

# U-FIRST

February 2011

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

66 Elm St. — P.O. Box 637, Gardner, Massachusetts 01440  
(978) 632-0222 — [www.uusg.net](http://www.uusg.net)

## Upcoming Worship Services

**Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.**

### February 6—Forget about UU, What About U?—Rev. John Pastor

We UUs pride ourselves on creating our own individual theologies. How do we do that? How do we know when a theology is a good fit? This sermon will attempt to address these important spiritual formation questions.

### February 13—You Can Burn Water!—Aaron Stockwell

Important life lessons can be learned in the most unexpected place. Whether it's in a church basement or on a mountainside at 12,000 feet, life has a way of teaching you when you least expect it. Aaron hoped to share some of the lessons he has learned during his 17 years with the Boy Scouts of America.

Aaron Stockwell was raised in Littleton, MA. He is in the second year of Masters of Divinity at Andover Newton Theological School, and is an Aspirant for the Unitarian Universalist Ministry. He is a member of the First Parish Church of Groton. He is currently serving as the Worship Coordinator of the UU student group at Andover Newton. Aaron has been a Boy Scout since 1993.

### February 20—Humor in Worship—Rev. John Pastor

We have all heard "laughter is the best medicine. Can it also be good "medicine" for a spiritual practice? Rev. John will examine this question with us.

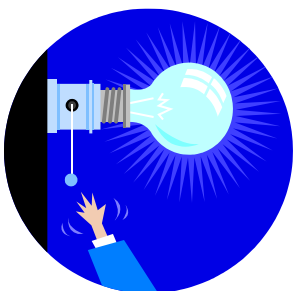
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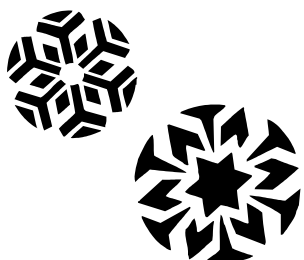
### February 27—Finding Spirituality Light in Winter—Laura Reichsman

Living a life of intention with a desire to be energetic and positive can take a real hit by the end of February. How can we stay centered and at peace with what feels like permanently frozen toes? Come hear what a professional optimist who hates winter has to say about surviving the winter blues and finding light at the end of the very cold, dark tunnel.

### March 6—International Women's Day—Catherine AzoraMinda

This celebratory service features the words, music and lives of UU women.

*Everyone is invited to join us for coffee and conversation in the fellowship hall downstairs following worship.*



Minister: Rev. John Pastor — Office Hours: Thurs. 1-6pm,  
Call for an appointment or to arrange another day or time.  
For pastoral emergencies — 508-277-6113

Emeritus Minister: Rev. Neil Bakker

U-First Editor: Julie Pera — [uusg.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uusg.newsletter@gmail.com)

Church Office: Catherine Azora-Minda, Secretary — 978-632-0222

# Pastoring...

## **What do you want your minister to be?**

As I sit here now in my home office with the snow piling up outside, snug and warm in the mid-winter light, I find myself reflecting on the past years as your minister. I'm now in my fourth year of serving this congregation. And, this is the time of the year that your Executive Committee begins to look at renewing my contract. To be honest with you all, I have been in deep discernment about continuing.

I have seen my principle task in our religious community as being a spiritual leader. This task, as preacher, calls me to affirm you on your individual and collective spiritual journeys. I point out the different paths without preference. I also have offered us opportunities to be a presence of peace and justice in the greater community.



We have co-mingled with other churches in a shared worship experience, marched proudly declaring "Love is the Spirit of this Church," and I have encouraged us to give generously to the needy. My role with the leadership of our church is that of an advisor and sometimes prophet. This role requires me to say things that folks may not want to hear, but are for the good of us all. My role as pastor is that of comforter and healer. I assume that all of these roles are what the church community, you, wants me to be; preacher, prophet, and pastor as I present them. Perhaps this is not so.

What do you want your minister to be? In my fourth-year discernment, I need your guidance. What should my job description ideally be?

Come, talk to me.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

## Notes from the Executive Committee:

Many of the items here were also discussed at the congregational forum on the last Sunday of January, but is worth repeating for those who were not in attendance.

With the encouragement and preliminary research from church members, we are exploring the feasibility of a lift for the back stairs to the sanctuary. Bob Gifford met with a representative from a company in New Hampshire to get some preliminary numbers, which is in the ball park of \$10,000. While we recognize that this would not make us completely wheelchair accessible, it is a step in the right direction and would meet the needs of many of our current church members.

We received a request from Nate Smith who runs a coffee house at the Fitchburg UU Church on the 2nd Saturday of the month to hold a coffee house at our church. Members of the EC are planning on visiting the Fitchburg coffee house on Saturday, Feb 12th to see what it's like. Preliminary discussions thought that maybe the 4th Saturday of the month might work for UUSG.

Lots of building repairs have been taking place over the past few months. The leaking roof around the tower and the related inside damage have been

repaired by Old Time Restoration. We received insurance money for this work. Old Time also did some updating to the flat roof and some mortar patchwork in the brick near this roof as well. A new, more weathertight door was also installed at the entry to the fellowship hall and a section of drain pipe from the kitchen sink was replaced.

Thanks to Mike Vecchi for being our "Building Supervisor" in coordinating this work with the various contractors.



The EC will be attending a district workshop on Saturday, Feb. 12th, to discuss church communication, leadership and committees. Our hope is that this workshop will help in continuing our work to build the community within the church and explore our mission for our members and the outside community.

