



January 31, 2010 -
February 14, 2010

Calendar

Sunday, January 31

9:00 Worship Service
10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
11:00 Worship Service
3:00 Family Talent Cabaret

Monday, February 1

***** Zen (Call office for time)
9:00 Newsletter Deadline
10:00 Mondays at Martha's SGM

Tuesday, February 2

10:00 Seekers Small Group Ministry
12:00 Staff lunch
7:00 Executive Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 3

9:00 Staff Meeting
11:00 Dream Group
6:30 RE Committee Meeting
7:00 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, February 4

9:00 Newsletter Crew
5:20 UUBF Zen Meditation
6:00 Practicing Your Faith

Friday, February 5

10:30 Women's Alliance
5:00 UU Dungeons & Dragons
6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, February 6

10:00 Wise Together SGM

Sunday, February 7

9:00 Worship Service
11:00 Worship Service
12:30 Workshop: Returning to Our Senses
7:00 Young Adult SGM

Monday, February 8

***** Zen (Call office for time)
5:00 All Committee Night

Tuesday, February 9

10:00 Wisdom Sprouts SGM
12:00 Staff Lunch
5:30 Property Committee Meeting
7:00 Book Discussion Group

Wednesday, February 10

9:00 Staff Meeting
11:00 Dream Group
6:00 Sapere Aude SGM
6:00 Music Committee Meeting
7:00 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, February 11

10:00 SGM Steering Committee
5:20 UUBF Zen Meditation

Friday, February 12

6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, February 13

9:00 Couples Workshop
6:00 Second Saturday Supper

Sunday, February 14

9:00 Worship Service
10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
11:00 Worship Service
12:30 UU Burl. Animal Ministry
12:30 Spirit in Creativity SGM
6:00 YUuth Group Meeting

On My Mind

Two weeks ago, the world lost Stephen Huneck, the whimsical creator of Vermont's Dog Chapel, whose motto ("All Creeds, All Breeds, No Dogmas Allowed") said it all. Atop the white steeple twirls a hand-carved, winged Lab, revolving in the wind. Inside, stain glass windows adorned with canine characters testify to "Faith," "Love," "Loyalty" and other four-legged virtues. The end of each pew is flanked by a dog with nose pointed upward and haunches down in the "Sit" position. And the little anteroom is filled with photos and hand-written farewells from hundreds of pilgrims who trekked to Dog Mountain to pay tribute to their departed pets.

Several years ago, at the age of forty-five, the artist had been hit with Adult Respiratory Distress Syndrome, a usually fatal illness. He was in a coma for two months, given little chance by doctors. When he recovered, he had to relearn basic skills from walking to signing his name. And at that time, Huneck decided that he either needed to get serious or do something completely wacky and wonderful with his life. Why not a shrine for man's best friend?

Personally, I'm not sure dogs need a chapel. Smokey, my twelve year old Shepherd mix, seems perfectly content to meditate while chewing an old tennis ball. (The first woodcut Huneck produced after regaining his health pictured his beloved Sally with the legend, "Life Is A Ball!") But I know that I'll need the support of ritual when Smokey eventually dies. And I'll be thinking of the Dog Chapel next week when I preside at the funeral for old Ben, fourteen years old and one of Smokey's longtime partners in crime who never seemed happier than gamboling through the poison ivy on the trail of something stinky.

The paper laid out several reasons why Stephen took his own life: a struggling business, financial losses that forced him to lay off workers. But I guess we never really know why a person decides to commit suicide, and the mystery only deepens with a personality this talented who brought others such joy. Perhaps it simply points to one of the spiritual differences between humankind and what Mark Twain liked to call "the Higher Animals," for whom finding a reason to live is usually as easy as a walk in the park.

Maybe they know something we don't.

Upcoming Sundays

February Worship Theme:

Looking Backward

"The past is not yet over," William Faulkner famously remarked, "It's not even the past." Whether we know and understand our history or not, it haunts and undergirds the present in innumerable ways. Unitarian Universalists have tried to overcome the awful legacies of slavery, sexism and religious intolerance, while preserving what's good in our religious heritage. Look forward in coming Sundays to a variety of speakers who explore our complex roots and cast a vision for the future.

