



December 13, 2009 -
December 27, 2009

Calendar

- Sunday, November 29**
No OWL Class
9:00 Worship Service
10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
10:00 UUSC Video
11:00 Worship Service
12:15 Talk Back/Charlie Clements
- Monday, November 30**

Zen (Call office for time)
Bazaar Set-up
9:00 Newsletter Deadline
12:00 UU Family Brown Bag Lunch
5:00 Celebration Committee
6:00 Planned Giving Training
7:00 Planned Giving Committee
7:30 Grief Group
- Tuesday, December 1**
Bazaar Set-up
10:00 Wisdom Sprouts SGM
12:00 Staff Lunch
7:00 Executive Board Meeting
- Wednesday, December 2**
9:00 Bazaar Set-up
9:00 Staff Meeting
6:30 RE Committee Meeting
7:00 Choir Rehearsal
- Thursday, December 3**
Bazaar Set-up
9:00 Newsletter Crew
5:20 UUBF Zen Meditation
6:00 Practicing Your Faith SGM
- Friday, December 4**
Bazaar Set-up
10:30 Women's Alliance Meeting
6:30 AA Men's Group
- Saturday, December 5**
9:00 Holiday Bazaar!
3:00 Giving Tree Set-up
- Sunday, December 6**
All day Socially Responsible Santa
9:00 Worship Service
11:00 Worship Service
12:30 Gary's Committee on Ministry
7:00 Community Carol Sing
- Monday, December 7**

Zen (Call office for time)
12:00 UU Family Brown Bag Lunch
7:30 Grief Group
- Tuesday, December 8**
10:00 Seekers SGM
12:00 Staff Lunch
5:30 Property Committee Meeting
7:00 Book Discussion Group
7:00 Council Meeting
- Wednesday, December 9**
9:00 Staff Meeting
6:00 Sapere Aude SGM
6:00 Music Committee Meeting
7:00 Choir Rehearsal
- Thursday, December 10**
10:00 SGM Steering Committee
5:20 UUBF Zen Meditation
- Friday, December 11**
5:00 Dungeons & Dragons
6:30 AA Men's Group
- Saturday, December 12**
10:00 Wise Together SGM
6:00 Second Saturday Potluck
- Sunday, December 13**
9:00 Worship Service
10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
11:00 Worship Service
12:30 UU World Discussion
12:30 UU Burlington Animal Ministry
12:30 Small Group Ministry
6:00 YUUTH Group Meeting
7:00 Jewish Perspectives on Jesus

On My Mind

An anthropologist from Mars might reasonably conclude that ours is a Christian denomination. Unitarian Universalists gather on Sundays (unlike Jews and Muslims, who pray on Friday). We decorate our windows with wreaths at Christmas and lilies fill our meetinghouse on Easter. There are little crosses on the ends of the hymn racks in our sanctuary—and the original Articles of Association of our Society, dating from 1810, defined our purpose: "To promote and inculcate harmony, friendship, morality, Christian faith, religion, and piety among the members of this society and mankind at large." All these are reminders of our history.

Two hundred years later, we have become an intentionally inclusive faith community, welcoming pagans, atheists, goddess worshipers, Buddhists and Bahai's. The banners in our sanctuary celebrate all the world's wisdom traditions as sources of insight.

But I sometimes wonder if we have become more tolerant of Confucianism than Christianity. While growing in breadth, have we lost touch with the depths of our own rich heritage?

I have never identified myself as a Christian. But for me, Jesus remains a beguiling figure, and his teachings of a Kingdom where distinctions of class and caste are banished remain a compelling vision of what it means to live in right relation with our neighbors. While I could never accept a literal interpretation of claims to divinity, Jesus seems to have attained a consciousness that comes to me only in glimpses—an awareness of our actual unity as sisters and brothers beyond all the superficialities of color, gender and nationality that separate or divide.

That is why I am honored to work together with non-dogmatic Christians (as well as Jews and other non-Christians) in organizations like Vermont Interfaith Action and JUMP. Where is our commitment to social justice grounded, if not in the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible and the social gospel of modern prophets like Dr. King?

While our congregation may no longer be Christocentric, I hope that we never become Christophobic, and that people of all beliefs continue to find a home in our Society ... even the Jesus folk.

