



UU Laramie News

February 2022

Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Laramie
1402 E. Gibbon Street
Laramie, WY 82072
(307) 745-8874

Services for February: Creating Spiritual Connections with the Natural World

Notes from the Program Committee

In January, the theme of connection ran like a thread through our services as we explored various facets of our own spiritual experience. We continue that theme in February, focusing on the spiritual challenges that winter offers.



February 6: Winter in My Soul: Spirituality and Religion

Winter offers us a time for reflection. Let's consider how we as UUs think about the connections between spirituality and religion.

February 13: Learning from the Elders

Let's imagine Henry David Thoreau at his cabin on Walden Pond one winter evening, hosting a folklorist familiar with various Native American cultures. Their conversation turns to how a group's view of human beings' place in the natural world affects how they meet the challenges of winter.

February 20: Reverencing Winter, Body and Soul

How do we find spiritual meaning in this season which is so different from all the others and lasts so long in Wyoming? Poetry and other writings about the season is one way. Another is by engaging with it physically. Let's build a snow chalice in the Fellowship front yard and make snow angels, maybe lob a few snowballs at one another.

February 27: Rev. Kee will continue our discussion on connections.



Minister

Rev. Leslie Kee (lkee@wyoming.com)

UUFL Board

Board Co-Chairs: Linda Meeker (ldangrousl@gmail.com)

David Perry (dperry@uwyo.edu)

Treasurer: Jennifer Wade (Jswade.wyo@gmail.com)

Secretary: Robin Chestek (rchestek@gmail.com)

Catie Ballard (cdonbdoc@bresnan.net)

UU Laramie News Editor

Laura Miller (uularamieneews@gmail.com)



Minister's Musings

In honor of the passing of the wise Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh:

As we are together, praying for peace, let us be truly with each other.

Let us pay attention to our breathing.

Let us be relaxed in our bodies and minds.

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.

Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves. Let us maintain a half-smile on our faces.

Let us be aware of the source of being common to us all and to all living things.

Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion -- toward ourselves and toward all living beings.

Let us pray that all living beings realize that they are all brothers and sisters, all nourished from the same source of life.

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other.

Let us plead with ourselves to live in a way which will not deprive other beings of air, water, food, shelter, or the chance to live.

With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us pray for the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth. Amen

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926- 2022)

Rev. Kee



Musings from the Co-Chair

I've been reminded recently of the many members our congregation has lost over the years. It first came to the forefront of my mind when I was dealing with the legal paperwork to claim the estate that Clarine Dunder graciously left to us when she died this past Thanksgiving week. Clarine, for those of you who might not have known her, was in charge of our children's RE program for many years and made her favorite hobby known to all with a bumper sticker stating "A Warped Weaver Looms Ahead" on the back of her car. Then I was reminded more recently of Sue and Hal Wedel, strong members of our congregation for many years, when an obituary appeared in the Laramie Boomerang for one of their daughters, Emily Wedel. For anyone who didn't know Sue, let's just say you learned to open your wallet any time you saw her approaching as she was invariably raising money for one good cause or another and was rarely known to take "no" as an answer.



Over the years, we have lost members in many ways. Some have moved away for better job opportunities or to retire nearer to children. I am told there was a major split in the congregation over the response to the Vietnam War that caused some to leave us. Others were not happy to leave the "Pyramid on the Plains" and move into town. Some have drifted away when their favorite minister moved on. In this vein, our membership numbers appear to have declined during the COVID pandemic. We are not unique in this respect among religious congregations. A friend of mine from an evangelical church told me that overall, churches are finding their attendance numbers are only 60% of the pre-pandemic numbers when they have returned to in-person services. All of which is to say, we've been through fluctuations in the past and we've always persevered and eventually had our numbers rebound. As a spiritual home for seekers who are turned off by creeds and dogma, we continue to offer a special place. Many of the services planned by the Program Committee in the recent past and coming weeks will remind us of what brought us together in the past and will lay the foundation for our future strength. I thoroughly enjoyed the January services and look forward to what is coming this month. I hope you will as well.

Stay well and stay safe.

David



Facebook: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Laramie (public)
Facebook: UUFL Community Group (private) *This is a private group for UUFL members and friends who want to discuss current issues and challenges.*
Website: uularamie.org *For more news and events, and the latest updates!*

UUFL Calendar of Events

David Perry maintains a current event calendar on the UUFL website (uularamie.org). You can always check there to see what is happening. Remember, all scheduling for use of the building must be done through David (dperry@uwyo.edu).



Family Promise

There is currently one family, a couple with two young children, staying in the motel hosted by Family Promise. There is one food restriction because of an allergy to mushrooms. Our dates to bring meals to the Presbyterian Church this coming year are:



March 20-27
May 1-8
July 31-August 7
September 11-18
October 16-23

All through the year, though, Family Promise can use shelf stable food and products for their diaper pantry. If you've questions please give me a call or text me at 307.761.0887. *Bren Lieske, Family Promise Coordinator.*

Holiday Giving

The Fellowship collected donations for two local social service organizations during December, 2021. Members donated requested clothing and diapers for Family Promise and Laramie Foster Closet and also made monetary donations to these organizations. The checks and items were delivered to the respective organizations in early January. Thank you for generosity towards those in need. *Nancy Lockwood*

Contemplative Yarns

We continue to meet over the winter with various activities. Andi Noakes often schedules walks and hikes. Our ongoing book group on paganism meets at 10 am on Saturdays in the UUFL zoom room, facilitated by Bren Lieske. It has been a fun learning time for those of us who attend. Many of us also meet at the Fellowship (masked) at 12:30 pm on Saturdays, for conversation and some of us bring needlework projects. We welcome others to join us. If you are interested in participating in any of these activities, e-mail uularamieneews@gmail.com.

Membership Committee

The UUFL Membership committee is Robin Chestek (Chair) and Laura Miller (Database Administrator). Please help keep the member / friend database up to date! If you have a change of address, phone number, or email address, please send your updated contact information to Robin at rchestek@gmail.com.



Building Use Policy *updated December 1, 2021*

As we face the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus, the Board will be constantly monitoring the transmission metrics in Albany County on the Wyoming Department of Health, the CDC, and the COVIDActNow websites. The UUFL COVID policy will be updated as necessary. Please keep tabs on our Facebook page and Website for any potential changes in our Sunday services and other activities.

Requirements:

1. **Users must wear masks or cloth facial coverings inside** the building.
2. Users are responsible for cleaning tables, doorknobs, and bathroom surfaces with appropriate solvents.
3. There must be a gap of one hour between groups using the building.
4. A maximum of 20 household groups is allowed in the Sanctuary and no more than 12 people are allowed in the Social Hall.
5. While individuals may bring their own food or drink, food may not be prepared or served to groups without advance agreement by the Board.

Exceptions:

Speakers who are fully vaccinated and boosted and are actively engaged in leading religious services may remove their face covering so long as they maintain at least **twelve (12) feet distance** from non-household members indoors. Currently the only place in our sanctuary that is 12 feet or more from the nearest row of chairs is the pulpit.

Recommendations:

1. Please maintain a social distance of 6 feet or more.
2. The doors and windows should be opened for ventilation, weather permitting.

Indoor Church Services and Meetings:

We are allowing in-person services inside, but to protect those among us who might be vulnerable to infection, **we continue to require masks or facial coverings inside** the building. The Board will continue to monitor the advisability of indoor services and meetings as circumstances evolve.

Zoom Room Information

UUFL has a Zoom room members and friends may use to host UUFL related events. Contact Michael Wade (darooke22@gmail.com) for details on how to use the Laramie Zoom Room to host a meeting. Below is the Zoom access information for both the Laramie and Casper Zoom Rooms.

Laramie Zoom Room
Meeting ID: 290 700 5294
Passcode: no passcode needed

Casper Zoom Room
Meeting ID: 459 187 0381
Passcode: 084964



Highlights from January Services

At the January 9th service, Ken Chestek, Catie Ballard and Barbara Bogart led an engaging discussion about the various things that are important to our daily existence: the different “dimensions of being” in the world, and how we can integrate these different parts into our whole selves. Some members asked that the chart we used to inform this discussion be reproduced in the newsletter, to facilitate further reflection. We offer it here.

The Dimensions of Being

Dimension	Values implicated
Empirical	True/false
Aesthetic	Beautiful/ugly
Emotional	Pleasing/hurtful
Spiritual	Righteous/sinful
Moral or ethical	Just or right/unjust or wrong
Mythical	Significant/insignificant

On January 16th, the Sunday program involved people drawing and sharing maps of the spiritual journeys that led to this moment in their lives. The wonderfully diverse, creative, and evocative drawings in this Zoom collage illustrate the many paths that have brought us into this religious community. We look forward to exploring other aspects of our individual and collective spirituality in upcoming programs. Join us!

