



December 14, 2008 -
December 27, 2008

Calendar

Sunday, December 14

- 9:00 Worship Service
- 10:00 Women’s Spirituality Group
- 11:00 Worship Service
- 12:30 Deep Coffee
- 12:30 Interweave Holiday Potluck
- 7:00 Yuuth Group Evening Meeting
- 7:00 Young Adult SGM

Monday, December 15

- ***** Zen (Call office for time)
- 9:00 Newsletter deadline
- 7:00 Grief Group

Tuesday, December 16

- 12:00 Staff Holiday Luncheon
- 7:00 Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 17

- 9:00 Staff Meeting
- 7:00 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 18

- 9:00 Newsletter Crew

Friday, December 19

- 6:30 AA Men’s Group

Saturday, December 20

Sunday, December 21

- 9:00 Worship Service
- 10:00 Women’s Spirituality Group
- 11:00 Worship Service

Monday, December 22

- ***** Zen (Call office for time.)
- 7:00 Grief Group

Tuesday, December 23

- 10:00 Wisdom Wanderers
- 12:00 Staff Lunch

Wednesday, December 24

- Office Closed**
- 4:00 Christmas Eve Service
- 6:00 Christmas Eve Service
- 8:00 Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 25

- Office Closed**
- 8:00 Christmas Breakfast

Friday, December 26

- 6:30 AA Men’s Group

Saturday, December 27

I admire and enjoy the charitable spirit which is so much a part of life at FUUSB. In the past month alone, new volunteers to make and serve dinner for the Food Shelf have stepped up to the plate; the JUMP bags we filled with groceries and compassion were a grand sight to see, amassed at the front of the Sanctuary. My UU Service Committee “Guest at Your Table” box traveled with me this Thanksgiving to tables in Massachusetts and Connecticut - I look forward to seeing all those boxes when we return them in January, and to thinking with you of the folks whose lives will be uplifted. Now the Yuuth group has put up the Giving Tree in the Sanctuary, the beautiful live tree itself donated (of course!) by parishioners; personally, I have to spread my giving funds around, so I chose an ornament from the Giving Tree for “Peanut Butter for the Animal Shelter.” (For those who may wonder, dogs attest that pills disguised in peanut butter are definitely more palatable.)

Every holiday season, I do two things: First, along with gifts for loved ones, I buy something for myself; let’s face it, it’s often the best way to make sure you get exactly what you want! Second, I make donations on behalf of friends and family to a variety of charitable organizations. I know many of us share this tradition of giving to a cause in honor of loved ones; several of you have spoken to me of the organizations you like to support.

Some time ago, a congregant from the church I served in Massachusetts kindly directed me to the Charity Navigator web site, charitynavigator.org. This web site describes itself as “Your Guide to Intelligent Giving.” One can browse charities according to categories such as Animals, Environment, Health, Arts and Culture; one can also peruse financial evaluations for thousands of organizations to determine which are most efficient. There are articles such as “Tips for Giving in Times of Crisis,” “10 Charities Drowning in Administrative Costs,” “Ramadan Related Charities,” and charitable options to “Support Our Troops.” Current “Holiday Giving Guide” tips from Charity Navigator include

- 1) Give to charities that spend at least 75% of their funds on programs
- 2) Buy gifts directly from charitable organizations rather than cause-related gifts from retailers
- 3) In times of economic hardship, give to human service charities
- 4) Support charities whose CEOs are reasonably compensated (you can see those numbers at the site).

For me, “shopping” through the Charity Navigator is a fun experience and yields a pleasurable variety of gifts. The surprise on my friend’s face the year I gave him a “Camel Kit” from the Mercy Corps (a top performing charity) was a hoot. The word “charity” means love. Love unfolds through our open hearts, ongoing practice, and intelligent choices. This season, perhaps you will choose to love yourself with a blessing gift too!

