



The First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont
“An Intentionally Diverse Community”

December 24, 2006 -
 January 13, 2007

Calendar

Sunday, December 24
 4:00 Christmas Eve Family Service
 6:00 Christmas Eve Service
 8:00 Christmas Eve Service
Monday, December 25
Office Closed
 8:00 Christmas Breakfast
 8:00 Morning AA Group
Tuesday, December 26
Office Closed
 10:00 Small Group Ministry
Wednesday, December 27
Office Closed
Thursday, December 28
Office Closed
 ***** Zen (Call office for time)
 7:00 Grief Group
Friday, December 29
Office Closed
 6:30 AA Men's Group
Saturday, December 30
Sunday, December 31
 12:00 Worship Service
Monday, January 1
Office Closed
 ***** Zen (Call office for time)
Tuesday, January 2
 10:00 Wisdom Wanderers
 6:00 RE Committee Meeting
 7:00 Executive Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 3
 9:00 Staff Meeting
 5:30 Mysticism SGM
 7:30 Choir Rehearsal
Thursday, January 4
 ***** Zen (Call office for time)
 7:00 Grief Group
Friday, January 5
 10:30 Women's Alliance Meeting
 6:30 AA Men's Group
Saturday, January 6
 9:00 New UU Class
 4:00 OWL Overnight
Sunday, January 7
 8:45 Family Sing
 9:00 Worship Service
 9:00 Social Action Committee
 9:30 Membership Committee
 10:15 IDRE Relations Committee
 10:30 Children's Choir Rehearsal
 11:00 RE Worship
 11:15 Worship Service
 4:30 RE Teacher Celebration
 6:00 Veggie Film & Potluck
 7:00 World Unity Choir Rehearsal
Monday, January 8
 ***** Zen (Call Office for time)
 6:00 Yoga
Tuesday, January 9
 10:00 Small Group Ministry
 5:30 Property Committee
 7:00 Book Discussion Group
Wednesday, January 10
 6:15 Music Committee Meeting
 7:00 Choir Rehearsal
Thursday, January 11
 ***** Zen (Call office for time)
 10:00 SGM Steering Committee
 6:30 Vermont Interfaith Action
Friday, January 12
 6:30 Men's AA Group
Saturday, January 13
 6:00 Second Saturday Supper

In My Heart

Roddy – in a moment of solstic weakness — invited her partner (me) to write her newsletter column. Yes, the solstice can make you weak and even giddy if, for instance, you love and need lots of sunlight: because, as I understand it, the winter solstice around here (not in South America) means an end to the lengthening darkness of our evenings and the beginning of longer days. Hooray! More light coming! Who doesn't need it? No wonder all religions celebrate solstice as a holiday, make it a feast, and sing and rejoice. Our hearts say: look! There's new hope in the sky! Scientists will explain it explosively: the big bang not only sent our planet circling the sun, and spinning as it circles, it also wobbles as it spins. Wow, what a ride! In Disneyland we pretend the ride is a train full of excitement but that's pretty tame. Earthlings need not pretend at all. We're really riding on a wonder, a flying hunk of rich mud unimaginably huge, scary and fertile. One of the spookiest parts of the ride is not just the circling and spinning – but the wobble. Call it Happy Hanukkah or Merry Christmas or Blessed Yule – but it all adds up to the return of Light, the return of Vision and Hope, and lovely food and drink – if we're lucky. And we are, aren't we. While it lasts.

Bill Cleary

New UU Class

If you are thinking of becoming a member of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington or would simply like to learn more about all things UU, you might want to consider attending the New UU class on Saturday, January 6, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM in the parlor. You'll have the opportunity to meet other people on the same journey and also hear from our ministers about UU history and other specifics about our own Society. Child care will be available if needed. Please sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board or call Bridget Meyer, 879-5409 for more information.

Minister's Sabbatical

The Board has granted Gary an additional month of sabbatical leave this winter. He will be serving the UU Fellowship on St. John from January 11 - February 5, 2007. Gary and Dori need a house and pet sitter for the last two weeks of this period. Please call 862-6824 if you can help.