Gary

Upcoming Sundays

**December Worship Theme:
Sin & Virtue**

These are old-fashioned words, but not outmoded concepts. Gandhi listed seven deadly sins of the modern world that included Wealth without Work, Pleasure without Conscience, Science without Humanity, Knowledge without Character, Politics without Principle, Commerce without Morality, and Worship without Sacrifice. Are some sins unforgiveable? What constitutes a life of virtue? *"God's plan made a hopeful beginning. But man spoiled his chances by sinning. We trust that the story will end in God's glory. But, at present, the other side's winning."* 19th Century Unitarian Oliver Wendell Holmes

Sunday, November 29, 9 & 11am
"A Resurrection in Our Time" Before Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by death squads in El Salvador, he promised, "If you kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people." On his election night last spring, the country's new leftist president Mauricio Funes pledged, "I will commit this government to Archbishop Romero's preferential option for the poor." Our guest speaker this morning is Dr. Charlie Clements, the Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, who first worked in El Salvador as a physician in the midst of civil war, then helped organize Congressional fact-finding tours to Central America to change America's policy of support for corrupt, client regimes in the region. This morning he sees signs of hope and change on the horizon. Charlie will engage in a question/answer session following the eleven 'o clock service.

Sunday, December 6, 9am & 11am
"A Light Shines in the Darkness" In the Christmas story, the season of Advent anticipates the birth of "love's pure light" into a world of sin and woe. Reverend Elaine reflects upon meanings of sin and salvation in the Universalist tradition and their contemporary, experiential relevance. A women's trio and the choir will sing.

Sunday, December 13, 9 & 11am
"Unstuffing the Holidays" Have you made changes in your holiday celebrations to reduce consumption, reduce your impact on the environment, increase your connectedness to family and friends, or make a difference for someone? Join us as we explore the many ways that people in our congregation have simplified their holiday celebrations while still enJOYing! Please participate by filling out the short and simple survey, located in the Parlors, and share your stories.



Message from Martha



One weekend, when I was about 10 years old, my sisters and I spent part of a morning making prank calls to a classmate of mine and her sister. We were bored, and created our entertainment at their expense, calling repeatedly and saying stupid, mean things to those girls. That is, until their fearsome father answered and demanded to know who was making the calls. My sister panicked and then blurted out her name and full address before finding the wits to hang up.

My parents knew something was up when they saw our faces and we readily admitted what we'd done. The girls lived at the end of our street, and that evening, we three were made to walk to their house, knock on their door, admit to what we'd done, and apologize directly. And we had to do this in our pajamas, because that's what we were wearing at the time the consequences were announced by my parents.

The shame and humiliation of delivering an apology in this manner kept me from ever making a prank call again. I apologized for sure, but my motivation to do so was not ideal. I believe I was sorer about the consequences my actions caused for *me*, than I was for the feelings the prank calls surely elicited in the hearts of our young neighbors. You see, they never had a chance to tell us what it felt like to receive our cruel calls. Our apology was quickly delivered and just as quickly received; in fact I had the sense they felt sorry for us, to see us standing sheepishly on their front porch in our pajamas.

Sincere apologies are rare in my experience. A combination of self-understanding, empathy, courage, and humility needs to be mustered to give an authentic apology. But that's the only way we can open the door for true forgiveness, and ultimately for relational healing, learning, and growth.

Since we're all only human, we make mistakes. Again and again, we fail to be our best selves. We can do really stupid, even mean things sometimes; and this truth about being human is naturally something we'd rather hide when it applies to ourselves. But our UU faith reminds us that mistakes can be received as opportunities to grow if we recognize them for what they are, and do the hard work of owning up to our actions, humbly apologizing, and being open to receive forgiveness, should it be offered.

For in the end, true apologies are actions of liberation! As such, may we give them and receive them with grace and generosity.

Martha Dallas,
Director of Religious Education

Socially Responsible Santa

On Sunday December 6th, Socially Responsible Santa will visit our Society and will be accepting donations for families in our community. In this unique program, selected families will receive cards with a cash gift to spend as they wish, which honors our First Principle. The families are selected with the assistance of "community elves" - guidance counselors at Barnes and Wheeler schools, Champlain College Single Parent Program, and our ministerial staff. Santa's helpers will be in the vestibule and the Parlors w/ baskets for your donations. Please be as generous as you can so our neighbors can enjoy this holiday season. Checks can be made out to: First UU Society with "SRS" written on the memo line. Please contact Maggi Hayes, Head Elf, mehayes@uvm.edu if you have any questions.

