



December 9, 2007 -
December 22, 2007

Calendar

Sunday, December 9

- 9:00 Worship Service
- 9:30 Adult Programs Committee
- 10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
- 10:00 Socially Responsible Santa
- 11:00 Worship Service
- 12:30 Peace Forum
- 12:30 Interweave Potluck
- 7:00 Dream Group

Monday, December 10

- ***** Zen (Call office for time)
- 9:00 Newsletter deadline
- 9:00 Joyful Parenting SGM
- 6:00 Anti-Racism Action Comm.

Tuesday, December 11

- 10:00 Wisdom Wanderers
- 10:00 Small Group Ministry
- 5:30 Property Committee Meeting
- 7:00 Book Discussion Group

Wednesday, December 12

- 9:00 Staff Meeting
- 5:00 Admin. Relations Committee
- 7:00 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 13

- ***** Zen (Call office for time)
- 9:00 Newsletter Crew
- 10:00 SGM Steering Committee
- 12:00 Root Yoga Community Class
- 6:00 Mysticism Sm. Group Ministry

Friday, December 14

- 6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, December 15

- Sunday, December 16**
- 9:00 Worship Service
- 9:15 Care Network Ministry
- 10:05 Ministerial Search Forum
- 10:00 Women's Spirituality Group
- 11:00 Worship Service
- 12:30 Social Action Forum

Monday, December 17

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

Tuesday, December 18

- 7:00 Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 19

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

Thursday, December 20

- ***** Zen (Call office for time)
- 10:00 Women's Alliance Exec. Mtg.
- 12:00 Root Yoga Community Class
- 6:00 VIA Citywide Meeting
- 6:00 Practicing Your Faith

Friday, December 21

- 6:30 AA Men's Group

Saturday, December 22

- 5:00 BUUC Ritual

Interweave Holiday Potluck

Please join us for Interweave's Annual Holiday Potluck and Yankee Gift Swap on Sunday, December 9th at 12:30 downstairs in the Sophia Fahs Community Room. We will have a festive time with a great potluck and gift swap for old and young alike. Regifting and recycling of fun, frightening or whimsical items are encouraged. The more off beat the better! (Folks generally keep gifts at \$5 or less.) Please bring your wrapped gift without a tag and a dish to share for this traditionally fun annual event. Hope to see you there!

On My Mind

Want to get in the holiday spirit? You could drag out those old Bing Crosby recordings of "White Christmas." Or build a papier-maché creche out of the L.L. Bean catalogues that seem to arrive daily. Or for a better suggestion, you could take half an hour to stand with the Burlington Peace Vigil, those faithful souls who have gathered in front of our meetinghouse daily for the last five years.

Some hold signs: "Give Peace A Chance" and "No Blood For Oil." Their numbers vary, but almost always include a contingent of UU's like Sylvia Holden, Dave and Sally Conrad, Don MacDonald and Ginger Hobbs, none of whom looks like a rabble rouser to me. Their presence at the top of Church Street reminds us that there's a war on—a fact that most Americans, amid the bustle of shopping, seem to have forgotten.

It's a war being fought by mercenaries and by young men and women who, out of idealism or economic need, have signed up for military tours that seem to extend indefinitely, in a bloody conflict that drags on with no end in sight. It's also an immoral war—at least when measured against the teachings of Jesus and the traditions of "just war" theory that have guided ethical reflection and international law for centuries.

So when you're planning your family's yuletide schedule of tree-trimming, hot chocolate and performances of the Nutcracker, ask yourself, why not take the kids to an event that will teach them something of the real meaning of "Peace on Earth?" It's only thirty-minutes, from 5:00 to 5:30 each evening, less time than it takes to watch one of those cartoon holiday specials on TV. You might even see me out there. Because I know that if Christ returned for Christmas, he'd be standing there with us ...

After all, it's the best place to see the lights.

Gary

Upcoming Sundays

December Worship Theme:

Happiness

"... you shall above all things be glad and young. For if you're young, whatever life you wear it will become you; and if you are glad whatever's living will yourself become." (ee cummings)
What is the secret of happiness? How is happiness different than joy? And when we sing "Joy To The World," what transformations of the mind and heart are most needed to bring happiness to birth?

Sunday, December 9, 9 am & 11 am
"The Happiness of Pursuit" Thomas Jefferson made the pursuit of happiness a permanent part of the American birthright—but two centuries later, most of us seem to have gone astray on the quest, or even got it backwards. This morning Gary examines what the Declaration's author actually had in mind. The choir will sing at the 11 o'clock service.