Elaine

Upcoming Sundays

December Worship Theme:

Beginnings

What new being do you carry inside waiting to come to birth? What nova is shining on your horizon? What sacred gifts do you bear for a world in need of hope? *“Very early, I knew that the only object in life was to grow.” Margaret Fuller*

Sunday, December 14, 9 am & 11 am

“This I Believe” An annual service that introduces us more fully and intimately to our co-congregants’ journey and beliefs. Today, the Worship Committee invites Mark Pendergrast and Peggy Owen Sands to speak. Following this morning’s 11am service, Small Group Ministry invites you to experience “Deep Coffee” going beyond social hour chit-chat to a more personal sharing similar to the SGM experience, from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 21, 9am & 11 am

“Jesus for the Non-Religious” Fact is usually more interesting than fiction, and historical knowledge does nothing to diminish our appreciation of the past. This morning Gary reflects on the figure at the heart of Christmas, separating Jesus the man from Christ the myth.

Sunday, December 28, 11 am

Kwanzaa Intergenerational Service “Honoring the Ancestors” is the theme of this year’s celebration, with members of our own Society reflecting on family and forbears, and guest performers Jeh Kulu bringing high energy dance and drum.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

On December 24, there will be three holiday celebrations. At 4:00 p.m., families with younger children may choose to participate in “The Animals Christmas,” where youngsters are invited to wear animal-themed pajamas and bring stuffed critters for the creche, as we re-enact the story of the nativity. The Children’s Choir will sing at 4:00 p.m., while services at 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. feature our Adult Choir. All three gatherings include readings from the gospels, traditional carols, and (of course) the kindling of candles in the spirit of love and goodwill. In addition, there will be a Child Dedication at 6:00 p.m. Please contact Gary or Elaine if your family would like to participate in this ritual blessing of children.



A word from the Stewardship (formerly Canvas) Committee...

The difficult economic times we are presently going through are creating a climate of substantial worry for us all. Reports of economic woe from newspapers, television news shows and our own personal savings or 401K updates all combine to fill us with feelings of uncertainty of what is to come. What is certain, however, is that our own First UU Society of Burlington provides an amazing source of strength and support in both good times and bad. Please consider thoughtfully the need to maintain your personal support to the religious community that we love so much.

*Linda Gross,
Stewardship Committee*

Current Notes

Message from Martha Young Adult Small Group Ministry



A few Sundays ago, I walked a new family down to the Community Room after we sang "Go Now In Peace." When I asked how old their son was, so I could deliver him to the proper classroom, they shared that he had gone to preschool with one of our UU children. In fact, now that the boys were Kindergartners in separate schools, they hadn't seen each other in months. When this new boy walked into the classroom, his old buddy saw him, joyfully jumped up, and skipped over to give him a big hug. Then he invited him to sit next to him. Could you imagine a warmer welcome on your first day here?!

Another recent Sunday, I chatted with a mom about her son's resistance to coming here on Sundays. "We haven't come as much because it's such a struggle for us. He's fine in school, but he acts out here and I just don't understand why," this mother shared as her son rolled around on the floor. I asked if he had any friends in his church school class. Was there anyone he looked forward to seeing when he came here? Another mother chimed in and suggested she make a play date with a child from his class, to help him build a personal connection to First UU. I facilitated this by sending her a list of his UU classmates with the towns where they live.

In the end, the content we work so hard to deliver to our children each Sunday becomes nearly irrelevant to a child who'd rather not be here in the first place. By contrast, when we find and develop ways to make UURE a place where children find friends and have a happy, fun time, we are truly succeeding as educators. When we create a learning atmosphere with elements of warmth, mystery, excitement, fun, depth, kindness, and affirmation, we nurture the deepest of roots in the hearts of our young UUs. Then, when we sprinkle in the more explicit "stuff" of learning, such as values and stories and information about religion, people, cultures, science, service, and all the rest... I guarantee we'll find that more of it sticks!

After our recent Intergenerational Thanksgiving Service, I was told about a child who spent some portion of the service pleading with her parents to go to Sunday School. "But there is no Sunday School today," her mother explained. "I don't care. I'm bored and I want to go to Sunday School!" was the insistent reply.

I guess Gary, Elaine, and I need to work on making our services less boring for some participants. But I'm pleased to know one thing that's true for this child: she *loves* Sunday School. *That's* where she wants to be. Yes!

Martha

Are you between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five? A new small group ministry is forming just for young adults. Small groups are not support groups or therapy sessions, but offer a chance to listen and connect at a more personal, reflective level. Gary Kowalski facilitates the first gathering on Sunday, December 14 at 7 p.m. Come learn more about it and discover whether a Small Group is for you.

