



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 2014

Minister:

Rev. John Pastor

Office Hours
By appointment.

For pastoral emergencies
call
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Sunday Services

10:00 am

**Children's
Religious
Education
& Nursery Care**
during worship service

Upcoming Worship Services

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.

CONGREGATIONAL FORUM FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

December 14 - Embracing the Darkness and Cultivating the Inner Light Nina Vecchi & Lisa Nuttal

When faced with the dark periods of our journey we have choices on how to navigate. Join Lisa Nuttal and Nina Vecchi as they share perspectives from personal experiences and spiritual practices.

December 21 - Christmas Service – Rev. John Pastor

Readings and carols of the season. All are welcome!
We will honor the Winter Solstice with a brief ritual during coffee hour.

December 24 - 7PM - Christmas Eve Vespers Service – Rev. John Pastor

A simple service as a time to reflect among the candles of Christmas.
(Service will be 30 minutes long.)

December 28 – A Christmas Carol Sing – Bob Hall

The gathered congregation will follow Bob's lead to sing some old and new, traditional and non-traditional, Christmas carols.

January 4 – Burrowing In - Catherine Azora-Minda

If we had any sense, we'd all be hibernating. Since some of us find ourselves reluctantly dealing with the coldness and isolation of wintertime, what might help us move to acceptance and deep peace?

CONGREGATIONAL FORUM FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

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

Theologian Howard Thurman writes, "There is a strange irony in the usual salutation, 'Merry Christmas,' when most of the people on this planet are thrown back upon themselves for food which they do not possess, for resources that have long since been exhausted, and for vitality which has already run its course. Nevertheless, the inescapable fact remains that Christmas symbolizes hope even at a moment when hope seems utterly fantastic. An endless process of births is the perpetual answer of life to the fact of death. It says that life keeps coming on, keeps seeking to fulfill itself, keeps affirming the margin of hope in the presence of desolation, pestilence, and despair. Well up out of the depths of vast vitality, there is something at work that is more authentic than the formal discursive design of the human mind. As long as this is true ultimately, despair about the human race is groundless."

This piece was written in 1954 and it still resonates with us in 2014. How slowly things change! Here at UUSG we see the truth of this. But we refuse to cave in to an attitude of hopelessness for the world. We are messengers of hope to the world outside our walls. Our Welcome Table meals are a generous symbol of our belief in hope. To the outside world we are messengers of eternal hope.

But, within our UUSG community, among ourselves, it may be difficult to hold onto hope. Witness our shrinking budget. This begs the question about what the future of our church will look like. With this question raised, some of you lose hope. I've witnessed this. From my perspective, the perspective of professional ministry, I still see a hope-filled future. This hope is found in your reinventing yourselves. You have so much to offer one another in community. I have never seen such vitality, such energy, in the projects that you focus on to raise funds and in the support you give to each other in your faith journeys. I raise this up as we end this year and begin another.

Yes, hope is eternal because it is ever-changing to the needs of the community which it serves.

Bob and I wish you all the blessings that this season brings.

With Love,



CAC Teen Gifts

This year this giving opportunity will be administered by Rev. Joe McGarry of Faith Lutheran Church. Gift card donations may be made directly to him or through Rev. John. The suggested amount is \$25 each. All donations should be made no later than December 18.

Thank You Julie!

Julie Pera has been editing the UUSG newsletter for almost as long as she has been a member of the church, beginning late in 1999. She took on the job because she liked doing graphic design and used that skill to change the newsletter from a simpler format to one that included graphics along with communicating information. The overall format has changed a few times during her tenure as editor and she has consistently worked at “making the white space look good” through the use of graphics. Julie began working on the newsletter well before she became a mother. She says that she learned to nurse and type simultaneously while doing the newsletter. As her family has grown and the children have aged, the responsibilities of raising children have often complicated the task of meeting the deadlines inherent in doing a newsletter. Overall, Julie has really enjoyed editing the newsletter and is looking forward now to putting her energy into a different role as the chair of the Music and Worship Committee.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to Julie for her long-standing commitment to an important job and for the skill and talent that she has brought to that job. As a testimony to the work she has done, it will now take two people to fill her shoes. We sincerely hope that we are equal to the task.

Boudoin and Catherine Azora-Minda,
Co-editors of UU-First.



Stewardship Cards

As we continue this year to balance our church budget, please consider making an additional gift to help with the unpledged needs of the church. Stewardship cards can be found in a pocketed wall hanging on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. Please take a card, write your name on the card if you'd like tax credit, and place it in the offertory plate or under the office door

Thank UU!

Thanks to everyone who helped green the sanctuary in preparation for the winter holidays – wreaths were hung, including the largest one on the organ pipes, windows were decorated, brass was polished and candles are ready to glow over our celebration of the December holidays.

If you know of a contribution, concern, or accomplishment that deserves mention in this column, please be sure to send a message to uusg.newsletter@gmail.com.



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!

December 21 - Interweave Meeting – 11:30 a.m.

If you are interested in talking about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer issues and furthering our mission of what it means to be a Welcoming Congregation please come to this meeting. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Bo.

December 25 – Special Christmas Eve Vespers Service – 7:00 p.m.

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

January 4 – Congregational Forum, after worship

Newsletter Contributions

UU-First is published monthly with the exception of July/August:

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