COTS Phonathon

The First UU Society of Burlington will be helping out again at the annual COTS Phonathon from 5:30-9:00 PM on Tuesday, December 1. We call only previous contributors who are always happy to receive your calls. There are needs for other tasks to be performed as well if you're not comfortable making calls. COTS will provide pizza and other goodies along with door prizes. There's free parking also. To volunteer please email Bruce Brown at bruce.brown22@gmail.com or leave a message at 876-7819.

Legacy Society Moves Forward!

As of mid-November, 20 households are making bequests to the First UU of Burlington. Several of these commitments are of very long standing and others are quite new, but all will be recognized as founders of the First UU Legacy Society during 2010 – the bicentennial year of the founding of our Burlington Society. Before a celebration next year, we expect many more UU members, and maybe even non-members, will join the Legacy Society as a result of the Planned Giving Campaign. Chair: Sally Conrad, 658-1047; e-mail dconrad@uvm.edu.

Are You Helping Animals?

If so, FUUSB's Animal Ministry would like to know! We want to identify the volunteer efforts and charitable contributions folks are already making on behalf of animals, in order to create and share a resource list of opportunities and interests. Knowing who is involved, and how you are helping, will also help the fledgling Animal Ministry group discern focus for programs and action. If you are willing to share what you and your family are doing for our friends, the animals, or if you are interested in joining us, please contact Rosanne Greco at 497-0711 or rosanne499@aol.com, or Reverend Elaine, elaine@uusociety.org.

Holidays Survey

On Sunday, December 13, our Sunday service, coordinated by the Lay Worship Committee, will focus on simplifying the holidays. In preparation for that service, we would like to know a little more about the changes you've made in your holiday celebrations. Please fill out a short survey, located on a table in the Parlors, and return it to the survey box no later than December 5 so that we can include your stories in our planning and, potentially, in the service. Call Bridget Meyer, 879-5409, or email Bmeyer1038@aol.com for more info.

Transylvania Trip Planning

Interested in visiting our partner church in Transylvania? Koppandi Zoltan, the minister, has invited us to consider a trip around Pentecost Sunday, which in 2010 is May 23. I would like to invite those interested in such a trip to meet at 1pm after services on Sunday, December 13 at my house - 37 Orchard Terrace (behind the First Congregational Church) for a soup and sandwich lunch and planning discussion of trip possibilities. Please email Bill Suiter if you plan to come, wosuiter@comcast.net. We can also view slides from the last trip.

2009 Holiday Bazaar

December 5, 10am - 2pm

The Women's Alliance Holiday Bazaar is coming right up! Please consider donating: books, CDs, DVDs, home baked goodies, toys, games and puzzles, hand knitted and hand crafted goods and holiday decorations. For our Attic Treasures room, we like household items in good, clean working condition, craft supplies, jewelry, artwork, china and silver, and vintage items. PLEASE - no televisions, computers, plastic or clothing. **Items may be dropped off in the Community Room December 2-4 only.** Questions? Call Bridget @879-5409. Hope to see you on the 5th.

Save the Date

Yes, our Annual Christmas Breakfast is on December 25th! It's time to circle Christmas morning on your calendar and plan on joining UU friends and downtown neighbors for a hearty breakfast, great conversation and LOTS of hot coffee. We invite our neighbors to join us for this free and convivial meal. For more information or to donate, email Lynn Douglas: moonglow@pshift.com or call 644-2197. See you then!

VIA Health Forum

Is single payer possible? Can we really control costs so long as private insurers stay in the game? Ohavi Zedek Synagogue invites you to explore options for health care reform within Vermont with representatives from our Congressional delegation and experts that include Steve Maier, Chair, Health Care Committee, Vermont House, Deb Richter, MD, Vermont Health Care for All, and Peter Sterling, Coordinator, Vermont Campaign for Health Care Security. Sunday, December 6, 2-4 p.m.

**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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UU World Discussion

Have you ever wanted to discuss an article or short piece that appears in an issue of the outstanding publication, UU World? Are you curious to hear what other people think of an article you've read, or are thinking of reading? If so, please read on...