Fired Up and Ready To Go

Join the excitement of the inauguration of President elect Barack Obama in DC on 1/20/09! We've chartered a tour bus and are headed down for a whirlwind trip to be part of history!

Depart Burlington on Monday, January 19, 7 pm, drive through the night and arrive at New Carrollton, MD metro station on Tuesday, January 20, approx. 7 am. Passengers are on their own to metro downtown and find their way to the swearing in, parade, etc. (tickets or no!) We will reunite back at New Carrollton metro station the same day at 7:30 pm to head back to Vermont. We hope to arrive back around 7 am, Wednesday, January 21, tired but running on the high of being part of this! Cost is \$84/pp - first come, first served. Call with questions or to reserve. In hope, Valerie Wood-Lewis, 859-0049

Child Dedication

Dedications are a rite of welcome in our tradition, blessing children and recognizing the joys and challenges of parenting. Families who would like to be included in the Dedication ceremony scheduled for December 24 at 6:00 p.m. should contact Gary or Elaine.

Are You a UU?

If you support our principles and feel at home in our congregation, we invite you to become a member of our Society. Signing the membership book is like registering to vote. It changes you from a spectator to a stakeholder in our community. It means that you identify with our history of religious freedom, social tolerance, and faithful dissent. To learn more about membership, please contact Gary, Elaine or Martha, who will be happy to answer questions and welcome you.

Join NING!

It's kind of like Facebook for our congregation, part photo directory, part social network. As a member of the online Burlington UU community on NING, you can start a discussion group (pagans, humanists), advertise a service (psychotherapy, babysitting), or throw a party (solstice, anyone?). There are already over a hundred members signed on. Don't be the last to go digital! To join, just email your request to Christina (xina@uusociety.org) or Gary (gary@uusociety.org).

Holiday Office Hours

The office will be closed from Wednesday, December 24, 2008 through Thursday, January 1, 2009. We will reopen on Monday, January 5, 2009. Although the main office will be closed, some staff may be working limited hours during that week. Please call ahead if you need to meet with someone or need access to the building during this time. Thank you all for another wonderful year. The staff truly appreciates this time off to spend with friends and family.

Author, Author!

UU Ricardo Johnson, assistant professor of educational leadership and policy studies at UVM, has published his first book *Resilience*. Subtitled, "Queer Professors from the Working Class," Johnson writes painfully of an early experience playing with his cousin's Barbie dolls, which he loved for their flowing hair, until the day he was ordered by his father to stand before his extended family and repeat, "I am not a little girl." Ricardo will be talking about his book and his personal experiences as a black, gay man in the academic world on Sunday, December 28 at 12:15 p.m. following our Kwanzaa service. Copies of *Resilience*, co-authored with Kenneth Oldfield, are available at the UVM Bookstore and through www.amazon.com. Gary

Christmas Breakfast

Yes, it's that time of year. The shopping list is ready, the strata recipes are being hunted up and the posters are being printed! So bring your apron and your family to our annual Christmas Breakfast: we share food, conversation and ourselves with each other and with neighbors who need a welcoming place for a holiday meal. Just like at home - we all pitch in to make it work! Please contact Lynn Douglas to volunteer, donate food or if you have questions (yes, it really is on Christmas morning!) moonglow@pshift.com, 802.644.2197 (there is NO sign-up sheet at the Meetinghouse).

Micro Bank in Haiti

Funds are needed to open a micro lending bank. Total amount \$ 5000.00. Checks can be made out to FINCA on memo line write Burlington, VT. Send to FINCA, 1101 14th St NW, Washington, D. C. 20005. Foundation for International Community Assistance web site: www.villagebanking.org

Richard Kemp, Social Action

Next Newsletter Deadline...

Monday, December 15, @9am sharp, covering December 28 - January 17, 2008 **Note: This is a 3-week newsletter.** Articles gratefully accepted before this deadline!

**First Unitarian Universalist
Society**
862-5630

Gary Kowalski, Minister

Elaine Bomford,
Assistant Minister

Jerrold Packard,
Board President

Martha Dallas, Director
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The Christmas Cycle

The Red Chair Series on Religion and the Arts presents "Christmas Cycle: St. Lucia, The Solstice Bride" performed by Victoria Fraser, Ceremonial Performance Artist with Aurora Ancient Music, Sunday, December 14, 2008, 3:00pm at Christ Church, Presbyterian, Redstone Campus, Burlington VT.

