



December 23, 2007 -
January 12, 2008

Calendar

Sunday, December 23

9:00 Worship Service
9:00 Membership Committee
10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
10:15 Memorial Plaque Dedication
11:00 Worship Service

Monday, December 24

Office Closed
4:00 Worship Service
6:00 Worship Service
8:00 Worship Service

Tuesday, December 25

Office Closed
8:00 Christmas Breakfast

Wednesday, December 26

Office Closed

7:00 Grief Group

Thursday, December 27

Office Closed

***** Zen (Call office for time)

6:00 Mysticism Sm. Group Ministry

Friday, December 28

6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, December 29

Sunday, December 30

10:00 Women's Spirituality Group

11:00 Intergen.Kwanzaa Service

Monday, December 31

Office Closed
4:00 First Night Lasagna Dinner

Tuesday, January 1

Office Closed

Wednesday, January 2

9:00 Staff Meeting

6:30 RE Committee Meeting

7:00 Choir Rehearsal

7:00 Grief Group

Thursday, January 3

***** Zen (Call office for time)

9:00 Newsletter Crew

12:00 Root Yoga Community Class

6:00 Practicing Your Faith

Friday, January 4

6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, January 5

Sunday, January 6

9:00 Worship Service

9:00 Social Action Committee

11:00 Worship Service

12:05 Denom. Affairs Parish Poll

12:30 "Faith Between Us" Book Talk

Monday, January 7

***** Zen (Call office for time)

6:00 Anti-Racism Action Com.

7:00 BUUC Business Meeting

Tuesday, January 8

10:00 Wisdom Wanderers

10:00 Small Group Ministry

5:30 Property Committee Meeting

7:00 Book Discussion Group

Wednesday, January 9

9:00 Staff Meeting

5:00 Admin. Relations Com. Mtg.

6:00 Music Committee Meeting

7:00 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 10

***** Zen (Call office for time)

10:00 Small Group Ministry

12:00 Root Yoga Community Class

6:00 Mysticism Sm. Group Ministry

Friday, January 11

6:30 Men's AA Group

Saturday, January 12

9:00 New UU Class

It's an awesome time of year, people say.

Awe is in their hearts. See the lights of Chanukah and Christmas, see the brilliant store windows, hear the flashy music. Still, just "A White Christmas" is the dream and song of many Americans.

But climate change is now in our hearts and minds too. How much longer can we have a white Christmas? Our little spinning and tilting planet is warming up, and too much and too fast. In fact, immediately north of Russia, an enormous expanse of floating ice the size of seven Californias has melted, said the NY Times on September 25, 2007 – "an unexpected phenomenon," the reporter added.

That is threatening to us all and our children, and requiring us to change our ways.

But what is equally awesome at this time of year is the solstice, the sun in its sliding travels across our sky is suddenly standing still and sliding back. Why? What holds the sun up there, or the moon? An explosion long ago, scientists tell us, when things went every which way, and not in any neat pattern. It's awesomely out of control.

What is in our control is global warming, and I think of it every time someone is dreaming of a white Christmas. Let's keep it white if we can. And awesome.

Guest columnist,
Bill Cleary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

4:00 p.m. "The Animals' Christmas"
Families with younger children will appreciate this kid friendly re-telling of the nativity stories. Children are invited to bring stuffed animals and/or wear animal-themed pajamas as part of our living creche. Youngsters who have been practicing with the Children's Choir to sing "Zumba Zumba" should come one hour early for final rehearsal.

6:00 p.m. Child Dedication is our way of recognizing the miracle of birth. Please contact Gary or Roddy if you would like to be included in this ritual blessing of new life. This service will feature our adult choir.

8:00 p.m. Readings from the gospels and kindling of candles, with singing of traditional carols grace all our services, including this one, which also offers our adult choir. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is provided at every service. Merry Christmas to all!

