

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

March 2008

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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

March 2—Practice Makes Imperfect—Rev. John Pastor

Sometimes we strive to be perfect in an imperfect world; this can be a real struggle. We can all develop a spiritual practice that lets go of this struggle.

March 9—Membership Sunday—Rev. John Pastor

During this service we will welcome new members to UUSG. Come celebrate!

March 16—If It Wasn't For the Women—Catherine Azora-Minda

In honor of National Women's History Month we will celebrate the contributions of Unitarian and UU women including Olympia Brown, Louisa May Alcott and Malvina Reynolds.

March 23—Easter Sunday Service—Rev. John Pastor

March 30—Justice Sunday

April 6—These Are My People—Rev. John Pastor

We are all a part of the stories of local and global suffering, triumphs of the spirit, and challenges of the heart. In all the many ways that we are in relationship with each other we are together as a people. "These are my people" is a mantra of interconnectedness, understanding and compassion.

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

Unitarian Universalist Church Opens Doors for Peace Sanctuary

On Saturday mornings, the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner has opened its doors as a Peace Sanctuary. From 10 A.M. to 11 A.M. the church will be open to those in the community who wish to pray, meditate, or think about world peace. The Reverend John Pastor and members of the congregation will be present during this hour to welcome those who wish to find hope and solace in a place of spiritual quietude. All are welcome. For more information call 978-632-0222.

Please note that the minister's office hours have changed.



Minister: Rev. John Pastor — Office Hours: Thurs. 1-5pm, Sat. 10-11am
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

Spring Ahead!!! Set your clocks for Daylight Saving Time on March 9, and don't miss out on Membership Sunday!

Membership Sunday Potluck

Potluck for New Member Sunday: Catherine Azora-Minda will be coordinating a potluck to welcome new members after the service on March 9th. Current members are invited to participate. Please contact Catherine for more details.



Pastoring.....

Spring is the time for resurrection.

As I am now writing, there is light snow falling outside. We are still in the grips of a typical New England winter and I find that I am looking forward to a change of season.

This year the official arrival of spring is followed closely by Easter, which comes early this year. This closeness of dates somehow seems appropriate as the seemingly dead earth sprouts new growth: a resurrection. Like the Easter Story, spring brings hope. In this season we have the opportunity to experience the newness of life present in our world and in our lives. This is the time for welcoming and embracing new life. It's a time for a reawakening of our human spirit.

David O. Rankin writes, "After a time of darkness, we are prepared to move into a new season, to be drawn into the new light. We don't wish to escape the past, but to be witnesses for a brighter future: We are ready for joy, we are ready for love, we are ready for new beginnings."

We are ready to rise, once again, on Easter morning and every dawn, to continue the work of creating a bright future for ourselves and for those that will come after us.

May you be blessed with the hope of resurrection this season and always.

With love,



Thank UU!

To Amina and Arif for clearing the church walkway of ice and snow so that there was access to our first Peace Sanctuary.

To those who continue to contribute to the Minister's Discretionary Fund.

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".

Dances of Universal Peace Offered as Spiritual Practice

Last month, Amina Silk and Arif Leininger began offering Dances of Universal Peace at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Gardner. Arif has wanted to bring the dances to this area for several years and has been working on his dance leadership and musicianship skills. Amina, who has been dancing for many years, likes to share these dances with others. They both lead the dances as a well-partnered team.

The Dances were originated by Samuel Lewis (1896-1971) in the late 1960s in San Francisco. He was a lifelong student of the esoteric teachings of many religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. Sam inspired folks in San Francisco with his dances and his peace plan – to eat, dance and pray together. Since then, the Dances have spread throughout the world. There are dance circles in North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, New Zealand and Australia. From an original collection of 50 dances there are now more than 500. Mr. Lewis writes, "The spiritual dance has no other purpose, no other aim than to elevate (hu)man kind beyond self thought, to joy, to bliss, to realization and to peace. The sincere dancer is one of the best workers for universal harmony, and so for universal peace."

The Dances of Universal Peace are joyous and meditative circle dances. They use sacred phrases, chants and songs from many of the world's wisdom traditions. The songs and phrases are combined with simple folk dance movements. All the dances are taught during the session, no prior dance or music experience is necessary.

The Dances of Universal Peace are held the second Thursday of the month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. For more information contact Amina or Arif at Amina1Arif@gmail.com, 978-874-2716 or the UUSG at 978-632-0222.

Just Between UUs

Submitted by Catherine Azora-Minda

In what will hopefully be a series of articles, I spoke recently with two people from our church to learn a little bit more about their lives. Since March is National Women's History Month, I chose to focus on two women, one who is a longtime member of UUSG and one who found this church fairly recently. Some of their common bonds include being lifelong residents of Massachusetts, being married in the Unitarian Church and having a strong love of the out of doors.

