



First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont

In The Interim



In The Interim

Here we are at the doorway of a new year – a time between what was and what will be. The new year is a great metaphor for intentional interim ministry; a gift from the calendar in the form of an invitation to take stock, to let go of things that no longer serve us well, and to embrace new possibilities.

I have begun to meet with the Interim Task Collaboration Team to plan how we, together, can guide the congregation through this process. We are reading and discussing Roger Nicholson’s book *Temporary Shepherds*. Nicholson writes about the interim time as a time when the system opens up, and the congregation can choose the experience discernment and self-study, of living with the possibilities and anxieties of being ‘between the no longer and the not yet.’

Some of you have probably asked, ‘Why wait? Why not just get on with the search, get a new settled minister in here and get things back to normal?’ The most compelling reason is that experience has shown that a rush to settle a new minister often results in a short-term, relatively unsuccessful settlement which in turn sends the congregation right back into that unsettled in-between time.

So I want to invite all of you to join with me and the Interim Task Collaboration Team to embrace the interim as a time of learning, of re-visioning, of re-energizing. In *Grace for the Journey*, Beverly and George Thompson refer to the interim time as ‘. . . this in-between time as a sacred space where your congregation can rediscover its energy and vision.’

Can you reframe your thinking about the interim? Can you go from ‘why wait, let’s just get going’ to ‘why not take advantage of this opportunity to learn about ourselves - our past, our present, and our possible future’? After spending five wonderful and rich months among you, I know that you can and will!

Early next year we will begin to work on the first interim task: coming to terms with history. We will be asking you to create a FUUSB History Wall, planning community conversations around significant times, and generally appreciating the perseverance and determination that has allowed this congregation to thrive for several centuries. Our purpose will be not just to look at the long narrative arc of the history – to know and retell the longer story and put recent events in context. This work will dovetail nicely with the gifts our historian in residence, Elz Curtiss, will be bringing to the congregation in the new year. Her book on the history of the congregation is about to be published, and she will be offering a series of adult programs on our history. Even if you don’t think of yourself as a history buff, I encourage you to attend these classes as part of your intentional interim work.

I am not sure yet how we will do all of this work, or what the experience will be like, or what the results will be. I am walking with you through the time between the no longer and the not yet. What I do know, based on years of experience in ministry, is that together we can assure ourselves that in this new year all will be well. All will be well.

Faithfully,
Rev. Roberta



Rev. Roberta will be on vacation from January 2 – January 9. During this time the Care Network will respond to most pastoral needs. In the event of a more serious pastoral emergency call the Society office and you will be referred to an on-call minister.

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A Message from Martha...

Happy 2012, everyone!

With the Winter Solstice a good week-and-a-half behind us, we're riding on January's bright, bracing, and sparkling days, which are growing reliably longer and longer. Hope bolsters our resolve to take a fresh look at who we've been and who we're becoming.

One of the ways I've fancied improving my life for several years now is by adding a yoga routine. A couple years ago I even ordered two yoga DVDs and followed them a few times, but that was it. There are such good reasons to do yoga: It would be a great cross-training addition to my fairly regular running routine. It can be practiced in a spiritual, meditative way. I know from experience that actively moving my body is at the same time both grounding and releasing, and yoga could add to this. I know yoga is good for my organs and overall health; not just my muscles and ligaments. My sister has taken up yoga, loves it, and is urging me to join her.

Why, then, can I not go beyond merely *imagining* doing yoga? Why, when there is every reason it will enhance my life, have I failed to do it? What's the risk? What's keeping me from making that first step?

My best answer is that I'm afraid to commit, which to me means signing up for a class. Why pay up front if I'm not completely sure I really want to do it, and can afford the time and money? In a class, my incompetence at holding the poses will be exposed to everyone else. The others might be more spiritual than I am and pay better attention to their breathing. It would be hard and it would be embarrassing. I could go on.

But right now I'm going to take a risk. I dare to ask for support and encouragement from those of you who practice yoga to help me find the right class and commit to yoga this year. Contact me and help me get my foot in the door of who I want to become. I resolve this year to do yoga... with your help.

And here's my offer to you: If you've been imagining that there's a wealth of goodness possible in fuller participation at First UU, you are right. I promise to help you find ways to deepen your commitment to our faith, and especially to religious education. This New Year, let's cross-inspire and cross-support one another to be who we dream to be!

Help FUUSB Secure a Strong Future!

As our congregation moves into its third century, we are more certain than ever that our liberal religion brings a compassionate, humanistic, reasoned, and active response to many critical issues facing our tired world. In 2009 to ensure that our Society continually enriches our local and state community, then minister Gary Kowalski and the Board of Trustees established the Planned Giving Committee.

