



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

October / November 2014

Minister:

Rev. John Pastor

Office Hours
By appointment.

For pastoral
emergencies call
508-277-6113.

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

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

October 12 — What Do You Need? — Chris Pera

October 19 — Caring, Commitment, and Continuing — Rev. John Pastor

In our UU polity, each congregation is independent, and it is the members who are in charge. Did you know this? You have the power!

October 26 — Poetry Sunday — Marion Lyon

All writers of poetry and those who love certain poems, who would like to share some at the service, need to contact Marion right away so that she can structure the program. It will help her to know the titles and authors of your poems so they can be included in the Order of Service. Any suggestions about music and hymns would be appreciated as well. Don't be shy...it's a very nice way to share what you love with the community.

November 2 — Remembering the Departed — Rev. John Pastor

This Sunday we will take some time to remember those loved-ones who have died. A special ritual will be offered as a ceremony of remembrance and healing.

November 9 — David & Joy Fleming, Vicki Heidorn

A blend of music and spiritual inspiration.

November 16 — Transgender Day of Remembrance — Bo Azora-Minda

On this day we remember those people who have killed as a result of transphobia and hate. Help us honor those who have fallen by enlightening the world to overcome hatred and bigotry.

November 23 — Thanksgiving Bread Communion — Rev. John Pastor

You are invited to bake bread or bring bread to share in a "bread communion." The bread may be significant from your family history or culture. This service will be intergenerational.

November 30 — Into the Gloaming — Laura Reichsman

The gloaming is the part of the day after the sun has gone down but before the sky is completely dark. This could be the description of the entire winter for some of us! As we move towards the darker days, how do we find (and keep!) our inner light?

December 7 — Let the Festivities Begin! — Rev. John Pastor

We celebrate the many spiritual traditions that are held in December and how they are part of our UU roots.

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

Pastoring...

Drifting Here With My Ship's Companions

As many of you know, "Blue Boat Home" is currently my favorite hymn. It speaks to the voyage on the sea of possibilities in a boat that we all share as "ship's companions." I firmly believe that we are seeking some sense of purpose and meaning to life.

This sea, like all seas, is constantly changing with waves and tides, storms and calm. We hold on tight during the unsettled weather. We sing and dance "on deck" in times of calm.

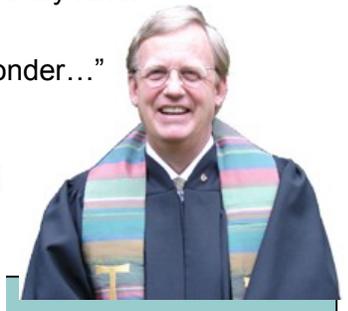
We have many questions on this voyage. Some are answered and some remain unanswered. But we continue; "Casting questions into the deep." We come to realize that it is important to recognize that sometimes there are many more questions than there are answers. It is equally important to remember that we are all in this together. And, if you have not discovered it already, it is not easy being a Unitarian Universalist.

Charles Magistro writes, "Our way in religion is not the way of ease. We are called to be sailors; for many worlds exist waiting to be discovered. And not the least of these worlds are within ourselves. It takes as much persistence, courage, and curiosity to look into our own depths, to come to terms with the twin mysteries of being alive and having to die, to see ourselves in new and larger ways without being dishonest about our limitations as it did for Columbus to sail thousands of miles into an unknown ocean until he found dry land."

We are sailors, all. We are
"Leaning over the edge in wonder..."

The sea of possibilities
is always in motion.

With love,



Dear Friends,

We are now in full swing with another church year at UUSG. I would like to start off this year with saying once again how proud I am of this congregation for doing the work necessary to become an official Welcoming Congregation. At today's service, Reverend John and I unveiled the official Welcoming Congregation Award from the UUA. You will be seeing the award prominently displayed in the near future.

As many of you heard at the service today, our work is not finished but has only really just begun. We need to continue to explore what it means to be a Welcoming Congregation. This exploration will begin at our church and then will be brought out to the wider community. Now that we are a Welcoming Congregation, the UUA asks us to deepen our commitment to nurturing our inclusiveness. They offer us some online assistance to find resources for investigation including such topics as age, racial/ethnic diversity, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, ability, and class/educational diversity. Additionally, the UUA encourages us to create a group which will consist of people who identify themselves as a part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer communities and those who identify as Allies. This group is called Interweave. Our first meeting of Interweave is scheduled for October 19th at 11:30 AM after the church service.