The Denominational Affairs Committee invites you to a lively discussion of articles in the current, Winter 2009, issue of UU World on Sunday, December 13 at 12:30 PM in the Meeting House. Join Rev. Elaine and members of our congregation as we discuss articles like "The Religious Left: An old tradition for a new day" by Daniel McKanan, the Emerson Professor at Harvard Divinity School who members of our congregation met recently during Rev. Gary's Boston/Concord trip. Or, consider Scotty McLennan's article called "Breath is Life: defending abortion from a liberal Christian perspective" in the Winter issue, as well as many other thought-provoking articles of various lengths. You can find this issue online at: <http://www.uuworld.org/currentissue.shtml>

Come on December 13th and share your perspective! What excited you, what bothered you, what got you thinking? Refreshments will be served and childcare provided. *Dave Conrad*

Gary's Committee on Ministry

Do you have kudos, complaints, or suggestions for how to improve the quality of our senior minister's services? Ron Bernard, Jan Abbott, Kathy Swarhout and Bert Munger welcome your thoughts. The Committee on Ministry will meet on Sunday, December 6 at 12:30 p.m. should you wish to attend in person. The first half hour will be open for congregational input, the second half hour held in executive session for more confidential concerns.

Author, Author!

Gary Kowalski is among nine essayists included in the newly published *The Whole World Kin: Darwin and the Spirit of Liberal Religion*, now available for \$12.00 from the UUA Bookstore. "These nine essays demonstrate that those who see a conflict between religion and science, between Charles Darwin's vision of the world and that embraced by many deeply religious individuals are simply not looking very clearly," writes Michael Zimmerman of the Clergy Letter Project. "Savor these essays and come to a fuller understanding of both religion and science." To order, call (800) 215-9076 or visit www.uuabookstore.org.

Book Group

Please join us on Tuesday, December 8th, 7:00 p.m. at the UU, as we discuss Gary Kowalski's book, Science and the Search for God. Gary argues that many of the ills of the modern world stem from the mistaken view that science and faith are antagonists and not natural allies. Rather, both science and faith compel us to move beyond materialism toward an understanding of the world that includes the realities of consciousness and spirit. New light is shed on old questions: Who are we? Where do we figure in the larger scheme of things? What can we honestly believe? Gary will be present. *Gerry Quinlan*

UU Gulf Coast Relief

Learn how the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the UUA, and congregations like ours are partnering with churches and neighborhoods still recovering from Hurricane Katrina. A short, informational documentary about this work will be shown in the Parlors on Sunday, November 29, between the two services. Our own Anti-Racism Action Committee is planning a third mission trip to New Orleans this coming spring. Come grab a cup of coffee and learn what's been accomplished and how much remains to be done.

Gary Kowalski

Twenty Years and Counting!

Rev. Gary Kowalski was installed as our senior minister on November 19, 1989, just twenty short years ago. All members and friends of First UU Society celebrate this landmark anniversary with him. At this time of the year when we celebrate connection and thankfulness, may we hold in our hearts our feelings of gratitude for Gary's presence among us for these two decades and for the remarkable and lasting contributions he has made to our congregation. Thank you to all who helped mark the Society's celebration in Gary's honor on November 15, especially to Ann Livingston and Jonathan Sands for their reminiscences, and to Mary Gady, Suzy Haas, and Tracy Titchner for organizing the receptions.

*Linda Gross,
Board Chair*

Feeding the Hungry

Casseroles are needed for the Food Shelf Sunday Suppers on 11/29, 12/13, 20, 27, and 1/3, 10, 17. They can be delivered to the Food Shelf by 5:00 or other volunteers can pick them up at UU. Please call Rosanne Greco at 497-0711 or email rosanne499@aol.com. Thank you!

Jewish Perspectives on Jesus

Rabbi James Glazier, spiritual leader of Temple Sinai in South Burlington, will lead one evening session on how both ancient and modern Jews view the historical figure of Jesus, Sunday, December 13 at 7 p.m. Join us for what promises to be an educational event! [A donation of \$10 for this course is suggested to benefit *The Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf*.]

Grief Group Forming

Daniel Wilds, M.D., the chair of our Care Network Ministry, and Gary Kowalski will co-facilitate a support group for those who have lost a loved one, starting Monday, November 30 at 7:30 p.m. and continuing at the same time Monday evenings through December 21. The group will offer a place to share memories, tell stories, and join with others on the road from grief to healing. Please contact Gary (gary@uusociety.org, 862-5630 ex. 24) or Daniel (372-4838) if you would like to participate.