The Christmas Cycle is a sequence of sacred stories presented with the hope of illuminating the holy potential of the holiday season. Told one a year, on or close to the day the story takes place in the winter calendar, *The Christmas Cycle* has been performed continuously since 1987. This year's story is *The Solstice Bride*, a Swedish Christmas tale from the Middle Ages about St. Lucia - a mysterious woman crowned in light who comes on the darkest night of the year. Aurora Ancient Music, a group of three women singing impassioned music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, will also be participating.

Suggested Donation \$15.00. For information and reservations call 862-1898 or secretary@christchurchburlington.org

November Splinters from the Board

"Splinters" is a summary of the monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees. If you would like more detailed information from the meetings, minutes are published and can be found in a binder in the parlor.

At the November meeting, the Board received an update from the Trust Fund Committee. With the current decline in the economy it is anticipated that income from the Nims Trust Fund will remain flat or decrease in coming years. The Trust Fund Committee also informed the Board of its decision to take over management of the UU Trust Fund and the Meeting House Fund from TD Banknorth in hopes of eliminating management fees and allowing greater control over investing in a socially responsible manner.

It was reported to the Board that the Stewardship Committee has been having vibrant meetings and is exploring new approaches to this year's pledge drive. Please contact Woody Fulton if you would like to join in this committee's vital work.

An annual responsibility of the Board is to approve staff health insurance coverage. After reviewing several options it was decided to renew the current staff health insurance plan for the upcoming year.

The Board continues to plan for a possible planned giving or capital campaign and is still exploring hiring a consultant.

The Board of Trustees meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 PM. Society members are welcome to attend.

Daniel Wilds, Board Secretary

Free Guide to Commercial-Free Holidays

How can we find meaning amid the clutter of commercial chaos? Preserve our values in the midst of the annual advertising assault? Reclaim the holidays from corporate marketers? Check out the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood's Guide to Commercial-Free Holidays at <http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/holidayguide/home.htm>

Food Shelf Sunday Supper

Many, many thanks to Rosanne Greco, Higley Harmon, Deborah Deladurantaye, Ellie Campbell, Sylvie Butel, and Barbara St. Gelais, for their dedicated service on November 30 at the Food Shelf. Barbara also brought three enthusiastic college students with her! There was a record-breaking crowd at the Food Shelf, but we had just enough food and plenty of helping hands. Thank you all so much for your generosity. From Aimee Hutchins Cronin & Suzie DeBrosse.

Interweave Connection

Have you been looking forward to Interweave potluck lunches? Would you like to meet or reconnect with UUs who are members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Ally community? Perhaps you'd like to find out more about what's happening in the larger LGBTQA community. If so, come join us on Sunday, December 14, for a Holiday Interweave Potluck @12:30 at the First UU Society. The December potluck traditionally includes a "Yankee Swap." Each adult brings a wrapped gift. It may be new or "newly recyclable", something fun, or beautiful, but not too expensive. Let your imagination soar! Please bring a dish to share, a gift (if you want to play the game), and a desire for fun and festivity! Call Rebecca Anderson with questions, 864-5971. All are welcome!

Gratitude for JUMP Thanksgiving Bag Helpers

Thank you to the following people who helped transport JUMP Thanksgiving Bags to the First Congregational Church (apologies if we missed anyone!): Bill West, Daniel Wilds, Gerry Quinlan, Lois Holbrook, Jeanne Parsley, Martha Dallas, Lynn Douglas, Brianna Douglas, Ellen Wollensack, Ivy and Wynn Bardaglio, Jan Abbott, her husband Harris, and their daughter, Ian and Kyle Facey, Austin Pine and his friend Henry, Chabi Luitel and his friend. Thanks also to members of the Youth Group who sorted through the bags on Sunday afternoon!