Additionally, I would like to note that our kitchen is just about ready for our first community meal.

Laura Reichsman has graciously agreed to head up a committee to work on this project and they recently held their first planning meeting. Laura brings much expertise to this enterprise and we are lucky to have her. I am very excited about this new venture and look forward to the first event.

Laura has also volunteered to help with organizing the Religious Education lessons and recruiting volunteers to help teach the lessons. We are set for the next month or so but she is looking for volunteers for future dates. Lesson plans are available through Laura and you may find that spending time with our children is not only a gift to them but to you as well. So please help!

As always you are welcome to attend the Executive Committee Meeting. It is usually on the third Monday of the month at 6:00 PM at UUSG. Our next meeting is October 20th.

With metta,

Bo Azora-Minda
UUSG-Board Chair

10 Things Your Congregation Can Do To Become More LGBTQ-Welcoming

<http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/185984.shtml>

When people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) first come to your congregation, they may be uneasy until they know they are welcome.

Many religious denominations and individual churches are actively hostile to and condemning of LGBTQ people, ignore them, and/or claim to treat everyone the same regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, refusing to acknowledge that LGBTQ people face additional issues in society and around matters of faith and religion. Because of this, many people who are marginalized due to sexual orientation and/or gender identity will assume that you and your congregation don't want them unless you clearly invite them in.

To feel welcome in your congregation, members of oppressed groups need to know that the congregation is aware of their issues and that they are welcome as their full selves. Little things are often the most important. What will really make people feel welcome, and what will make them want to return, is inclusion in all aspects of congregational life. You can make it clear that they are welcome without their having to ask.

1. Engage or Reengage with the Welcoming Congregation Program

Go through the Welcoming Congregation Program. No matter what your congregation's unique circumstances are, you can become recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) for your work around education, congregational life, and community outreach in regards to LGBTQ issues.

If your congregation is already recognized as a Welcoming Congregation, do a refresher program! LGBTQ Ministries recommends that all congregations go through a Welcoming Congregation Program or refresher program every five years.

2. Proclaim Your Welcome

Advertise in local and regional LGBTQ publications and newsletters, including online ones. Also advertise in general venues: local newspapers, bulletin boards in community gathering places, and online publications with a local focus.

Place a note in your Orders of Service that states your welcome. You can make a general statement that you welcome all people, or you can use more specific language. If your congregation has a website, add a note there as well and consider how else you can make your website welcoming to LGBTQ visitors.

3. Make Information About LGBTQ People and Issues Available

In your literature area, bulletin boards, newsletter, and/or website, include literature and information about LGBTQ people and issues and what LGBTQ outreach and public witness your congregation is doing. LGBTQ Ministries and the UUA Bookstore have printed materials you might want to consider displaying.

4. Take Steps Toward Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is about more than stating a welcome to all. It's about intentionally understanding and challenging the ways that our language unconsciously assumes certain things and unintentionally makes people with marginalized identities feel unwelcome.

Provide written guidelines for inclusive language to all people who participate in your Sunday services (including ministers, lay leaders, guest speakers, and readers of announcements and readings), contribute to your newsletter and/or website, lead your religious education programs for all ages, and lead other programs. Also, give special attention to the role of your greeters—among other options, check out the UUA's Multicultural Welcome resource.

5. Acknowledge and Respect Individuals and Families

Accord full acknowledgment and respect to each person and family, as defined by the person/family. This includes the definition of pledging units, listings in the directory, family events, and all other aspects of congregational life. Take time to ask how individuals and families prefer to be acknowledged and referred to, rather than assuming things like family structure, preferred gender pronouns, and labels and other words people use to refer to themselves.

If your services include a time for people to participate as a family, invite families of all descriptions to take a turn in that part of the service: single people, single people with children, same and mixed gender couples with and without children, families of choice, etc.