Sunday, December 16, 9 & 11am
"A Moment of Happiness" May Sarton suggests that it is wrong to expect that there will be a time of happiness in our lives. At the same time she redeems this dreary assessment by saying there are moments of happiness and "almost everyday contains at least one moment of happiness." During this holiday season reputedly "the most wonderful time of the year", a time of culture driven expectations, we might appreciate the wisdom of this poet's words and savor the one moment of happiness that comes our way almost everyday.

Sunday, December 23, 9am & 11 am
"A Transcendental Christmas" Many trappings of the holiday season were invented in the nineteenth century—not a few of them by our Transcendentalist forebears, including Unitarian Louisa May Alcott who wrote more than a dozen Christmas themed stories in her day. This morning Gary looks back at a heritage that needs to be remembered and reclaimed. The choir will sing at the 11 o'clock service.

Christmas Eve Candlelighting Services

There will be three services on Monday, December 24th. At 4:00 p.m., the "Animals Christmas" is perfect for families with young children, who are encouraged to bring stuffed animals or wear animal themed pajamas; the Children's Choir will sing. Services at 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. feature the adult choir, and the 6:00 p.m. service includes a Child Dedication as well. All Candlelight Services include carols, readings from the gospels and kindling lights to spread the glow of hope.

Religious Education News

This past Sunday, instead of regular RE classes, the children took part in a morning of activities around the theme, "Simplified Holidays." Compared to last year on the same Sunday, attendance was up 50%, suggesting families' eagerness for ways of making *more* out of *less*, as the December Holidays approach.

In one room, children were making coupons for *gifts of time*. ("To: Mom... From: Martha... Good For: Breakfast in bed. You choose when.") In a time and culture where not only adults, but many children too, have busy schedules filled with countless appointments and activities, giving of one's self by giving up one's time is truly precious and infinitely valuable. And *time* is a currency that anyone, of any age, can give in abundance with just a little encouragement, guidance, and intention.

How much is a gift of time worth? The kind I'm talking about can't properly be translated into dollars and cents, especially when you remember that when you give time, so many other priceless goodies are in the mix: love, friendship, community, caring, selflessness, and generosity to name a few. And the result? Contentment. Pleasure. Peace. Gratitude. Happiness.

Yes, happiness. It's not just for kids anymore! The tiny Himalayan country of Bhutan has invented a new measure: Gross National Happiness (GNH!). Its leaders make policy decisions with its citizens' happiness in mind. Economic health is important, but the growth of Bhutan's GDP (gross domestic product) is weighed against the growth of its GNH. The Bhutanese understand the limitless value of a happy people, compared to the limits and costs (many hidden) inherent in the flow of money.

How do the Bhutanese measure their national happiness? I don't know. But I do think they are wise to realize its value. And I think we can learn from them.

Let's give to ourselves and to each other this season so as to increase our collective happiness. Let's give all the time and love we can and count things like "Thank Yous," restful sleeps, tears of joy, belly laughs, and smiles. Each of us is unique, precious and capable of exchanging such precious gifts as these. May we all be blessed with happiness!

Martha

Ministerial Search

About two hundred people have completed surveys helping our Search Committee understand what the congregation wants in an assistant minister. Those who have not yet filled out a questionnaire can access the document at our Society's website, www.uusociety.org, print it out and return it by December 16. That Sunday, the Search Committee will also be hosting forums to gather feedback, answer questions and report on progress to date, following each of the services. All are welcome to participate.

JUMP Thanks!

Your JUMP volunteers and board members send out a warm, heartfelt thank you to the members of "Mondays at Martha's" Small Group Ministry. This group's effort, organized by Lois Holbrook and Martha Dallas and Gerry Quinlin, to take on the enormous task of distributing, gathering and transporting our Thanksgiving bags was a big success. Over 120 bags of groceries, nearly 30 bags of toiletry items and 16 bags of food for African refugees were collected! As usual, our congregation responded with grace and generosity. Thank you also to the team of volunteers who "schlepped" all the bags from the UU pews to a balcony in the First Congregational church: Lynn Douglas, Mike Donato, Jeanne Lynch, Bill Wilds, Daniel West, Martha Dallas, and Harris Abbott. Many JUMP folks will find their way smoothed by having a bag of groceries to help fill their pantry. Thank you all again and Happy Holidays!

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-April 12. 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.

Child Dedication

Unitarian Universalists celebrate the miracle of life with the rite of dedication, our way of honoring parents and acknowledging the blessings (and responsibilities) children bestow upon us all. A Child Dedication ceremony will be included in the Christmas Eve candlelight service at 6 p.m. on Monday, December 24. Please contact Gary or Roddy if your family would like to participate.

