



# 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

September 2014

## Minister:

Rev. John Pastor

Office Hours  
By appointment.

For pastoral  
emergencies call  
508-277-6113.

## Newsletter Editor:

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## 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

### September 7 — Water Communion — Rev. John Pastor

This Sunday we return from our summer break to begin our new church year. During the service we will be sharing water and stories from our special places of summer, even if this is home. Please make sure to bring some water to add to our common bowl of blessings.

### September 14 — Gathering Seeds — the Music & Worship Committee

We often think of seeds in conjunction with the time of planting in the spring, but it is at this time of year that we must gather the seeds we wish to plant, prepare the soil, and watch for the right time to sow them.

### September 21 — Click on Continue to Enter — Rev. John Pastor

You receive an invitation from an unknown website to “Enter.” What do you do, delete or enter? How can this be a metaphor for church community life?

### September 28 — Celebrating Our Ways That We Welcome — Welcoming Congregation Committee

This Sunday we celebrate and unveil our official UUA Welcoming Congregation Award as we also prepare to welcome guests to our first community meal.

*Rev. John will bless the animals at the Gardner  
Animal Shelter on October 4th at 10am.*

### October 5 — Make Me An Instrument of Peace — Rev. John Pastor

World peace remains an important vital goal. Over 800 years ago, Francis of Assisi preached that we are all instruments of peace. What does this mean in our own time?

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

Our Minister Emeritus, Rev. Cornelis “Neil” Johannes Bakker, Chaplain (Lt. Colonel) USAR retired, age 97, passed peacefully at home with his family at his side Sunday, August 10, 2014. Relatives and friends are invited to attend a memorial service on Sunday, September 14 at 3pm at the First Unitarian Church, One Benevolent St., Providence.

I believe that our church is at a turning point, that is, a point at which there is a change in direction. We need to change direction. This means that we focus on changing the ways that we function as a church community.

We have tried many ways to grow our church. In the beginning of my tenure we were growing in membership. This has now leveled off. We have new folks coming in but have not had any new members in two years. We need to look at possible solutions.

At our Annual Meeting in June we significantly reduced our budget expenditures. We will be asking for individual donations to fund those items that were cut, but are needed. Be sure to look for funding cards that will be posted. I myself have reduced my hours in order to help balance the budget.

We will soon be offering our first community meal using our newly renovated kitchen. This is an important step for our church. I have often said that small congregations are recognized by the work that they do for the community. In the past we have generously contributed to the CAC Food Pantry, the Gardner Animal Shelter, and to the needy children in Gardner and beyond. This community meal program, that will be offered monthly, is a big commitment that will require many hands to be successful.

We are currently in search of a Director of Religious Education. We are seeking a paid professional who can help educate our children of all ages in Unitarian Universalist values. We will need volunteer teachers to assist with this important ministry.

All of this is a lot of turning. Appropriately, we are entering the season of fall, a season of turning. As it is written in Scripture, "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven."

Beloved community, this is our season. I invite you to "Turn, turn, turn."

I am so looking forward to continuing our journey together.

With love,



15th Annual HOPE Benefit

# Pasta Feast

Thursday, September 18, 2014 • 4:30-7:00 P.M.  
PACC, 171 Kendall Pond West • Gardner

**Eat-in or Take-Out**  
\$10.00 Adults • \$5.00 children under 12  
\$75.00 for a table of 8

*Pasta with Home-made Sauce, Meatballs, Salad,  
Garlic Bread, Dessert, and Beverages*  
provided by Royer's Catering of Kamaloht and Calico & Crème

*Raffle Items donated by local individuals and merchants*

Tickets at 978.630.4752 or [www.hopegardner.org](http://www.hopegardner.org)

**HOPE** LEARN • BELIEVE • SUCCEED

**HOUSE of PEACE & EDUCATION, INC.**

All proceeds from this event will go directly to support HOPE's work with underserved women and youth

# Welcoming Congregation



Dear Rev. Pastor and members of the Welcoming Congregation Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner,

Congratulations!