6. Avoid Assumptions

Avoid making assumptions about the sexual orientation or gender identity of any of your members, visitors, or children, and be open to challenges to assumptions that you do make. Take time to ask, and then always respect, each person's identity, self-labels, and pronoun preferences.

7. Take Intentional Steps Toward Transgender, Bisexual, and Queer Welcome

Do education around the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, and take intentional steps toward transgender welcome and inclusion, as well as bisexual and queer welcome and inclusion. For example, avoid dividing people into two genders in practice or in language. Avoid assuming all people are gay or straight, or that you can tell a person's sexual orientation by their partner. Prioritize education about gender diversity and non-binary sexual orientations, whether through Sunday services, film screenings, workshops, small group ministry, religious education programming, or more.

Continued, next page.

10 Things Your Congregation Can Do To Become More LGBTQ-Welcoming, continued from page 3.

8. Make LGBTQ Issues a Part of Your Worship

Hold services and sermons that address LGBTQ issues. Ask worship leaders to do supportive sermons or openly LGBTQ members, friends, and/or family members to contribute sermons or other elements. Invite community leaders or interfaith partners to lead or collaborate in worship around LGBTQ issues. Honor LGBTQ events such as Pride, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and National Coming Out Day. Regularly include diversity of families, sexual orientations, and gender identities in stories, readings, and other worship elements.

9. Do Outreach and Public Witness Around LGBTQ Issues

There are a multitude of ways to take action and show your support for LGBTQ justice, no matter how small your congregation is or where you're located. Build relationships with LGBTQ groups or organizations in your area—ask them what they need and how you can help. If there are openly LGBTQ people in your congregation, respect their guidance and leadership. You can also read stories about LGBTQ welcome and social action from other congregations.

10. Deepen Your Welcome Beyond Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Increasing your welcome of LGBTQ people is just one entry point into the conversation about how to truly be a Welcoming Congregation. LGBTQ people, like all people, have multifaceted identities. They are people of color, they are working class, they have disabilities, they are immigrants, they are children and youth and single parents and elders. Is your congregation a welcoming congregation to all of these people also?

Emphasize the fact that all people are multifaceted and that all oppressions are interrelated—weave this into everything that your congregation does. Explore how homophobia and transphobia affect people with multiple oppressed identities differently. Offer Building the World We Dream About, a program about race and ethnicity; check out more ways to nurture inclusivity.

LEARNING CONGREGATION WORKSHOPS

*Unitarian Universalist Spirituality:
A Wellspring for Congregational Leaders*
Saturday, 10/25/2014 - 10 AM to 4 PM
with Rev. Jen Crow in Worcester, MA

Love as Practice
Saturday, 11/15/2014 - 9 AM to 1 PM
with Meck Groot and Hilary Allen in Weston, MA

Cracking the Leadership Crisis
Saturday, 12/06/2014 - 9 AM to 1 PM
with Douglas Zelinski (Location TBA)

Youth Ministry in the 2K's
Saturday, 01/31/2015 - 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
with Karen Bellavance-Grace and Kim Paquette
(Location TBA)

The Future of Small to Mid-Size Congregations
Saturday, 04/11/2015 - 9 AM to 3 PM
with Douglas Zelinski (Location TBA)

The Future of Small to Mid-Size Congregations
Saturday, 05/02/2015 - 9 AM to 3 PM
with Douglas Zelinski (Location TBA)

Renewing Our Commitment to Multicultural Ministries
Saturday, 05/16/2015 - 9 AM to 4 PM
with G.R.A.C.E. Team (Location TBA)

Creating and Leading Dynamic Lay-Led Worship
Saturday, 05/30/2015 - 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
with Rev. Sue Phillips in Taunton, MA

Creating and Leading Dynamic Lay-Led Worship
Saturday, 06/06/2015 - 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
with Rev. Sue Phillips in Littleton, MA

The **Fall Fair will be held November 8th** and it's an all-hands-on-deck event! We need donations of supplies for the cafe, bakers for the bake sale, items for the flea market, crafters (please spread the word to friends) and volunteers to set up on the 7th and to help on the 8th. We especially need help breaking down at 2:00! Sign up sheets are on the bulletin board. For more info see Laura Reichsman.



