

# 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](http://www.uusg.net)

December 2006  
& January 2007

## Upcoming Worship Services

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

### December 3—On Being Cast Down

Please see “Minister’s Farewell” on page 2 for information about the celebration for Rev. Stephen immediately following the service.

### December 10—Music for the Holidays

Special Guests: The Chair City Pipers

### December 17—Does God Exist?

### December 24—Remembering Who We Are, Christmas Sunday

This will be Rev. Howard’s farewell homily. (Service at 10AM only)

Please see page 3 for an invitation from the Winchendon Church to join them for a traditional Christmas Eve Service in the evening.

### December 31—New Year’s Eve Sunday, Lay-led Service

### January 7—Commitment Sunday, Led by David and Leslie Fabian

### January 14—Beyond the Dream: The MLK Our Holiday Leaves Out, Guest Speaker: Tony Lorenzen

Tony Lorenzen is a Ministerial Intern with UU Church in Weston, MA. Please see page 7 for his full bio.

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

## Adult Religious Education:

### The Welcoming Congregation Program

The Adult RE sub-committee will soon begin to offer workshops from the UUA Welcoming Congregation Program. This program is a completely volunteer program for congregations that see a need to become more inclusive towards bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people. It consists of a series of workshops developed by the UUA. The goal of the workshops is to reduce prejudice by increasing

understanding and acceptance among people of different sexual orientations. Some of the workshop titles include: How Homophobia Hurts Heterosexuals; Connections to Other Forms of Oppression; Gender Socialization and Homophobia; and Biblical Perspectives on Homosexuality.

For more information, please speak with Lori Shea, Melody Fortier or Sue Blain.

## In this issue...

Minister’s Message—p. 2

Fall Fair Update—p. 2

Children’s RE—p.3

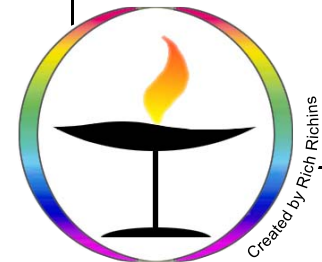
UUSC Guest at Your Table—p. 3

U-Youth!—p. 4

Holiday in Focus: Chanukah—p. 4

Calendar of Events—p. 5 & 6

Trustee Tidbits from CBD—p. 7



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## Minister's Farewell

Please join us Sunday, December 3rd following the service for a potluck celebration in honor of Rev. Howard. This marks his completion of 50 years in the ministry as well as wishing him a fond farewell. Please plan on attending and thanking Stephen for his spirituality and leadership.

## New Member Welcome!

Please join us in offering a warm welcome to our newest member, Lori Shea, and her daughter, Kelsey.

## Holiday Greetings

Both Ann and I wish to extend warm holiday greetings to all the members and friends of the UUSG. We have enjoyed our time in Gardner and wish you success in future endeavors.

Sincerely, Stephen

## Fall Fair Update

The annual Fall Fair was a great success. Thank you to everyone who helped from beginning to end. On October 21<sup>st</sup> six people helped to make 27 pies. (There are some left.) The day before the fair a total of 8 people helped to set up tables and sort through all of the treasures that had been donated. The day of the fair, which was sunny and pleasant so that the Bake Sale could be held outside, brought 20 individuals to serve lunch or help customers. Cleanup went quickly with about 8 determined people.

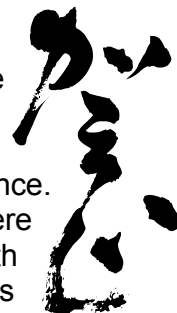
Again, thank you for your participation. The profit was \$1,200 plus!

If you have any comments or suggestions, please call Dorcas Hurd at 874-2350 or e-mail [dorcashurd@comcast.net](mailto:dorcashurd@comcast.net).

## Minister's Message

### THE NEW YEAR

Soren Kierkegaard observed that "Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward." Our understanding is based on past experience. Yet we cannot live solely in the past. There is much in the past that provides us with pleasant memories. These memories sustain and inspire. Yet there are other memories that remain an oppressive burden. Perhaps we have memories of people who have wronged us, or memories of personal misfortune. In order to live productive lives, we have to remember the lessons of history and not become fixated on our scars so that we are incapable of moving toward the open future. Our scars are visible reminders of our encounters with the inequities of life. To understand the past is the function on reason- to live creatively toward the future is an act of faith. Wisdom



enables us to interpret the past. Faith enables us to meet the unknown future with courage.

Once, after a snowstorm, I looked out of my window and was both pleased and surprised to discover the Rose of Sharon that had been bent to the ground by the heavy snow had sprung back to its original form. Only one branch had broken off. The rest remained intact.

