



# UU-First

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

66 Elm Street – P.O. Box 637, Gardner, Massachusetts

(978) 632-0222

www.uusg.net

December 2013-January 2014

## Minister:

Rev. John Pastor

Office Hours

Thursday 1-6pm.

Call church phone for an appointment or to arrange another day or time.

For pastoral emergencies call 508-277-6113.

## Emeritus Minister:

Rev. Neil Bakker

## Newsletter Editor:

Julie Pera

uusg.newsletter@gmail.com

## Church Office:

Catherine Azora-Minda

978-632-0222

info@uusg.net

## Sunday Services

10:00 am

Children's Religious Education & Nursery Care during worship service

## Upcoming Worship Services

### December 1 — Protecting Sacred Places — Rev. John Pastor

Hanukkah is best known for the miracle of the oil, but it is also a lesson on protecting places that are sacred.

### December 8 — Waiting for the Light — Rev. John Pastor

Advent is a time of waiting, or anticipating. It is also a time of inward reflecting in preparation for Christmas.

### December 15 — Fanning the Flames — Catherine Azora-Minda

We seek the warmth of the Solstice fire and welcome the return of the sun.

### December 22 — Candles & Carols — Rev. John Pastor

This will be a special Christmas Service celebrating hope, peace, love, and joy. All are welcome!

### December 29 — The Joy of Music — Vicki Heidorn & Bill Ruggiero

Come to enjoy your favorite and most-played hymns from weekly worship and participate in a special sing-along with Jay Rainey. In this one hour worship service, we will count down some of the most popular hymns and songs at UUSG. Send your requests to Vicki at [surroundingsgallery@gmail.com](mailto:surroundingsgallery@gmail.com).

### January 5 — Everything Happens For A Reason? — Julie Pera

All around us we frequently hear "everything happens for a reason". Have you ever stopped to think about your feelings when you hear it?

*Congregational Forum following the service.*

### January 12 — Martin Luther King Sunday — Rev. John Pastor

In this service we will honor the life of a leader in the cause of human rights. We will also begin a conversation about community service.

### January 19 — The Fifth Sacred Thing — Laura Reichsman

What does it mean to truly accept one another? How can we be open to everyone's point of view? Is there a place at the table for everyone, even if their beliefs are very different than our own?



### January 26 — The Gospel of Thomas — Rev. John Pastor

What does the "fifth" Gospel have to say to us today?

### February 2 — Our Shared Principles — Rodney Fagan

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



There will be no Christmas Eve service at UUSG. Please refer to page 2 for a list of Christmas Eve services at other UU Churches in the area.

You have probably noticed that I often weave Hebrew, Christian, and Buddhist texts into my sermon messages. On Sunday mornings I have quoted from the Buddha and Buddhist Nun, Pema Chodron, and I have also offered words from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures: Micah, Isaiah, Corinthians, and the Gospel of Luke, to name a few. I find common themes in these sacred texts and am happy to share them with you. I believe these texts are not teaching us what to believe, they are teaching us a path to transformation. And it is important to remember that there are many different forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. Each form has its range from conservative to liberal so folks choose a path of transformation based on the form that best suits them.

Regardless of the form chosen, there is a teaching that all of these spiritual practices have in common: loving-kindness. This can be easily found in Buddhist practice. It is not so easy to find in the Bible. But, if you look and are able to understand the original Hebrew, it can be found.

The Hebrew word looks like this **חסד**

and it is pronounced *hesed*. The closest English translation has it meaning loving-kindness.

According to Jewish teaching, *hesed*, loving-kindness, is one of God's most prominent characteristics. It moves someone to act for the benefit of someone else without considering "what's in it for me?"

I found that this definition of *hesed* seems to contain universal appeal: "The consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly-pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, and furious love."

*Hesed, loving-kindness, is common to Western and Eastern spiritual practices.*

I invite you to celebrate your Judeo-Christian roots as you also embrace Buddhism. Having embraced the transformational teachings of these spiritual traditions, do what you best: continue to spread the practice of loving-kindness in the coming year in your every encounter.

Bob and I wish you the blessings of comfort, joy, and peace for the New Year

With love,



## Holiday Services

**Yule / Winter Solstice  
(December 21st)**

7:30pm  
First Church Unitarian  
478 Main Street, Athol MA



**Christmas Eve (December 24th)**

4:00pm

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Ashby, On The Common  
First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist, 15 West Street, Leominster

4:30pm

Family Service, First Church of Christ Unitarian, 725 Main Street, Lancaster

5:00pm

First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist, 923 Main Street, Fitchburg  
First Parish Unitarian of Hubbardston, 2 Main Street, On The Common  
Universalist Church of Orange, 31 North Main Street

7:00pm

First Congregational Parish Unitarian, The Common, Petersham  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon, 126 Central Street

11:00pm

Candlelight Service, First Church of Christ Unitarian, 725 Main Street, Lancaster

Dear Friends,

The holidays are upon us. We are looking forward to the completion of the kitchen renovation and to the upcoming holiday fair. This is an exciting time of the year for us at UUSG. I am thankful to the people who have made those two projects happen for us. I am particularly grateful to the dedicated people at our church who make things run as smoothly as they do and proud that we are able to work together as a community to get things done.

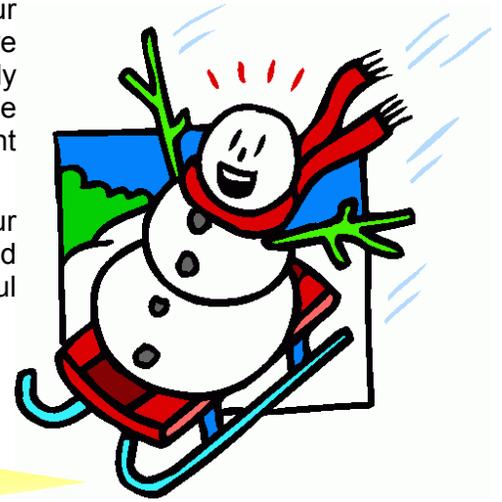
We do have some challenges we are facing. The Executive Committee has been discussing our financial future, as well as where and how we would like to grow as a congregation.

The EC has formed a Growth Committee to tackle these issues. They will be creating a capital campaign to finance our kitchen and plan for the growth of our congregation. The Executive Committee will be working closely with this committee and will be providing support to implement these plans.

Thank you to everyone in our church. Without you UUSG would not be what it is. Have a wonderful and safe holiday season.

With Metta,

Bo Azora-Minda  
Executive Committee Chair



# UUSG Holiday Marketplace & Festival

Saturday, December 14, 9am-3pm

*The perfect opportunity for all your last-minute holiday shopping needs!*

*Great food AND entertainment!*

*Now I become myself. It's taken  
Time, many years and places;  
I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces.*

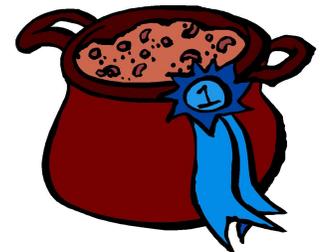
selection from poem by **May Sarton**,  
read as Closing Words at the Transgender  
Day of Remembrance Service,  
November 17, 2013



## SWEET POTATO CHILI

from Lois Gilbert

- 3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- ½ cup water
- 2 (15 oz) cans black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 2 (15 oz) cans dark kidney beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 large can of vegetarian baked beans
- 1 large can diced tomato
- 1 large onion diced
- 1 red pepper diced
- 1 green pepper diced
- 2 TB cumin
- 2 TB oregano
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ cup minded cilantro



In a pot add sweet potatoes and water. Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes until potatoes almost cook. Add onions and pepper and simmer 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and cook on low for 30 minutes.

# Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

P.O. Box 637

Gardner, MA 01440

## 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 the Church Year 2013-14

(year in parentheses indicates term ending)

Bo Azora-Minda (Chair, '15)

Barbara Bartl ('15)

Roy Gilbert ('16)

Brien Hawkesworth ('14)

Chris Pera (Clerk/Treasurer, '15)

Frieda Reichsman ('16)

Laura Reichsman ('14)

## Save the date!

December 14—UUSG Holiday Marketplace  
& Festival, 9am-3pm



**Carry the flame!**

**CLF**  
Pendants  
Lapel pins  
Notecards

**At Amazon**

Type **CLF UU** in the *search* field

Proceeds support the many Unitarian Universalist ministries at  
[QuestForMeaning.org](http://QuestForMeaning.org) \* [CLFuu.org](http://CLFuu.org) \* [DailyCompass.org](http://DailyCompass.org)

## 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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.**