Upcoming Sundays

January Worship Theme:

God

Unitarian Universalists hold many beliefs about God, but cannot ignore the perennial question of how we name and experience the creative mystery at the heart of the cosmos. As Martin Buber writes, "Some would deny any legitimate use of the word God because it has been misused so much. Certainly it is the most burdened of all human words. Precisely for that reason, it is the most imperishable and unavoidable." Are there healthy and unhealthy images of God? Is belief in a deity compatible with science? What difference does believing (or not believing) make in our daily lives and attitudes toward the world?

Sunday, December 23, 9am & 11 am "A Dickens of A Christmas"

If we think of this season as "a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time," it owes much to the imagination of one man. This morning Gary explores the life experiences and religious beliefs that made Charles Dickens one of the most beloved authors of his day—and ours. The choir will sing at the 11 o'clock service.

Sunday, December 30, 11:00 am

"Kwanzaa" In "The Bronze Muse of the 19th Century ... and Beyond," actress Dorothy Prince brings to life the personality of Unitarian abolitionist and poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, in a dramatic performance sure to entertain and educate all ages. Our annual Kwanzaa celebration also includes lighting the Kinara and the Umoja Chorus, with a selection of readings that highlight the African American heritage. *There is no 9am service today.*

Sunday, January 6, 9 & 11am

"Einstein's God"

A secular saint, a pacifist bomb-maker, a Zionist who believed nation states were obsolete, Albert Einstein embodied the creative conundrums of religion in the twentieth century. This morning Gary explores the mystical humanism of this most godly infidel.

ARC Gallery

This is not a typo...simply the humor of the late Caroline Mac Donald who preceded me as curator of our upstairs gallery. Artists in our community are welcome to hang their work. Please contact Mary Ellen Manock for help and encouragement in this regard, memanock@mac.com. We have a new show by Carol ES MacDonald, local artist, teacher, member of the choir and creator of the banners depicting religions of the world in the Sanctuary. Please take a walk upstairs to our Gallery to view her latest artworks.

Religious Education News

Last weekend I attended a two-day workshop for UU religious educators. The theme was "Worship for All Ages." In one activity, we listed a bunch of words on a flip chart -- words associated with worship, that people felt were *loaded* or maybe *contentious*... words about which, if used in their congregations, they feared *someone* would bristle, or at least grumble.

The sheet of flip chart paper was jammed when we were done, but here are some words that I can recall from it: *prayer, praise, altar, God, sacrament, sacred, sin, evil, and worship*. Worship! Here we were at a workshop *on worship*, and some people were sharing that it can be a *heavy* word to use in UU circles.

How do people respond to the word, "worship" here at First UU? I think there's a clue to the answer when you look at the responses to the survey handed out recently by the Assistant Minister Search Committee. In the survey, one question asked was, "If you attend services and/or participate in congregational activities, please give three reasons for doing so." Of the first 150 surveys received, only about twelve people said that *worship* is one reason they are involved here. By contrast, the biggest "winner" of this question was "celebrating common values." About 82 people come here for *that* reason.

Your answers to this question remind me of the power of *words*, and of the strong likelihood, that when we are speaking with one another about Big Questions and Deep Things, that our differing associations with, and connotations of words like *worship*, may keep us from *truly* discussing *essentially the same thing*. I hope there are more than twelve people here who would find, as I do, a compelling sense in the following definitions of *worship*:

Worship is a shared exercise of the spirit, directed to conscious, deliberate reconsideration of, and rededication to universal values as related to ourselves and the world.

Worship is the only suitable preparation of the greatest creative artistry in the world, the art of reshaping the total vital process of living.

Worship occurs when the horizontal and the vertical – the mundane and the transcendent – suddenly intersect for us.

What meaning does *worship* have for you? Do you come here to worship? As you consider this, let me remind us that *worship* used to be called *worth-ship*, suggesting a practice of tending to things of worth. However we choose to name that thing we are doing when we sit together in the pews on Sunday mornings, may we be here because of the *worth we bring* and the *worth we receive*, in that time, and in this place.

Martha

Schedule Reminder for Children and Families:

Sunday, December 23: regular RE classes

Monday, December 24: worship services at 4:00, 6:00, and 8:00 PM. The 4:00 service is planned especially with children in mind.