I'm delighted to inform you that the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner's application to become recognized as a Welcoming Congregation has been approved! Sincere congratulations on taking this powerful step, doing collective work to educate yourselves on LGBTQ issues, and committing yourselves to vital ongoing ministry in this area.

It was a pleasure to be able to read about what you have accomplished and the powerful work you have done. I'm always struck when a small congregation such as yours takes on this important mission.

I see that you've begun the process of educating your members about issues relevant to LGBTQ people and their lives through your cottage groups, film series, and congregational forums. I would suggest that, in your Welcoming Congregation report, you include the dates or date range in which these events occurred. I would also encourage you to include the results of the May 11th Congregational Forum in your report. This will help you down the road when you want to understand this history. The topics you discussed in the cottage meetings sound very appropriate. I wonder if you captured any of the responses, especially "Are there ways that UUSG may not be welcoming?" This would be valuable as you continue your efforts.

I commend you on sponsoring the LGBTQ Coffee House for Gardner Area Teens. I hope you'll be able to make progress on the gay-straight alliance. This is an important resource for area teens. And I love the idea of a cluster-wide Interweave chapter. Especially for small congregations, having the support of other area congregations in building a strong network makes all the difference. If you are able to accomplish this, I would love to hear about your successes and challenges.

I'm pleased that you are talking about tackling the infrastructure changes to bylaws and other relevant documents. It is essential for you to do this in order to maintain your commitment to welcome even as membership changes. I was

pleased to see that you have incorporated gender-neutral signage on the bathrooms. This is so very important to transgender individuals and is one of the most obvious signs of welcome. Sometimes congregations get so caught up in offering education and engaging in outreach that they forget the internal changes that make a difference to LGBTQ people who want to know if they can risk becoming a part of your congregation. Inclusive bylaws, and language on websites and in orders of service tell a guest that you welcome them before they even meet you. I appreciate all the efforts you are putting into making your facility and your congregation breathe welcome!

It's clear that the UU Society of Gardner understands that becoming recognized as a Welcoming Congregation is a commitment rather than an end point. I'm so glad to see that you've developed future plans so that this work continues. I encourage you not to waste any time putting these plans into action. Congregations can lose energy after they see the posters on the wall. The more work you can do to solidify your plans now will make it clear that you are serious about continuing to make your congregation an ever more welcoming one. You have an vital voice in your community and you must find ways to make sure it stays alive and vibrant.

I hope you'll see the UUA as a resource for you—please be in touch any time if you have any questions or we can be of service or support. I encourage you to visit our website often; we are always adding new resources that will help you on your continuing journey. You can expect to receive two Welcoming Congregation posters in the mail and the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner should be recognized on the UUA's website by mid-July. If you have members attending General Assembly in Providence this week, they will be able to pick up Welcoming Congregation ribbons for their badges. Give the timing, the ribbons won't be in their registration packets. Please ask them to stop by the Multicultural Growth and Witness booth and we'll make sure they get ribbons.

Thanks again for your congregation's life-giving, essential work!

With appreciation,

**Annette Marquis**  
LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director  
Multicultural Growth and Witness

# 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)

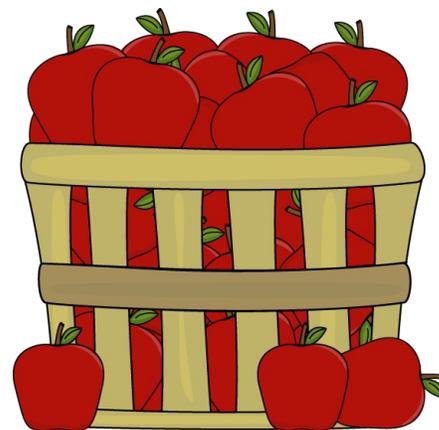
Bo Azora-Minda (Chair, '15)

Barbara Bartl ('15)

Roy Gilbert ('16)

Chris Pera (Clerk/Treasurer, '15)

Frieda Reichsman ('16)



## Save the date!

September 14—Congregational Forum during  
Coffee Hour

October 4—Blessing of the Animals, Gardner  
Animal Shelter, 10am

## 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.**