Jane Coleman

It is only fitting to begin these dialogues with Jane Coleman who traces her roots in this church back to the day of her christening as an infant in 1920. Her grandparents were members of UUSG as were her parents and Jane has continued that family tradition. One of the most memorable moments in this church for Jane was her wedding at UUSG in 1941 to her first husband, Pete Heywood. Her two daughters and her son grew up here, her daughters were married here and one of them, Jennifer Heywood, still attends services here.

During her years at UUSG, Jane taught Sunday School, served on the Board, and recalls putting on plays with the children in the sanctuary. She remembers being part of the Women's League which did activities to raise money for the church. There were bridge parties with 20 tables of people participating, working on numerous fall fairs, baking apple pies and putting on wonderful spreads for coffee hour over the years.

Jane's longest lasting and most valued role is one that has no title but is appreciated greatly. She began decorating the sanctuary as a part of a committee, working with a woman named Cora Miller. Eventually the committee dissolved, Cora was no longer able to do the work and Jane continued in that role. Jane brought her impeccable sense of taste to this work for a very long time and continues to function as an advisor and worker during the hanging of the greens for the winter holiday season. This job was a natural fit for Jane as her love of the out of doors includes gardening and oftentimes the flowers decorating the sanctuary would come from Jane's own garden. She gathered the greens that have been used for many years by

(Continued on page 4)



Nina Vecchi

Nina Vecchi, like Jane Coleman, is a lifetime resident of Massachusetts, starting out in Stow, taking a brief detour to New Hampshire and coming to rest in Westminster. Her first contact with the Unitarian church occurred when she was married to Mike Vecchi by an Indian minister in the Unitarian church in her hometown of Stow.

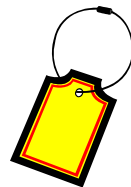
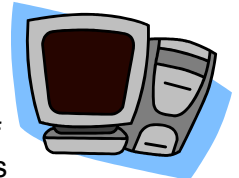
Nina found a career for herself doing something that she truly loves to do – shopping online. She has turned that habit into a successful business building e-commerce websites. Although she enjoys being self employed, this work involves very little direct contact with people and can be isolating.

As well as needing connection with other people and a sense of community, Nina felt that she had become spiritually stagnant. This led her on a search, “a new adventure,” to find open, like-minded people. This search brought her to UUSG for the first service of the church year last September. It happened that this was also Rev. John's first official day in the pulpit and Nina felt like it was really meant to be.

The Fall Fair gave Nina an opportunity to jump right in and get involved with the activities at UUSG. She tied on one of the well-worn money aprons and was working the flea market section when the doors opened to let in the waiting throng, a situation she likened to the running of the bulls. She's already looking forward to next year's fair and found it to be a great way to start getting to know people. She's also hosted a coffee hour and has offered her expertise working on the web to help improve our website.

Nina enjoys everything about Massachusetts, including good educational possibilities and

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(Jane Coleman, continued from page 3)

trekking through the woods she knows so well in and around Gardner.

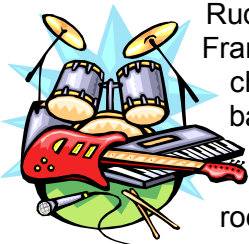
Jane's love of the out of doors is one of the reasons that she traveled to and camped at most of the national parks in this country. The longest trip was a five week camping journey by car and ferry from Massachusetts to the glaciers and mountains of Fairbanks, Alaska. She went on a cruise with 23 family members to the Scandinavian countries and St. Petersburg, Russia, that began with a stay in London and ended with a stop in Paris.

In 1996, Jane and her current husband, Bud Coleman, were married at UUSG. They have known one another since the first grade and remained friends throughout the years. They married after the loss of their first spouses. Jane loves the changing of the seasons in Massachusetts and babies are guaranteed to make her smile. She is grandmother to six children and great-grandmother to another six children, providing her with lots of reasons to smile. We are very fortunate to have Jane Coleman as a constant presence in our midst with a treasure trove of UUSG history in her background.



(Nina Vecchi, continued from page 3)

medical services, the mountains and the sea, and all of the cultural resources. She doesn't travel a lot, but does love Las Vegas. She prefers to be at home with her three dogs, Rudy, Jake and Eddie, her cat Frankie, and, of course, Mike. Her children, Gina and Tony, play in a band together and Nina says there is no connection between this fact and her early desire to be a rock star when she grew up.