The Planned Giving Committee seeks bequests and planned gifts from members and friends of the First UU Society to grow the Society's endowment funds to preserve and protect the historic building and perpetuate the mission of the First UU Society of Burlington. To carry out this challenge the Planned Giving Committee initiated the First UU Legacy Society to celebrate the first two hundred years of our congregation's founding. The Legacy Society is now composed of 66 members and friends of our congregation. We deeply thank all Legacy Society Members for their vision, generosity, and dedication to the future of the First UU Society of Burlington.



Members of the Planned Giving Committee can provide resources to help those wishing to begin or update estate/financial planning. In the spring we plan to present a workshop focusing on ways young families can provide financial security for their children. For more information about joining the Legacy Society or any of the Committee's activities please contact Janice Lange, Chair (878-5256; janice.lange@uvm.edu) or any member of the committee: Gene Ashley (862-2604); Tom Porter(862-930; tporter@veda.org); Martha Fitzgerald (862-6626; martha.fitzgerald@uvm.edu); Nick Nixon (859-9221; nixonwp@yahoo.com); Sally Conrad (658-1047; dconrad@uvm.edu)



The Spirituality of Stewardship and Generosity

Unitarian Universalism is a religion for our time. Think about the fruits of our efforts to change the culture surrounding how gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people are treated in this country. Or about our recent efforts to promote a humane approach to the immigration issue. Or most recently our engagement with the Occupy movement in pursuit of economic justice. We UUs offer a powerful message of hope, open-mindedness, acceptance, intellectual curiosity, and radical love. The world needs our UU message; our neighbors in Burlington need our UU message.

One important foundation for our UU movement is congregational polity. This means that the local congregation is the seat of power and authority. If we want to do more good in the world, the place to start is right here at the First UU Society of Burlington. This transition period provides an exciting opportunity to rethink how we nurture and organize our resources to do the important work of Unitarian Universalism.

So what can we do to strengthen our congregation and promote our UU values? And what does any of this have to do with stewardship and generosity? The short answer is: Come join Rev Roberta and Barry Finkelstein (UU Congregational Stewardship Consultant) on Sunday, January 22, 2012, and see for yourself.

The longer answer is that stewardship is the way we focus our many resources – talent, energy, ideas, and yes, money – to make things happen. Stewardship is a vehicle for engaging one another to strengthen the bonds that make FUUSB strong and vital. Stewardship is the process by which we ensure that the Society will endure for generations, investing in a future we can scarcely imagine for people who have not yet heard of us.

On January 22, we will explore what it means to practice stewardship in a deep and broad sense. The workshop will give us tools for talking with one another in new ways about what FUUSB means to us personally, and what our congregation can be at its best. We will talk about an enduring vision of a Society that lives out its values every day by improving and transforming the lives of its members, inviting others to join us, and bringing a life-affirming message of love to a hurting world.

This workshop is NOT primarily for finance people. It is for everyone who loves FUUSB and wants to ensure that it thrives. Everyone who is eager to expand the power of Unitarian Universalism in Vermont and beyond. In short, everyone who is a part of this beloved community.

So come join Roberta and Barry and one another on January 22 at 12:30 PM. And here are two final and important considerations: one, the workshop will be FUN, and two, there will be COOKIES.

Last month, the core staff shared the covenant they created as part of their team building. This month the board would like to share their covenant with the congregation.

**First UU Society of Burlington
Board Covenant 2011-2012**

We acknowledge that we have been elected by the membership to work together in the best interests of the congregation as a whole, always keeping the congregational mission in mind.

In order to fulfill that mandate we covenant to:

Be engaged and aware. This means being aware of how our own experiences and viewpoints influence our outlook and being aware of personal agendas that might influence our thinking. It also means welcoming and celebrating other experiences and opinions of other board members by listening to and learning from each other.

Be respectful of each other. This means accepting that we will not see every issue in the same way. We will question ideas and concepts without questioning the integrity of others. We will hear questions as curiosity rather than challenges.

Be a vital part of the board process. This means being open-minded, engaging in lively discussions, and offering each other constructive feed-back. We will not back away from disagreement. We will engage conflict constructively, and will use the board process to resolve disagreements as they arise.

Be mutually supportive. This means being appreciative of each other and remembering that we have different roles and areas of expertise. We will ask each other for help when we need it, and will respond to requests for help when we are able. We give each other permission to explore new and outside the box ideas. We will remember to have fun together.



