church in Virginia to combine solar and geothermal and reduce our use of energy from the power grid to net zero. It is so wonderful to be able to live our values in such a significant way.

Other good news: the Holiday Shop was an absolutely marvelous event. Thanks so much to the members of the Every Thursday group for their many months of hard work that went into making this traditional event such a huge success.

The Ventures in Community Hypothermia Project (VIC-HOP) has been under way for a month already, and many of us have already had the opportunity to prepare food or chaperone on Thursday nights. It is impossible to come away from such an experience feeling anything but truly blessed by our own good fortune. I am very proud that, in so many different ways, our Church is dedicated to trying to make life a little better for people who are less fortunate.

Finally, on Friday, December 10, a five-year lease was signed between MVUC and the Fort Hunt Co-operative Preschool which offers weekday morning classes for 2 year olds, 3s, and 4s in the Carriage House. This new lease will ensure the continuation of our positive and mutually beneficial relationship that has already existed for 48 years.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we strive to live our vision and our values in the New Year.

With love, respect, and appreciation, Joan

Sermons for Your Re-Hearing

Each Sunday's service is recorded and available within a few days on the MVUC web site (www.mvuc.org - worship/sermons) The services are also available on CD; If you would like a copy, please speak with **Raleigh Romine**.

A Month of Sundays

Two services at 9:15 am and 11:15 am unless otherwise noted



Sunday, January 2
"No Turning Back"
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

Sunday, January 9
"Utopia or Reality?"
The Rev. Levente Lázár and
the Rev. Erika Demeter

Sunday, January 16
"Evolution of Morality"
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

Sunday, January 23
"Let's Say Grace"
Inter Minister Kären
Rasmussen

Sunday, January 30
"Gays Cry Too"
The Rev. Kate R. Walker

* See Page 4 for Sermon Descriptions

**Mount Vernon
Unitarian Church**
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Caring Associates

Contact information for the Caring Associate for the week and Caring Associate Coordinator (CAC) can be found each week in the Order of Service and in the Member Services area of the church website. As always, MVUC staff and volunteers are willing to assist you during normal business hours. Please direct any questions or concerns to Betsy Stephens betsys@cox.net.

Our condolences to Marge Witting. Her sister, Eleanor Swanson, age 89, passed away recently in California.

Our best thoughts and prayers go to Leila Goodman, Cathy Coakley, Al Weinstein, and Gil Fritz for recent illnesses.

Jim and Joan Wamsley will be moving to Greenspring on December 28. Their new address will be 7450 Spring Village Drive, apt 317, Springfield, VA 22150. They will be getting a new phone number.

Reminder to All MVUC Email Users

To receive emailed newsletters, weekly bulletins, and special notices, please notify Esther Dickinson if your email address changes, esthergertrude@verizon.net.

Thank you!