

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

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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

March 6—International Women’s Day—Catherine AzoraMinda

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

March 13—It’s All About Connections—Rev. John Pastor

At its’ heart, spirituality is all about making connections: to self, to a transcendent form, to the world around us. This sermon will lift and affirm connections and how they contribute to our wholeness as spiritual beings.

Congregational Forum

There will be a Congregational Forum after the worship service, during the coffee hour, on March 13th. As always, this is an informal opportunity to share thoughts, concerns, ideas, etc. about our church community.

March 20-My Spiritual Path

Members of our congregation share from the journey that has led them to their current beliefs.

March 27—Conversations Before the Crisis—Rev. John Pastor

Death will come to all of us. We don’t know when we will die so we need to be prepared, financially, legally, and spiritually. This worship service will address how to prepare for a good death by having conversations with our loved-ones about our end-of-life wishes.

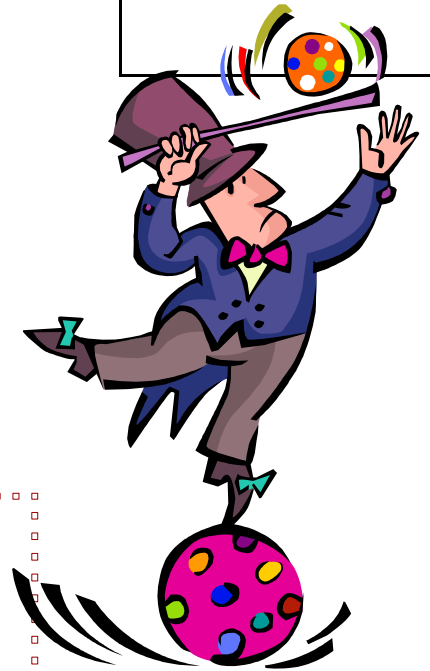
April 3—Commitment Sunday

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

April 10th is Regional Association Sunday!

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

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

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

Pastoring...

Building a Cathedral

*We make this space sacred
By all that we share
And by our resolve
To project onto the pathway of tomorrow
Our best reflections*

These Opening Words by Steven Shick are from our February 6th Worship Service. They speak to us of our present tasks for future growth; of creating "our best reflections." While these tasks are individual, they serve best when a commonality of purpose is defined.

Last month, our Executive Committee and your minister attended a workshop called, "Who's In Charge Here?" It was inspirational, thought-provoking, and challenging. Larry Peers was the presenter and offered us "The Cathedral Story." The story is about three stonecutters, all performing the same tasks: making bricks. When the first stonecutter was asked what they were making, the answer was, "I'm making bricks." The second was asked the same question. The answer was "I'm making a wall." But when the third stonecutter was asked this question, the answer was, "I'm building a cathedral." Three stonecutters performing the same task each with different visions of what they were creating. We are all building a cathedral together; a cathedral that is a beacon of hope, acceptance, truth, and love for this community and beyond. We are building, one brick at a time, and one wall at a time. This is the task.

By the way, the answer to the question, "Who's In Charge Here?" is, we all are.

May we be blessed in this work.

With love,

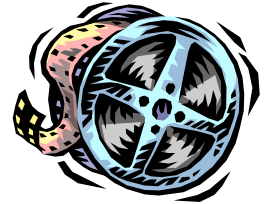


FILM & DISCUSSION SERIES ON IMMIGRATION

**Sunday, March 13, 2:00-4:30
at Winchendon UU Church**

This month's film in the series will be "Beyond Our Difference" which shows people around the world uniting across racial, religious, and social barriers.
(snow date March 20)

**Sunday, May 1, 2:00-4:30
at UU Society of Gardner**
Film: TBA



***Each session will include a movie,
discussion, and light refreshments.***

All are welcome.



Save the Date – April 6th, 2011

**Join Us for the 5th Annual
UU Mass Action Advocacy Day
*Standing on the Side of LOVE***

On April 6th UU's will congregate at the Unitarian Universalist Association's headquarters at 10 AM to kick off a day of advocacy at the Massachusetts State House. Declaring our intention to Stand on the Side of LOVE we will hear from knowledgeable lawmakers and activists who are working day-in and day-out to shape public policy on issues critical to our most vulnerable citizens. Following the program at the UUA Headquarters at 25 Beacon Street we will carry our message to lawmakers at the State House.