I recalled a favorite passage from Boethius, a philosopher-humanist and advisor to the Roman Emperor Theodoric. The Consolation of Philosophy was written in the sixth century. Boethius, probably falsely accused of treason and lamenting his unjust fate, wrote these words from his prison cell:

*The bough which has been downward  
thrust by force of  
Strength to bend its top to earth, so  
soon as the pressing  
Hand is gone, looks up again straight  
to sky above.*

As we enter a new year, may the resilient spirit of life guide us into the unknown future.

-Stephen

## From Winchendon to Gardner

An Invitation from Rev. Jennie Barrington and the  
Congregation of UU Winchendon

All members and friends of the  
UU Society of Gardner are invited to our

**Christmas Eve Service,**  
at 7:00 p.m.,

at the UU Church of Winchendon,  
126 Central Street in Winchendon,  
with the half-circle driveway and flower gardens.

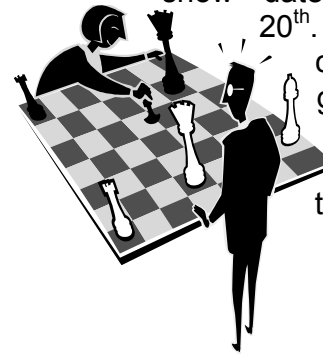


All are welcome, and we have plenty of  
room! As is our tradition, it will be a service  
of lessons and carols, concluding with "Silent  
Night" sung by candlelight.

Additionally, we invite any members and friends who  
would like to sing with our choir to join us during our  
Christmas Eve service. We'd love to have some additional  
voices, and we'd love the added fellowship and fun that  
would result. Our choir is about to begin rehearsing, so we  
ask anyone interested to contact us soon. They may call  
the Rev. Jennie Barrington at: 978-297-3480.

## Potluck & Game Night

The Activities Committee will be  
hosting a Potluck, Game Night  
on January 13<sup>th</sup> at 6PM with a  
snow date on January  
20<sup>th</sup>. Please



come, bring a  
game and a  
dish to share  
and join in  
the fun!

## Children's RE: Holiday Joy



The children will be participating  
in a holiday program this  
December. Please speak with a  
children's RE teacher for more  
details.

## Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

### Guest at Your Table

The Guest at Your Table  
boxes and envelopes are  
available at the church.  
They will be collected on  
January 7<sup>th</sup>. Please take  
one and donate towards  
the great work of the  
Unitarian Universalist  
Service Committee. For  
more information, please  
speak with Melody  
Fortier.

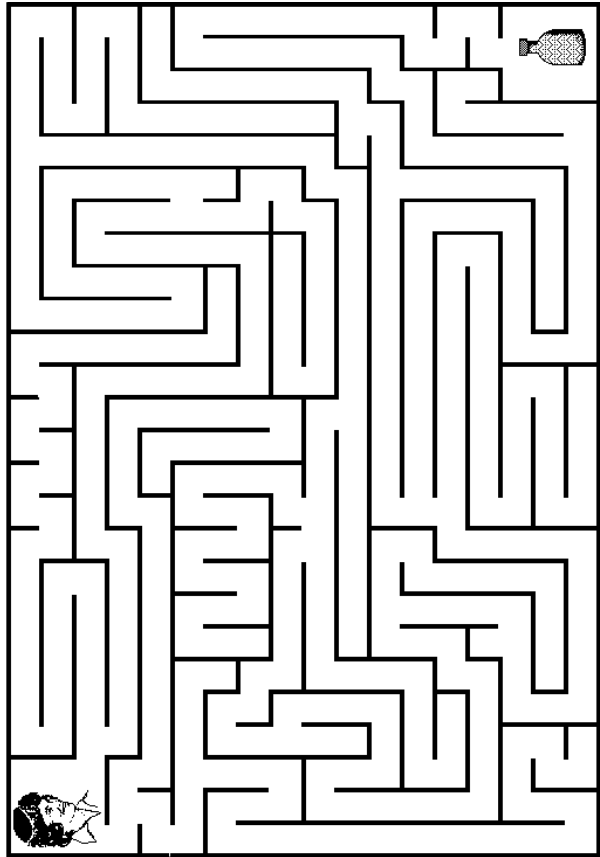
Info from  
[www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org)

*Through this special tradition, Unitarian  
Universalist communities celebrate the worth  
and dignity of all people and learn how to put  
these values into action. The Guest at Your Table experience of  
families learning together has built lasting connections to UU values  
for generations of UU youth.*

*Guest at Your Table has been an important part of UUSC, and of UU  
culture, since 1975. The program made its UUSC debut following  
then Institutional Advancement Director Warren Salinger's trip to the  
Netherlands. While there, he was inspired by a similar organization's  
program, entitled "Gast aan Tafel," to educate its supporters about its  
work and to raise vital funds. That program used colorful boxes that  
the whole family could enjoy. Warren immediately began work with  
UUSC's staff in Massachusetts to adapt the idea for use in Unitarian  
Universalist homes nationwide — and even worldwide! Each year  
since 1975, involvement in Guest at Your Table has grown  
tremendously, strengthening UUs' connections to our shared  
principles and helping to challenge injustice throughout the world.*

