

UU-FIRST

February 2013

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

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Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

February 3—Sharing With Friends—Bill Ruggiero & Rev. John Pastor

Invite a friend to our church for this service!

February 10—Let Us Pray—Rev. John Pastor

According to Anne Lamott the three greatest prayers are “Help, Thanks and Wow.”

February 17—Finding Balance in a Busy Life—Laura Reichsman

Fully participating in life is fun and satisfying. Yet finding the balance between being truly engaged and time to recharge can be challenging. Come explore ways to find that balance.

February 24—Walking the Unfrequented Road—Rev. John Pastor

The road less traveled is often more interesting, but can also be more challenging.

March 3—International Woman’s Day—Catherine AzoraMinda

This celebratory service features the words, music and lives of UU women.

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

Welcoming Congregation

As you may remember hearing in the past couple of months, a group of members feel it is time to “formalize” UUSG’s status as a Welcoming Congregation. What does this mean? With the help of UUA guidelines, UUSG would develop a program over the next 12 to 18 months that would help members of our congregation learn and discuss issues specifically to be more inclusive of members of the LGBTQ community. As we participate in this program, we will also likely learn more about being welcoming and inclusive to all people.

You may be asking the question, “But aren’t we already welcoming?” There is no doubt that the UUSG community does

a great job welcoming members, friends, and new comers, regardless of their orientation or religious beliefs, but there’s always room

for improvement. We may not realize that changing little things, like making our bathrooms gender neutral, can be a big deal to making all individuals feel more welcome. This program is designed to help us look at some of these small (and big) things that make our community more inclusive of all individuals.



Growth and learning only work if people are willing to participate. As we move forward to “certify” ourselves as being a Welcoming Congregation, we welcome everyone to take part in the many opportunities for growth and discussion that this program will provide.

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

U-First Editor: Julie Pera — uusg.newsletter@gmail.com

Church Office: Catherine Azora-Minda, Secretary — 978-632-0222

In the hymn, "Blessed Spirit of My Life," written as a prayer by Shelley Jackson Denham, There is a verse line that reads,

*Fill me with a vision,
clear my mind of fear and confusion.*

I often pray and meditate for clarity of mind. Having a clear mind is important in my ministries. Though this is sometimes a challenge when the world is swirling all around me. Can you relate to this?

You may be juggling a lot around in your brain on a daily basis. It may be that even routine spiritual practices, like meditation don't always bring clear thinking. There is so much "fear and confusion" out there. My goodness, just listen to the news! The list is quite lengthy: the economy, jobs, retirement, the future of our children, etc... As a nation, we apparently just narrowly escaped going over a "fiscal cliff."

In our spiritual community there are worries about our finances; our own fiscal cliff. Will everything be alright? Will we be able to keep this community of the spirit going? Where will the money come

from? There is a desire for this financial issue to disappear and be replaced by the comfort of an abundant bank account. How will this be accomplished? We begin by talking directly in community about our fears, confusions, and unrealistic expectations. We may need to completely change the way that we operate and develop a clear mind that can be filled with a vision. This vision will be a map of a realistic plan for the continuance of this house of faith. Our financial challenges have been the "elephant in the room." Yet, I know that a conversation took place about this issue at the last Congregational Forum. This is good!

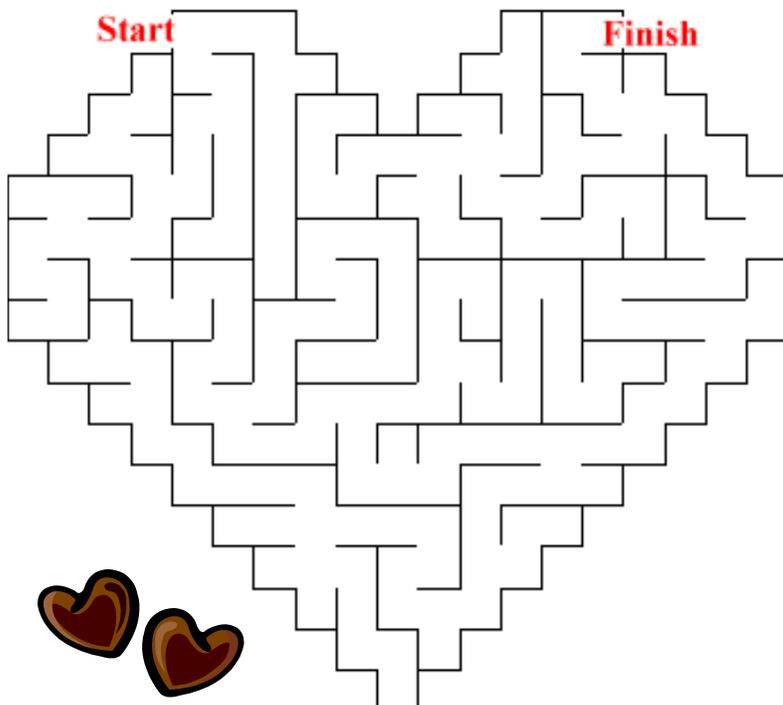
Oh, getting back to "Blessed Spirit of My Life," the verse line that follows the one quoted above is,

*When my thoughts flow restlessly,
let peace find a home in me.*

These two verse lines seem like the perfect prayer for us in this time, in this place.