Sunday, December 30: Intergenerational Kwanzaa service at 11:00 AM

Sunday, January 6: regular RE resumes

Congregational Poll

What proposed Congregational Study/Action Issue(s) for 2008-2012 does our congregation want to appear on the Agenda of General Assembly (GA) 2008? Up to 10 proposals will appear on the 2008 Agenda with only 5 appearing on the Agenda of the subsequent GA. Congregations can vote Yes, No, or Abstain and cast up to 5 Yes votes if they wish.

On Sunday, January 6, @12:15pm, we will discuss and then take a poll on the two proposals that have been accepted by the UUA's Commission on Social Witness. One issue is **Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice** and the other is **Nuclear Disarmament**. On January 6, Gary Kowalski will address briefly the issue of Ethical Eating and Wendy Coe will address briefly the issue of Nuclear Disarmament.

After a brief presentation by Gary and Wendy on these two issues, and some lively discussion, we will take a poll to see which of the issues (or neither or both) our congregation would like to appear on the Agenda of the 2008 General Assembly. All *members* of the Society are eligible to participate and vote.

Help our congregation make a decision about these vital issues by joining us for stimulating discussion and a congregational poll on January 6, 2008. *Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs*

Book Talk: *The Faith Between Us*

Authors Peter Berbergal and Scott Korb will talk about their new book on Sunday, January 6 at 12:15 p.m. *The Faith Between Us* tells two distinct but interrelated religious stories, Peter's struggles with Judaism and Scott's Catholic religious struggles, surmounted by a faithful friendship above and beyond tradition, and even belief. By book's end, Scott comes out as an atheist, and Peter continuing his search for a mystical experience that recognizes belief in God is not necessary to a religious life. Expect a fascinating dialogue.

Gulf Coast Volunteer Program

The Anti-Racism Action Committee is forming a group to participate in the UUA-UUSC's Gulf Coast Volunteer program. This program connects volunteers with the needs of communities in the hurricane-affected areas. Volunteers engage in a variety of projects with community partners. All level of skills are welcomed. The program also includes training and dialogue about the race, class, and power issues that have led to inequalities in the region's rebuilding and recovery process. Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age. Our group is tentatively scheduled for the week of April 5 -12, 2008. Volunteers are responsible for their own transportation, lodging and food costs. Lodging can be arranged for \$5.00 per night at the First Church of New Orleans; a kitchen is available for making meals. Please contact Susan Schoenfeld at 863-6299 or central4@burlingtontelecom.net for more information.

Guest at Your Table and the UUSC

Thank you for supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee through Guest at Your Table this holiday season. Your active support of the UUSC and the Guest at Your Table program means that this year we can do better than last year's 27% of our congregation becoming UUSC members.

When you join or renew your membership, you help UUSC fulfill its mission: "UUSC advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies." It would be wonderful if 50% or even more of First UU Society of Burlington members would become members of our denomination's highly effective service committee!

Please do your part by handing in your Guest at Your Table box on Sunday, January 6, or the following week if you forget. It would help if you write a check to "UUSC" for the amount of money collected and return your box with the check inside. Fill out the membership panel on the box to join the UUSC (students/youth membership \$10, seniors \$20, general \$40, dual \$75).

If you would like to send a tax deductible contribution directly to the UUSC, please send a check to: UUSC, PO Box 845259, Boston, MA 02284-5259 and write "First UU Burlington" on the memo line. All individual or family memberships and contributions over \$100 will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, NY.

With your help, our congregation can increase its support of the UUSC's goal of envisioning "a world free from oppression and injustice, where all can realize their full human rights." Thank you for your help. *Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs*

Book Discussion Group

Join us on Tuesday, January 8, when we discuss *Law of Similars* by *Chris Bohjalian*. "...fast-paced and absorbing. Few writers can manipulate a plot with Bohjalian's grace and power.." Liz Rosenberg, New York Times Book Review. On Tuesday, February 12, we will discuss *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and The Will of the People* by *Jonathan Schell*. All meetings will be at 7pm. at the First UU Society. Please call Bud or Alison Etherton at 658-4126 with questions.