Upcoming Sundays

January Theme: Heroines and Heroism

Sunday, December 24, 2006

There will be no morning services on Christmas Eve. Instead, there will be three Christmas Eve Candlelight Services. Our 4:00 p.m. celebration ("The Animals' Christmas") is designed for families with children. Youngsters are invited to wear animal-theme pajamas or bring a stuffed critter to surround our creche. Dawna will lead the Children's Choir. Later services at 6:00 p.m. (which includes a Child Dedication) and 8:00 p.m. feature our adult choir. All have readings from the gospels, traditional carols and lighting candles to spread the glow of good will.

Sunday, December 31, 2006 at Noon

Regular morning services are rescheduled. In coordination with First Night, our annual Kwanzaa celebration will begin at noon, featuring African dance and drum ensemble Jeh Kulu, plus the world renowned Umoja Chorus. This is a family friendly festival for all races as we come together to light the kinara, honor the ancestors and those from the African American community and beyond who strengthen our commitment to equality for all peoples.

Sunday, January 7, 9 & 11:15am

"Meet Joseph Campbell" Our Sunday theme for the month of January focuses on heroines and heroism. What are the dragons 21st century men and women are called to combat? What tests and ordeals measure the strength of our character? Where in your own life do you hear the call to sacrifice and service? This morning Gary will present the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell—not so much a traditional sermon as a dramatic distillation of this seminal thinker, in his own words. This is a Membership Sunday. If you would like to join our congregation, the membership book will be available; please make an appointment with Gary or Roddy prior to signing. They will be happy to meet you and help orient you to our intentionally inclusive spiritual community.

Sunday, January 14, 9 & 11:15am

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Robert Appel, Director of the Vermont State Human Rights Commission, will be our guest, with an assessment of progress and challenges facing the whitest state in the union. Our Anti-Racism Action Committee will take a special collection to fund our grant program, assisting public classroom teachers in Chittenden and Addison counties educating students in the arts of diversity and inter-racial respect. The choir will sing.



Religious Education News



There is a precious wonder about this time of year. Living in a climate that delivers ice and snow this season, our appreciation of warmth and light increases as their very presence declines. Perhaps that's why I prefer the tiny, white lights to the larger version. They seem more fragile, more miraculous in their delicate size. They are like stars, twinkling so vastly far away, or like fireflies which, when we're lucky, we can catch, cup in our hands, and marvel at up close.

Please remember that there are no morning services here on Dec. 24th or the 31st. We will celebrate Christmas Eve with three opportunities for worship. At 4 PM, "Animals' Christmas" is the theme and children are encouraged to bring stuffed animals to add to the crowd around the crèche. Animal-theme pajamas and clothes are encouraged too! At 6 PM and 8 PM, our choir will sing, and 6 PM will include a child dedication ceremony as well. All three services will feature gospel readings, carols and a lighting of candles.

The RE Community rings in the New Year with a Winter Teacher Celebration! It will be held on Sunday, January 7th, from 4:30-6:30 PM in the Community Room. Childcare and a hot, hearty supper will be provided. This is an opportunity for teachers to check in and get fresh, updated information about RE and address any questions that may have come up since September's Teacher Orientation. Teaching teams will meet to plan and schedule the next few months if they have not already done so. We hope to see you there!

Our neighborhoods are bedecked with varied arrays of light displays. Their magical nighttime appearance comes from hundreds and thousands of tiny lights contributing to the whole. These little lights are reminders for us. When the world is cold and dark... when we are inclined to turn inward... to stay indoors or -- if we go out -- to bundle up under layers, they remind us that there is always a warm bright glow inside us and inside all people. It's a good light of peace, hope, freedom, and possibility, and to some a light of precious magic too.

Martha

Contact Info/Correction

Mara O'Connor's new address is 284A North Washington Street, Belchertown, MA 01007. Her correct phone number is (413) 323-4814.

