

# U-FIRST

May 2008

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

## In this issue...

Pastoring...—p.2

UUSG Fundraiser:  
Candles & Cutlery—  
p.2

Monthly Movie  
Night—p.2

Calendar of  
Events—p.3

Just Between UUs—  
p.4

## Upcoming Worship Services

*Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.*

### May 4—Universal Dances for Peace—Amina Silk and Arif Leininger

We're going to dance! Worship will be in the fellowship hall. Children are invited to participate.

### May 11—Compassion Sabbath – 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 Compassion Sabbath Worship will address how to prepare for a good death.

### May 18—Children's Sunday—Vicki Heidorn

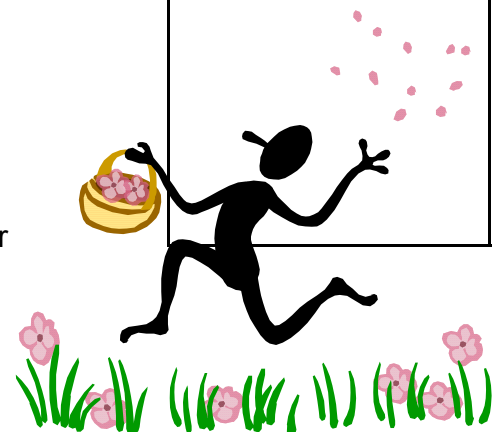
Vicki and our children will lead this service.

### May 25—Memorial Day Service—Rev. John Pastor

### June 1—Songs of Our Spirit—Music & Worship Committee

Join in as we sing sacred and secular music to inspire us for our Annual Meeting.

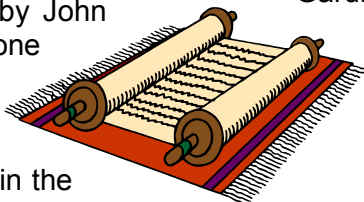
*Everyone is invited to join us for coffee and conversation in the fellowship hall downstairs following worship.*



## Adult RE

### Understanding the Bible

Many in our congregation have signed up for this exciting Adult RE Course, which will include five sessions on the Hebrew Bible. Participants will be using a book called *Understanding the Bible: An Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers and Religious Liberals* by John Buehrens, along with one of the recommended versions of the Bible. A second series of sessions will be held in the fall, focusing on the Christian Bible.

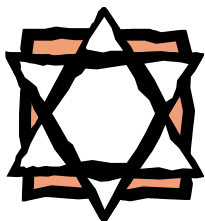


## Financial Commitment Forms

The financial commitment form will help us prepare the budget for next year. Consider your plans for the year July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009. Make your best estimate of your giving commitment. You can change it at any time just by letting us know. Please return your form in a sealed envelope addressed to the Finance Committee, UUSG, PO Box 637, Gardner MA 01440 or hand it to a Finance Committee Member or the Church Secretary. You can indicate on the form whether you would welcome a conversation with one of our church leaders.

**Please respond by May 4th or as soon as possible.**

Copies of the form are available at church or by contacting Chris Pera or Catherine Azora-Minda.



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

## Pastoring.....

At the end of the April 6<sup>th</sup> worship service, "These Are My People," it was great fun to sing "Together, Wherever We Go." Jay's talents are such a gift to our religious community! And the song was so appropriate to the theme of our service that day. As we move forward, its good to sing and think about all the ways that we come "together."

We are called to come together to keep before ourselves our highest ideals and our love for people, no matter who they are. Staying clear and centered in our deepest intention to be a thriving religious community is our vision. It is important that this vision always be with us, before us. As Proverbs reminds us "Where there is no vision, the people perish...." [29:18] From our clear and centered vision we can come to believe in something better, something higher, something that makes a difference when we all say yes. The willingness to say yes will make the difference in our lives between misery and grace.

Remember, we're all in this together.

"Together, Wherever We Go!"

