

THE liberal

FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

In the universalist spirit of love and hope, we give, receive and grow.

Issue 4, Number 7

February 2013

2013 Pledge Drive

**Giving, Receiving, and Growing Together:
The Ritual of our Annual Pledge Drive**

By the time you reading this, you've probably received your Pledge Packet in the mail. Pledging is an annual ritual of generosity at First Universalist, not unlike Solstice or our Holiday services. As a part of this ritual, we're asking you to reflect on what First Universalist means to you and your family.

Pledge (continued on page 5)

Rally with Us!



By Laura Smidzik

Let's rally and get 175+ First Universalists to the Freedom to Marry Day at the Capitol on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 3:00pm.

This will be the first time in 2013 that marriage supporters gather at the State Rally (continued on page 10)



Annual Valentine's Dance

By George Dow

Dancers **Debbie Cash** and **Bob Friedman**, pictured above, are long-time First Universalist members who have attended every one of our Valentines Dances over the past decade. When asked what brings them back each year, Bob said, "This high energy night speaks to the love that won't let us go." Debbie loves the music, the fun, and how multigenerational this event is. So put on your dancing shoes and hop on over to First Universalist for our Annual Valentines Dance/Music Program Fundraiser/Love Fest on Saturday, February 9 from 7:30 to 10:30pm. Come hear the sweet sounds of the Universalist Jazz Band, Usual Suspects ensemble, and our very own **David Lauth, Alan Ware, Mary Bohman, Joey Babay** and more. Each year over 150 UUs and friends of all ages kick up the dust and have a ball at this event. You can dance, or you can just chat with your friends and enjoy the music; either way you won't want to miss a beat of this amazing music and great gathering! Tickets are \$15/person, and you can purchase them in the social hall after each service or at the door. Be there, don't be square, and support the music program at this grand affair!

Our Worship Theme Feb 10 - Mar 3

Sex and Spirit

by Ruth MacKenzie, Director of Worship Arts

What do spirituality and sexuality have to do with each other? In fact, putting these two ideas in the same sentence might feel like an oxymoron. Still, if we affirm the Unitarian Universalist principles of people's inherent worth and wholeness, equity and compassion in human relationships, and the deeply interconnected web of life, then we must speak about sexuality. This month we explore the power, and goodness, of the body. We will hold the concerns and wounds of those who have experienced sexuality as a form of abuse rather than a form of pleasure, while reclaiming the body and the erotic as a resource within each of us. Like the great poet Rumi reminds us, our body may be our greatest teacher. Sexuality is not separate from spirituality, but rather the erotic, the "physical, emotional, psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us (Audre Lorde)" is the source of sacred power.



On Resurrection Day

Rumi Translation by Coleman Barks

On Resurrection Day your body testifies against you.
Your hand says: "I stole money."
Your lips, "I said meanness."
Your feet, "I went where I shouldn't."
Your genitals, "Me too."

They will make your praying sound hypocritical.
Let the body's doing speak openly now,
Without your saying a word,
As a student walking behind a teacher
Says, "This one knows more clearly
Than I the way."



Topography

by Sharon Olds

*After we flew across the country we
got into bed, laid our bodies
delicately together, like maps laid
face to face, East to West, my
San Francisco against your New York, your
Fire Island against my Sonoma, my
New Orleans deep in your Texas, your Idaho
bright on my Great Lakes, my Kansas
burning against your Kansas your Kansas
burning against my Kansas, your Eastern
Standard Time pressing into my
Pacific Time, my Mountain Time
beating against your Central Time, your
sun rising swiftly from the right my
sun rising swiftly from the left your
moon rising slowly from the left my
moon rising slowly from the right until
all four bodies of the sky
burn above us, sealing us together,
all our cities twin cities,
all our states united, one
nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for
all.*

Letter of Love to the Worship Associates

by Ruth MacKenzie, Director of Worship Arts

For the past few weeks our Worship Associates have opened our services with stories that have moved us, spoken truth, and told a compelling story. Each Associate has seated the worship theme in the particulars of his or her own life, grounding each service in the reality of lived experience. The worship service has become all the more rich with these stories: a cowardly lion finding courage in community, a truth left unsaid, a mother who hears the most tender words from her adult son as he lies in a hospital bed.

