

U-FIRST

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

April 3—Commitment Sunday

Our Executive Committee will present a special program for giving, sharing, and caring.



Congregational Forum

Our next Congregational Forum will be during Coffee Hour on April 3rd.

April 10th—Regional Association Sunday!

The service will be at 10AM
at the First Church UU in Leominster.
A list for carpools is posted in our fellowship hall.

April 17—The Sin of the Sodomites —Rev. Richard Trudeau

While the Biblical story of Sodom & Gomorrah does mention sex between men, religious conservatives have so fixated on that detail as to miss the central point of this vivid story, which is to re-emphasize a core value of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

April 24—Easter Sunday: What Would Jesus Do? —Rev. John Pastor

Most of us are familiar with the question, WWJD? This Easter sermon will offer answers to this question from a Unitarian Universalist perspective.

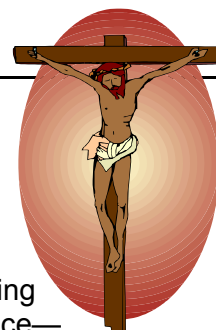
May 1—Spring and Transformation —Amina Silk & Arif Leininger

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

April 22—Good Friday Traveling Worship Service, 12n-3pm

Gardner churches are gathering for a traveling worship service—visiting four churches (we hope). Just as Jesus traveled through part of Jerusalem, on the way to the cross, we will travel between churches, experiencing some of what Jesus encountered that day.

Join us at 12PM—gathering first at the Congregational Church (Central-Green Street). Then we proceed to the Unitarian-Universalist Church (Elm Street), then to St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Cross-School Street) and finish at Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Cross Street).



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

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Pastoring...

What Would Jesus Really Do?

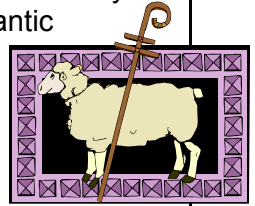
I'm currently preparing my Easter Sunday sermon. It is about Jesus, currently titled, "What Would Jesus Do?" Could be changed to "What Would Jesus Really Do?" All my sermons are works in progress, even as they are delivered. The theme, of course, is a Christian one.

Christians are a minority in our Unitarian Universalist denomination. The UUA reports they are less than ten percent; less than ten percent! Wow, what happened to our roots?

The story of Jesus seems like a good fit into a Unitarian Universalist theology more freely to make the percentage a bit higher. Jesus lifted the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor, and women. He questioned religious authority. He preached the Gospel of Love. So, why aren't more UUs Christian? Could it be the "death and resurrection" thing? Does his death seem more like a failure than a success?



The late Rev. Peter Fleck offers us some encouragement. He writes, "We must have the courage to be a failure. From this courage, from this willingness to let go what the world cherishes most, stems the strength of the spirit. This is the mystery that is embedded in all great religions, but in none so clearly, as in Christianity. The story of Jesus' life was the story of a gigantic failure, a failure of such dimensions that the Western world, spiritually speaking, is still living by its grace, the grace by which the poor in spirit are blessed, the mourners are comforted, and the meek shall inherit the earth."



We all have had some failures in our lives. Naturally, our desire is to be successful; we want to be winners. But, out of the learning from failures success can be born: a kind of resurrection. Come hear more on Easter Sunday.

Wishing you the blessings of this season of new life.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John".

Notes from the Executive Committee:

With the church year coming to an end in three months, there are still a lot of things going on during our EC meetings. Our biggest task will be to prepare the annual report and budget. To help us with this, we ask that you reflect upon what you may be able to contribute financially to our budget for next year. As we mentioned during the commitment worship service, as a whole church community, our pledging amounts have been increasing over the past three years. Please help us continue this trend by topping our goal of raising \$35,000 in pledges for next year. If you haven't received a pledge form, please visit the website, or talk with an EC member.



Thanks to Bob Gifford, Roy Gilbert and Tom Brady for working toward finding a solution for our accessibility needs. We have received bids for a chair lift that rides along the rails of the stairs to the sanctuary and are now looking at the option of a wheelchair capable lift for inside the building. We will be keeping everyone updated as the study continues.

As we mentioned in a previous newsletter, the EC attended a district seminar that explored the mission of the church. We 'secretly' opened up this discussion during our commitment Sunday service, and mentioned that we would like to continue this discussion during small group meetings outside of the church setting. The idea of these small group meetings is to meet at someone's house and discuss some set topics and things in general. A member of the EC would help to facilitate the discussion. If you are interested in hosting, please speak to Chris Pera.



Now is also the time to think about serving as a member of the EC. Our thanks to Rodney Fagan and Cheryl Menard, who have served with the EC during the past couple years and whose terms end this year. If you would like to be on the ballot for the Annual Meeting, please speak with a member of the nominating committee: Melody Fortier, Nina Vecchi and Catherine Azora-Minda. The monthly EC meetings are about 2 1/2 hours in length, but are a lot of fun while getting the business of the church done and hopefully you will also find the time spiritually rewarding.



As you can see, there are many activities going on around our church. Please take advantage of these opportunities to help build our mission and make it possible.

Blessings from your
"MISSION POSSIBLE" Agents.

Just Between UUs

Submitted by Catherine Azora-Minda

Terry Dattolo



Terry Dattolo is a woman who has lived her life very close to her roots. She was born and grew up in Winchendon and has always lived no further than 20 minutes from there. She says that when she was growing up her neighborhood was very “New England” and school and church were within walking distance for her. The house that she lived in was originally owned by her grandparents and her grandmother lived in an apartment in the same building right next to her family.

Terry’s family was “very Catholic, along with all the ‘normal’ dysfunction that situation implies.” Her mother could never be shaken from her faith and what she believed. Terry has come to see that as



“my mother’s greatest strength and her biggest folly – two sides of the same coin.”

Growing up, Terry attended church services, CCD class and confession weekly.

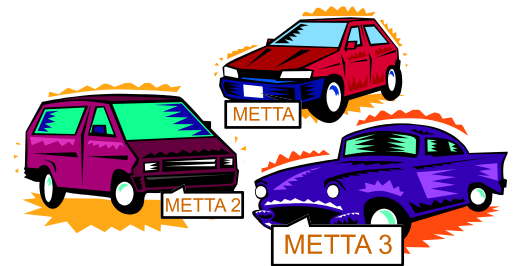
‘ Since she lived so close to the church, she sometimes helped the nuns with chores like cleaning and dusting the sanctuary on Saturday mornings. Some of the Catholic doctrine she was raised on was difficult for Terry to believe and “when I became of an age to make these kinds of decisions, I stopped attending church entirely.”

Many years later, Terry and her husband Don wanted to be supportive of Don’s son, Randy, when he decided as an adult to be baptized into a Christian church. After attending his baptism, they began going to services with him in Fitchburg. Although that turned out



not to be the place they wanted to be every Sunday, Terry and Don realized that they wanted a church community in their life. They also decided that they wanted that community to be right in their own neighborhood. Since Terry had already started attending meditation here at UUSG, “we decided to give this church a try and it was a good fit for us.” They found a “welcoming place, where different beliefs and religious ideas were met with a much larger degree of respectful acceptance than other churches offered.” A spiritual element that Terry felt

was missing in her life is provided to her through her participation in the Wednesday night meditation group. She has come to realize that “Eastern beliefs and concepts are everywhere – even, and perhaps especially, in the Bible.” Not surprisingly, if Terry were to have a vanity license plate on her truck, she would be in good company with Priscilla Ericsson and Chris Pera. Her plate would read “Metta 3”.



One of Terry’s favorite things about living in the area where she was born is the feeling of community. “Being well acquainted with and having memories attached to the surrounding cities and towns gives me a sense of comfort in the familiar.” She stated, “I never wanted to move anywhere else, and I am content to be wherever I am (most of the time).” Terry also enjoys knowing her way around the area because it makes one of her favorite activities much easier. For years, she and a core group of friends have spent their Saturday mornings shopping at yard sales and flea markets and strengthening the bonds with one another.



Since coming to UUSG in 2007, Terry has been involved in several aspects of church life. She has served on the planning committee for several fairs, even though the actual fairs impede her yard-saling activity. She joined with Tom and Jean Brady to organize the Sunday morning coffee hour and the kitchen for the last couple of church fairs. With her husband Don, she worked on the project weatherproofing the sanctuary windows, and often just does stuff she sees that needs doing. In this past year she has helped with planning some worship services and has become a frequent

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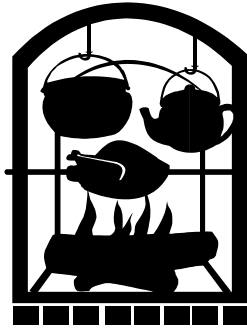


(Continued from page 3)

storyteller on Sunday mornings. Her current passion is contra dancing and she is working with Marion Lyon and others to bring contra dancing

to UUSG on a monthly basis. To help understand what's involved to create the event here, she's found reason to attend other contra dances in the area, something which is guaranteed to make her smile.

If Terry could have a fantasy dinner with someone, she would travel back in time. "I would choose the first family that built, owned and lived in the house that I grew up in. In the 200+ year old home, I would help prepare the dinner in the large kitchen and help to cook it, using swinging iron 'arms' from which hung the cast iron pots in the fireplace. I'd help with the chores at the end of the day, and spent the night, listening to their stories and learning about what life was like in that age before electricity and telephones, radios and television."



Terry doesn't recall aspiring to any career as she was growing up, figuring that she'd probably get married and have kids. In looking back, she thinks she might have wanted to "be a dancer—play piano—be an astronaut even though I'm sure I probably couldn't do the math (required to get there and back)."



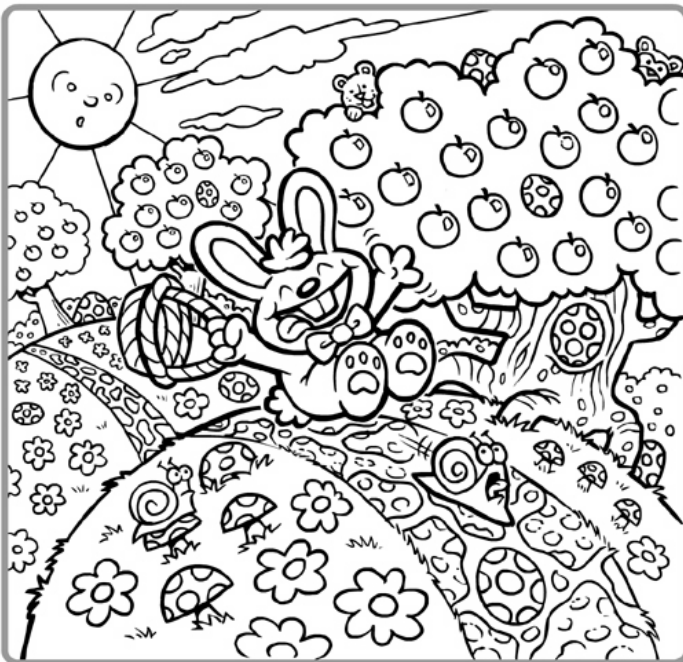
"In 13 months, my mother died, my sister died, and then my husband died. Losing Don, especially, so suddenly, and so young, was the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to me in my life. It's changed me in ways I couldn't even describe. In a spiritual sense, I feel a much deeper connection to the Universe." At this point in time, Terry is just taking one day at a time or, in more meditative terms, **one breath at a time**.



U-Youth!

Easter Egg Hunt

The silly Easter Bunny has lost all of his Easter Eggs. Help him find all of the 10 hidden spotted eggs in the picture below.



www.funschool.com

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www.kaboose.com

From the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) the arrival of two **NEW** pendants!

www.clfuu.org

Click on **CLF Shop**



NEW!
\$6



Celebrate your Green Sanctuary or Earth Day with a green pendant.

Celebrate your Welcoming Congregation with a rainbow pendant.



To reach a real person, contact The Church of the Larger Fellowship
e-mail: clfshop@clfuu.org
617-948-6150

Purchasing your UU gifts from the CLF is another way to support Unitarian Universalism throughout the world. All proceeds from CLF Shop sales sustain the many ministries of the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

General Assembly 2011: June 22-26, Charlotte, North Carolina

General Assembly (GA) 2011 in Charlotte will mark the 50th anniversary of the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America.

Join thousands of fellow Unitarian Universalists from across the country as we remember the persons and events that brought into being the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in May 1961, to reflect on our denomination's relevant achievements and struggles since then, and to chart new aspirations for the future we are determined to shape.

Experience wonderful and uplifting worship services—morning and night—led by some of our best worship leaders, with glorious music and inspiring messages.

Participate in our democratic process. General Assembly is the way that our faith does business, bringing together the distinctive character of our individual congregations.

Hear terrific speakers. There will be hundreds of dynamic, entertaining programs and informative workshops.

Connect with craftspeople and artisans, social action groups, professional and educational resources, theological schools, UUA organizations and staff, Beacon Press, and the UUA Bookstore in the General Assembly Exhibit Hall.

Network with other congregation leaders, share best practices, and learn from one another. Return to your congregation reinvigorated and inspired to put your values to work.

Witness for our faith in moving and exciting ways as we look forward to and prepare for a special "Justice" General Assembly in Phoenix, AZ in 2012.

www.uua.org/ga/index.shtml

OFF SITE General Assembly

Are you a congregational delegate, minister, or credentialed director of religious education? Can't attend General Assembly 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina? You can still participate! Be part of our 50th Anniversary Assembly and represent our Association.

The new General Assembly (GA) 2011 off-site trial provides an alternative way for congregational delegates to participate in the business of the Association when they cannot physically attend GA. Off-site delegates will be able to watch live streaming video of Plenary Sessions, "virtually" queue up to speak, and vote with the "live" delegates.

The 2011 project will provide a full "dress rehearsal" of all aspects of off-site participation, in preparation for full operation in GA 2012. In 2011, off-site delegate votes will be tallied and reported but will not count in GA decisions; in 2012, the votes of off-site delegates will count (pending the 2011 General Assembly's approval of changes to the bylaws proposed by the Board of Trustees).

Although off-site participants' votes will not count in 2011, delegates will be required to submit a certified GA credential from their congregation. An off-site delegate will count against a congregation's total number of delegates allowed; so off-site participation is not recommended for congregations that can send a full delegation to attend GA in person.

Clara Barton and Massachusetts Bay Districts Spring Conference

Governance and Ministry with Dan Hotchkiss
May 7, 2011 - 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA

Fee: \$50 / person - includes materials, refreshments and lunch

REGISTER NOW!!!
(Deadline: April 25 or capacity)

www.cbd-mbd-uua.org/content/governance-and-ministry-spring-conference-2011

Renewing Our Commitment to Multicultural Ministries

with Paula Cole Jones
May 14, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
First Church Unitarian, Littleton

Fee: \$25 per person;
\$100 per congregational team of 4 to 6
(additional team members \$15 each)
Morning refreshments and lunch will be provided.

A program from GRACE:
Growing Racial and Cultural Equality,
Clara Barton District's Anti-Racism Team

www.cbd-mbd-uua.org/content/renewing-our-commitment-multicultural-ministries

Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

P.O. Box 637
Gardner, MA 01440

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, 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 May newsletter is April 15.

Save the Date!

April 23—Contradance in the Fellowship Hall, speak to Terry Dattolo for more information



Benefit Concert at First Baptist Church, Gardner

Pioneer Valley Brass

Sunday afternoon, April 10th at 2 PM

\$10 for adults, youth price TBD

Proceeds will be shared with the music instrument program of the Gardner Middle School.