Memorial Plaque

The names of loved ones whose ashes are interred in our Memorial Garden have been inscribed on a handsome wooden and brass plaque to be placed in the nook at the north end of our meetinghouse. The Memorial Garden Committee invites you to attend a brief blessing of this new installation on Sunday, December 23rd at 10:15 am.

Book Discussion Group

Join us on Tuesday, December 11, when we will discuss The Omnivore's dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by *Michael Pollan*. Named one of the 10 best books of 2006 by the New York Times. On Tuesday, January 8, we will 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.

Socially Responsible Santa

Sunday, December 9th marks the 21st anniversary of our Society's unique holiday program which provides cash gifts to families who face serious struggles just meeting the basic necessities of life and have nothing left for even a simple celebration. The RE children will receive treats while Santa's elves will be collecting money for our families. Since its inception, this program has provided gifts to more than 300 families. Please be as generous as you can when the elves come by. If you will not be in church that Sunday, you can mail a check to the office and mark it "SR SANTA" For further information contact "Head Elf" Maggi Hayes, mehayes@uvm.edu or 878-4418.

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.

The Library Gift Tree

Thank you to everyone who made our Library Gift Tree a huge success! On October 21st and 28th the Library collected over \$300. This will allow the Library Committee to purchase 23 books with a little money left over for future use. Once again, a great team effort by the Library Committee, with a very generous response from the congregation.

Rebecca Anderson, UU Librarian

Newsletter News

Next deadline: Monday, December 10, @9am covering December 23 - January 12, 2008. **This is a three week issue.** You can view the newsletter and this year's newsletter schedule on our website: www.uusociety.org.

First Unitarian Universalist
Society
862-5630

Gary Kowalski, Minister

*Roddy O'Neil Cleary,
Affiliate Minister*

*Jerrold Packard,
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 Ingram,
Administrative Assistant*

Email: office@uusociety.org
Web Page: www.uusociety.org

Is Peace Possible?

As part of our ongoing exploration of the UUA's Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) of "Peacemaking" over the next several years, First UU Peacemakers invite you to a panel discussion centering on the question "Is Peace Possible in the 21st Century?" on Sunday, December 9, from 12:30-1:30pm.

The panel includes Cherifa Swearingen who was born in Algeria to extremely poor peasant parents, lost her stepfather to war, and left home alone at the age of six to begin a new life in Paris and later in the U.S. Another panelist, Ken Swearingen, is a veteran of World War II who seriously questioned his actions during the war and still finds answers hard to come by. Jay Roszman, the new organizer for Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA), spent the past year in Belfast, Northern Ireland where he studied and observed the peace process in action. Cleophafe Mukeba is a Burlington resident from Congo who will also share his personal perspective on war and peace as part of our congregation's exploration of Peacemaking.

We hope that you will join us for this panel of dynamic and inspiring speakers who will share thought-provoking observations and welcome your questions. Refreshments will be served.
Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs

Welcome a Guest at Your Table

When you add coins and bills to your Guest at Your Table box this holiday season you are helping our denomination's service committee, the UUSC, partner with a community-based organization in Ecuador to make the right to water a reality. You are also helping to support the UUA-UUSC Gulf Coast Relief Fund to guarantee New Orleans residents the right to come home. And you are supporting a UUSC program partner in Kenya to strengthen the rights of child laborers.

Perhaps you'll have family members joining you over the holidays who also feel moved to share with those who are struggling to drink clean water or rebuild their lives after a disaster. Last year my brother visited from Philadelphia and generously contributed several sizable bills to our Guest at Your Table box. I think he will probably do the same thing this year, and maybe your visiting family or friends may feel so moved.

Here is a great suggestion passed on to me by a member of our congregation: How about giving a UUSC gift membership to a family member or close friend? Envelopes already addressed to UUSC (as well as boxes) are available on tables in the back of the sanctuary and in the Parlor. Or send your tax-deductible check directly to: UUSC Guest at Your Table, P.O. Box 845259, Boston, MA 02284-5259. Please mention First UU Burlington on your check. If the total of your gift to UUSC is \$100 or more, it will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y.

A warm thank you for joining or for renewing your support of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.
Dave Conrad, Denominational Affairs

First Night Volunteer Opportunities

Our Meetinghouse has been a long time host site for First Night Burlington. Our theme this year is "Song and Celtic". We have 30 two hour time slots for folks who would like to volunteer and receive a free First Night Button. The times are: 11:40am to 1:40pm, 1:40pm to 3:40pm, 3:40pm to 5:40pm, 5:40pm to 7:40pm, 7:40pm to 9:40pm and 9:40pm to 11:40pm.

There is a sign-up-sheet on the First UU Society bulletin board, or you can call me at 862-5630 x23 or send an e-mail to david@uusociety.org to sign up or ask questions. Volunteers can pick up their buttons beginning at 11:00am on December 31st or can contact me to pick them up before this.

Volunteering is great fun and a wonderful opportunity to support this valuable Burlington event.
David McFeeters, Facilities Manager

News from Vermont Interfaith Action

About twenty people gathered in the Susan B Anthony Room at the First UU Society on November 11th to catch up on VIA's latest work on affordable housing in Burlington and UVM's plan in So. Burlington, health care, and an opportunity to meet Jay Roszman, a new employee for VIA.

Our citywide meeting is scheduled for Thursday, **December 20th** from 6 - 7:30pm at the First UU. At this meeting, Debbie Ingram, Director of VIA, will give a Power Point presentation on Vermont's Catamount Health Insurance Plan.

It is crucial for a large attendance at an ACTION to be held during the week of **January 7, 2008**. This ACTION has two purposes regarding affordable housing in Burlington. 1. We need assurance that all housing projects are implemented in a timely manner. 2. Developers need to be held accountable to the agreements they make with the city regarding their building projects. If you have any questions, free to speak to Pat Allen or any VIA leader.

Our next local meeting is scheduled for Sunday, **January 13, 2008** @12:30 at the First UU Society Meetinghouse complete with refreshments.

New UU Class

Want to know more about Unitarian Universalism? If 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.

Public Radio

Our congregation is proud to sponsor Krista Tippet's "Speaking of Faith" on North Country Public Radio, FM 88.1, each Thursday at 1:29 p.m. But we depend on our members and friends to channel what they'd ordinarily give to public radio through our UU Office. The next time you hear "pledge drive," please think of making your check payable to the First UU Society, marked "Public Radio," to keep our weekly message on the air: "This program brought to you by the First Unitarian Universalist Society, a voice for religious freedom in downtown Burlington." Thanks for your support!

First Unitarian Universalist Society
152 Pearl Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
(802)862-5630
www.uusociety.org

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

Holiday Gift Book

Searching for a meaningful holiday gift - that special something that could really touch someone? Consider the book CYCLES OF REFLECTION by our Minister Emeritus, Bob Senghas! A collection of powerful readings from sermons and meditations given during his time as minister here (1979-89), CYCLES will be available at a special holiday price during coffee hour on December 9 and 16. Or, you can always buy one by contacting Julia Blake at 899-4180 or jvblake42@aol.com. All proceeds from sales go to the First UU Society.

(VIA) Moveable Feast Report

Vermont Interfaith Action held its Second Annual Movable Feast on November 10th. The evening began with a gathering at Ohavi Zedek for refreshments including good will, beverages and hors d'oeuvres.

Following that, guests journeyed to host homes where a fine dinner including dessert awaited them. Many people from our congregation helped to make it a resounding success. Hosts provided a scrumptious meal for friends and congregants, and they in turn, wrote a check to VIA. Unitarian Universalists raised \$1,340 for VIA that evening. In total, VIA raised about \$5,000. The funds will be used to help VIA expand its services.

Many thanks are due the hosts for the evening. The hosts were Dave & Sally Conrad, Deborah Deladurantaye, Martha Fitzgerald & Ed Knight, Linda Gross, Jerrold Packard & Merl Grossmeyer, and the writer of this report. Helping VIA was, of course, a benefit to that organization. Other benefits of the evening included getting to know fellow UUs a little better by having the opportunity to share time and food together.

Some people were not able to provide assistance because of previous commitments. Right now VIA plans to hold this event annually. I have a list of those of you who may be interested in helping with the dinners in some capacity next year. As soon as the date is set, I'll contact you. Conversely if you're interested in hosting or attending a dinner another year, kindly let me know. Thanks, Pat Allen

First Unitarian Universalist Society **Summary of Cash Activity** **October 2007**

Checking Account Beginning Balance		\$85,113.31
Non Pledge Income	\$22,537.19	
Pledge Income	\$24,233.16	
Transfers	\$11,824.84	
Total Income	\$58,595.19	
Expenses & Payments	\$82,405.34	
Total Expenses	\$82,405.34	
Checking Account Ending Balance		\$61,303.16