With love,

UU-Youth!



Thank UU

To Tom Brady for repairing and installing the window inserts in the sanctuary.

To everyone who helped in greening the sanctuary for the holiday season, and to Jay Rainey and Caleb Pera for providing music to go with the festivities.

To those who quietly ungreened the sanctuary when the time came.

To Tom Brady for repairing the lights inside the Wayside Pulpit, and to the Pera family for donating the inserts with our voted-upon UUSG name.

To Roy Gilbert for his donations of furniture—a table for meeting on the stage and a pulpit for downstairs events.

*Thank UU, CongratUUlations, In Our Thoughts & Welcome
If you know of a contribution, concern, or accomplishment
that deserves mention in this column, please be sure to
send a note to the newsletter editor.*

Dear Friends,

The holiday season is over and the winter chill is setting in. I don't know about most of you, but I would be very happy to hibernate and take a long winter's nap. However, the work must go on.

At the beginning of January the Executive Committee delivered a Sunday morning service. We were inspired by a workshop we attended earlier in the year. This particular workshop discussed our call to service and what we are doing to create our religious community. We were reminded that our work is of a spiritual nature. As such, we need to keep in mind that service to the church is about more than fixing leaking roofs; it's also about growing and nurturing a spiritual community.

As a result, the Executive Committee began to discuss and plan a service for the congregation. We decided the spiritual touchstone for this service would be our mission statement. This statement, which is usually printed on the back of the weekly order of service, talks about what is spiritually important to our church and what our values are.

It reads as follows:

We provide the greater Gardner area with a spiritually innovative ministry through a caring and welcoming congregation by:

Working in the community to identify and fulfill needed services.

Treating each person as a special individual and accepting them as they are.

Developing worship services that meet the wide-ranging needs of a variety of age groups and beliefs.

Providing opportunities for intellectual and spiritual growth for our congregation and the larger community.



Constructing a comfortable, inviting environment for all church and service events.

Maximizing the church resources through responsible and visible use of its assets in the community.

At the service we began a discussion of why our mission statement is important to us as a religious community. There was lots of lively discussion about each statement and some debate about how we are doing at each of these things. Some of us on the Executive Committee questioned whether we are doing what our mission statement speaks about doing. It seems clear from the discussion that Sunday morning that the congregation feels we are doing many of the things outlined in our mission statement.

However, there is more work to do. The discussion indicated that many of us want to build a spiritual community and are doing so. Having a spiritual life is very important to us and we are dedicated to that ideal. A variety of topics were touched on during this service and lots of ideas were brought forth. Among the things we discussed are: how we use our space; recruiting new membership; becoming a Welcoming Congregation; adult RE; being a good neighbor; worship services; heat; universal appeal; parking; assets; fundraising; guest speakers; and, participation in the larger community. The question is, where do we take it from here?

I would really like your feedback. Please feel free to contact me about this or any topic and, of course, you are always welcome to attend an Executive Committee meeting.

With Metta (lovingkindness),

Bo Azora-Minda



Saturday Night Social

**Potluck and Movie Night
February 16 - 6:00 p.m.**

Please watch for additional information in the weekly announcements!

We find comfort among those who agree with us--
growth among those who don't.



Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

P.O. Box 637
Gardner, MA 01440



TO:

Your Executive Committee

The Executive Committee usually meets on the third Monday of the month. 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 2012-13

(year in parentheses indicates term ending)

- Bo Azora-Minda (Chair, '15)
- Barbara Bartl ('15)
- Tom Brady ('14)
- Melody Fortier ('13)
- Bob Gifford ('13)
- Chris Pera (Clerk/Treasurer, '15)
- Laura Reichsman ('14)

Newsletter Contributions

UU-First is published nine times per year:
September, October, November, December-January, February, March, April, May-June, and July-August.

The deadline for the newsletter is the 15th of the month.

Save the Date!

February 3—Congregational Forum, after worship

February 16—Saturday Night Social: Potluck & Movie, 6pm

March 6—May 31—Religion in Gardner display
(see below)



Religion in Gardner

UUSG, along with other congregations, will be participating in a display at The Gardner Museum, March through May. This presentation will highlight how the religious communities in town have influenced the greater community over the past 227 years.

We are looking for photos, memorabilia, stories or comments that would represent UUSG's (and maybe Unitarian and Universalist) role in the community. We also need a few people to be present at our display during the opening night (most likely Thursday, March 14th) to answer questions about our faith community. If you would like to help out or have any thoughts about what items would best tell our story, please see either Chris or Terry.