



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Gardner

66 Elm Street - P.O. Box 637, Gardner, MA 01440  
(978) 632-0222  
www.uusg.net

## January 2017

**Minister:**

Rev. John Pastor

**Office Hours**

By Appointment

for pastoral emergencies  
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978-632-0222

**Sunday Service**

10:00 AM

Children's Religious  
Education & Nursery Care  
during worship service



## Upcoming Worship Services

**January 1** – *A Resolution I Can Keep* – Laura Reichsman, Lay Leader

The New Year's Day service will be held downstairs where a buffet brunch will be served. The service will be intergenerational.

**January 8** – *Resilience: A Way of Change* (Sermon by Rev. Lynn Thomas Strauss) – presented by Lay Leader, Julie Pera

**January 15** – *When Hope Is Hard to Find* – Catherine Azora-Minda, Lay Leader

Where do we go looking for it? What does it provide us? How can it help?

**January 22** – *Transitions, Expected and Unexpected* (Sermon by Josh Pawelek) – presented by Lay Leader, Chris Pera

This Sunday will also include an opportunity for the congregation to reaffirm the commitment originally made to Caleb Pera and his family at his dedication in May 2003, as he officially begins his Coming of Age year.

**January 29** – *Heartfelt Gratitude* – Rev. John Pastor

Louise Hay writes, "Gratitude and acceptance act like powerful magnets for the miracles every moment of the day." But sometimes it can be a challenge to hold these two feelings together. It can be easier when we give to life with a joy and feel that life lovingly gives back to us. How does this happen?

\*The third Sunday of each month is an "Accessible Sunday," and worship services are held in the Fellowship Hall.

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



I once attended a workshop for creating a Shared Vision Clearness Committee. It focused on congregational life and how to grow. The workshop model was a process of co-creating a vision by covenanting, sharing and being honest about feelings.

The instructor who was leading the workshop comes from the Quaker tradition. She invited us to create a vision by thinking about what is right instead of who wants what done. Her advice was that we can build a realistic vision based on treating everyone as an equal and seeking alignment, not agreement. She shared that the Quakers have a process for collective discernment; this process is called a "Clearness Committee."

Forming a collective vision can be challenging, but if individual issues are addressed one at a time, the process can be less challenging. The way that it works is that a committee gather together to become a Clearness Committee. One person at a time becomes the "Focus Person" who presents what they feel is an issue, an obstacle, to creating a collective vision. The Quakers hold this as a spiritual practice. It begins with a period of silence, then the Focus Person speaks for about ten minutes, then other members of the committee ask clarifying questions of the Focus Person, someone is assigned to take notes. Then, there is another silent period followed by a one word response to the session. Everyone has an opportunity to be the Focus Person. Pretty amazing things can happen.

I am thinking about this process as I witness, now from the sidelines, your own collective discernment about the future. From what I have heard, it seems that important decisions have been made as a collective community. These decisions may require some modification to the vision for UUSG. There may be some issues or obstacles that present themselves. Perhaps using the above method may be of some use in re-forming the vision.

At any rate, my humble advice is to stay focused, always listen to one another with a loving heart, and do things for the good of all concerned.

Happy New Year!

With love

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Dear Friends,

I want to start off by saying a joyous New Year to all. Some of us on the Executive Committee attended a UUA workshop on lay leadership. I believe we went looking for solutions for our upcoming transition. It didn't seem like the point of the workshop was to spoon feed us the answers but to help us realize our potential. Many UU congregations are very much like ours, small and economically challenged. However, many of these congregations are thriving. I feel that we can do the same. We need to continue to do what we do best. That is work for the greater Gardner community such as our monthly meal and reaching out through our Interweave Group. Our good work must continue.

Our discussion of lay leadership will happen during our next potluck on January 15th during our coffee hour, time. The Executive Committee has been collecting your surveys and are looking forward to receiving a few more. Your input is important. Thank you for your commitment to UUSG.