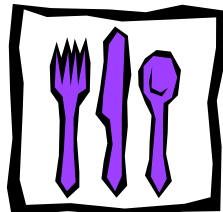
With love,



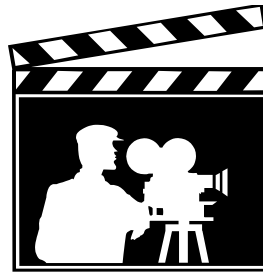
## Soy Candles & Cutlery

During the Fall Fair we sold cutlery and soy candles. Both are available at any time. They make wonderful shower, apartment, house-warming, or any kind of gift. The church makes money on everything that is sold. There will be a catalog available on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

If you have any questions, please call Dorcas Hurd at 987-874-2350 or email her at [dorcashurd@comcast.net](mailto:dorcashurd@comcast.net).



# MOVIE NIGHT!



In following up on the discussion at the Sunday Forum, we have scheduled movie nights from April through August. We are building a list of titles and welcome suggestions, especially those that relate to timely themes and topics. Please note that movie

night will be the last Saturday of the month, with occasional exceptions. The goal is to provide an opportunity to get together over supper and watch and discuss provocative movies.

**Meet for pot-luck supper: 6:30 pm**  
**Movie and discussion: 8:00 pm**

### April 26—Middle Sexes

(Gore Vidal) <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/339674/Middle-Sexes-Redefining-He-and-She/overview>

### May 31—What the "Bleep" Do We Know!?

Described as a blending of science and new-age spirituality, this film has its adherents and its skeptics. Check the web for both sides of the argument.

### June 28—Stonewall

This showing coincides with the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall riot in Greenwich Village after the NYC police raided a drag bar. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/stonewall.html>.

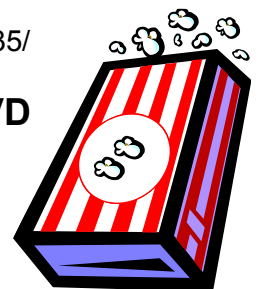
### July 26—The Russians Are Coming. The Russians Are Coming.

Enjoy great comedy and ponder the serious questions about what stereotyping and propaganda do to us. A good family film. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060921/>

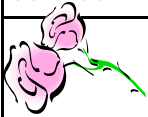
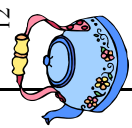


### August 23—Guess Who's Coming for Dinner

Tracy, Poitier, Hepburn. 1960's white parents' liberal attitudes are challenged when their daughter brings home a fiance who is black. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061735/>

**Does anyone have a DVD projector we can use?**  
**If so, please email [nfiske@comcast.net](mailto:nfiske@comcast.net).**



# UUSG May 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27 Worship, 10am	28 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	29 TOPS, 9am	30 Meditation Group, 6pm 	May 1 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Adult RE, 7-8:30	2 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	3 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
4 Worship, 10am Congregational Forum, following Dances of Universal Peace, 12-2pm	5 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	6 TOPS, 9am Executive Committee Meeting, 6:30pm	7 MOMS Club, 9:30am Meditation Group, 6pm	8 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Dances of Universal Peace, 7pm	9 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	10 Publicity Comm, 9am Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
11 Happy Mother's Day! Worship, 10am <u>Newsletter Deadline</u>	12  Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	13 TOPS, 9am	14 Meditation Group, 6pm	15 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Adult RE, 7-8:30	16 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	17 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
18 Healing Share Session, 9am Worship, 10am RE Comm., 11:30am	19 Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	20 TOPS, 9am	21 Meditation Group, 6pm	22 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Worship Committee, 7:30pm	23 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	24 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm
25 Worship, 10am	26  Memorial Day Yoga, 6:30-8:30pm	27 TOPS, 9am	28 Meditation Group, 6pm	29 Minister's Office Hours, 1-5pm Adult RE, 7-8:30	30 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	31 Peace Sanctuary & Minister's Office Hours, 10-11am AA, 12-1pm Movie Night, 6:30pm 

**UUSG events at UUSG**

Plain Text: Rental Groups at UUSG

*Italics:* Community Events

**Italics:** District & UUA events

# Just Between UUs

Submitted by Catherine Azora-Minda

*Arif Leininger*

Following his passion and his path, Arif Leininger found his way to UUSG in the fall of 2007. He came looking for a place where he could hold an event called the Universal Dances of Peace ([www.universaldancesofpeace.org](http://www.universaldancesofpeace.org)).

In the process, he attended the Wednesday night meditation group and then came to see what the Fall Fair was all about. He and his partner in life and partner in dance, Amina Silk, left the fair laden with all sorts of treasures from the flea market to furnish the home they were sharing in Westminster. He also attended a service at the church and found that he really liked it and he liked the feeling of the people attending the service as well.

Arif is originally from Baltimore and he came to Massachusetts as a drummer in a rock band in the early 70's because Boston is "much more of a music city than Baltimore." They played at the colleges and in the bars around the universities. During this time he met and married his wife, Karla, and went back to school after the birth of their daughter. He moved from being a musician and a cabinetmaker into a career as a software engineer at Simplex and was doing the "dad thing—Cub Scouts, t-ball and stuff like that." His daughter now lives in San Diego and his son is in college.



The Universal Dances of Peace provides another community that Arif is a part of and it is a passion that fills his life. He was originally drawn to the dances in the 70's because he was a "total mess." He did them for three years or so and then came back to them during the time when his wife became ill. He and Karla both went to the dances and it provided a place for them to be in community during her illness. Other healing modalities that he learned and used with her included Reiki, Qigong and the Buddhist practice of tonglen "taking and giving—you breathe in the pain and then breathe out relief for them."

After Karla's death a little over a year ago, Arif found we was maintaining a routine that he had created for himself which included running, playing guitar, meditating, reading, Qigong breath meditation and chanting. He also trained to play guitar for groups doing the Universal Dances of Peace. It was during this time he met and fell in love with his current partner, Amina, who is also trained to lead the dances. They want the dances to be "a total heart experience...leading with hearts instead of minds." They both have teachers and are constantly training. While there are 400-500 dances to choose from, "they are into having joyful, energetic dances" and the dances they choose reflect that philosophy.

In March, Arif and Amina traveled to Syria with a woman who lives half of each year in Vermont and the other half in Syria. He says that being in Syria felt like home. He found the people to be very welcoming to them as Americans and he felt safe being there. There is so much history in this area, going back over many centuries, civilizations built upon previous civilizations, parts of old cities remaining standing out in the desert



in various stages of decay. While there Arif was able to participate in a zikr, a religious ceremony of remembrance, holding hands and chanting with lines and lines of other men in an ancient mosque.

Since becoming a member of UUSG in March, Arif has moved to Gardner within very close walking distance to the church. One of the reasons for this move was to be able "to be close to community without needing to use resources." Besides bringing the Dances to our church, he and Amina are now offering monthly healing sessions before the service in the meditation space in the fellowship hall. He is still a "big believer in cross training—doing a little bit of physical exercise, a bit of meditation, reading and psych work so your shadow doesn't bite you." If it were possible, he would love to spend time in conversation with Sam Lewis, the founder of the Dances of Universal Peace, or John Lennon. It is possible for all of us to spend time in conversation and dance with this very interesting newcomer to our congregation.



# 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."

May 08

## Your Executive Committee

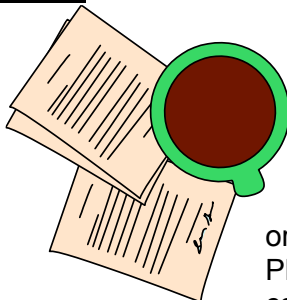
If you have any questions or suggestions regarding church policies or programs, please feel free to speak with any of the church trustees.

## Save the Date!

May 4—Congregational Forum, 11:20-11:50;  
More Dances of Universal Peace, 12pm-2pm  
June 1—Annual Meeting, following Worship Service

## Trustees for Church Year 2007-08

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



## Deans Beans

You can purchase fair trade coffee and chocolate products which support small farmers in the world, the local economy, and our church. Please check out the product list on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall or [www.deansbeans.com](http://www.deansbeans.com) for a full list of what's available. Please fill out an order form and give it to Vicki Heidorn or call her at 978-630-2340. Extra packages of coffee and java drops are often available for immediate purchase.

## 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](mailto:uusg.newsletter@gmail.com); or on diskette, typed or neatly handwritten in the newsletter "inbox" 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 June newsletter is May 11th.**