Newsletter News

Next deadline: Monday, December 31, 2007 @9am covering January 13 - January 26, 2008. You can view the newsletter and this year's schedule on our website: www.uusociety.org.

West African Groundnut Stew

If you enjoyed the West African Groundnut Stew at the Women's Alliance Bazaar Lunch and would like the recipe, feel free to contact Kathy Bonilla at kbonilla@drm.com and she will send it to you.

**First Unitarian Universalist
Society**
862-5630

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*Roddy O'Neil Cleary,
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*Jerrold Packard,
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Viva La VIA!

Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) is celebrating two recent victories!

First, our VIA friends from Christ Church Presbyterian have been leading the ongoing effort to convert the former Gosse Court Armory in Burlington's New North End to a multi-use, multi-generational facility. The Burlington city planning office has reached an agreement with a citizen's committee including many VIA members to fund the renovations by a combination of city funds and corporate fundraising. The old Armory will now house much-needed after-school programs and other services for youth.

Second, VIA's work has resulted in the first step toward a UVM affordable housing project in South Burlington. At our June VIA action at Ohavi Zedek Synagogue UVM agreed to move ahead with a plan for affordable housing on UVM owned land. Recently the South Burlington Planning Commission voted unanimously to re-zone the plot of land on which UVM wants to build affordable housing. South Burlington residents and VIA leaders Pat Allen of the UU and Mark Follansbee of College St. Congregational Church spoke in favor of the zoning change at the public hearing. South Burlington officials have committed to finding another location for the dog park which is presently at this site.

Please note the following important VIA dates. An Affordable Housing Action mass meeting is planned on a yet to be determined date during the week of January 7th 2008. The next First UU Society VIA Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Meeting is Sunday, January 13, 12:30pm. Refreshments will be served. All heartily welcome! For more info, call Pat Allen, 864-9799 or Sally Conrad, 658-1047.

First Night Lasagna Dinner

Once again, the Social Action Committee will be organizing the First Night Lasagna Dinner event to serve hearty and delicious lasagna to hungry First Night participants. We need at least 45 pans of lasagna - preferably vegetarian but vegan and meat also welcome. We also need "Kitchen Kaperers" (aka workers) to help set up, serve and clean up. There are sign-up sheets on the bulletin board. This is a fun event with lots of people in festive moods and a great way to help raise funds for many Social Action programs. For further info, contact Maggi Hayes: mehayes@uvm.edu or 878-4418.

Wondering about Your Carbon Footprint?

Vermont Earth Institute's Kristin DeVoe-Talluto will introduce a new study / discussion course, "Global Warming: Changing CO2urse" at the Social Action Forum, January 20, beginning at 12:30. This course offers its participants a chance to (1) learn more about the history, science and politics of the climate crisis, (2) explore personal values and habits pertinent to this issue, and (3) consider actions they might take to help curb greenhouse gas emissions. Those who elect to sign up for the course will be meeting weekly both to discuss the articles reprinted in the course-book, and to consider their personal lifestyle choices in the light of what they are learning about climate change. If you are concerned about Global Warming, but not yet sure what to do about it, this course is for you.

The only cost is \$18 for the course book.

Kristin DeVoe-Talluto is the regional coordinator for the Vermont Earth Institute. Dedicated to building strong and vital communities, she inspires and supports individuals looking to live more sustainably and facilitates workshops designed to assist businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. A former non-profit consultant, Kristin is also passionate about local food systems, youth leadership, and the intersection of spirituality, wealth and philanthropy.

"Global Warming: Changing CO2urse" is the most recent of seven courses offered by VEI since 2000. Members of our congregation took the course on Globalization last year; we found it both informative and a good basis for discussions. Refreshments will be served.

New UU Class

Want to know more about Unitarian Universalism? If you are a new comer or even an "old" comer - the key is that you have lots of questions - we have such a deal for you! Come to the New UU class on January 12th from 9:00am - 12pm, and we will strive to fill you up with information about the UU movement and First UU Society of Burlington, in particular. There will be activities for children at this program and for the very young, child care will be available. Please be sure to sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board. Questions? Call Ginger Hobbs at 865-9682 or email at gingerhvt@verizon.net.