As you can see, there's been a lot going on during the first half of our church year, and the next half looks just as busy. As always, anyone is welcome to bring a concern or proposal to the EC by talking with one of the trustees and/or attending our monthly meetings, usually held on the third Monday of the month at 6:30 in the fellowship hall.

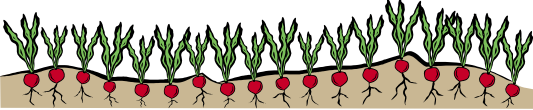


Blessings.



## Community Garden

For those with plots in our community garden, or those interested in one, there will be a meeting in March to discuss our next growing season. Look for more information in our next newsletter, or talk with Amina Silk, Arif Leininger or Chris Pera.



## With Great Thanks

to the many donors who contributed to the Silent Auction at the Fall Fair:

- Chairtown Lumber
- Midas Auto Service
- Gilbert Furniture
- Temptations Boutique
- Happy Trails Natural Foods
- \*David & Leslie Fabian
- \*Dorcas Hurd
- Ken Everett, Wildlife Artist
- \*Nina Vecchi
- Agway Garden & Feeds
- Fitness Concepts Health
- O'Neil's Bicycle Shop
- John Featherstone (Yoga)
- Domino's Pizza
- Parker House of Pizza
- Brian's Bowlaway
- Speedee Oil Change
- Gardner Ten Pins
- Blue Moon Diner
- Curves for Women
- Bruce's Watch & Jewelry
- Gardner Cinemas
- Valley Florist & Greenhouses
- John's Sporting Shops
- Surroundings Gallery

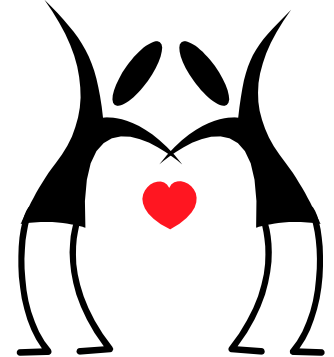
*\*non-business donors*

## Standing on the Side of Love

Monday, February 14th, 2011 is the 2nd Annual "National Standing on the Side of Love Day," when the very heart of the Standing on the Side of Love campaign comes to life. On this day, and the days surrounding, we re-imagine Valentine's Day as a holiday of love and acceptance for everyone.

In MA let's use this day to raise our voices to support the Transgender Equal Rights Bill that expands the state's non-discrimination laws to include gender identity and expression. We urge you to gather signatures on our petition (<http://www.uumassaction.org/node/306>) and send them to you state senator and representatives.

**Save the Date – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011**  
**Join Us for the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual UU Mass**  
**Action Advocacy Day**  
***Standing on the Side of LOVE***



Please join us.

To find out more please visit our web site at [www.UUMassAction.org](http://www.UUMassAction.org) or call Sue at (978) 910-0190.

You can RSVP at [SueMassAction@gmail.com](mailto:SueMassAction@gmail.com).

## Thank UU!

To Tom Brady for installing more energy efficient CFLs in our fellowship hall.

To Mike and Nina Vecchi for donating a laptop for the minister's office.

## CongratUUlations!

To Mike Rice, our former music director, and his wife Mia, on the birth of their son, Aidan James, in November. You may recall Mike & Mia's visit to UUSG for a summer worship service. The family lives in China and is enjoying extra time together during Mike's vacation from teaching.

## In Our Thoughts...

Rev. John and his family, while they celebrate the life of and mourn the loss of his mother, who died peacefully on January 31st.

Jane & Bud Coleman who have been unable to attend church in the recent weeks. Hope to see you again soon!

*Thank UU, CongratUUlations, In Our Thoughts & Welcome*  
*If you know of a contribution, concern, or accomplishment that deserves mention in this column, please be sure to send a note to one of the newsletter editors via e-mail or "in-box".*

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TO:

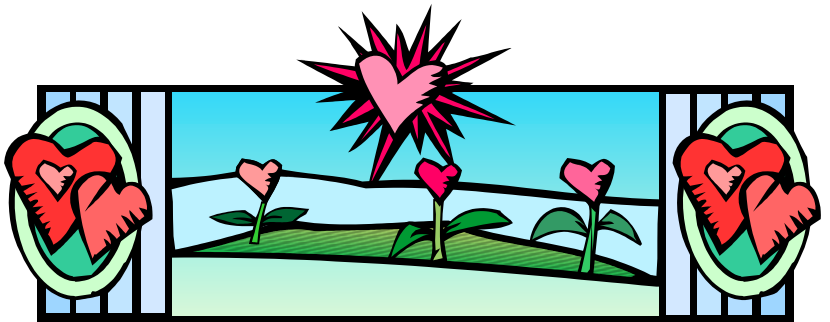
## Your Executive Committee

The Executive Committee usually meets on the third Monday of the month. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding church policies or programs, please feel free to speak with any of the church trustees.

### Trustees for Church Year 2010-11

- Bo Azora-Minda ('12)
- Rodney Fagan ('11)
- Melody Fortier ('13)
- Bob Gifford (Chair, '13)
- Cheryl Menard ('11)
- Chris Pera (Clerk/Treasurer, '12)
- Mike Vecchi ('12)

(year in parentheses indicates term ending)



### **Newsletter Contributions**

The deadline for newsletter contributions is usually the 15th of the month. Please send your contribution via e-mail to [uusg.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uusg.newsletter@gmail.com), or provide a typed or *neatly* handwritten copy to Julie Pera. Contributions may be edited for length or content at the discretion of the editors.

**The deadline for the March newsletter is February 15.**