Now Hiring

Our Meetinghouse is getting busy with two services and an increase in space use and rentals. We have an opening for 5 hours a week to do cleaning within the Meetinghouse and upstairs in the Clarke Street house. The schedule for these hours is flexible, centering around the use of the spaces. This person will also be eligible to work some evening and weekend security shifts. If you are interested in this work, please contact me. *David McFeeters, Property Manager: 862-5630 ext. 23 or david@uusociety.org*

Joys and Concerns

The tradition of sharing "Joys and Concerns" during Sunday morning worship has a long and cherished history in many UU Congregations. Here in Burlington, Joys and Concerns made a comeback after an absence of many years. There was a time when members would stand up and share their joy or concern with the entire congregation. As our membership grew, this practice became impractical and very time consuming. That is when Gary decided to try a new method, and introduced the Joys and Concerns Book.

My concern today is, "How do we share our Joys and Concerns in a way that is appropriate and respectful?" It is important to remember that Joys and Concerns should be about yourself. Make sure that you are telling your own story and not someone else's. It is very natural to want to let people know about another member who is ill. However, unless you have their explicit permission to share this information, it is not your story to tell. We would never want to "out" someone who does not wish to be "outed." Let me provide an example:

Not OK: I have a concern that Jane Doe was just diagnosed with cancer.

OK: I have a concern that my good friend was just diagnosed with cancer.

OK: Of course if you are Jane Doe and wish to let everyone know that you have cancer, than by all means feel free to share that information.

Remember that not everyone wishes to share their personal situation with the entire congregation. If inappropriate information is written in the Joys and Concerns Book, the minister will not read it aloud. Thank you for helping to make this tradition a wonderful and respectful experience for everyone.

Eating Responsibly

Take a journey from the groundbreaking Darwin to Dawkins conference on animal sentience in London, and to states that seek to criminalize photography and political speech at the behest of the livestock industry. Unlike some documentaries, *Behind Closed Doors* is not horrifying to watch, but is thought-provoking and fact-based as Sandgrain Films interviews experts to rise above the rhetoric of both "animal rights" and the agriculture lobbies. Join Gary Kowalski and Steve Boyan on Sunday, January 7 for a veggie potluck at 6 p.m., followed by a viewing of this important new film.

Minister's Lunch Bunch

Gary invites those hungry for dialogue to join him on Thursday, January 4, at Halvorson's Upstreet Café in Burlington from 12:00-1:00 p.m. for a bite to eat and discussion of this month's sermonic theme—Heroes and Heroism.

The Plywood Steeple Window

Many folks have asked me what is happening with the window in the steeple.

This summer steeplejacks were hired to do surface repairs and painting of the steeple and to repair the window. When the window was removed, it fell apart and could not be properly rebuilt. Examining the other seven windows, it is clear that they will soon need to be replaced as well. Also, as surface wood was removed from the steeple to be replaced, rotting support beams were discovered. These beams were repaired. However, it appears likely that there may be other areas of structural deterioration. What was hoped to be a definitive repair has now turned into an extended process.

The Property Committee has contracted the services of a structural engineering firm to probe further into the supporting joists to give us an idea of the extent of reconstruction that may be required. We are actively looking for individuals or companies that can build new windows, with a consideration of the materials to be used and the costs involved.

We want both congregation members and those who enjoy the Meetinghouse as an icon of Burlington to know that the steeple needs work. Leaving the plywood window unpainted is accomplishing that goal. Thank you for asking!

*David McFeeters
Property Manager*

Women's Alliance

Our next monthly meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 5, 2007 at 10:30am at the meetinghouse. Also, many thanks to all who helped make this year's Holiday Bazaar a success!

New Members

Since joining the First UU Society, *Jill Allen*, a former Methodist, loves the freedom of being able to ask questions. She works as a Disability Rights Advocate and often speaks to area groups as well as here at First UU. Jill writes novels, swims, and loves to spend time with her friend/turtle Sunny.

Sally Conrad has joined First UU after attending here on & off for 20 years. The only child of Christian Scientist & Southern Methodist parents was raised in Mass. She holds a BA in English Literature and an MA in Vocational Rehabilitation Administration. She's married to David Conrad; daughter Susan is a UU Minister.