Our focus this year will be on Protecting Services for the Most Vulnerable. The economic downturn, the continuing revenue gap, and the disappearance of federal stimulus money has heightened the threat of sharp cuts to housing, health, and other life-saving programs. More about those issues will be available before April 6th as it becomes clearer what programs are being targeted in budget discussions.

Many of us in the UU Network look forward to this opportunity each year to gather together and express our deep desire for social justice in a very practical way. Our dream of a just and abundant life for all draws from a long history of Unitarian Universalist involvement in movements for human and civil rights, peace, economic and environmental justice, and so much more. Your attendance will make a real difference in the lives of those struggling on the edge.

Please join us

To find out more please visit our web site at www.UUMassAction.org or call Sue at (978) 910-0190. You can RSVP at SueMassAction@gmail.com.

Just Between UUs

Submitted by Catherine Azora-Minda

Sue Blain

Sue Blain grew up in southern New Hampshire in a “loosely Catholic” family living in a non-Catholic area. She describes her family as “oddball” in relationship to their environment as they were not Anglo-Saxon, protestant or middle class. After

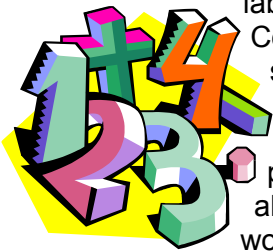


confirmation, at the age of 14, her parents said she could decide for herself about church and Sue decided she was agnostic and quit going to church. In her 20's she began attending church again, was married in a convent chapel, and tried out several churches, including a return to the Catholic Church. She also spent a period of time attending the First Church of God in Christ, “a holy roller, Pentecostal black church” which had her absolutely hooked for some time, spending 2 ½ hours in service on a Sunday morning.

A constant part of Sue's spiritual practice for many years has been the “Course in Miracles.” She first learned about it through the Center for Well-Being and began reading it on her own in 1997. She later joined a study group and still participates in one to this day. She reads from it every morning and “when I need a reminder of who I want to be or when I need to get my perspective back.”



In November of 1999 Sue paid her first visit to UUSG with the encouragement of Marion Lyon's husband, Richard, who was a co-worker at the math lab at Mount Wachusett Community College. Sue ran the math lab and she recruited Richard, who had been her daughter's teacher in high school, to work there as a professional tutor. He kept telling her about the church because he felt she would fit in here and thought that she would like it. In Sue's words, “I came to visit and never left.”



During her time here at UUSG Sue has served in many capacities including a stint on the Board and the Music and Worship Committee. This writer worked with Sue on the now defunct Activities

Committee, planning a wide variety of events from movie night potlucks to the farewell dinner for Rev. Howard. We also put together a welcoming party for Rev. John and Bob Hall. For this event, Sue created a trivia game about the UU church called “UU Head to Head” and slipped in questions about John and Bob to help us get to know them a little better. During her tenure as the “flower child” who decorated the sanctuary for Sunday worship, Sue created the red “Love Is the Spirit of This Church” banner at the church the night before a Valentine's Day service. The banner hung in the sanctuary for a long time and now decorates our booth at Gardner Days. Sue has a long-standing interest in adult religious education and most recently helped to plan the current series on immigration. She has led or participated in many worship services and has often shared her special gift as a storyteller for all ages.



One of Sue's favorite things about living in Massachusetts is that she has a strong feeling of community here and feels very connected to people through friends, church and her work. Her least favorite thing about it is that “not everyone I love lives here.” What is guaranteed to make her smile is her five grandchildren, three of whom live in Leominster and the other two recently moved from Florida to New Jersey.

Sue's chosen person to create a fantasy dinner with is Dorothy Day. She describes her as a “deeply spiritual and totally earthy person who lived her faith and just put one foot in front of the other doing what she knew was right. Dinner would be in the kitchen of a Catholic worker house after everyone else had been fed.”

