



The Steeple

February 2012 Newsletter

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont

In The Interim



"May we face each new day with gratitude that we have been given not only the gift of life, but the gift of knowing that we have that gift." Those words from Rev. Robert Senghas, a member and former minister of this congregation, have been inspiring me in the first weeks of the new year.

We human beings are blessed with the knowledge that we can make decisions about the way we live – both individually and communally. I invite you all to bring that gift of awareness to the interim process that will begin in earnest in the coming months. The Interim Task Collaboration Team has begun working on a plan for approaching the Five Tasks of Interim Ministry:

- claiming and honoring the past and engaging and honoring griefs and conflicts
- recognizing your unique identity and your strengths, needs, and challenges
- clarifying the appropriate leadership roles of minister(s), church staff, and lay leaders and navigating the shifts in leadership that may accompany times of transition
- making appropriate use of District, UUA, and other outside resources
- proudly coming into possession of a renewed vision and strong stewardship, prepared for new growth and new professional leadership, ready to embrace the future with anticipation and zest.

Will you use your gifts to embrace this work, to 'lean into the in-between time'? (Beverly and George Thompson, *Grace for the Journey*) There are two very specific things you can do to work on the first task – coming to terms with the congregation's history. One is to attend the series of adult education programs offered by our resident congregational historian Elz Curtiss. (Click here for more information on ([History Series](#))) The other is to take part in the History Wall exercise. On two Sunday mornings in March, after each service, you will find the parlors filled with a timeline of the two-hundred plus year history of this congregation. Your job will be to add your own memories and experiences. The purpose of this exercise is to get a sense of the full narrative arc of this congregation's history; to put all of your subjective experiences into a larger context; to share your stories and to blend them together into a cacophonous retelling of your shared life in faith. Once the History Wall is filled with your stories the Team and I will find ways to further disseminate your story – through sermons, small group conversations, and other means.

There is also something very specific you can do to work on the fourth task: renewing denominational ties. On Sunday February 5th @ 12:30 pm the Denominational Affairs Committee will present a panel of FUUSB members who have been to recent General Assemblies. They will talk about their personal experiences. What is it like to be part of a gathering of many thousands of UU's? How well do we sing together? Deliberate about the future of our movement? Do the work of justice? We are hoping that we can interest some of you in applying to be the congregation's officially credentialed delegates to the General Assembly in Phoenix in June. If attending a General Assembly feels like it will take too much time and effort (and money!) perhaps we could instead interest you in attending the annual meeting of the Northern New England District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The meeting will take place April 13-14 in North Conway, NH. Funds are available for registration fees for our delegates, and we'll help put car pools together. For more information follow this link: <http://nned.uua.org/pdf/2012SpringconferenceFlyer.pdf>.

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A Message from Martha...



Do you know the film [Fly Away Home](#)? It's the wonderful story of a girl, Amy, who bonds with her estranged father through their shared experience of raising a nest of abandoned Canada Goslings, including escorting them, via ultralight plane, on their first migration.

Fueled by Amy's fierce compassion for the young birds which naturally imprint on her, she and her father must become as goose-like as possible, so as to effectively lead their feathered friends on the path that's already laid out in their DNA. They need to teach them to fly, to increase their strength and endurance, and eventually, to show them the way south.

Literally, Amy and her dad take these birds under their wings so as to teach them how to be who they already are in their very bones and feathers. Without someone to teach them the fullness "gooseness," they would die.

This story comes to mind when I think of the teaching, modeling, and guiding that our more experienced religious education teachers provide to the newer ones. Some of you have journeyed a year or more on the annual cyclical path of activities, events, and patterns that are part of the life of First UU. You know the route and the territory. Your experience has shaped you, naturally, into leaders.

And each year, with every month that goes by, new families join our "flock." With time, new adults come to notice a growing feeling of commitment to the vision and values we share. Having awakened a latent inner urge to stretch their newfound wings, they want fly with us! That's when the time comes for the seasoned journeyers to reach out a wing of support and show them the way. The best part is, it's so easy! Unlike Amy and her dad with the geese, we're all the same species!

This year, the uplift in your collective flight energy is palpable. More of the "elder geese" in our midst are offering a wing to the many eager ones who've joined our flock in the past year or two, and it's a beautiful thing to witness. The RE Committee and I developed some plans for a mentoring program, which would formalize and organize this process, but you seem more interested in raising one another up, naturally, spontaneously, and organically. I promise to find ways to encourage your inclinations!

I'm inspired by the way you're all taking off in flight. Sharing the lead, let's keep rising higher, as we fly away home!

Gladly and Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha".

Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education



Occupy the Spirit: UUs on the Side of Economic Justice

Since mid December, a Task Force of First UU Society members have been working to decide how to support the local Occupy Movement. One idea that's bubbled up is to display a banner supporting economic justice on or near our meetinghouse making our UU values clear and public. We'd be proclaiming our support for the UU principles affirming that each person has inherent worth and dignity; that justice, equity, and compassion should be the guiding principles for human relationships; and that all people deserve access to the democratic process. We'd help support those who are trying to educate the population beyond the walls of our meetinghouse on these issues.