Voices from Chernobyl

Mark your calendars: Friday evening, 6:45pm, January 23rd. Should the Vermont legislature allow the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant to be re-licensed and continue operating long past its planned life span? This is the question Vermonters are addressing in 2009. The possible consequences of nuclear energy are so horrendous that most people avoid thinking about the issue. *Voices from Chernobyl* is a play that weaves together stories told by survivors of the meltdown that occurred at the nuclear plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine on April 26, 1986. Our First UU Society will be hosting this event, followed by discussion, to help citizens wrestle with this issue in communities around Vermont and beyond. Questions? Call Linda Ayer (865-3305) or Rev. Elaine Bomford (862-5630 ext. 25)

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Loose Plate for Charity

I just realized that it's been awhile since I've updated you on the Loose Plate for Charity collections. I have tons of wonderful news! On October 26th we collected \$410.72 for Dismas House, on November 2nd we collected \$659.36 for Burlington High School Emergency Needs Fund, on November 9th we collected \$737.22 for JUMP and on November 16th and 23rd we collected \$1,669.76 for the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Half of each of these amounts will go to the named organization. These amounts are truly amazing and will benefit people in our community during this coming winter. Which agencies are next on our list? On December 14th & 21st we will be collecting for the Boys & Girls Club of Burlington, and on December 28th we will be collecting for COTS Firehouse Shelter.

Loose Plate for Charity collections go to non-profit agencies that serve residents of the Old North End. If you would like to nominate an agency, please contact Christina at 862-5630 ext. 22 or email at xina@uusociety.org.

Property Corner

As Long as Wood Grows and Water Runs

In June 1867, the First Congregational Society (our current UU Society's original name) created a committee to "survey and lay out into suitable sized building lots, the said land and lease the same on permanent leases or otherwise as they may deem best for the interest of said Society...to have and to hold from the date thereof...as long as wood grows and water runs."

Ultimately every building lot was leased and many houses were built. Today, if you walk down Clarke Street past our UU Society parking lot, you would begin to see the houses that were built on our leased property. Continue down to the end of Clarke Street and turn left on Grant Street and then left again up Elmwood Avenue back to our Meetinghouse and every building you see is either owned by us or is on our leased land. Also, there are still a few lots on Elmwood Avenue, one of them leased by the Methodist church. Interestingly, our Society still collects annual fees from the leased land. The yearly rents for the lots range from a low of \$14.50 to a high of \$50, bringing in a total of \$475 each year to our coffer.

Today we own three buildings in addition to our Meetinghouse. The white clapboard house at 27 Clarke Street immediately next to the Meetinghouse was formerly called the "Sexton's House." For many years our Society's previous sexton, Gale Holden, and her family lived there. Today 27 Clark Street is used downstairs by Vermont Interfaith Action, and the upstairs is used as classroom space on Sundays and a meeting and rental space at other times. To the west of our Meetinghouse we own the two brick buildings located on Elmwood Avenue. 30 Elmwood Ave, the southern-most brick house, is rented by a law firm, McVeigh-Skiff. 34 Elmwood Ave is rented by RU12?, a Community Center organization for the LGBTQ Community. *Tom Patterson, Property Committee*

Putting UU Faith Into Action

Guest at Your Table is going strong at our First UU in Burlington, as it is in hundreds of UU congregations around the country. People are reading "Stories of Hope" about individuals and groups that the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is supporting worldwide. They are putting coins and bills in their Guest at Your Table box to further the work of UUSC. We hope that you will participate in this tradition of sharing during the holiday season.

One of the "Stories of Hope" is about Dalia, the young Egyptian woman whose strong voice for women's rights is echoing through the world in a partnership with UUSC. Consider what rights the women in this country enjoy freely. And consider what even a small gift to your Guest at Your Table will mean to Dalia and women like her around the world who, often at great peril, are standing up for their rights. You can learn more about UUSC's work on advancing women's rights and civil liberties worldwide online at www.uusc.org.

Guest at Your Table boxes should be returned the first Sunday after the new year, January 4. Please be sure to fill out the form on the box so that UUSC can acknowledge your contribution. **Checks strongly recommended.** Membership is \$10 for students/youths, \$20 senior (65+), \$40 regular, and \$75 dual (2 adults). All individual and family unrestricted contributions of \$100 or more will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the UU Congregation of Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY. Envelopes are available on tables at the back of the Sanctuary if you prefer to send a tax-deductible gift directly to UUSC.

Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs
