

# U-FIRST

February 2006

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)

## In this issue...

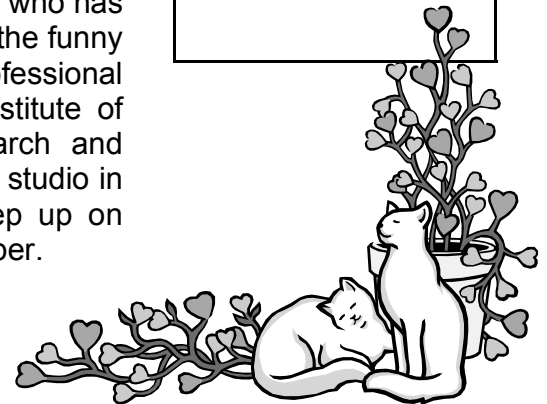
Minister's  
Message—p.2

From the Executive  
Committee—p. 3

Calendar of  
Events—p. 4

February Religious  
Holidays—p. 5

U-Youth!—p. 5



## Upcoming Worship Services

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

### February 5—Loneliness, Solitude and Community

### February 12—On Being Cast Down

Reflections on melancholy and depression. Abraham Lincoln spent a lifetime fighting fear and depression.

### February 19—Carl Gustav Jung - Physician of the Soul

### February 26 Humor to Warm Your Heart in the Midst of Winter: Part II

Guest Speaker, Phil Milgrom, returns to our congregation to inject a little more of his humor into our winter days. Phil is an acclaimed public speaker, wellness consultant, educator, writer, yoga instructor, and therapist, who has been illuminating the minds, uplifting the hearts, and strengthening the funny bones of audiences for over 25 years. He belongs to several professional groups, including the Association for Therapeutic Humor, the Institute of Heartmath, Institute of Noetic Sciences, and the Yoga Research and Education Center. He is co-director of The Centered Place, a yoga studio in Warren, MA. He also teaches yoga in Chelmsford, MA. To keep up on stress, Phil works at HP Invent full-time as a documentation developer.

**Check out Phil's website at [www.philmilgrom.com](http://www.philmilgrom.com)!**

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

## A Welcoming Congregation

Please remember to wear your nametags during services. Visitors and guests appreciate the extra step we take to make them comfortable.

## Become a Member!

Thinking of joining the church? A three-session course will be offered in March for those considering church membership. Please speak to Rev. Howard if you are interested.

## Snow Removal

Volunteers are needed to help Leo Rousseau with snow removal. Please sign up on the sheet by the kitchen if you can help out.

The church is also in need of a snow blower. If you have one that you would like to donate, please contact the church office. If it needs a little repair, we'll try to fix it up.



Minister: Rev. Stephen Davies Howard — Phone: 413-253-5868  
Office Hours: Tuesday 10am-2pm (Wednesdays if inclement weather)

Emeritus Minister: Rev. Neil Bakker

U-First Editors: Julie Pera — [pera.cj@verizon.net](mailto:pera.cj@verizon.net)  
Cindy Malley — [b.charmer@verizon.net](mailto:b.charmer@verizon.net)

Church Office: Catherine Azora-Minda, Secretary — 978-632-0222  
Office Hours: Thursday 10am-2pm

## Minister's Message

One of the recurring themes in Robert Frost's poetry is our need to be steadfast and to continue on our special errands or missions. This becomes particularly clear in his poem, "The Onset", in which he describes an experience with the whiteness of the winter storm as the storm descends in the dark woods. The poet discovers a precedent in nature, the return of spring by which the power of cold and death are defeated. In a similar way despair is overcome if we persist in our special missions and errands.

*I almost stumble looking up and round,  
As one who overtaken by the end  
Gives up his errand, and let death descend  
Upon him where he is, with nothing done  
To evil, no important triumph won,  
More than if life had never begun.  
Yet all the precedent is on my side:  
I know that winter death has never tried  
The earth but it has failed...*

As the snow descends in the dark woods the familiar landmarks are covered. In the days allotted to him, the poet must honor his calling as an artist and keep his promise to those dependent on what he does or leaves undone. Everyone has a journey to continue, commitments to honor and promises to keep in the time and place allotted. There is a sense of urgency and finality in all we do. Each one of us has a special mission or vocation – a path to follow that varies with the inner law of our individuality. What we do has significance and importance. Feelings of worthlessness vanish like the winter snow, melting into April rains. In a few weeks spring will return and once again this powerful precedent will release earth from bondage to cold. New life will adorn the earth and the triumphant power of hope will become evident.

Sincerely, Stephen



## Thank UU

To everyone! The Giving Tree was a great success this year. Thank you to all for the wonderful presents and for thinking of the girls at Cottage Hill. They were very happy on Christmas morning and had a wonderful holiday season. Again, thank you for giving so generously to a cause that is so dear to my heart.



Sincerely,  
Heather Mahoney

Our deepest thanks are given to Diane Tousignant and Connie Thompson for serving on the Executive Committee. Diane resigned during the summer. Connie is resigning so that she can focus on recovery after her hospitalization. Your efforts and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated.

*If you know of a contribution 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".*

## In Our Thoughts...

We send our deepest condolences to Bill Ruggiero and his entire family on the loss of his mother.

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery are being sent to Jane Coleman who is recovering from a broken knee.

Connie Thompson is on the mend from her hip surgery. We hope to see her in services again soon.

## From the Executive Committee

### What does the Executive Committee do?

The Executive Committee is the direction setting, policymaking body of the congregation. It is the elected leadership of the congregation. The Executive Committee shall have general charge of the property of the society and the conduct of its business affairs and control of its administration. (UUSG by-laws)

### Can I come to an Executive Committee Meeting?

Visitors are welcome at E.C. meetings. If you have an item for the E.C., contact any E.C. member or Vicki Heidorn, chairperson. Some issues are addressed at a committee or task group level and then brought to the E.C. We are a democratic institution—sometimes the "EASY" button works, and sometimes it requires patience!

### What has the Executive Committee been working on?

- ◆ Safe Congregations Policy
- ◆ Vision and Mission
- ◆ Growing a lifespan religious education program with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children, teens and adults through the years
- ◆ Outreach to the community through newspaper and website development
- ◆ Worship experience
- ◆ Taping the service
- ◆ Disruptions, devices to aid hearing and additional speakers for downstairs
- ◆ Property decisions regarding the house at 119 Edgell St.
- ◆ Issues with our aging church building (roof, kitchen floor, heat, handicapped accessibility)
- ◆ Finding an organist/choir director
- ◆ Developing a sense of community

Our community of faith has a long history. The church buildings are physical property belonging to the entire society. The challenge for us as a gathered democratic community of faith is to be good stewards of the property and to promote good to our members, the larger community of Gardner and the world. The Executive Committee thanks everyone for his or her involvement!

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Heidorn, Chairperson, Executive Committee

## Thank You for Serving

Board members are elected by the congregation at the Annual Meeting in June and appointed to fill mid-term vacancies by majority vote of the board. The board has invited Marion Lyon and Trish Mahoney to fill two mid-term vacancies. Welcome, Marion and Trish!

## Adult Religious Education

### Poetry Appreciation

Sundays; February 5th & 19th,  
11:30 AM

Participants are asked to read and share thoughts about a poem of their own choosing. Poetry is an essential part of the religious quest. Robert Frost suggests that a good poem begins with delight and ends with wisdom.



## Scrapbooking & Craft Club

Come to craft and converse! Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 7th, 6:30-9pm. Bring your current project and a friend or two!

## Time for Fun

On Saturday, February 11th at 5:30pm there will be a potluck supper and game night for the entire congregation. Please come; bring a game or two (board games, cards, anything that you think we would enjoy) and a dish to share. Everyone is welcome for a night of great food, fun and community!

# U-Youth!

## Valentine's Day

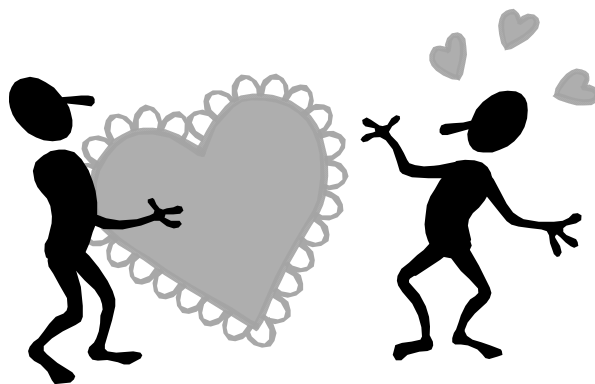
Every February we celebrate Valentines Day by giving flowers, candy and cards to those we love. We do this in honor of Saint Valentine. You may be wondering, "Who is St. Valentine"? Legend has it that Valentine was a priest who served during third century Rome. There was an Emperor at that time by the name of Claudius II. Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those that were married. With this thought in mind he outlawed marriage for young men in hopes of building a stronger military base. Supposedly, Valentine, decided this decree just wasn't fair and chose to marry young couples secretly. When Emperor Claudius II found out about Valentine's actions he had him put to death.

Another legend has it that Valentine was an imprisoned man who fell in love with his jailor's daughter. Before he was put to death he sent the first "valentine" himself when he wrote her a letter and signed it "Your Valentine", words still used on cards today.

Perhaps we'll never know the true identity and story behind the man named St. Valentine, but this much is for sure...February has been the month to celebrate love for a long time, dating clear back to the Middle Ages. In fact, Valentine's ranks second only to Christmas in number of greeting cards sent.

Another valentine gentleman you may be wondering about is Cupid (Latin cupido, "desire"). In Roman mythology Cupid is the son of Venus, goddess of love. His counterpart in Greek mythology is Eros, god of love. Cupid is often said to be a mischievous boy who goes around wounding both gods and humans with his arrows, causing them to fall in love.

[www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/val/history.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/val/history.html)



## February Holidays by Religion

### February 2nd—IMBOLC (Wicca)

Imbolc (also called Imbolg, Candlemas, Brigantia, The Feast of the Waxing Light, and Oimelec) celebrates the increasing strength of the God, given as the first and greatest gift of the Goddess. Many Wiccans honor the Goddess at this time as the source of fire, poetry, arts, crafts, agriculture and smith craft. It is a time for reflection upon the generative power of the gods, from which will come the later material and spiritual harvests.

### February 3rd—SETSUNBUN-SAI (Shinto)

Popularly known as the Bean-throwing Festival, Setsunbun-sai marks the end of winter and the eve of the first day of spring according to the ancient East Asian solar calendar familiar to Japanese. Beans are thrown into each room of the house, and then through the outer doors, with the shout, "Devils out, Fortune in!" Today, Setsunbun-sai is a happy family festival.

### February 9th—ASHURA (Islam)

Ashura commemorates the martyrdom of Husain (Prophet Muhammad's grandson) in AH 61 (680 CE). Shi'ite Muslims celebrate (calling the festival Muharram) for ten days from the first of Muharram. Ashura is also associated with the safe landing of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat.

### February 26th—MAHASHIVRATRI (Hinduism)

Mahashivaratri is dedicated to Shiva, one of the major deities to whom Hindus direct their devotion. The night before the feast, Hindus recite texts, sing songs, and tell stories in honor of this God whose dynamic cosmic dance creates, preserves, destroys, and recreates the world.

# 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."

Feb 06

## 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 2005-06

Vicki Heidorn, Chairperson

Sue Blain

Keith Casavoy

Bob Gifford

Marion Lyon

Trish Mahoney

Cindy Malley

## Save the Date!

February 5—Adult RE, 11:30am

February 7—Scrapbooking & Craft Club, 6:30pm

February 11—Potluck & Game Night, 5:30pm

February 12—Board meeting, 11:30am

February 19—Adult RE, 11:30am

February 26—Guest Speaker, Phil Milgrom



**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 [pera.cj@verizon.net](mailto:pera.cj@verizon.net) or [b.charmer@verizon.net](mailto:b.charmer@verizon.net); 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 March newsletter is February 12th.**