The stories you hear are a product of rich conversations, reading and wondering. Two weeks before they appear on the chancel, I meet with the Worship Associate. We talk about the particular slant of a sermon and then let our conversation carry us to associations, or stories that shed new light, or create surprising angles on the upcoming theme. The conversation is always rich and I usually leave the meeting stunned by the beauty and depth of the people in this group.



Thanks to our wonderful Worship Associates, who are bringing such depth and beauty to each Sunday by telling a story about life and the spirit. Thanks to **Cami Applequist, Maggie Arends, Marion Bauer, Brian Eshult, Suzanne Hay, Larry LaVercombe, Ward Lyndall, Sharon Mandel, Emma Paskewitz, Richard Spratt, Chandler Yorkhall.**



Art Exhibits

January 5 - February 10

Bonnie Hill, long time member of the church, will be showing her art in the social hall in a show she has titled "HEART" beginning January 5, and continuing through February 10. In her show she will share her art journey, with drawings and paintings starting in 1999, the year she purchased a parent/child painting class at the church auction.

February 17 - March 24

Doug Abbott's art exhibit *Sacerdos* will be in the social hall February 17 - March 24. In 2010, Doug completed his MA with a dual program in Theology and Art and Leadership Towards Racial Justice at United Theological Seminary. This exhibit contains works he created during his graduate studies as well as new works.

It is a great pleasure to share this body of work with my home congregation. Yes, First Universalist is still one of my spiritual homes. This exhibit, simply titled SACERDOS, draws from work I created during my graduate studies at United Theological Seminary, as well as new works.

In 2005 I embarked on a journey to deeper understand the spiritual dimensions of my own creative process. I hope you enjoy the exhibit. You may contact me directly at dougmn@me.com with questions, inquiries or deeper conversation.

Drawing from words by Ori Z Soltes, "Just as the sacer itself has various analogical aspects, so the sacerdos may be understood as a borders creature of various analogous aspects: a priest(ess), a prophet(ess), a hero(ine), a pharoh, shah, an emperor, a king, a poet, an ARTIST. All of these are inspiring connections with the sacer that the rest of us lack. It is the sacerdos who, as ARTIST(prophet), presents us with behavioral guidelines prescribed by God, through which we can achieve God's blessing."

Pledge (continued from page 1)

ly, to fill in the “I Give Because. . .” sticky note in your packet, and then to fill in your pledge card.

We’re inviting you to complete our ritual of generosity by returning your pledge card, posting your sticky note in the Social Hall and adding a thread for each member of your family to our “Web of Connection.” You’ll find the “Web of Connection” in the Social Hall – you can’t miss it!

There are great plans ahead here at First Universalist Church, as we deepen our faith formation programming, our justice work, and our engagement in the world. Our presence and impact in our community has grown along with our financial needs.

We’re asking each member and friend of First Universalist to stretch in their pledge again this year. We know that generosity is a path to deeper spiritual growth and a more meaningful life. Stretching in your pledge is committing to something bigger than yourself; it commits you to supporting the faith and values we care about, and making them come alive in the world.

We ask you to:

1. Increase your current pledge by \$100 a month,

or

2. Pledge 5% of your household income to First Universalist, or take a step toward pledging 5%.

We are practicing what we preach. We both give 5% of our income to the church, and we invite you to practice generosity as a spiritual discipline. Please grow with us on this journey and join us in our ritual for a successful Pledge Campaign!

In gratitude and joy,

*Revs. Justin Schroeder and Jen Crow
(and the Pledge Team)*

Investment Team Opportunities

Are You Interested in Applying for the Offering Plate Community Investment Team?

by Rev. Justin Schroeder, Senior Minister

One of the church’s Visionary Goals is this: “The people of First Universalist Church work to build a just, loving and sustainable world. We are a visible, influential voice, and we act to shape the larger community into a more just and equitable society.” Our commitment to building a world that works for everyone extends to the way we manage and share our resources.

Because the Church’s operating budget is supported through annual financial pledges from members and friends, First Universalist deepens its practice of investing in exceptional community based work by giving away a significant portion of its Sunday offerings. In the two years from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012, First Universalist collected and gave away over \$120,000 from its Sunday offering plate. Generosity and investing in our community are core values for us.

We’re in the process of creating an Offering Plate Community Investment Team that will be comprised of the following people: One member of the Faith in Action Umbrella Steering Committee; one member of the Anti-Racism Working Group or Leadership Team; two at-large members of the congregation; and one staff liaison.