By supporting this action the members of the First UU of Burlington would be following in a tradition of support for economic justice begun by our sister congregations fifteen years ago and reaffirmed in 2000 when the UU General Assembly adopted a "Statement of Conscience" that said, "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, hereby rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of economic justice, an end to racism, and an end to poverty. We recognize that racism is a major contributor toward economic injustice..."

We believe hanging a banner near or from our building demonstrates what we stand for in a strong and visible way. We want to know what you think about a banner and what the wording should say. Very soon there will be a poll taken at Sunday services and a Survey Monkey link from our Enewsblast. Please let us know what you think.

For more information about this action or to share your thoughts please contact: Lucy Gluck 652-9058 freelulu@yahoo.com,
Jean Palmer 288-9566 jeanpa813@gmail.com, Sally Conrad 658-1047 dconrad@uvm.edu

The Stewardship Campaign: Reigniting Connections

Our 2012 stewardship campaign is getting underway. We are renewing our personal connections to one another, our society, and our values. Our theme this year is "reigniting connections," and we aim to connect with each active member of the congregation.



The effort to reach each and every one of you begins with our big kick-off variety show. The entertainment starts on Saturday, February 11 at 4 PM. Childcare will be provided. Come support our society at the show! Many of you will be invited to have one-on-one conversations with another congregation member. These personal encounters will offer an opportunity for you to discuss your hopes for the future of our society. We are calling the members who will be organizing these conversations our congregation's visiting stewards. We are now contacting some of you to ask you to join our cadre of visiting stewards.

Others of you will be invited to one of a dozen or so cottage meetings: small gatherings hosted by your friends and neighbors. At these meetings, we will get together to discuss our church and make our financial commitments for the next year. We are already recruiting hosts for these cottage meetings.

As you can see, there are lots of ways for you to contribute. If you would like to volunteer to be a visiting steward or host a cottage meeting, please don't hesitate to contact either me (Louis.deRosset@uvm.edu; 802 264 9001) or Woody Fulton (jwfulton63@alumni.cmu.edu; 802 399 2643). Most of all, however, we ask you to lend your support to ensure the financial well-being of our society. Together, we feed the name that stands for the light of truth, the warmth of community, and the fire of commitment. *Louis deRosset*

Interim Task Collaboration Team

The Interim Task Collaboration Team is composed of five members of the Society: Paula Fives-Taylor, Thomas Porter, Tracy Titchner, Nancy Freeze, and James Palmer. Our purpose is to help the Interim Minister facilitate the Society's transition to a new settled minister. We have been reading Roger Nicholson's "Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry" to educate ourselves about the interim process. One of our roles is to serve as eyes and ears for the congregation; we welcome any opportunity to discuss how you feel the interim process is going.



At our January 11 meeting, we discussed ways to display the Society's history and provide an opportunity for our members to share their memories, experiences and feelings about this history. It is our expectation that learning and remembering who we were will help us discover who we want the Society to become. We assigned preparation tasks and expect to design the history task at our February meeting.



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Finally, there is a very specific way you can lean into the fifth task: congregational renewal. Every household in the congregation should be looking forward to taking part in the annual Stewardship campaign. The theme this year is Reigniting Connections. The Stewardship Campaign is, indeed, a way to reignite connections. By talking to each other about the nature of your commitment to the congregation, by pledging your fair share in good faith, by reminding yourselves that your congregational budget is a reflection of your values – all of these are ways to contribute actively to the health and well-being of your beloved community.

So, my friends, lean in. Lean into the telling of your story. Lean into learning about the larger movement that this congregation is an intrinsic part of. Lean into the rebuilding of the infrastructure that keeps your programs vital, your buildings and grounds intact, and your faith visible in the community. Lean in with courage and with optimism. Again quoting Robert Senghas, "Let us greet each new day with a yes to the greater life of the universe in which we have our little parts to play. May we resolve to be worthy of the gift of life we have



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

February Worship

February 5 *“Standing on the Side of Love”* We take the title for this service from the UU hymn that has become the anthem for human rights work in our Unitarian Universalist Association. One of the ways we UU’s stand on the side of love is by supporting families of all shapes and sizes and configurations. In this multigenerational service Rev. Roberta and Director of Religious Education Martha Dallas will weave the stories of families from our congregation into an inclusive and celebratory worship experience.

February 12 *“The Love That Makes the World Go Round”* A few days before Valentine’s Day Reverend Roberta will reflect on the kind of love that transcends greeting cards and flowers and chocolates . As we kick-off our annual budget drive let’s remember the many ways we have given and received love as we reignite the precious connections that will sustain our beloved community.

February 19 Our Worship Committee will lead services on this day.

February 26 *“The Third Smooth Stone: Ultimate Optimism”* This service is the 3rd in a series on the foundational ideas at the core of our faith. How does religious liberalism maintain a hopeful and optimistic outlook without denying the reality of evil? A thorny theological dilemma addressed by theologian James Luther Adams. (Plan to attend the monthly minister’s forum on the first Sunday of each month at 3 pm to delve more deeply into these ideas.)