At the age of 19, Sue traveled to Germany, France and Italy, touring through those countries in a VW camper with her sister and brother-in-law. She has memories of “fresh food and beautiful art” and having seen the Sistine Chapel and the “Pieta” before it was damaged. While some people may think that math is a foreign language, Sue doesn't

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necessarily believe it qualifies as such. She would like to learn conversational Spanish and has a personal goal of learning the syllabary of the Blackfoot language. Her mother's great grandfather was a horse trader in eastern Canada and he married a Blackfoot woman, Sue's great grandmother.

When she was young, Sue wanted to be "700 different things" when she grew up. In high school she moved back and forth between the fields of commercial art and teaching mathematics. After graduation, she didn't really want to stay in school

because "once I escaped, I wasn't going back." When her marriage ended and she realized that she would need an education in order to support her family, she went to Mount Wachusett Community College and now she works there teaching mathematics. Last year she completed a Master of Science in Mediation and Applied Conflict Studies at the Woodbury Institute of Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont. Though she began this study thinking that she would use it to change occupations, the lessons learned there have become part of her daily life. For now, she continues to work at the Mount because "teaching is not what I do, it's who I am."



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

How much time does your board or committee spend managing programs? How much time do your congregational leaders - paid and volunteer - spend seeking approval for choices they could be trusted to make on their own?

Good governance starts with clearly defined roles and authority. It succeeds when lay and professional leaders conduct ministry together as collaborating partners. Such partnership requires clear role boundaries, effective delegation and a constructive system of accountability.

With an eye to keeping your congregation's mission at the center of its ministry, this all-day seminar will help you to:

- clearly define roles and authority
- set clear policies
- streamline decision-making
- maintain clear limits
- trust others to make their own decisions
- create behavioral covenants
- make space for spiritual discernment and holy conversations

Presenter Dan Hotchkiss helps congregations move beyond frustrating and ineffective management of boards, clergy and staff. He helps participants, whether they want to sharpen their leadership skills, reorganize to enhance growth, or consider an entirely new model for board governance.

The author of *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership*, Dan Hotchkiss has consulted with hundreds of churches and synagogues across the American religious spectrum on a wide variety of issues. He is a senior consultant with the Alban Institute and is currently focusing his writing, teaching and consulting in the areas of planning, governance, clergy consulting and financial assessment. Dan is a knowledgeable, encouraging presenter with an engaging, conversational style.

Fee: \$50 / person - includes materials, refreshments and lunch
REGISTER NOW!!! (Deadline: April 25 or capacity)





The Rev. Dr. Jane R. Rzepka

Minister Emerita, Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF)

- ◆ UUA Distinguished Service Award (2010)
- ◆ Senior minister at the CLF (1999—2009)
- ◆ Minister at the UU Church of Reading, MA (1984—1999)

The writings of Rev. Rzepka are now available in both book format and CD.

A Small Heaven, a meditation manual filled with moments from Jane’s everyday experiences.

In CD format, ***From Your Minister (2009)***, a year of *Quest* columns (the Church of the Larger Fellowship’s monthly worship publication) — over an hour of Jane reading.

Both are available from the Church of the Larger Fellowship
www.clfuu.org

Coming this spring from Skinner House Books
From Zip Lines to Hosaphones:
Dispatches from the Search for Truth and Meaning
 To order: www.uuabookstore.org

Checks should be made payable to the **CLF** and mailed to: CLF, 25 Beacon St, Boston, MA 02108. Check enclosed: _____

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Proceeds support the CLF’s work to bring Unitarian Universalism to religious liberals throughout the world.

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)

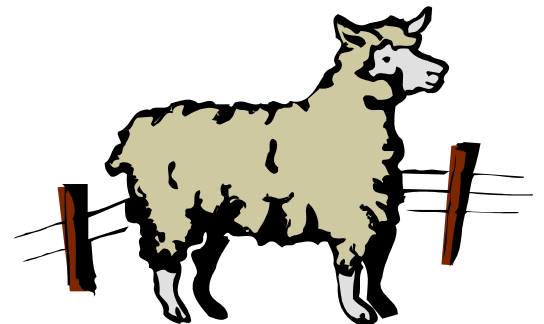
Bob Gifford (Chair, '13)

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 April newsletter is March 15.