Bazaar Wreaths and Greens

A heartfelt thank you to the creative volunteers who decorated the gorgeous wreaths for this year's Bazaar; to the helpers who hung wreaths, prepped, hauled and cleaned the greens area, & to the "elves" who supplied much of the interesting natural materials used on the wreaths & greens! Your energy, enthusiasm, & good conversation made it fun and successful!

Sarah Forbes



January Worship Calendar

January 1, ONE SERVICE 10 AM “Coffin and Cradle” – Rev. Roberta will lead a low-key service to welcome the new year. You are invited to bring two objects with you: one that represents something you wish to leave behind with the old year to place in the coffin, another that represents something you wish to give birth to in the new year to place in the cradle.

January 4, 5pm Silent meditation, 5:30 pm Reflections

January 8, 9 am & 11 am PARTNER CHURCH CELEBRATION SUNDAY “The Dream of the Diaspora” The expression Diaspora describes people of a common ethnicity who moved away from their home community, and are currently living among foreigners. In the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, the term Diaspora is used for ethnic Hungarians of the Unitarian faith who are spread in areas where there is a vast Romanian majority, and where in many cases it is difficult to build autonomous, self-supporting church communities. Rev. Zoltán Kopándi-Benczédi is a Diaspora minister, living in the once thriving, now remote Zsil Valley in Romania.

In doing community building in the Diaspora, we must adopt the visionary attitude of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. which starts with "I have a dream." The dream must be big, but also realistic, speaking to the way the congregation imagines its own church in the future. It is hard work, but it will be successful if done by people who believe their work is led by God's Providence.

The Rev. Zoltán Kopándi-Benczédi is the 2011-2012 Balázs Scholar at Starr King School for the Ministry, and is minister to congregations in Lupény-Vulkán, Déva and Vajdahunyad, Transylvania. He hopes to return at the end of his scholarship year with new insights into the connection between church life and community development, particularly work done in multicultural environments.

January 11, 5pm Silent meditation, 5:30 pm Reflections

January 15, 9 am & 11 am Martin Luther King Day Service “The Second Smooth Stone: Just and Loving Community” Rev. Roberta continues her irregular sermon series on the foundational ideas of liberal religion based on the work of James Luther Adams. In honor of the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, this sermon will focus on building beloved community.

January 18, 5pm Silent meditation, 5:30 pm Reflections

January 22, 9 am & 11 am “Death with Dignity” End of life issues challenge us on many levels. The Vermont legislature is considering a “Death With Dignity” bill in the current session, which will be the topic of the January Social Action Forum. Rev. Roberta’s sermon will explore some of the emotional, ethical and spiritual challenges this bill raises. The Care Network Ministry will be offering the opportunity to complete Advance Directives after each service.

January 25 5pm Silent meditation, 5:30 pm Reflections

January 29 9 am & 11 am “Question Box” Join Rev. Roberta for worship ‘without a net’. At the beginning of the service you can write questions that you would like Rev. Roberta to answer. With selection assistance from members of the Worship Committee, Roberta will answer some of those questions spontaneously instead of preaching a prepared sermon.



**First Unitarian Universalist Society
of Burlington, Vermont**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Racism in the Schools

"Racial harassment appears prevalent in and around Vermont's public schools," reported the Vermont (Civil Rights) Advisory committee in 1999. The document pointed out that as numbers of minority students increase in the schools we can expect racial harassment to become an even larger issue.

Targeting all public and private schools in Chittenden and Franklin counties, the Anti-Racism Action Committee first sent the report to all the schools and then began offering yearly grants to schools with plans to work actively to reduce racism.

To apply for the grants, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, librarians, or a team from any given school fills out a form which our committee sends out in April. The deadline for submission falls on the middle of May. After the committee has reviewed all the applications it makes its awards to the top two or three. Mainly we are looking for projects which will raise awareness and ultimately change behaviors.

Awards this year: Ten monthly district-wide discussions, "Courageous Conversations about Race" in all Burlington schools; Sheldon School, anti-racism books for its library; and, third, funding for a trip to Washington D.C. for a group of student refugees.

To answer any questions about the program, committee members Susan Schoenfeld (8863-6299), Monica Sargent (863-5188) or Nini Worman (285-2201) can be contacted.



In Appreciation

A warm thank you to all who chose to remember a loved one with a wreath or greens for our sanctuary and church doors. The space not only looks lovely, but is wrapped in memories of love and laughter and time spent together in community and fellowship. Thank you for bringing this wonderful energy to our Sanctuary. *Sarah Forbes*