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## January 2019: Outlaw's Bridge Universalist Church

*Welcoming Congregation*

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### The Bridge

\*10:00 a.m. each Sunday: Intergenerational Devotional

\*10:10 a.m. Religious Education for all ages

\*Primary: "Love Surrounds Us"

\*Teens: "UU Kids"

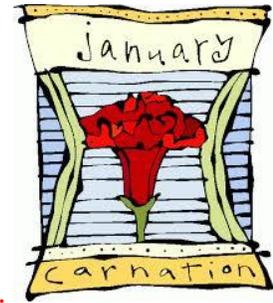
\*Adults: "Universalism 101"

**January 6: "Seven Habits of Compassionate People"** – Ann Malpass – Compassion is a strong force for good. But before we can spread compassion outward, we must cultivate it inward. Ann will share Jennifer Blaise Kramer's everyday lessons on how to foster kindness in our own heart so we can better reflect it to others.

**January 13: "A People of Possibility"** – Reverend Claudia M. Frost –Join us for the first sermon in our series on the Seven Unitarian Universalist Principals. Our monthly theological theme, "Possibility", provides a good approach for study of our first UU Principal: *The inherent worth and dignity of every person*. A foundational value simply stated but often challenging to practice. What about those people you don't like; the ones who are your exact opposite and drive you crazy? Can you love them anyway? Do they have inherent worth and dignity? What are the possibilities for spiritual growth as we live the Seven UU Principles?

**January 20: "Tracing Early Christianity through the Music"** – Jimmy Merritt

**January 27: "Shame, Guilt and Wholeheartedness"** – Reverend Claudia M. Frost – Third in a sermon series dealing with negative or difficult emotions: a theology of shame and guilt provides a deeper understanding of how these two difficult emotions impact human life both in everyday interactions and long-term matters of the soul. Join us to explore the possibilities for a more joyous, creative and loving life when we understand the difference between shame and guilt and their implications for "wholehearted" living.



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#### Dates to Remember

**January 10: AUW Meeting at the Church.**

**January 13: Board Meeting Following Services and Pot-Luck Lunch.**

**"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the entire staircase."  
Martin Luther King, Jr.**



## Claudia's Comments

The beginning of a new year is a good time for January's theme of "Possibility". Possibility is central to our faith. Historically, Universalists saw potential when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human character. While others focus on the fallen state of human identity and look to hopes of an afterlife, we believe God loves all and doesn't give up on anyone. We shouldn't give up on each other, either. Our religious past has led us to be a people of "why not?" "Why not give people another chance?" Ask yourself how your faith in possibility is doing.

I came across an idea in our resource packet for the *Soul Matters* monthly theme work I think is worth considering. Centuries ago, people of faith used to go into the desert to seek out monks and hermits known for their guidance and wisdom. These wise "desert mothers and fathers" would offer people a word or phrase to ponder for weeks, years, even a lifetime.

This has become known as a spiritual practice...a simple world reflection that has the power to create possibilities within an individual and the world. The words weren't instructions as much as invitations to open oneself in new ways. They're about deepening and unfolding; not fixing or improving. Rather than a list of resolutions this year, I invite you to try this ancient practice of picking a word that will help keep you open to new possibilities this year. One fan of this practice points out that it's easier to remember a single word you can use to check yourself and ensure you're on track than a long list of goals and resolutions. There are so many words...so many possibilities to choose from. How can you pick the best one for you? Here's a three-step suggestion I found by Geneva Vandezell, an internet blogger:

1. Brainstorming...think of words that define your approach or goals in various areas of your life.
2. Put words under key areas like family, health, travel, etc.
3. Look over your list. Try to understand where there is overlap in your intentions.

Your chosen word doesn't have to relate to all areas of your life, but the more overarching in relation to what you want to achieve the more useful the word will be for focus.

Frequently chosen words include: Improve, Begin, Challenge, Wellness, Balance, Courage, Creativity, Evolve, Change, Heal, Release, Finish, Health, Home, Focus, Soar, Compassion, Gratitude, Help, Engage, Breathe, Give, Shed, De-clutter.

Imagine how holding one of these as your daily mantra can open possibilities and expand the way you are in the world. But how can you hold on to your word? Maybe a sticky note by your computer screen, or even as your computer's screen saver or cell phone home screen. You could paint it on a rock, spelled out on a piece of jewelry, a picture, painting or vision board hung on a wall of your home all year, a note by your alarm clock. Whatever method you choose, the key is to keep your word in your vision so that you remember it daily and explore its gifts throughout the year. Enjoy the possibilities this simple New Year's practice reveals and changes that unfold. Happy New Year!

With Love, Hope, and Joy,  
Reverend Claudia