Sunday, January 31, 9am & 11am

"A Faith for Our Time" Two hundred years ago, on the 29th of January in 1810, a dedicated company of religious liberals signed the Articles of Association forming the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington. Kicking off the celebration of our Bicentennial, Gary puts the event within its New England context, where a spiritual and intellectual renaissance was underway that would mark a decisive break with pre-modern ways of thinking. Our Senior Choir will sing.

Sunday, February 7, 9am & 11 am

"The Power to Bless" The late poet John O'Donohue wrote, "In the parched deserts of postmodernity, a blessing can be like a discovery of a fresh well. It would be lovely if we could rediscover our power to bless one another. I believe each of us can bless." In this sermon, we will explore what it means to offer someone a blessing. How can Unitarian Universalists talk about and practice blessing? Our speaker this morning is Reverend Mara Dowdall, newly installed minister of the Unitarian Church in Montpelier. Gary will be exchanging pulpits with Mara this Sunday.

Sunday, February 14, 9am & 11am

"Abigail" Abigail Adams was more than our second First Lady. She was a forward-looking feminist every bit the intellectual and spiritual equal of her pugnacious husband and, like him, a staunch Unitarian with distinctly unorthodox opinions about religion. Their passionate lifelong romance provides the backdrop to this Valentine's Day service. The service will also include a Renewal of Vows for those who wish to participate (see the article included with this newsletter). Gary preaches and our Senior Choir will sing.

Sunday, February 21, 9am & 11am

Lay Service: "The DNA of Religion"

Gary

Message From Martha

A few months after I began as Director of Religious Education at First UU, I was given the advice to always write my newsletter columns about why UU Religious Education matters. It made good sense, so that is what I've tried to do. Every two weeks, I root around in my current life experience for a little nut of meaning to chew on with you. Sometimes an idea pops up readily; other times, I hunt and wonder for hours.

This time, I find myself holding a huge, tangled ball of experience: the recent hospitalization, and subsequent death, of my mother. The strands of meaning and mystery that I could tease out and follow are many.

The learning I'm experiencing in the wake of her death is deep and profound. It is something I can feel physically: a sodden grinding transformation that continually writhes heavily in my body and spirit. It hurts. Very little of it comes with words.

While I miss my mom and I feel sad, at the same time I see elements of blessing, humor, levity and freedom. Even as discrete events occurred in the last week of her life, I found myself tying them one to another so as to weave a story whose meaning I could own. When living mom's ending felt like riding a turbulent, twisting, unpredictable river, my story served as a raft or a paddle – something reassuring to connect with on the ride. It let me rest – even if for a moment now and then – in acceptance of the circumstances that swept us along.

In fact, as I lived my mom's bodily end, I recalled the title of a UU curriculum from the 50's or 60's, called, "Man: The Meaning Maker." *How true*, I thought. As mom's life ended and her death began, I did not find myself believing that any of it had been *planned*, or was *meant to happen*. Rather, as each present moment spun off to join the rest in the past, I kept rewinding, reviewing, and remembering, and in so doing saw, found, and placed meaning where I needed it to be.

So now I carry a story of my mom's life and death in my heart. It's shaping me every second, so I promise you that with grace I will do my best to share whatever life-deepening gems I sift free in my grieving.

One truth remains steady: The faith community in which I work glows warm, bright, kind, and gentle. For all of you who make that truth so, I am deeply grateful.



Martha Dallas,
Director of Religious Education

Renew Your Vows?

Couples who would like to publicly renew their vows of marriage or civil union are invited to do so on Valentine's Day during our Sunday morning services at 9:00 and 11:00 am. Gary will include a brief ritual including poetry and a solemn re-affirmation of commitment for those who wish to say "I Love You" to their partners right out loud. Please contact him, gary@uusociety.org, if you would like to be included in this ceremony.