Come Sing Christmas Carols

Sunday evening, December 6 at 7pm, join the choirs of the downtown churches as we present the annual Christmas Carol Sing in the UU Sanctuary. Each choir presents an anthem and everyone joins in singing favorite Christmas carols in-between. A fun musical experience for the entire family, this program lasts about an hour and is followed by a reception for all in the Parlors. Bring the kids, and hope to see you there!

Woody Fulton

Got Used Toys?

To raise money for their Boston trip, 6th graders will be collecting used toys for resale at the Holiday Bazaar. Any functional toy or complete puzzle that you have outgrown and wish to recycle, we'd be happy to take (**no stuffed animals please**). We'll collect them after the Sunday services on November 29, or you may drop them off at the UU Society Monday -Thursday 11/30-12/3 **only**. If neither option works, call 497-0365, and we will try to arrange a home pick-up. Thanks! *Brenda Balon*

20th Anniversary Tune

Several have requested the lyrics for Gary's congratulatory 20th anniversary song, written and performed by members of the FUUSB staff. Sung to the tune of "Zippedy-Doo-Dah," here they are:

Gary Kowalski - extraordinaire!
Brilliant, although you have lost all your hair.

Meaningful sermons, pastoral care,
Sharing your wisdom, calm and aware.

O Reverend Gary, we are grateful
for your years aplenty,

Holy Cow, it's up to twenty!

Gary Kowalski - we give a cheer!
Super Kowalski - faith and not fear!

Rev. Elaine Bomford

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Seeking Youth Advisor!

First UU is seeking to add a Youth Advisor to our staff starting in January, 2010. The position we seek to fill will complement and expand the staff support of our youth programming. By staffing this position, we aim to:

- add social activities for 7th and 8th graders
- develop a stronger “bridge” into 9th grade and our high school youth group
- increase the number of active participants in our high school youth group
- enhance the depth and variety of high school youth group activities
- increase youth’s visibility and involvement in the life of the wider congregation
- increase awareness, buy-in, and support on the part of youth’s parents
- help develop our Coming of Age program

We seek applicants who:

- Are 25 years of age or older
- Affirm Unitarian Universalism
- Demonstrate initiative
- Have experience working with teens
- Bring facilitation skills
- Can navigate youth-friendly modes of communication
- Will pass a background check

This is a stipended position. Applications must include a resume, three references, and a letter of interest. The application deadline is December 15, 2009. Please direct inquiries and applications to the attention of Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education, 862-5630 x28 or martha@uusociety.org.

Putting Faith into Action

Thanks to our support, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is working throughout the United States and around the world to advance human rights. Your beautiful Guest at Your Table box and Stories of Hope booklet introduce you to people whose lives have been changed by this work.

Each week, with family and friends, we can focus on a different person's story of hope as we sit down to meals together and consider our many blessings.

This week, meet Daw San and Moe Moe, courageous women in Myanmar who partnered with UUSC to rebuild their lives and livelihoods after last year's deadly cyclone. Daw San is now raising pigs and Moe Moe has opened a food stand, selling delicious bowls of Mohinga, a hearty breakfast food. Consider what security and returning home has meant to Daw San, Moe Moe, and others this holiday season. Consider what even a small gift to your Guest at Your Table will mean to women like Daw San who are overcoming great obstacles in a time of crisis in Myanmar or elsewhere in our world.

You can learn more about UUSC's work to defend rights in times of crisis online at www.uusc.org/humanitariancrises. If you have not yet picked up your Guest at Your Table box and Stories of Hope, you can do so at one of the tables in the Sanctuary or in the Parlors.

The Denominational Affairs Committee urges you to become a member of the UUSC by participating in Guest at Your Table, or by using a donation envelope. Individual membership is \$40, Dual \$75, Youth/Student \$10, and Senior \$20 per person. We want our congregation to increase our membership in UUSC so that we can once again become a member of the Creating Justice Banner Society. Please help by renewing your membership or joining for the first time. Your generosity with Guest at Your Table is tax deductible! Be sure to complete the form on your box so that you and our First UU of Burlington congregation will be recognized. Thank you! *David Conrad, Denominational Affairs*

Next Newsletter Deadline

The next deadline is Monday, November 30, 2009 @9am covering events from December 13 - December 27, 2009.
