

U-FIRST

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

December 2011/
January 2012



Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

December 4—Being in Harmony—Vicki Heidorn

Woodwind quintet led by David and Joy Flemming.

December 11—Advent Taize Service

—Rev. John Pastor

This service is in the tradition of the Taize monastic community. There will be readings, chanting, and moments of silence woven into this worship experience.



Immediately following this service we will be "Greening" our sanctuary for the Christmas Season. All are invited to help decorate. Refreshments will be served.

December 18—In the Bleak Midwinter —Catherine Azora-Minda

As we approach the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, we will gather as people have gathered for centuries, praying for the return of the light.



Saturday, December 24—6 PM Candles & Carols —Rev. John Pastor

This Christmas Evensong service is a service of hope, peace, love, and joy. All are welcome!



December 25—No service. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

January 1—Job Well Done!—Vicki Heidorn

Sometimes we are troubled by roadblocks that keep us from finishing things. In this intergenerational worship experience, Vicki Heidorn will show how we can affirm our goal and transform our attitude so that the problems melt away and we see success. We will meet in Fellowship Hall, downstairs. Please bring food to share as we bring in the New Year together.



January 8—Happy Birthday UUA!

—Rev. Elizabeth Strong

This service will be a continuing celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the UUA, the consolidation of Universalism and Unitarianism.

January 15—Martin Luther King Sunday

—Rev. John Pastor

This is our annual tribute of celebration for the life of Martin Luther King, the inspired leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

January 22—Ethical Eating as a Spiritual Practice

—Nina Vecchi & Lisa Nuttal

Nina Vecchi and Lisa Nuttal from the Wachusett Vegan Society (WVS) share insights and inspirations from "The World Peace Diet - Eating For Spiritual Health And Social Harmony" by Will Tuttle, Ph.D. This service will highlight the explicit and invisible connections between our culture and our food and the relation they form as a contributor for a broad range of challenges facing humanity. Musical inspiration will include songs of peace from Gospel, American Indian and Hindu traditions. Vegan food samples will be supplied by WVS members at coffee hour and free resource materials will be available for those wishing more information on compassion towards animals, people, the planet and plant based nutrition and health.



January 29—Amazing Grace—Rev. John Pastor

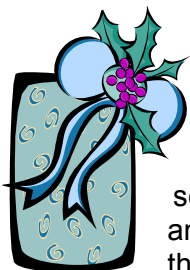
What is grace? We are told that it is all around us. We are told that it is a manifestation of God's love for all. We are told that grace is the state of kindness towards someone. Grace sure seems amazing!

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

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



This is the time of the year, the season, of "Peace on Earth" and New Year Resolutions. So it certainly is meaningful to reflect upon the universal themes of this season; themes of ever-present hope and expected newness. We also, at this time, appropriately think about gifts. What is the greatest give that we can give? Love, we are told. The heart of love, I believe, is understanding through deep compassionate listening that allows others to be heard. Listening can be a most precious a gift for this season and, of course, for the rest of the year.

Listening means that we are being heard; it is so needed. I'm not thinking about texting, Facebook, or emails, as a means for being heard, but face-to-face, in person "live" encounters. Listening creates relationships. Being heard is healing. Nothing in the universe exists as isolated or independent. Everything exists in the form of relationships, from subatomic particles sharing energy to ecosystems sharing food. In the web of life, nothing living lives

alone. So our natural order is to be together in relationship. Everybody has a story, and everybody wants to tell their story in order to connect. If no one listens there are no healthy relationships. In our English language, the word for "health" comes from the same root as the word for "whole". We can't be healthy if we're not in relationship. And "whole" is from the same root word as "holy." Listening moves us closer, it helps us become more whole, more healthy, and more holy.

Author and teacher, Parker Palmer once remarked, "It is impossible to create a healthy culture if we refuse to listen. But, when we listen, we reweave the world into wholeness. And holiness."

Blessed be the holiness that we create together.

Merry Listening and Happy Being Heard!

With love,



Date	Coffee Hour Coordinators	Greeters	
December 4	Connie Thompson Bob & Barbara Cronin	Bob Gifford	
December 11	Jane & Bud Coleman Jen & Katie Abisla	Pera family	
December 18	~~~Potluck~~~		*****
December 24 (Christmas Eve)	~~~Potluck~~~ Cookie & Light Refreshment		Your help is needed!
January 1	~~~Potluck~~~		Please sign up on the clipboard near the kitchen.
January 8	Pera family		*****
January 15			
January 22	Wachusett Vegan Society	Pera family	
January 29			



Coffee Hour Hosts should plan to arrive 30 minutes before service to set up tables and chairs, and start the coffee. A detailed list of coffee hour responsibilities is posted in the kitchen.

Greeters should plan to arrive 15 minutes before service to greet people in the ladies parlor. Greeters are expected to offer words of welcome, hand out orders of service and collect the offertory.

Membership News

During this time of the year, each UU congregation is asked to submit to the UUA their membership numbers. This number determines the amount of Fair Share dues we pay to the district and the UUA, and allows us to vote at GA. Fair Share dues per member is \$80. The number that UUSG submits reflects our active members. While we don't have a specific definition of what an active member is, it can be assumed you are active if you participate regularly in Sunday worship and/or make a financial contribution to UUSG. At our Annual Meeting, our bylaws state that we remove from our membership book, those who have not been active over the past two years. If you would like to continue your membership at UUSG, please consider a financial pledge or donation to cover the cost of your membership. Active members also receive a mail subscription to UU World Magazine. With the New Year approaching, is there a better resolution than being an active, participating member of UUSG?

Have you made a financial commitment to UUSG?

Filling out a pledge form and making a financial commitment is one way to be an active member of our faith community. We are just \$6,700 from making our 2011-2012 goal. Can you help lessen this amount? Please talk with Priscilla or Chris, or you can find a Financial Commitment Form on the UUSG homepage. Thanks to everyone for their generosity!

Wanted: Feedback!

We are quickly approaching the half-way mark of our church year. How are things going? What are your concerns? The Executive Committee would like to hear from you. While the monthly forum is one place to voice your thoughts, the Minister and EC members are available to talk at other times as well. We all do our best to manage the concerns of the congregation, but we can't help UUSG move forward without hearing from each other. Let's talk.



Committee in the Spotlight

Music & Worship Committee

Meets: 2nd Sunday of the month, 11:15am

Members: Catherine Azora-Minda, Rodney Fagan, Vicki Heidorn, Marion Lyon, John Pastor, Julie Pera

Purpose:

The Music & Worship Committee is responsible for all of the lay-led services during the church year. They ensure that these services reflect the Unitarian Universalist values of our church community. The committee has drawn from the talents of our congregation for many of our lay-led services; sometimes the committee invites guest ministers, musicians, or special outside speakers. Because of the long-time tenure of some of the members, the committee has a wealth of knowledge about resources for creating rich, meaningful, worship time. One of their latest resources is the Church of the Larger Fellowship website at www.clf.uua.org.

How YOU Can Support this Committee:

Volunteer to participate in worship, from lighting the chalice, doing a reading, presenting a full worship service. Please give feedback on how the services are meeting your needs. Contact a member of the Music & Worship committee to find out more!

Thank UU

To Lois Gilbert and Connie Thompson for donating greeting cards to the Membership and Outreach Committee.

To the UU Church of Winchendon for allowing the use of their tables for our Fall Fair, and to Terry Dattolo for letting us use her truck.

Welcome!!

To Erin and Becca, sophomores from the Peer Leaders Program at Oakmont Regional High School, who have volunteered to provide childcare in our nursery. They each have an extensive resume of extracurricular activities and experiences, and are eager to share their talents with the children of our congregation. There was a very reluctant 3-year-old who after spending only one morning with them is anxiously awaiting the next. Please make sure to introduce yourself and extend a warm welcome.

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 the newsletter editor via e-mail or "in-box".

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 2011-12

(year in parentheses indicates term ending)

- Bo Azora-Minda ('12)
- Tom Brady ('14)
- Melody Fortier ('13)
- Bob Gifford (Chair, '13)
- Chris Pera (Clerk/Treasurer, '12)
- Laura Reichsman ('14)
- Mike Vecchi ('12)



Save the Date!

December 4 - Congregational Forum, after worship

**December 11 - Greening of the Sanctuary, after worship
(DATE CHANGED from original planned date)**

December 24, 6 PM - Christmas Eve Service

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 February newsletter is January 15.