Invitation to Membership

Are you searching for a spiritual home? Resolved in the New Year to deepen and find more discipline on your own religious path? How about starting the New Year with a more meaningful connection to our congregation? Please make an appointment with Gary Kowalski, Elaine Bomford or Martha Dallas to discuss pathways to membership in our Society. We welcome individuals of all beliefs and backgrounds, age sixteen or older, who can support our principles and mission: "to inspire spiritual growth, care for each other and our community, seek truth and act for justice."

Computer Needed

A New American family with three high school aged youth is looking for a used computer (monitor, keyboard, etc.). If you have one you would like to donate, please contact Reverend Elaine.

Celebrate 200 Years

The opening celebration for our First 200 years will be on Friday, January 29 from 5-7 p.m. Hope you have it on your calendar. This party will have a grown-up ambiance with candle light, white table cloths, back ground music, wine, punch, light snacks and, as always, wonderful conversations with fellow Unitarian Universalists. If we had more money, it would be grander, but we do the best we can in this economy to celebrate our story—our past, our present, and looking to our future. Childcare will be available. Come join us! *Susan Raimy*

Second Saturday Supper

You are invited to a 2nd Saturday Potluck on February 13. Come at 6:00 for conversation, singing, new friendships, and a good dinner. To make a reservation, contact Adam or Rita Bortz at 864-3516 or ritabortz@aol.com and leave a message. Please say if you are bringing an appetizer, main dish, salad, or dessert. Also include how many people and if you need childcare (it's free, but we need a few days notice). We ask for a \$2 per person donation to cover the costs of wine, cider, soft drinks, and supplies. I hope to see you there.

Returning to Our Senses

A **free** workshop in Sensory Awareness is scheduled for Sunday, February 7, 12.30-2.30 at the First UU Society. This workshop will explore ways in which even the simplest actions – standing up, sitting down, handing something to another person – can move us beyond our habitual conditioning to open a fresh, energizing connection with the world and with our own being. Michael Atkinson, who has studied this discipline for over 30 years, will offer simple, inviting, non-threatening experiments in attending to our sensations, which can lead to intuitive insights not available via thought or feeling. In spontaneous mindfulness, you may find a new connection with your own natural intelligence and vitality during this afternoon of gentle exploration. Light refreshments will be provided before the workshop. Please arrive between 12:15 and 12:25, wear comfortable clothing, and leave your shoes at the door.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is now hard at work. We are on a mission to find interested members who are willing to serve on a particular committee as chair. Members of the Nominating Committee are Bill Suiter, Terry Jeroloman, John Lincoln, Claire Graham-Smith, Ken Swearingen, and Pat Allen. If you are a friend of UU and are interested in serving as a member of a committee, please feel free to speak to one of the Nominating Committee members. Anyone of us can provide you with information regarding the work of the various committees here at the UU.

Thanks,

Pat Allen, the Nominating Committee

Joint Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is accepting donations to provide aid to the people affected by the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. If you would like to donate by check, please make it payable to "UUSC/UUA Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund" and mail it to UUSC, P.O. Box 844001, Boston, MA 02284-4001. If you would like to donate online, please go to www.uusc.org. UUSC's disaster response in Haiti will focus on those survivors less likely to have access to aid, such as child domestic workers (restaviks), women-headed households that work in the informal sector, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Haiti has a vibrant grassroots movement with a vision of empowering people. UUSC will work closely with partners in this grassroots movement to reach those survivors at greatest risk of being overlooked.