*You can keep this spirit and tradition alive. Put a Guest at Your Table  
box on your family's table and discuss together what it means to  
welcome a guest to your table.*

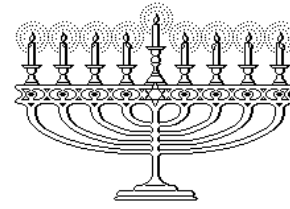




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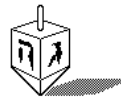
Find the flask of oil

# Chanukah Word Search



O L I V E O I L A T K E  
 H Z X E Y U O Z G V I A  
 H A L L E L S Y P E S F  
 S J M E Z N I H S L L T  
 A I Z M A C C A B E E T  
 M H G I E E R K E D V K  
 A A R G L R J U I I R S  
 H Y Q P D N U N G E B N  
 S G M E N O R A H R I B  
 N E A E A E K H T D M G  
 T S Z E C R L C O X B A  
 W S F L R Z S M F L F F

CANDLE  
 CHANUKAH  
 DREIDEL  
 EIGHT  
 GELT  
 GIMEL  
 HALLEL  
 HAMMER  
 HAY  
 KISLEV  
 LATKE  
 MACCABEE  
 MENDRAH  
 MODIN  
 NUN  
 OLIVE OIL  
 SHAMASH  
 SHIN  
 SYRIANS  
 TEMPLE



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## Chanukah

Sundown, December 15 — December 22, 2006

Every year between the end of November and the end of December, Jewish people around the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, but the starting date on the western calendar varies from year to year. The holiday celebrates the events which took place over 2,300 years ago in the land of Judea, which is now Israel.

Long ago in the land of Judea there was a Syrian king, Antiochus. The king ordered the Jewish people to reject their G-d, their religion, their customs and their beliefs and to worship the Greek gods. There were some who did as they were told, but many refused. One who refused was Judah Maccabee.

Judah and his four brothers formed an army and chose as their name the word "Maccabee", which means hammer. After three years of fighting, the Maccabees were finally successful in driving the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed the Temple in


Jerusalem. The Maccabees wanted to clean the building and to remove the hated Greek symbols and statues. On the 25th day of the month of Kislev, the job was finished and the temple was rededicated.

When Judah and his followers finished cleaning the temple, they wanted to light the eternal light, known as the N'er Tamid, which is present in every Jewish house of worship. Once lit, the oil lamp should never be extinguished. Only a tiny jug of oil was found with only enough for a single day. The oil lamp was filled and lit. Then a miracle occurred as the tiny amount of oil stayed lit not for one day, but for eight days.

Jews celebrate Chanukah to mark the victory over the Syrians and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. The Festival of the Lights, Chanukah, lasts for eight days to commemorate the miracle of the oil. The word Chanukah means "rededication". In America, families celebrate Chanukah at home. They give and receive gifts, decorate the house, entertain friends and family, eat special foods, and light the holiday menorah.

from <http://www.holidays.net/chanukah/story.html>

# UUSG December 2006

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	27 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	28 TOPS, 9am	29 Meditation Group, 6pm	30 	Dec 1 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	2 <b>Decorate the Church</b> AA, 12-1pm
3 <b>Worship, 10am</b> <b>Farewell Potluck</b>	4 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	5 TOPS, 9am	6 MOMS Club, 9:30am Meditation Group, 6pm	7	8 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	9 AA, 12-1pm
10 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	11 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	12 TOPS, 9am	13 Meditation Group, 6pm	14	15 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	16 AA, 12-1pm
17 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	18 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	19 TOPS, 9am	20 Meditation Group, 6pm	21 Belly Dancers, 7-9pm	22	23 AA, 12-1pm
24 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	25 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	26 TOPS, 9am	27 Meditation Group, 6pm	28 Belly Dancers, 7-9pm	29 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	30 AA, 12-1pm


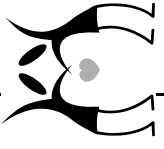
**Bold:** UUSG events at UUSG

*Plain Text:* Rental Groups at UUSG

*Italics:* Community Events

**Boldface Italics:** District & UUA events

# UUSG January 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Dec 31 <b>Worship, 10am</b> 	Jan 1	2 TOPS, 9am	3 MOMS Club, 9:30am Meditation Group, 6pm	4	5 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	6 AA, 12-1pm
7 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	8 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	9 TOPS, 9am	10 Meditation Group, 6pm	11 Belly Dancers, 7-9pm	12 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	13 AA, 12-1pm <b>Potluck &amp; Game Night, 6pm</b>
<b>Newsletter Deadline</b>	15 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	16 TOPS, 9am	17 Meditation Group, 6pm	18	19 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	20 AA, 12-1pm
21 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	22 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	23 TOPS, 9am	24 Meditation Group, 6pm	25 Belly Dancers, 7-9pm	26 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	27 AA, 12-1pm
28 <b>Worship, 10am</b>	29 Yoga, 6:30-8:30	30 TOPS, 9am	31 Meditation Group, 6pm	Feb 1 	2 Al-Anon, 10:30am AA, 5-8pm	3 AA, 12-1pm