Items for the flea market can be dropped off at the church on Sunday before noon or by appointment by calling Laura at 413-687-2241. Please put the items on the stage towards the back.

There are apples in the back stairwell by the kitchen. They are available for people to use for the Fall Fair Bake Sale. Thank you.



Rev. John Speaks at Rev. Neil Bakker's Memorial Service

Rev. John was asked to speak at Rev. Bakker's Memorial Service at the First Unitarian Church of Providence Sunday, September 14, 2014. Following is what he presented:

My name is Rev. John Pastor and I serve as minister to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner. Neil was our Minister Emeritus. He served our church from 1962 until 1979; the longest ministry at our church, to date.

Seven years ago, on my first day at the Gardner church, I called Neil to introduce myself and to ask for any words of wisdom as I began my new ministry. We had some similarities in our Gardner ministries; both Neil and I both served a parish and a community chaplaincy. As many of you know, Neil was a chaplain at the Gardner State Hospital; my other ministry is in hospice. Over the years, I would speak with Neil periodically, by phone, especially after he was admitted to hospice.

In the past few weeks, stories about his ministry have been shared in our congregation.

He is remembered very fondly by Jane Heywood Coleman, the oldest member of our church. She sends her condolences to Mel and Stephanie.

Others shared how open-minded he was to religion and how he was a walking example of calm compassion.

He started the Great Books Club, which would meet at the parsonage where youth were encouraged to learn and grow.

There are recollections of how he taught to treat all people with care and loving compassion; that all people suffer and that all people deserve dignity and respect. His was a compassionate presence.

Folks recall how he loved classical music and how his Christmas Eve stories were so interesting, though not always connected to Christmas. He was a great story-teller.

When the Gardner State Hospital was closed, most of the patients were transferred to Rutland State Hospital. The story goes that when the Rutland employees went on strike a call went out to the community for volunteers to come at mealtimes to help feed the patients. Neil was there. Marion Lyon, a member of our congregation volunteered. She shared that she was so impressed with his kindness and caring for those who had to adjust to this new facility and the lack of care that ensued from the strike.

There are many more stories.

Neil remains much beloved by the Gardner Community.

On behalf of the Gardner Congregation and my colleagues in the Central Massachusetts UU Churches I bring wishes for comfort and peace to Mel and to the family.

In October of 2009, I invited Neil to come and offer the benediction at the service celebrating the 125 anniversary of our church.

It snowed that day. Neil, Mel, and Stephanie drove all the way up from Providence. At the close of the service, I escorted Neil to the

pulpit to deliver the Benediction. Once there, he opened the hymnal to reading #683 by Theodore Parker and read.

At the time, I felt somewhat disappointed with this benediction. I guess I expected Neil, who I had heard so much about, to offer some profound words of wisdom and blessing. I have since reflected on this and realized that he was speaking his creed as a benediction. The creed about a religion that he and Theodore Parker shared. I came to understand that this piece speaks of his ministry to our churches in Gardner and Providence and of how we can remain a religious people in the religion that Neil embodied.

Be ours a religion which, like
sunshine, goes everywhere;
its temple, all space;
its shrine, the good heart;
its creed, all truth;
its ritual, works of love;
its profession of faith, divine
living.

The last time I spoke with Neil on the phone I asked him how he was doing. He replied, "I'm 97 years old, this is how it goes." Indeed, this is how it goes: every living thing dies.

Dear Neil, we are so glad for time alive among us; that we got to know you and felt the glow of your presence. You are missed but not forgotten.

God Bless you, beloved Neil.

The first **Welcome Table Community Meal** will be held October 28th at 5:30. Servers are needed as well as leaders for future meals. Sign up sheets are downstairs on the bulletin board.



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 2014-15

(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!

October 28 – Welcome Table
Community Meal, 5:30-6:30pm

November 2 – Congregational Forum,
after worship

November 8 – UUSG Fall Fair

November 25 - 7 PM - Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service, hosted by the Faith Lutheran Church. During the service there will be an offering of non-perishables or money to be donated to the Gardner Food Pantry. Members of our choir are invited to participate. Congregations attending are asked to bring some refreshments for our time fellowship after the service.



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.