This team will be responsible for soliciting suggestions of recipients from the Faith in Action Focus Areas, Anti-Racism Leadership Team (still being formed), and from the congregation at large. Your suggestions will be reviewed by the Team against a preset selection criteria and they will make recommendations to the Staff Management Team who will approve them.

If you’re interested in serving on this team, please submit a one page letter to Rev. Justin Schroeder at justin@firstuniv.org. Please explain why you’re interested, your involvement in the church, the relevant experience you bring, and how you imagine this work might change, challenge, and deepen your faith.



General Assembly 2013 Approaching

by Ginny McAninch



Imagine yourself and thousands of fellow UUs gathering to celebrate, to worship, to work for justice and to do the business of our Association. That is what happens at our annual conference, General Assembly. A discussion of General Assembly occurred at our last Annual Meeting so we want to emphasize that NOW is the time to start thinking about the conference and deciding if you want to be there. This year's General Assembly is in Louisville, KY June 19-23.

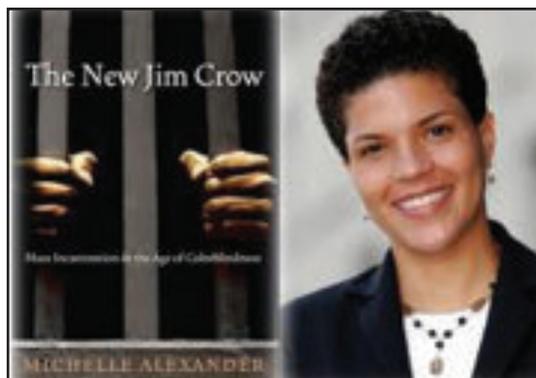
As many people may attend as want to attend, but our church may send 17 delegates. If you are a delegate you can vote in the business sessions (Plenary) and you may deduct your expenses on your taxes as a charitable contribution. The Nominating

Committee creates a slate of delegates. If you want to be a delegate, let me know so you may be added to the official slate to be presented at the Annual Meeting. Please also note that the church budget includes a small sum to assist those who want to attend.

Next month we'll give more information, including stories of those who have attended and found it fun and meaningful. Feel free to direct questions to **Ginny McAninch** at Ginny.mc1947@gmail.com.

Black History Month

In celebration of Black History Month, Unity Church-Unitarian is extending an invitation to join in a discussion of Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The discussions will take place at Unity Church (733 Portland Avenue, St. Paul) on Sunday, February 24, at 12:30 PM and on Wednesday, February 27, at 7:15 PM. Civil Rights advocate and litigator Michelle Alexander asserts that crime-fighting policies and systems such as the "War on Drugs" and the U.S. incarceration system disproportionately and intentionally affect Americans of color. She also details the multifaceted, lifelong discrimination and disenfranchisement that enslave those who are labeled as "felon." The book is available in local libraries, bookstores and at the Unity Church Bookstall on Sundays. All are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Pat Haff, Coordinator of Community Outreach Ministries at 651.228.1456x126 or pat@unityunitarian.org.



Put Food on the Shelf



The need for donations to the Joyce Food Shelf continues.

Please bring Non-perishable food items to the church, such as:

- Canned fish (tuna, salmon)
- Canned fruits & vegetables
- Soups & chili
- Peanut butter & jelly
- Tomato paste or sauce, spaghetti sauce
- Cereals
- Pasta (wheat, whole grain)
- Powdered or canned milk
- Cornmeal (white & yellow)
- Dried beans, peas & fruit
- Canola oil
- Rice (long grain, Basmati, brown, Minute)
- Hygiene and household items (Baby food, formula, diapers, toothpaste)

Chalice Lighters

by Lauren Wyeth, Dir. of Children, Youth & Families Ministries

Last Fall, eleven children in grades 3-6 were invested as Chalice Lighters for First Universalist Church. These girls and boys were prepared for the task through an afternoon workshop, in which they studied the origins of the UU chalice, considered the meaning of the chalice lighting ritual, and practiced the skills required to participate in leading worship.

From October through December, our new worship leaders assisted with lighting the chalice on Sharing Sundays and for multigenerational worship. Their skillful service and presence on our chancel was appreciated as an enrichment to our worship experience, so with the beginning of the new year the Worship Team invited the children to light the chalice for us as we gather every Sunday morning.

