

U-FIRST

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

66 Elm St. — P.O. Box 637, Gardner, Massachusetts 01440
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February 2012

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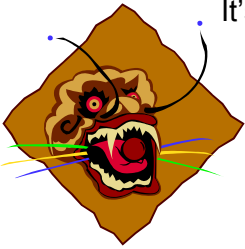
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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

February 5—Celebrating Chinese New Year—Qing Fagan & Caleb Pera



It's the year of the Dragon! Caleb will share some of what he has learned about Chinese New Year, as well as present a story for all ages that tells about a beast who is said to have inspired many of the New Year's traditions. Qing will talk about her experiences celebrating the holiday with family and friends.

February 12—Love is a Many Spendored Thing—Rev. John Pastor

As we approach Valentine's Day, we turn to thoughts of love. In this sermon, Rev. John will speak of the many forms of love that inform and enrich our lives.

February 19—The Futility of Regret—Laura Reichsman

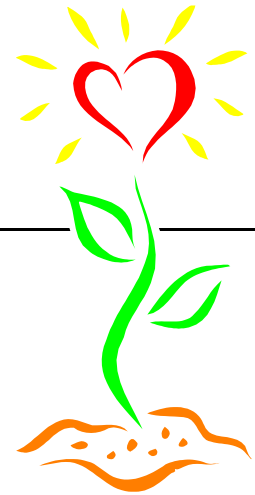
Many of us walk around each day tormented by past mistakes or wrong turns. While learning from our mistakes and moving on can be very healing, reliving those regrets can overwhelm us and keep us from from forgiving ourselves. How can we learn to have compassion for ourselves so we can truly let go?

February 26—It's a Leap Year!!—Rev. John Pastor

This year is a leap year which means that we have an extra day this year (There are 366 days instead of 365.) What shall we do with our extra day? How do we make the most of the additional time we are given? Rev. John has some suggestions.

March 4—International Women's Day—Catherine Azora-Minda

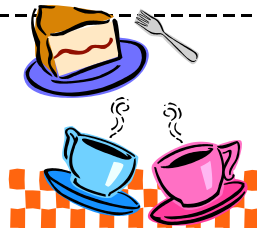
This celebratory service features the words, music and lives of UU women.



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

Mmmmm. Coffee!

Order Dean's Beans Coffee to fill your cup and support UUSG!
For more info, see the order form at www.uusg.net.



Volunteers are needed to host coffee hour and greet in the sanctuary. Please sign up on the clipboard near the kitchen.

Rada Cutlery & Soy Candles

Another way to support UUSG.
See Dorcas to order.

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

In *Love in Action* Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "Without doing anything, things can sometimes go more smoothly just because of our peaceful presence. In a small boat when a storm comes, if one person remains solid and calm, others will not panic and the boat is more likely to stay afloat."

During the Vietnam Conflict I was in the Navy assigned to a minesweeper, a small wooden ship made from mostly wood, brass, and other non-magnetic materials. When we were out in the wide sea of the Pacific, even the smallest wave caused some rocking and rolling of this tiny vessel. During the storms, of course, it was much worse and I spent many a sea-tossed moment with my head over the side. I remember that during these times a well-defined sense of panic set in. There was no other place to go! I could only wish that the storm would cease; that the water would calm. Of course, it did, eventually.

Life can sometimes feel like being in a small boat during a storm.

The Gospel of Mark (4:35-11) tells this story about Jesus crossing the water in a small boat:

Jesus said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the

waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

Jesus was solid and calm, a peaceful presence, asleep in the back of the boat. While other, less faith-filled, folks panicked. This is understandable and is especially true when in the middle of the storm and there is no other place to go.

We sometimes struggle in our personal and congregational lives to not panic while we wait for turmoil to be over. But, with a practice of peaceful presence, we can find rest in the storm and come to have faith that the boat will stay afloat.

"Peace! Be still!"

With love,



Church of the Larger Fellowship



Do you work on a Sunday morning?

Can't get out of the house?

Can't get enough of Unitarian Universalism?

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), a unique congregation without walls, opens its doors even wider with the launching of its new website: www.QuestForMeaning.org. The website offers many new resources, including weekly online UU worship. Come explore. You're just a click away!

Thank UU

To Brian Keefer and Marion Lyon for sharing their piano skills with us on January 9 when Jay Rainey was sidelined by an injury from playing for our service. Our guest minister, Rev. Liz Strong, was most appreciative of them making the music happen.

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".

Gardner Contra Dance Series

at UUSG every 4th Saturday of the month

FREE Dance Lessons at 7:15pm
Dance Times: 7:30 - 10:00 pm

Live Music by The No Name Band



~ Callers & Dates ~

February 25 ~ Jim Fownes

March 24 ~ Sandy Lafleur

April 28 ~ Bill Fischer

May 26 ~ Alice Morris

June 23 ~ Rich Hart

All ages & abilities welcome! No need to bring a partner ~ each dance is taught by the caller.

Please bring clean suitable dancing shoes.

Suggested Donation:
\$7.00 per person - \$5.00 Students

Contact: Terry @ 978-632-6677
gardnercontradance@gmail.com
Facebook – Gardner Contra Dances

Donations Benefit: “The Elevator Fund”

This agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Inspiring Congregational Growth

with **Rev. Stefan Jonasson**, UUA Large Congregations Director

Saturday, March 3, 2012 - 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM
First Parish Church in Weston, MA

Healthy, dynamic congregations grow. There is an irresistible energy in these places: a sense of collective purpose, strong ministry, covenantal relationships, and infectious joy. This kind of energy often leads to numerical growth in membership, but more importantly it supports the spiritual depth and maturity of the community, helps the congregation learn and change, and inspires folks to make their faith manifest in the world. This is congregational growth at its deepest.

The good news is that we can help our congregations make way for all these kinds of growth. Our presenter for the day will be Rev. Stefan Jonasson, our UUA's Director of Growth Strategies. He's an engaging, funny, deeply experienced workshop leader who will help participants:

- engage growth strategies that work
- understand and prepare for different types of growth
- re-orient church leadership toward mission-based growth
- learn about special considerations for growing larger and smaller congregations

This training will be especially appropriate for ministers, board members, membership committees, religious educators, and anyone involved in congregational mission/vision/planning. We especially encourage teams of leaders to attend together.

REGISTER NOW! (Deadline: February 27)

The Rev. Stefan M. Jonasson is minister of the Unitarian Church in Arborg, Manitoba, and coordinator of services to large congregations for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.



Please note that Stefan will also be offering a master class on congregational growth for ministers and religious educators on Sunday, March 4 from 2- 5pm.

Space is limited so please register soon.

www.cbd-mbd-uua.org

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!

- February 12—UU Kids Valentine Social, 2:30-4:30 (see flyer)
- February 18—All-Age Open-Mic Talent Night & Coffee House, 7-9pm (see flyer or website)
- February 25—Contradances (see p. 3)

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 March newsletter is February 15.