Nina likes to cook and enjoys music, including playing the guitar and singing. She turned physical fitness into an active part of her life, moving from smoking three packs of cigarettes a day to lifting weights, walking the dogs and eating healthy. She believes that this has improved her life spiritually as well as physically. We are very fortunate that Nina's search led her here to UUSG.

Who's Who Among UUSG Committees

Meeting days & times listed may vary due to holidays or other conflicts. Please contact the committee chair to verify!

Executive Committee

2nd Sunday of the month, 11:45am

Chair: Bob Gifford

(see last page of newsletter for member listing)

Finance Committee

1st Wednesday of the Month, 7:30pm

Members: Priscilla Ericsson, Chris Pera

Ministerial Relations Committee

Members: Chris Pera, Jane Coleman,
Dorcas Hurd

Music & Worship Committee

4th Thursday of the month, 7:30pm

Chair: David Fabian

Members: Vicki Heidorn, Marion Lyon,
Catherine Azora-Minda

Publicity Committee

2nd Saturday of the Month, 9:00am

Members: Marion Lyon, Catherine Azora-Minda,
Priscilla Ericsson

Religious Education Committee

3rd Sunday of the Month, 11:30am

Chair: Nancy Fiske

Members: Vicki Heidorn, Melody Fortier,
Shauna Pratt

Property Committee

forming

Purpose: identify and prioritize building needs, make recommendations for repairs, coordinate maintenance

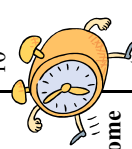
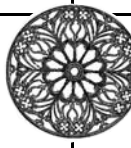




Membership & Welcoming Committee

forming

Purpose: new member consciousness, caring for all members, activities, small group ministry

All committees are encouraged to provide current information regarding meeting schedule and committee chairpersons for publication in the newsletter. As always, committee news and updates are also welcome!

UUSG March 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2 Worship, 10am Congregational Forum Adult RE, 11:30	3 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	4 TOPS, 9am	5 MOMS Club, 9:30am Meditation Group, 6pm Finance Comm, 7:30pm	6 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm	7 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	8 Publicity Comm, 10am Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
9 **Daylight Savings Starts** Worship, 10am New Member Welcome Potluck, following Newsletter Deadline	10 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm 	11 TOPS, 9am	12 Meditation Group, 6pm	13 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Dances of Universal Peace, 7pm	14 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm 	15 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
16 Worship, 10am Exec Comm., 11:45am Private Function, 4-9pm	17 Happy St. Patrick's Day! Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm 	18 TOPS, 9am	19 Meditation Group, 6pm RE Committee, 7pm	20 1st Day of Spring!!! Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm 	21 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	22 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
23 Worship, 10am  Happy Easter!	24 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	25 TOPS, 9am	26 Meditation Group, 6pm	27 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Worship Committee, 7:30pm	28 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	29 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
30 Worship, 10am	31 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm April 1 TOPS, 9am 	2 Meditation Group, 6pm	3 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm	4 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	5 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm	

Bold: UUSG events at UUSG

Plain Text: Rental Groups at UUSG

Italics: Community Events

Boldface Italics: District & UUA events

Coffee Talk

Rolling Out the Red Mugs

Special RED mugs are available for newcomers during Coffee Hour. If you are relatively new to UUSG, please use a red mug to identify yourself. Please take the opportunity to greet and get to know our newest visitors!



Coffee Fundraiser

We will be placing another order from Dean's Beans, a local family-owned certified organic, fair trade, specialty coffee roaster. This is a great opportunity for you to purchase quality coffee while supporting ethical buying and business practices, AND the church.

***If you have had the coffee at Coffee Hour,
then you've tried Dean's Beans!***

Visit www.deansbeans.com to view the available choices and get your special requests to Vicki Heidorn as soon as possible. Prices through the church are \$8.50-\$9.50 per pound, which includes the shipping cost.

Greeters & Coffee Hour Coordinators

Someone is needed each week to greet people as they come into the sanctuary, hand out the orders of service and help with the offertory collection.

Help is also needed coordinating Coffee Hour. Directions are posted in the kitchen indicating how much coffee to use in the urn, what jobs need to be done, etc.

Please sign up for one of these important jobs on the sheet next to the kitchen window.

Is it the Coffee or the Cup?

A group of alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life. Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups—porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite—telling them to help themselves to hot coffee.

When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said: "If you noticed, all the nice looking expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is but normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases, it is just more expensive, and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups... And then you began eyeing each other's cups. Now consider this: Life is the coffee; the jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain Life, and the type of cup we have doesn't change the quality of life we live. Sometimes by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee in it." Enjoy your coffee!

Anonymous

"You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing what they could and should do for themselves."

— Abraham Lincoln

Evolution of The Easter Bunny *Why a bunny?*

Easter is right around the corner and with Easter comes the sunny days of spring, children dressed in their best seersucker suits and bonnets with baskets full of chocolate bunnies and colorful eggs. But what in the world does a bunny have to do with Easter?

The symbol of the Easter Bunny originally came from the pagan festival of Eastre or Eostre - the goddess of fertility. This festival celebrated replenishment, rebirth, the renewal of life, and spring. The consort of Eastre was the symbol of fertility, a hare. According to some stories, Eastre gave the hare the ability to lay colorful eggs (an ancient symbol of fertility) once a year.

In Germany it was believed that the Hare would lay colorful eggs to all the well behaved children who had left a nest for the animal. The children would build their nests in secluded places out of their bonnets or caps and excitedly await the arrival of the "Oschter Haws". It is believed that the Germans brought this tradition with them as they migrated to North America during the 18th century. However the celebration of Easter and the rabbit were not widely celebrated in America until after the Civil War.

As time passed, the traditional took on some new forms and by 19th century America the Easter Hare morphed into the Easter Bunny and children's nests of caps and bonnets became baskets which are now filled with more than just colorful eggs. Baskets now include chocolate candies, jelly beans, marshmallow peeps and other assorted goodies. And the holiday is celebrated by Christians and Non-Christians alike as a celebration of life and spring.

Earth Day Every Day



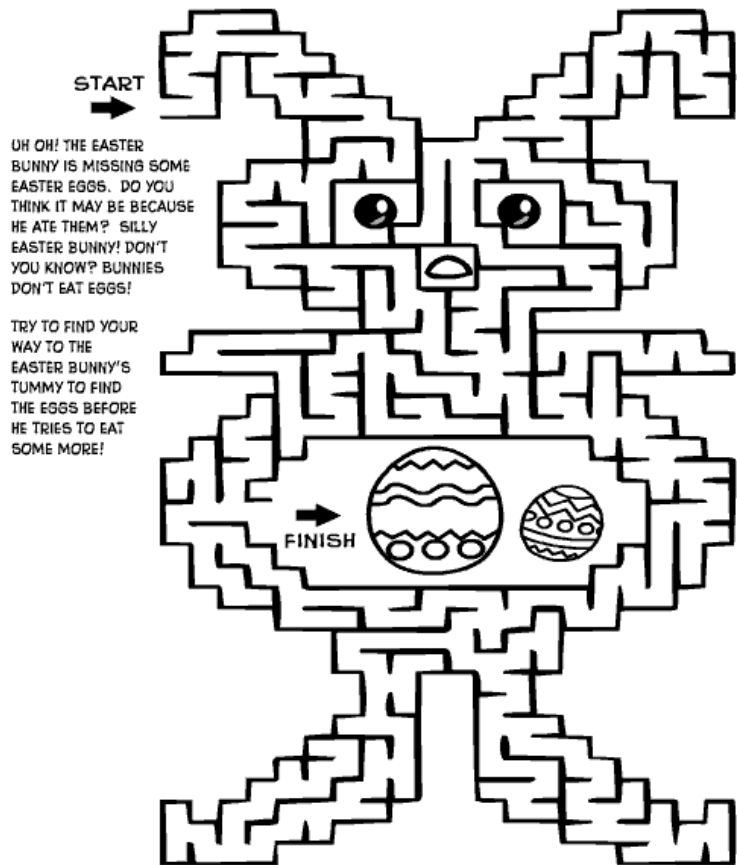
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MAZE EASTER MAZE



Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

P.O. Box 637
Gardner, MA 01440

TO:

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or be on our mailing list, or if your address has changed, please send a note to the church, "Attention: U-First Editor."

March 08

Your Executive Committee

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 2007-08

Al Ericsson
David Fabian
Nancy Fiske
Melody Fortier
Bob Gifford (Chair)
Vicki Heidorn (Clerk)
Marion Lyon



Save the Date!

March 2—Adult RE: Gathered Here...

March 9—Membership Sunday Potluck, following Worship

March 23—Easter Egg Hunt, following Worship

April 5—Clara Barton District Spring Conference & Annual Meeting; Keynote Speaker: Jim Scott "Making Art of Our Vision." Childcare available if registration received by March 24. For more details and registration forms, visit www.cbd.uua.org

Newsletter Contributions

The deadline for newsletter contributions is usually the second Sunday of the month. Send your contribution via e-mail to uusg.newsletter@gmail.com; or on diskette, typed or *neatly* handwritten in the newsletter "in-box" located on the bulletin board downstairs. No phone submissions, please. Contributions may be edited for length or content at the discretion of the editors.

The deadline for the April newsletter is March 9th.