**First Unitarian Universalist
Society**
862-5630

Gary Kowalski, Minister

*Roddy O'Neil Cleary,
Affiliate Minister*

*Brian Haas,
Board President*

*Martha Dallas, Interim
R.. E. Director*

*David McFeeters,
Property Manager*

*Jack V. Austin,
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*Christina Fulton,
Society Administrator*

*Kathleen Ingram,
Secretary & Newsletter Editor*

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Book Discussion Group

You are invited to join us at any or all of the meetings of the Book Discussion Group. We will be discussing the following books: **January 9. Lies My Teacher Told Me** by James W Loewen, a former member of our church. "An extremely convincing plea for truth in education." -- Mary Mackey, San Francisco Chronicle

February 13. Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder. This is a book about Dr. Paul Farmer. "..... if any one person can be given credit for transforming the medical establishment's thinking about health care for the destitute, it is Paul Farmer." ---The New York Times

March 13. The World is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman.(an) "account of the great changes taking place in our time, as lightning-swift advances in technology and communications put people all over the globe in touch as never before-creating an explosion of wealth in India and China, and challenging the rest of us to run even faster just to stay in place." --- The New York Times

We meet at 7:00 pm at the church. Please call Bud or Alison Etherton at 658-4126 for more details.

Holiday Office Hours

The office will be closed from Monday, December 25, 2006 through Monday January 1, 2007. We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.

Christmas Breakfast Alert

WHERE: First UU Society Meetinghouse
WHEN: Christmas morning. Doors open at 8:00 am
WHO: Anyone looking for a hot, delicious breakfast & good company. Children welcome!

It's that time of year: lists to make, decorations to put up, gifts to buy, relatives to visit. This year start a new tradition or return as a faithful "regular" and come to our 11th annual Christmas Breakfast.

This breakfast is a gathering of our Old North End neighbors, our congregation and folks from around Burlington who come together to enjoy a great breakfast and good conversation and often some wonderful music in our Community Room. Children are most welcome! Donations of food, time and financial assistance make this event possible. If you would like to participate, please contact Lynn Douglas: moonglow@pshift.com, 802.644.2197

Intro to SoulCollage Workshop

SoulCollage is a deeply satisfying, nurturing, self-discovery process combining imagery with imagination and intuition. Discover your instinctive, inner creative self using the simple tools of images, scissors, and glue. Artist skills are not required, only your willingness to participate as images magically find you, revealing important aspects of who you are. The workshop, led by Joan Palmer, trained SoulCollage facilitator, is scheduled for Saturday, January 13, and January 27, from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm at the First UU Society building. Contact Joan at 893-2950, or joankdk@verizon.net for specific details and/or to register. This event is sponsored by the Adult Programs Committee.

Building the Dream

Join congregational leaders from around the country to explore creating a multi-racial, multi-cultural faith community, February 16-18, 2007 in Arlington, Virginia. Some funding for travel costs and registration may be available from our Society (ask Gary for details). For more information about the "Now Is The Time" conference, visit www.uua.org/cde/.

UU Summer Internships

Young adults aged 18-25 are invited to apply for UU summer internships working on social justice projects in the Boston and Providence area, June 1 – July 14, 2007. For more information, see our bulletin board or visit www.uua.org/ya-cm/summer.

First Night Lasagna Dinner

Once again our society will be hosting the Lasagna Dinner as part of the First Night celebration. Each year we feed 450-500 cold and hungry revelers and need lots of help to make this happen. In addition to 50 lasagnas (preferably vegetarian or vegan), we also need helpers to setup, serve, keep tables supplied w/ condiments, and cleanup. The first shift starts at 2:30, and the 2nd shift at 5:30. It's a very busy time but lots of fun. Please sign up on the bulletin board and help ring in the New Year. Proceeds from this event are distributed by the Social Action Committee to different community groups such as JUMP, Spectrum, Community Health Center, etc. For additional information, contact Maggi Hayes mehayes@uvm.edu or 878-4418

Second Saturday Potluck

Do you enjoy good food, wine, conversation, new friends, or singing old songs? Please join us in the UU Parlors for the 2nd Saturday Potluck on Saturday, January 13, at 6pm. Call Shirley McLane at 862-0543 or shirleymclane@verizon.net. Please let me know if you need child care, whether you are bringing an appetizer, salad, main course, or dessert and how many people in your party. Bring your own dishes or use ours. Hope to see you there.