Let's Help Spread the Word!

Did you ever want to tell lots of people about an important charity fundraiser, political gathering or social event? Well, try this...

Join Front Porch Forum and reach dozens (or even hundreds) of your neighbors with a single email message. Our congregation is in the middle of so many important actions and they all need help in getting the word out. So please consider using your neighborhood Front Porch Forum to post notices about our shared work in the community.

Front Porch Forum (FPF) hosts 130 online neighborhood forums covering all of Chittenden County. More than 7,000 households subscribe to this free service, including 30% of Burlington. Fellow UUs Michael and Valerie Wood-Lewis launched this site in Burlington's Five Sisters neighborhood in 2000. Now all the great community-building happening through FPF is attracting national recognition.

Join the service and the conversation at FrontPorchForum.com!

Christmas Breakfast Alert

WHERE: First UU Society Meeting House

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 12th 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.

Tax Credit for Pledges

For all of you who want to get credit on your 2007 taxes for your pledge, please make sure your pledge payment arrives in the office postmarked on or before December 31, 2007. All pledge payments postmarked after that date will be credited to your 2008 tax year statement. In January you will receive two Giving Statements. One statement will be your 2007/2008 Second Quarter Giving Statement; the other will be a 2007 Calendar Year Tax Statement. If you have any questions regarding your pledge, please contact Christina at 802-862-5630 ext. 22 or xina@uusociety.org.

Holiday Office Hours

The office will be closed from Monday, December 24, 2007 through Tuesday January 1, 2008. We will reopen on Wednesday, January 2, 2008.

First Unitarian Universalist Society
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Are We Shrinking or Growing?

In 2005, before we started holding two services each Sunday, our Society reported a membership of 562. This year, we will report a total membership of 611.

In 2005, our total registration for Religious Education was 175. In the current year, we have 213 youngsters enrolled in Sunday School. Our children's attendance has seen a comparable surge.

Attendance of adults on Sunday morning is harder to measure. In 2005, we had only one service each Sunday. Children were downstairs each week with their own chapel service. And the ushers counted 278 adults on average upstairs, in the sanctuary.

Today we have two worship services each Sunday. Children attend the beginning of both services with their families. And after the children depart for classes, the ushers are still counting an average attendance of 278 adults.

Now on the surface it might appear as though our number of total adults in the sanctuary has stayed level. But appearances are deceiving. You see, the ushers count how many people are in the sanctuary while the children are there, and then count again after the children leave. But the children are not the only people who leave; all the teachers and R.E. stewards also depart at that time. Because we are now offering two full Sunday School programs at 9:00 and 11:00, we are using many more teachers and volunteers in R.E. If the ushers were counting the number of adults in the building—and not just those in the sanctuary—the number present would be up considerably.

We instituted our experiment with two services in order to grow our congregation, particularly our religious education program, which was overcrowded and for that reason uninviting to new families. Has the experiment been a success? Let the numbers tell the story.

Summary of Cash Activity for November 2007

Beginning Balance as of 11/01/2007		\$61,303.16
Income	\$9,869.63	
Contributions	\$30,420.02	
Transfers	\$1,827.77	
Total Additions:	\$42,117.42	
Expenses	\$63,766.66	
Total Subtractions:	\$63,766.66	
Ending Balance as of 11/30/2007		\$39,653.92

Loose Plate for Charity

On November 4th and November 11th, our congregation pledged to contribute 50% of our Sunday Loose Plate Collection to Kids-A-Part. I am proud to report that our congregation will be sending a check to Kids-A-Part for \$580.76. On November 18th and November 25th, we collected our loose plate for Mercy Connections and Neighborkeepers and will be sending them a check for \$555.48. On December 2nd and December 9th we will be collecting for Women Helping Battered Women; and on December 16th and December 23rd, one half of our collection will go to the Greater Burlington Boys and Girls Club. Please come prepared to give generously!

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.