With Metta,  
Bo Azora-Minda  
Executive Committee Chair



Dear Readers,

I am proud to announce a new discussion group hosted by our very own Interweave Committee. It is being called the Interweave Community Cafe. Our discussion group will be a safe place to discuss current issues that are pertinent to the LGBTQ Community. Our next meeting will be on January 10th at 7 PM. If you would like more information please call the Interweave Community Cafe phone number at 978-410-9107.

**ICZU**



## Meditation Group Welcomes New Teacher

The Wednesday Night Mindfulness Meditation group is pleased to announce the arrival of a new teacher. Marlon Barrios Solano originally came to a meditation practice more than 20 years ago "needing to find calmness of mind." Since 2009, his primary practice has been focused on the vipassana (mindfulness) tradition as presented and developed at the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts, as well as the Beatenberg Meditation Center in Switzerland.

Marlon is in the process of completing the Community Dharma Leaders Program/teacher training at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California, into which he was nominated. After three years of study, he is graduating in April of this year. He has found this program helpful to his learning process because the model is not to tell the student how to practice but to "create a container in which to unfold your practice." One of Marlon's mentors during this training is Chas Dicapua, the first teacher to work with the Wednesday night group.

Marlon has an interdisciplinary background in psychology, dance improvisation and new media arts. He holds an MFA from Ohio State University and currently lives and works as a cook at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre.



### **Wednesday Night Meditation Group**

The Mindfulness Meditation group meets every Wednesday at 6:00 pm. In addition to our regular sitting meditation, we are also reviewing the essential principles of practice. If you are interested in learning more about Mindfulness Meditation, please join us.

## Congregational Meeting and Potluck – January 15

We'll come together at coffee hour to discuss our approach to the fellowship (lay led) model of worship for the coming church years. Bring a dish and your thoughts about our church! If you haven't already done so, before this meeting on January 15th, please fill out the UUSG survey about your concerns and return it in the stamped envelope provided. The survey can also be returned to a Board member at either the January 1st or January 8th service.



### FAITH ROCKET

As one element of our process in becoming a lay-led congregation, we have renewed our membership in the Church of the Larger Fellowship. The CLF is the largest congregation in the Unitarian Universalist Association, with most of its ministry conducted online. Wherever you are in the world, wherever your truth takes you on your spiritual journey, the Church of the Larger Fellowship is there to keep you connected with Unitarian Universalism. More than 3,500 members of the CLF, with their children, live all over the world. What brings them together is the desire to connect, seek, share and grow within Unitarian Universalism.

As part of our membership in the CLF, we have access to Faith Rocket which is a collaborative experiment being run by the CLF and Launchpad. Launchpad is a multi-site and church-planting ministry. Their services range from providing backend administration to close-up strategic consulting support, to planting new churches. They can provide know-how to do things we have not done before and offer assurance to help sustain us in our journey.

Two of our services this month are drawn directly from Faith Rocket materials. If you follow us on Facebook, you may have seen messages from UUSG that were placed there using the resources of Faith Rocket. If you haven't already done so, please like us and follow us on Facebook to get a look at what this can do to raise our visibility on the internet.



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#### **Your Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee usually meets on the third Monday of every month. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding church policies or programs, please feel free to speak to any of the church trustees. All meetings are open to church members and friends.

#### **Trustees for the Church Year 2015-2016**

Boudoin Azora-Minda (Chair '18)

Robert Gifford ('18)

Irene Blacquiere ('19)

Chris Pera (Treasurer '18)

Frieda Reichsman (Clerk '19)

#### **SAVE THE DATE!**

Jan 8 – 11:30am – Music & Worship  
Committee Meeting

Jan 10 - 7pm – Interweave Discussion  
Group

Jan 15 - 11:30am - Congregational  
Potluck Discussion

Jan 16 – 6:30pm – Executive Committee  
Meeting

Jan 24– 5:30pm – Welcome Table  
Community Meal

#### **Newsletter Contributions**

UU-First is published monthly with the exception of July/August.  
The deadline is the 3rd Sunday of the month.