

U-FIRST

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

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(978) 632-0222 — www.uusg.net

December 2009/
January 2010

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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

December 6—Chair City Pipers

An annual tradition, the Chair City Pipers return with their wonderful seasonal music.

December 13—We Need a Temple?—Rev. John Pastor

The story of Channuakah is about the restoration of the temple as the central place of worship in ancient Israel. This sermon speaks to the temple tradition and asks if we need a temple, a spiritual home, today.

December 20—The Sacred Darkest Days—Vicki Heidorn

Vicki Heidorn and other lay volunteers will lead readings and songs for Judeo-Christian, earth-based, and world religions celebrating this sacred time of year.



December 24, 6:00pm

Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward All—Rev. John Pastor

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. The community is invited to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.



December 27—Making Beautiful Music Together

Hymn-Sing-A-Long and Potluck lunch. All musicians and wanna-be musicians are invited to participate in the festivities. Please speak to Marion Lyon, so we can plan to have a really great time.

January 3—Buddhist Meditation Community Service

(Catherine organizing – more details?)

January 10—What On Earth Have I Done—Rev. John Pastor

This sermon is a reflection on Robert Fulghum's book of the same title. Fulghum writes to his fellow travelers about the deep and vexing mysteries of being alive.

January Worship Services
continued on page 2



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

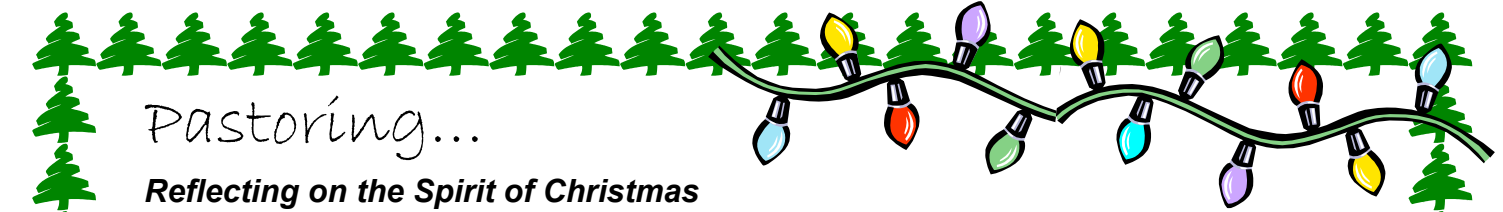


Minister: Rev. John Pastor — Office Hours: Thurs. 1-6pm,
Call for an appointment or to arrange another day or time.
For pastoral emergencies — 508-277-6113

Emeritus Minister: Rev. Neil Bakker

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Pastoring...

Reflecting on the Spirit of Christmas

As I approach the end of this year, I find myself reflecting on our time together.

I am so honored and proud to be serving this thriving congregation, now finishing our 125th year. What a celebration we had! During this year we have gathered to worship, to teach and to learn, to create community, for gardening, and for coffee and conversation. There have also been times of sadness and concern. You have been a place of compassionate presence; witnesses to life's rough places. This Christmas, this season of peace and good will, I offer you a special thank you for all your sharing, caring, and giving.

Rev. Howard Thurman writes, "The spirit of Christmas—what is it? It is the rainbow arched over the roof of the sky when the clouds are heavy with foreboding. It is the

brooding Presence of the Eternal Spirit making crooked paths straight, rough places smooth, tired hearts refreshed, dead hopes stirred with the newness of life. It is the promise of tomorrow at the close of every day, the movement of life in defiance of death, and the assurance that love is sturdier than hate, that right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil."

My dear friends, in this season of light in the darkness let us hold this spirit of Christmas in our hearts. Let us bring this spirit with us into the coming New Year. Let us always remember that we are here to help one another.

Bob and I wish you every blessing of this season.

With love,



Upcoming Worship Services, Continued:

January 17—Are We Temporarily Able Bodied?—Vicki Heidorn & Bill Ruggiero

How to pause for the consideration of diverse needs.

January 24—Martin Luther King Sunday—Rev. John Pastor

Once again, this Sunday we will be reading from "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" to honor the inspired leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

January 31—Surprise Musical Program

February 7—Reiki Healing Service—Rev. John Pastor

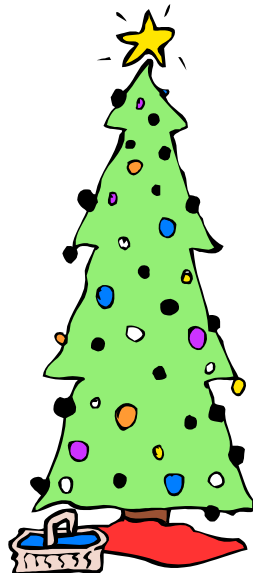
Greening the Sanctuary

On Saturday, December 5th at 10AM you are invited to help decorate our sanctuary for the holidays. We will put up our Christmas Mitten Tree, hang our wreath, arrange fresh evergreens, and polish brass. Hot chocolate, tea, and cookies will be provided. For more information contact Rev. John.