**First Unitarian Universalist
Society**
862-5630

Gary Kowalski, Minister

*Elaine Bomford,
Assistant Minister*

*Linda Gross,
Board President*

*Martha Dallas, Director
of Religious Education*

*David McFeeters,
Facilities Manager*

*Wayne Schneider,
Music Director*
wayne.schneider@uvm.edu

*Christina Fulton,
Society Administrator*

*Kathleen Kemp,
Administrative Assistant*

Email: office@uusociety.org
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Couples Workshop

Gary Kowalski offers his annual pre-Valentine play shop for partners in committed relationships on Saturday, February 13th, from 9 am - 1:30 p.m. Participants will experience fun, non-threatening communication exercises designed to express affection and appreciation, develop mutual priorities, and set reciprocally satisfying goals. Whether you have been married for twenty five years or just started living together last summer, you and your relationship will benefit! A donation of \$20 per couple is requested to cover expenses of opening the meetinghouse; waivers are available for low income households. Please plan to bring a brown bag lunch. Registration will be limited to ten couples; please sign up on the bulletin board, or call Gary, to reserve your spot.

A Job Well Done!

The Board of Trustees is indebted to our fundraising committee comprised of Carolyn Munger, Hope Swanson, Barbara Benton, Kristin Kany, and Sarah Forbes for their stellar work on the recent services auction. With energy and enthusiasm they produced the amazing result of raising more than \$9,000 for the society. Not only was a fabulous amount of money raised, but many of us are enjoying the added benefits of making new connections at dinners, lessons, and other services. A heartfelt thank you Carolyn, Hope, Barbara, Kristin, and Sarah for all your hard work.

Linda Gross, Board President

First UU Legacy Society Growing!

Since the kick-off of the Planned Giving Campaign in mid-October, 2009, Planned Giving Committee members personally have contacted over 60 members of the congregation and are in the process of contacting still more. Many folks have found the idea of making a bequest or other type of planned gift to the Society a special way to continue support for UU values after their own death. The response has been heart-warming and we look forward to welcoming many folks to the Legacy Society family before our celebration of founding members in June 2010. If you have not yet been contacted and would like to be visited by a member of the Committee, call or e-mail Sally Conrad, Chair, Planned Giving Committee (phone: 658-1047, e-mail: dconrad@uvm.edu)

Ecumenical Exploratory Task Force Forms

Our UU Board has appointed a task force to explore a future organizational link with Christ Church Presbyterian, now located on the UVM Redstone campus. Christ Church currently owns their building, but not their land, with a lease expiring in 2013. Their congregation, which welcomes and ordains GLBT members and has a long history of social justice work, has approached us to contemplate some form of alliance with the First UU Society. The parameters of such a relationship are still to be determined, but Adam Bortz, Rev. Elaine Bomford, Barbara Heeter, and Gary Kowalski have been asked to begin a conversation between our two communities. The first joint meeting took place on January 21. Expect more information as talks progress!

At the Start of Worship

If you arrive at the Meetinghouse after the worship service has begun, please be mindful of those who are already seated. Unless you need to use the elevator, please do not enter the Sanctuary via the north door by the elevator, as this can cause distraction to others. Instead, you may go downstairs, through the Community Room, and up the back stairwell into the vestibule to enter from the rear of the Sanctuary, or you may walk around through the parking oval to the front steps. Thank you for your consideration. *Martha Dallas*

Next Newsletter Deadline

The next deadline is Monday, February 1, 2010 @9am covering events from February 14 - February 28, 2010.

Book Group

You are invited to join us on Tuesday, February 9, at 7p.m.. at the UU as we discuss Collapse, by Jared Diamond. This important book examines why ancient and modern societies, such as the Anasazi and Rowanda, fall apart. Factors including economic catastrophe, depletion of natural resources, decline in living standards and environmental disasters are discussed. *Gerry Quinlan*

Donations of Cat & Dog Food

Are you aware that low-income folks in our area have no source for emergency food for their beloved pets? The FUUSB Animal Ministry team has undertaken an ongoing collection of dog and cat food to be distributed through the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Your donation of a carrying-size bag of kibble or cans of food could make it possible for a dog or cat to stay with their family instead of going into a shelter. Please consider contributing regularly. Place dog and cat food in, or beside, the purple bin located at the bottom of the main stairway to RE. Ruff, Meow, and Thank you!