**Bold:** UUSG events at UUSG

Plain Text: Rental Groups at UUSG

*Italics:* Community Events

**Boldface Italics:** District & UUA events

## Tony Lorenzen, Guest Speaker for January 14

Tony Lorenzen is a candidate for the UU ministry and will meet with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in March in Chicago. He earned a BA from Fitchburg State College in 1990 and received his M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School in 1994. He taught theology and ethics in Catholic high schools for a number of years before joining the UU congregation in Leominster. He has also worked for Amnesty International, the CARE AIDS Services Project in Fitchburg, Mass Equality, and served as Coordinator of Volunteers and Spiritual Care for the Gardner VNA Hospice. He continues

to teach the course "The Bible as Literature" at Fitchburg State College. He was the Green-Rainbow Party Candidate for Lt. Governor in 2002 and is currently the ministerial intern at First Parish Church in Weston, UU, where he coordinates the middle school Coming of Age program, runs the Soulful Sundown services, teaches adult education, and serves as staff liaison to the Stewardship Committee and Church School Committee. He lives in Leominster with his wife and son.



## Trustee Tidbits

*By Jackie Shanti,*

*UUA Trustee, Clara Barton District*

Every 3-4 months I travel to Boston (or in June to the site of our General Assembly) to sit at a table with my fellow trustees from across the country. We are joined by UUA President, Bill Sinkford and senior staff from the UUA. Over the course of 4-5 days, we gather in working groups and committees, to worship and share meals, and to sit together as Trustees of our Association.

When I began this "work" my youngest sister asked me only one thing: "Does it nourish you?" After 3 years I would offer a soulful "Yes!" My eyes still cross a bit at the sight of spread sheets and budgets, but my attention span for fiduciary matters has increased greatly. And my energy never wanes when issues regarding justice, growth or mission are on the table.

The Board's focus these past 3 years has been to better serve our congregations by promoting less "top down" programming and more "lifting up" of grassroots efforts, showcasing and sharing the best practices that already exist in our congregations. We've also made major changes in our annual assembly – "GA" – so that it can be truly a gathering of congregational leaders.

We are asking our congregations to be more intentional in sending delegates to GA – not just depending on those who might be vacationing in the area – and in turn, the Board has committed to helping pay registration for congregational presidents. Top-notch speakers, workshops and networking

opportunities are being provided, focused on areas of congregational life that challenge and inspire us all: leadership development, membership/hospitality, collaboration among UU congregations, and witnessing to our faith in the larger world. (visit <http://www.uua.org/ga/ga06/uuu.html> for detailed description and resources from UU University 2006).

Board business is rarely "as usual" these days. At our October meeting we tabled a vote on the fee structure for GA 2007. This followed a "light bulb" moment when the Board was presented with a GA budget which included a poorly attended, highly subsidized "childcare" program. In that moment we realized that our re-visioning of GA needed to include our best offering of children's programming, not just childcare or babysitting. Why not bring together inspired UU educators and curricula to hold our children in a community of faith and love? The excitement was palpable as we planned our entry into a new era of family-friendly GAs. Stay posted for details!

During the coming months I will share other tidbits of news from the Board, and I welcome your feedback, questions, concerns and ideas. I represent ALL of the congregations in Clara Barton District, and I would love to hear from you! In fact, I could use your help: as a member of our District's Growth Team I'm preparing an article on summer services and how many of our congregations are expanding their definition of the "church year" to include year-round, full-service programming. What does your congregation currently do in the summer? What are your dreams? Contact me at [jshanti@comcast.net](mailto:jshanti@comcast.net) or (413-788-7649).

# 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."

Dec 06/Jan 07

## Save the Date!

Dec 2—Decorate the Church

Dec 3—Farewell Potluck for Rev. Stephen Howard

Dec 24—Christmas Service at UUSG, 10AM;  
Christmas Eve Service at Winchendon UU Church, 7PM

Jan 7—Turn in "Guest at Your Table" Boxes

Jan 13—Potluck & Game Night, 6PM



**Look for details inside!**

## Newsletter Contributions

The deadline for newsletter contributions is usually the second Sunday of the month. Send your contribution via e-mail to [julie99slp@gmail.com](mailto:julie99slp@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 February newsletter is January 7th.**