Mitten Tree

On Sunday, December 6th our Christmas Mitten Tree will appear in the sanctuary. The children in our Religious Education Program made the mittens that hang on the tree. Each mitten represents a gift for the needy children in our community. On the back of each mitten is written "boy" or "girl" and an age range. We encourage you to take a mitten, purchase a gift for that child, and return it, unwrapped, with the mitten attached. Please place these gifts back under the tree by December 16th. They will be brought to the Community Action Committee for distribution.

For more information contact Rev. John.



Holiday Movie Night

December 19 at 6:30 p.m.

The Publicity Committee of UUSG is hosting a holiday movie night, a time to socialize with one another and enjoy a couple of special movies. We'll open the evening with "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," the animated film featuring Boris Karloff as the voice of the Grinch. The feature-length film is "A Christmas Carol" starring Alistair Sim. This version is considered by many—especially those on the Publicity Committee—to be the classic adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel.



Please take some time away from your holiday preparations to have some holiday fun. Popcorn and beverages will be provided.



I can't wait until we get to watch a movie on the big screen at church again!

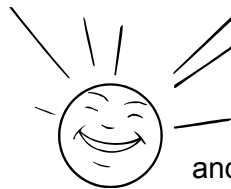
—CALEB PERA

Adult Bible Study Class

Our next meeting will be December 17th at 7pm and include a discussion of the Gospel of John. While reading it, please give some thought to:

- why John was called the most beloved disciple,
- why Jesus set up an inner circle (Peter, James, John),
- how and why this gospel differs from the synoptics.

The annual Fall Fair was a great success, despite the driving rain. Some areas made more money and some made less than last year. However, it wasn't entirely about the money made. A lot of the success was the spirit and cooperation of the congregation. More than thirty people offered assistance with setting up, baking, working the day of the fair, and cleaning up the day after.



Thank you to all who participated in any large or small way. Every bit of time and effort helped to brighten the day!

—Leslie, Terry, and Dorcas

If you have any suggestions for future fairs, please call Leslie or Terry.

Just Between UUs

Submitted by Catherine Azora-Minda



Al & Priscilla Ericsson

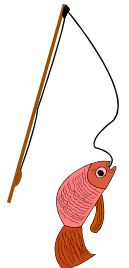
Al and Priscilla Ericsson live seemingly quiet lives on a quiet back street in a very tidy ranch house. This, in spite of the fact that they share the space with several animal friends, including six cats, a dog, tropical fish and some birds. Their lives are rich with many daily moments of connection— connection to each other, connection with their "roommates" and connection to their community.



From 1969 to 2000, Al and Priscilla lived in Littleton where they had a house, a barn and six acres of land. They raised chickens, ducks, a pig, honey bees, horses, and had a dairy goat herd. They lived a life that was close to the land and heated their house with wood. Then Al decided it was time

to retire from his work as a nurse and move to Florida. Priscilla wasn't quite convinced that Florida was the answer but agreed to go if Al would just do two things—become a Unitarian and a vegetarian.

Priscilla was baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church and was raised as a Congregationalist. As a young mother, she took her son to the Unitarian church and was impressed with the way that they included other religions within their worship and teaching. Al was raised in the Salvation Army church which has a strong military influence, including wearing uniforms to church. Al took Priscilla up on both of her "requests" and so they moved to Florida where they became members of a storefront Unitarian church that had no traditional church building and no minister.



After a couple of years in Florida where Al fished

(Continued on page 5)



UUSG December 2009 & January 2010

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
6 10am Worship	7 6:30pm Yoga 6:30 Executive Comm. Meeting	8 9am TOPS 6pm, Wachusett Vegan Society	9 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	10 1-6pm Minister's Office Hours 7pm Dances of Universal Peace	11 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	12 8:30am Zikr 9am Peace Sanct. 9am Publicity Committee 12-1pm AA
13 10am Worship Congregational Forum, following	14 6:30pm Yoga	15 9am TOPS	16 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	17 1-6pm Minister's Office Hours 7pm, Bible Study	18 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	19 9am Peace Sanctuary 12-1pm AA
20 9am Healing Share 10am Worship	21 6:30pm Yoga	22 9am TOPS	23 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	24 6pm Worship 	25 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	26 9am Peace Sanctuary 12-1pm AA
27 10am Worship	28 6:30pm Yoga	29 9am TOPS 	30 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	31 	Jan 1 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	2 9am Peace Sanctuary 12-1pm AA
3 10am Worship	4 6:30pm Yoga 6:30 Executive Comm. Meeting	5 9am TOPS	6 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	7 1-6pm Minister's Office Hours	8 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	9 9am Peace Sanctuary 12-1pm AA
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24 10am Worship 	25 6:30pm Yoga	26 9am TOPS	27 6pm Meditation 7:30 Book Group	28 1-6pm Minister's Office Hours 7:30pm Music & Worship Comm.	29 10:30am AI-Anon 5-8pm AA	30 9am Peace Sanctuary 12-1pm AA

and volunteered, they decided to move back to Massachusetts. Al gave up retirement and vegetarianism and they looked for a Unitarian church to join. They found their house in Gardner and very quickly found UUSG where they became members in March of 2002. Both of them felt at home here and they thought that the people were very friendly and welcoming.



Al has been on the Board a couple of times and has served on the Building Committee with a focus on the maintenance of the building. He was on the Board during the time that Cindy Landrum was hired as the minister and ordained at UUSG. He is looking forward to the Christmas service which is one of his favorites, hearing the old, familiar hymns. One of the things that he especially appreciates about this church is how we don't all have to agree. He's not "a liberal person in a lot of ways, but I can be here, have my own thoughts and still fit in quite comfortably."

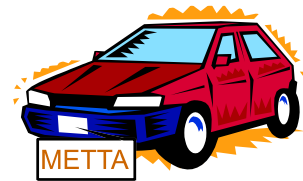
Priscilla served as the Treasurer for three years and is now on the Finance Committee, functioning as the secretary. She was a member of the Publicity Committee for a few years and was instrumental in starting the meditation group that meets here regularly on Wednesday evening. Priscilla's son, Tom, spoke at a worship service about his spiritual journey as a Buddhist. After that service there seemed to be some interest in learning more and so Priscilla did an internet search for meditation groups in the area. Both the Insight Meditation Society and the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies came up. Priscilla followed that lead which brought Chas DiCapua here to begin a group. She is pleased to see how the group has grown and developed over the past few years.



As lifelong residents of Massachusetts, that short stay in Florida aside, both Al and Priscilla love this area. Priscilla especially loves "the trees and the soil and the stone walls and the seasons." She also enjoys the people here and likes hearing the Massachusetts accent. They both agree, in Al's words, that "there's precious little about it I don't like...I don't like some of the politics too much and the taxes are a little disturbing." Additionally, Priscilla says she doesn't like "the long, cold, dark nights of winter."



While Florida is about as far as Priscilla has travelled, Al travelled extensively in Europe as a medic in the service, serving in Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland. Given the opportunity to have a vanity license plate, Al's would say "Train Nut" and Priscilla's would say "Metta," the Pali word for lovingkindness.



The person who Al would like to have a dinner conversation with is Curt Schilling of the Sox. "he's an interesting guy with lots of thoughts about life and the world in general – was a hero when they won the Series." Priscilla's fantasy dinner guest would be Elwood Babbitt. "Elwood was a full trance medium and psychic. In the 70's, he was a frequent guest on WBZ radio and Al and I would listen to him take calls and give readings...Much research and testing was done on Elwood, which proved his credibility."

Al is guaranteed to smile at the thought of coffee with his wife, "there's no better thing than that" and it's a standing morning occurrence. For Priscilla, it's their granddaughter Erin who is almost three years old.



When Al was growing up, he thought he would like to be a fireman. When they lived in Littleton he was an on-call fireman so he got to live his childhood ambition. When Priscilla was growing up, she said that girls got the message that they "were going to be a mother and a wife" and she never gave it much thought. Her father said that if she trained to be a secretary she would always have a job. Following along those lines and her love of math, she trained to become a bookkeeper and it's still work that she enjoys doing. As for Al, he says he will probably never retire again because his work brings meaning to his life.

Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

P.O. Box 637

Gardner, MA 01440

TO:

Nov 09

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 2009-10

Bo Azora-Minda

Rodney Fagan

Melody Fortier

Bob Gifford (Chair)

Cheryl Menard

Chris Pera (Clerk)

Mike Vecchi

December 12—Peace Sanctuary, 9am

This Saturday Amina and Arif will offer a zikr prior to the Peace Sanctuary at 8:30. The Peace Sanctuary will be held in the healing space in the fellowship hall. It is a time to spend in prayer or meditation for peace. All are welcome.

December 19—Popcorn & Movie Night, 6:30pm

December 24—Christmas Eve Service, 6pm



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.