Calling All Travelers

The Library Committee is having an RE Activity Sunday on February 21st. We want to highlight 4 countries with posters, food, objects, etc. The activity will include a story, song or game. If you would like to 'host' a country or help out in one of the countries, please contact Laura Nelson, hestia9699@comcast.net or 899-5830.

WhaleCoast Alaska 2010

Five Alaskan UP fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program this summer in our 14th year! See REAL Alaska, with UU homestays in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Sitka. UP's host events and lead tours. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Observe wildlife, including bears, moose, caribou, whales, sea otters and bald eagles. Visit Denali National Park. Dave Frey, a 29-year Alaska resident, leads the programs. Visit www.whalecoastak.org. Don't delay, reservation deadline is March 10. Email dfrey@whalecoastak.org for information, or call 907-322-4966. The tours usually fill quickly. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

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UU're Home

Do you dream of inexpensive vacation travel to interesting destinations where you can stay in the homes of friendly people who share your ideals and are happy to provide directions and advice for their area? The UU bed and breakfast directory *UU're Home* (formerly *Homecomings*) can fulfill your dream. For 31 years, we've provided a network of hosts in the United States (and a few abroad) who enjoy meeting new friends and who are happy to open their home to like-minded people. You can also become a host and be listed in the directory: see www.UUreHome.com for an application. If you have questions, contact us at info@uurehome.com or call 828-281-3253.

Host listings on the *UU're Home* website at www.UUreHome.com are updated whenever changes are made or new hosts are added. The paper edition is published once a year in April. For a copy of the 2010 directory and a year's access to the website listings, please click on "become a member" to pay by credit card, or send a check for \$25 and your e-mail address to: UU're Home, 43 Vermont Court, Asheville, NC.

Multi-Faith Calendar

February 2 (Pagan) Imbolc, mid-point between Winter Solstice & Spring Equinox

February 4 (Unitarian Universalist) Waitstill and Martha Sharp embark for Czechoslovakia in 1939 to aid refugees fleeing the Nazis, the beginning of the UUSC.

February 12 (Unitarian Universalist) Birthday of Charles Darwin in 1809

February 14 (Taoist, Confucian) New Year for China, Tibet, Vietnam, Korea

February 17 (Christian) Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent.

GoodSearch and GoodShop

What if every time you shopped online a percentage of the sale went to the First UU Society?

Welcome to GoodShop! More than 100 great stores including Gardner's Supply, The Body Shop, Travelocity, Land's End, Target, Macy's, The Gap, Best Buy, PetSmart, and Staples have teamed up with GoodSearch to do just that.

The next time you're looking for a new book, computer, DVD, pair of shoes or clothing, go to GoodShop first.

It's simple. No username or password is required. Just designate your favorite charity (***First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington***), click on the store's logo from the GoodShop site and then shop as you normally would.

You'll get the same great prices, but every time you place an order, you'll be supporting the First Unitarian Universalist Society with donations that average around 3% of the sale but can exceed 20%!

2009 - 2010 Newsletter Schedule

Items are due in the office by 9am Monday morning.

Articles may be emailed to Kathleen at office@uusociety.org.

Deadline Date

Period Covered

Volunteer Crew Meets

February 1, 2010

February 14, 2010 - February 28, 2010

Thursday, February 4, 2010

February 15, 2010

February 28, 2010 - March 14, 2010

Thursday, February 18, 2010

March 1, 2010

March 14, 2010 - March 28, 2010

Thursday, March 4, 2010

March 15, 2010

March 28, 2010 - April 11, 2010

Thursday, March 18, 2010

March 29, 2010

April 11, 2010 - April 25, 2010

Thursday, April 1, 2010

April 12, 2010

April 25, 2010 - May 9, 2010

Thursday, April 15, 2010

April 26, 2010

May 9, 2010 - May 23, 2010

Thursday, April 29, 2010

May 10, 2010

May 23, 2010 - June 6, 2010

Thursday, May 13, 2010

May 24, 2010

June 6, 2010 - Entire Summer

Thursday, May 27, 2010