Building Community Connections Retreat Report

Results from our November Community Building Retreat indicate that there is a great deal of interest in increasing the number of intergenerational social events for our society. An example might be to include a game night or sing-a-long with Second Saturday Dinners just to mention a few. Many people emphasized the need for more follow-up with new members and visitors. Although there was a great deal of interest in increasing the size of the staff to allow for a Membership/Volunteer Coordinator, that decision can only be made as part of our long range plan for staffing needs. A stop gap measure of offering assistance to the Membership Committee could be considered in the meantime. This would involve dividing their responsibilities into two groups...the first part that includes the new member/visitor welcome, mentoring and follow-up, and the second part that includes the weekly Sunday morning coordinators, usher sign up and coffee table people.

If any of you are interested in helping to work on these two issues, or would like to suggest other issues, please contact Bridget Meyer, Bmeyer1038@aol.com or Susan Raimy susanraimy@juno.com.

First Unitarian Universalist Society

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

The Inner Workings

Working for the First Unitarian Universalist Society inspires me to a higher standard of work ethic than any other place I've been employed. Yes, I still need to make sure that we are adhering to federal and state laws, but I also need to make sure that we are following the seven principles. These principles affect all of the work that I do here.

Take for example hiring a new staff person. Yes, we need to make sure that we are paying them at least minimum wage because that's what the law tells us. But we also need to make sure that we are paying them a "livable wage" because our principles tell us that we affirm and promote "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and also "justice, equity and compassion in human relations." Those same principles also guide me in my everyday supervision of staff members here at the Society.

As David and I discuss whether to purchase coffee from Costco or from Equal Exchange, we are also discussing how that fits into the "goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all." And when David chooses cleaning products that are environmentally friendly, he's taking into account "the interdependent web of all existence."

Our staff meetings do not resemble ones that I attended while working in "Corporate America." Our first order of business is never "the bottom line." Our first order of business is a shared reading. A chance for each staff member to take a turn at sharing with the group their own "free and responsible search for truth and meaning," a chance for all of the staff to offer "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth." Our meetings are not a time for one person to dictate to the entire staff the course that we should take, but a time for us to bring forth the challenges we are experiencing in our jobs so that together we can solve problems. By operating in this way, we affirm each staff member's "right of conscience" and ability to do their job based on their own beliefs.

It's an exciting exercise to practice the seven principles in your job. What a blessing to work in an environment that challenges me to live out my beliefs each and everyday. Thank you, *Christina Fulton*

Putting UU Values into Action

Thank you for your support of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) through Guest at Your Table this holiday season.

UUSC's Mission Statement reads: "The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies." UUSC works to eradicate economic injustice, promote environmental justice and defend civil liberties. Its work is made possible by the activism and generous support of thousands of members and supporters like yourself.

Won't you join--or renew your membership in-- the UUSC this holiday season? General membership is \$40 or \$75 for dual membership; \$20 for Seniors 65 and over; \$10 for Student (high school and up) and Youth or \$20 dual Student and Youth. Gifts and/or memberships of \$75 or more are matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y. and are tax-deductible.

This year our congregation was proud to be recognized by UUSC as part of the Creating Justice Banner Society for its generous support of the important human rights work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Help us receive this honor again this year by participating in Guest at Your Table or sending your membership contribution directly to UUSC. For more information, check the web site: www.uusc.org

Please continue to invite a guest to your table by placing coins and bills in your Guest at Your Table box and returning it at one of the Sunday services on January 14. Before handing it in, it would be greatly appreciated if you count the money inside and place a check for that amount in the box. Also, please be sure to write your name (and family member names, if you wish) on the bottom of the box before returning it.

Thank you ever so much for sharing with others during this joyous time of year!

Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs