



Unitarian
Universalist
Fellowship of
Murfreesboro

The Chalice

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Member Spotlight

A new feature begins with this issue: the member spotlight. Each month we will bring you a character sketch of a UUFM member. Our inaugural spotlight member is:

JOE ANDREWS

TC: How long have you been a UUFM member?

JA: *I first attended UUFM in October, 2012 and became a member on February 17, 2013.*

TC: What originally brought you to UUFM and keeps you coming back?

JA: *Growing up, I was an active participant in my inherited Southern Baptist religion but it never was a good fit. I couldn't make the connection with the supernatural that appeared to come so readily to my peers. I figured there must be something wrong with me. Then there was Vietnam. A nearly fatal stint as an infantryman, followed with months of hospitalization, left me with a mostly shattered value system that was slow to rebuild. When the dust mostly settled, I was left with a spiritual void that persisted far beyond the healing of my physical wounds. I was a survivor but I didn't feel like I was living. I learned to adapt, not always with the healthiest of tools, and stayed busy with work and family across the years. With retirement from work and increasing social isolation, I realized that I needed people in my life. I walked into the UUFM gathering one Sunday morning, not knowing what to expect and more than a little anxious. The first person I saw, smiled and introduced herself to me (You know who that was, Barbara!), welcoming me to the fellowship. Everything I experienced that morning reassured me that I had found a group of good people who were coming together for good reasons. I had found the community that had been missing in my life.*

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Joe Andrews (continued from page 1)

TC: How do you like to spend your free time?

JA: *Living. It's the little things as much as the big. Daily walks with a front-end load of mindfulness meditation are a good way to start most days. I have many canine friends that I greet with dog biscuits along the way. I feed birds year round and know some of them personally (especially our Barred Rock pets, Medie and Buster). I become a serious river rat in the spring, often visiting my favorite Crappie hole 4-5 mornings a week at first light. We eat a lot of Crappie. If the fish aren't biting, I often stroll the sand bars looking for interesting rocks to add to my collection. By the time the Spring fishing starts to tail off, I begin working to get my garden planted. I grow a variety of things but Zinnias are my favorite crop. I enjoy giving them to friends and neighbors and always try to have a nice bouquet for UUFM on Sunday mornings. I'm a news junkie and consume a lot of current events from a variety of sources. I have an interest in military history and have covered quite a bit of ground from the Civil War forward, with a special focus on the war in Vietnam. My wife and I enjoy MTSU Lady Raider Basketball and get season tickets yearly. From time-to-time, I enjoy journal-style writing and dabble in poetry on occasion.*

TC: What's the best vacation you've ever taken and what is one place you'd like to see?

JA: *A 17-day camping trip comes to mind. We spent a week on a remote Florida beach, crabbing, fishing, swimming, and relaxing. Crossed over to a campground in St. Augustine and did the tourist routine. Wrapped up with a few days in the heart of the Okefenokee Swamp in South Georgia, canoeing through the swamp among the alligators. I've always wanted to see Bali in the South Pacific.*

TC: If you could create a slogan for your life what would it be?

JA: *Chop wood, carry water, and always question authority!*

Imbolc, or When Gardeners Go Crazy

By Kitti McConeil

Halfway between Christmas and the first day of Spring, we have Imbolc. People start noticing that days have gotten longer. The days have been getting longer for six weeks already, but now it is obvious. You walk out of work and it is not dark. You see the sun rise on the way to school.

Christians call this Candlemas, time to bless votive candles before Lent. The Christ child and His mother Mary had passed the period of rest and isolation that traditionally followed childbirth. Time to change modes.

Pagans anticipate the world awakening. We see snowdrops and maybe crocus, and delicate looking greens like chickweed peek out of frosted ground. Maybe some burrowing critters peek out, too. Yes, Groundhog Day. Not really about the weather, it is about anticipation. Spring is coming and people like me - dirty, optimistic gardeners - lose our minds.

At this time, no candy or card company has figured out how to sell Groundhog related wares. Florists ramp up for Valentine's day, Cadbury is already pushing eggs. But my mailbox is stuffed with seed catalogs, and optimism peaks.

THIS is the year I will finish my landscaping. THIS year I will plan my garden and follow the plan religiously. THIS year I will conquer weeds. THIS year I will try all those adorable backyard decor ideas I have saved on Pinterest. There are no grubs, no aphids, no hornworms, no mites, no squash bugs, no moles because it is still winter.

Sacred fires celebrate the lengthening days and anticipation of Spring inspires poetry. Cabin fevered Irish told long tales, staring into Saint Bridget's flames.

My air registers inspire few poems, but I have colour-coded sketches of plantings and notes on companion plants. Brightly illustrated seed packets peek out of grubby file folders and tattered bags, and daffodil shoots make me manic.

From now until April, every cold front will break my heart. Warm spells will delude me into early planting and I will lose innumerable seedlings before final frost.

Happy Imbolc, and may Bridget inspire you.

The UUFM Pagan Group

By Karen Johnson

What do pagans do at full moon? We aren't scary (although I am losing my teeth, but I haven't cackled out loud in a while). Do you imagine us dancing naked under the brilliant full moon? Or do you see us, like Macbeth's witches, crouched over a bubbling black cauldron? Summoning demons? Talking to fairies?

Nah.

We usually talk about how we've been, what's been happening in our lives, catching up - just like the Women's Group, Men's Group, and Humanists' Group do - a chance to get away and talk. We mark the passage of time by the moon's calendar. Lately we've been meeting inside because it's cold! During the summer, we may go outside to meet in a more natural setting, and perhaps build a fire to circle 'round.

We take our spiritualism seriously, although we are informal about the ritualization of it. We cast, or call, or summon (your choice of words) our circle. We do this to create a sacred space, a safe space, to delineate, or mark, that here and now is a special place and time; kind of like ringing the bell and lighting the chalice at UUFM on Sundays. We call to the four corners: North for earth, East for air, South for fire, and West for water. We ask the spirits of each to come lend us their gifts: grounding, communication, compassion, and acceptance. We believe that these spirits exist in some fashion in the natural world. We call to summon these feelings in ourselves as well. Our altar generally has some representation of each of these things: a jar of salt, a feather, a candle, a seashell.

In our summoned circle, we relax again around our altar. Sometimes we cast runes to see what we can see in the stones or in ourselves. Sometimes we will lay out a tarot spread for one or more of us. Sometimes we meditate or scry in black mirrors, water, or crystals. Lately, we have been discussing chakras. We talk about the astronomy and astrology of this moon and perhaps how to use that energy to focus our own energies on some aspect of our lives.

We close the circle, thanking the spirits of North, East, South, and West for visiting us. The circle is open but never broken. Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again.

Then we go outside and gaze at the glorious moon, dance a bit to cast moonshadows, and go home. Now, what we do there...

We aren't a coven. Not all of us even claim the word "witch." There are some covens and more formal circles in the area, but even the witches among us are solitary and eclectic. Ha. Among pagans and witches, we're the UUs of that religion, too!

There is NO Full Moon in February 2018. This only happens "once in a blue moon" and only in February. The next moonless month won't be until 2037.

Founding UUFM Member Pass- es

By Jill Austin

Mitsue Williamson, a founding member of our congregation died on January 19, 2018. She was 88 years old. In 1953, Mitsue moved to Murfreesboro with her husband, Bascom, to the farm on what is now Medical Center Parkway (farm just before the interstate – where strawberries are planted now in the spring and sunflowers in summer.) Mitsue was born in Japan and she met Bascom while he was there helping to restore agriculture in post war Japan. I cannot imagine the difficulty moving so far from home to a culture you do not know and a place where you do not speak the language. Mitsue joined the Blackman Home Demonstration Club, the Farm Bureau Women, the Blackman Community Club, and the discussion group that became the Unitarian Fellowship of Murfreesboro.

I met Mitsue Williamson about eleven years ago. She became a good friend to me. Mitsue cared deeply about people. She believed in hard work, being a good person, and living fully every day. Mitsue cared deeply about her church: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Murfreesboro. Mitsue and Bascom Williamson and others began meeting in 1956 for discussions about important topics of the day. They met in the Mitchell Neilson cafeteria and in members' homes. In 1962, the group became formalized as the Unitarian Discussion Group. Later the name was changed to Unitarian Fellowship of Murfreesboro. Mitsue was busy during those early years organizing child care, picnics/gatherings for the congregation, and keeping the church financial records. She gave me two small books where she wrote out the information about expenses: \$3 dollars for childcare each week, \$2 a month for membership dues. Seven families were listed as members in 1962. Mitsue and Bascom were active members with the Unitarian fellowship for many years of growth and change.

The first time I went to church, a small very nicely dressed older woman (perfect make-up, jewelry to match her outfit) came up to me. She said "Who are you?" Mitsue was plain spoken like that. I told her about myself. Then, she hugged me and told me she was glad I was there. Here are a few of my remembrances from times with Mitsue at UUFM.

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FEBRUARY SERVICES

4	Dr. Amy Sayward: "A Personal and Historical Perspective on Tennessee's Death Penalty"
11	Doug Traversa: "TBD"
18	Rev. Denise Gyauch: "TBD"
25	Music Sunday: "Nature Songs"

FEBRUARY MUSIC

4	1060 As We Sing of Hope and Joy 346 Come Sing a Song with Me
11	207 Earth was Given as a Garden 204 Come O Sabbath
18	311 Let it Be a Dance 1018 Come and Go with Me
25	7 The Leaf Unfurling 77 Seek Not Afar for Beauty

FEBRUARY UUFM EVENTS

8	Board Meeting 6:30 pm Barbara & Bod
9	UUFM Humanists 6:00 pm See Carolsue Clery
14	Men's Group 6:00 pm TBD
21	Women's Group 6:00 pm TBD



Founding UUFM Member

(Cont. from page 4)

- She always supported the Alzheimer's Walk. That is the only thing I remember Mitsue being willing to discuss in front of the church membership. She preferred to be in the background rather than being on display in front of the congregation. But she was insistent that we contribute as a fellowship to the Alzheimer's Association and that we walk with her. She talked about the good work of the association and about Bascom's diagnosis of the disease and she encouraged us to contribute and to walk --- And we did walk and we were proud to walk with Mitsue.
- Mitsue learned that one of our speakers (Rabbi Rami) liked banana pudding. So, every time he spoke, she had her banana pudding there ready for him to eat. I hope he really liked that dessert because she dished it up, handed it to him, and watched while he ate, waiting for appropriate sounds that he was enjoying her gift.
- Mitsue often gave me news clippings (poems and stories). They were usually carefully saved in a plastic notebook sheet. She asked me to be sure they would be included in the readings for the church service – and we did. Mitsue was always pleased to hear one of her collected news items talked about at church.
- Mitsue liked to know about all of the decisions made about church operations. When a decision was made, she always asked "Why you do that?" It did not matter the issue, she asked that question. I would explain all of the reasons; she would nod politely and listen. Then, she would ask "Is this good for church?" I would say "yes" I think so. Mitsue always wanted to be sure that the church was well taken care of and that things were going well. She often asked me: How many people today? Any new visitors today? Why a particular person did not attend one Sunday, and so on.
- We had our first meeting of our UUFM women's group at Mitsue's house. Almost 30 women came to the meeting – former members, current members, and friends of the fellowship. Mitsue was proud to host and smiled through the night's event because so many people were visiting and having a good time.

Following are a couple of other stories about time I spent at Mitsue's house:

- One day Mitsue asked me to come over to her house to look at some dresses. I thought that was a bit odd, but I said, "Of course, I'll be there." What beautiful dresses. Mitsue had at least 10 – 12 kimonos and other traditional Japanese clothing. She had the dresses hung on the doors of the rooms in her house. We walked from room to room and Mitsue told me the story of every garment. It took a couple of hours. I wish I had taken notes. I think she showed me her wedding dress and some clothes Bascom wore, but my memory is a bit fuzzy on that. Once she brought a kimono to church and talked with a few of us about how it is worn. She tied the sash on me, very tightly and then asked me: "You gain weight?" Mitsue was a good storyteller and those kimonos were special to her.
- After the Good Friday tornado, I phoned Mitsue to be sure she was okay. She told me she needed to pick up debris that was scattered on the farm. So, I went to her house along with four or five other church members. We picked up tree limbs, shingles, wood, siding, insulation. We worked steadily for a few hours. Finally, someone said, "Mitsue, can we rest?" And "Can we have some water?" Mitsue provided water, lemonade, and peanut butter crackers. We snacked for a couple of minutes, and Mitsue, said "Ready to work now?"

She worked circles around us that day (people 30 – 50 years younger than her). We ended the day with Mitsue driving us around the farm, pointing out where various gardens were planted in the past, where church picnics were held, and so on. During this tour, at least three volunteers were in the truck bed along with lots of debris, being bounced along. So, only a couple of people inside the truck got the tour. Others just held on to stay in the truck.

Mitsue was:

- Plain spoken and caring
- Happy and a worrier
- A hard worker and person who could laugh
- Sweet and tough
- A doer and a listener

She was a good friend to me. And I loved her. I learned from her and I enjoyed her company. I respected her for the way she lived her life and for her dedication to the church.

Mitsue left a legacy to this community through her love of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Murfreesboro. For 55 years, this congregation has been a place of refuge, a place of hope, a place of healing and comfort, a place where we can all be ourselves. I know this congregation would not be the same without Mitsue's influence and caring concern. I cherish her memory and I will think of her often and the lessons she taught me. Those of us who knew Mitsue are richer for those lessons learned and we were honored to be in her circle of laughter and caring concern.



Mitsue M. Williamson
1929—2018

**UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
FELLOWSHIP OF
MURFREESBORO**

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Murfreesboro, Tennessee (UUFM) is a liberal religious society associated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). UUFM is a member of the Southern Region and the Mid-South District.

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POEM

DANCE LIGHTLY WITH LIFE

By Jonathan Lockwood Huie

Today is your day to
dance lightly with life,
sing wild songs of adventure,
soar your spirit,
unfurl your joy.