At First Universalist, we recognize that people of every age have unique contributions to offer our spiritual community, and our Chalice Lighters program allows children with an interest in worship and ritual to develop deeper ties to our faith through service to our church. Our young Chalice Lighters model our values through their commitment, generosity and service. Please feel free to share with them your appreciation for their part in our faith community.

Many thanks to our 2012-2013 Chalice Lighters:

Olivia Dalby
Monroe Chumklang
Anya Healy
Ethan Healy
Elliott Jaeger
Edward Keller

Owen Knych
Graham Krewinghaus
Aidan Lindon
Satya Mamdani
Rose Marshall



At Chalice Lighter training, Monroe Chumklang makes sure the lighter is under control after lighting the chalice. Reverends Jen Crow and Justin Schroeder study his technique.

Will Divestment of Big Oil Save our Planet?

Will Divestment of Big Oil Save our Planet? Tuesday, Feb. 12 from 7 to 8:30pm in the Cummins Room. How would divestment of fossil fuel stocks impact climate change? And, perhaps more importantly, will it serve as a catalyst for more effective action? What should our church and denomination do? Join this compelling dialogue about a controversial strategy for the most challenging issue of our time. Our speaker, **Ross Levin**, is a prominent wealth management executive, inaugural recipient of Financial Planning Magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award, and First Universalist member. The evening will include the opportunity to sign up for a "Take Action on Climate Change" event at the church and learn more about an emerging climate-related program on "faithful conversations". Join us for dessert at 6:30 pm.

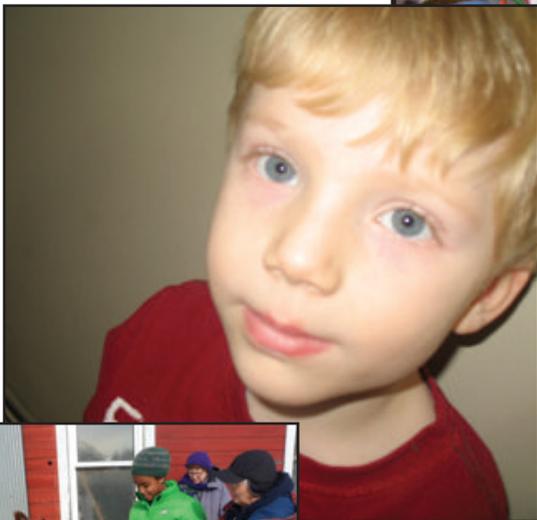


Bill McKibben

Divestment is the brain child of Bill McKibben, writer, activist and founder of 350.org. He has laid out some "terrifying math" based on two imperatives: to keep global warming below 2°C and to prevent CO2 emissions from exceeding 565 gigatons. Not doing this means a science fiction climate and destruction of the planet. The fossil fuel industry, meanwhile, has 2,795 gigatons of CO2 in their reserves (5 x the target supported by 167 nations).

Images From The Day of Service This Year

A quick collage of images from the Day of Service, Feb 2. Look for more of the story in the next Liberal.



Small Groups are Growing

By Sara Smalley, Interim Dir. of Membership and Small Groups



small groups
BIG CONNECTIONS

Small groups are continuing to grow and deepen at First Universalist! Sign up soon because groups start meeting in mid-February.

If you haven't been a part of a small group, or it's been a while since you've participated in one, here's what you need to know: small groups run for 90 minutes every other week for six sessions. During each session, participants light a chalice, hear a thought-provoking reading, and reflect on one or two questions.

What happens next is powerful. People listen. Really listen. They listen to themselves and to each other. Parker Palmer said some of our deep truths are like shy deer; they'll run for cover if something comes crashing through the woods, but will emerge in a quiet clearing. Small groups are that quiet clearing where we can sit and listen as deep truths emerge.

Small groups are fundamental to how we relate to each other at First Universalist. We hope you join one! For more information, please contact Sara Smalley, Interim Director of Membership and Small Groups, at sara@firstuniv.org or 612.825.1701 x124. Sign up in the Social Hall starting January 13.



New to First Universalist? Considering Becoming a Member?

Join us for our First Step class. This is a short overview of Unitarian Universalism and First Universalist Church. Sessions run about half an hour and no sign up is necessary – just show up and learn more about our church community! First Step is offered the first and third Sunday of every month after each service. We meet at the front of the Sanctuary near the pulpit.

If you are a newcomer who is ready to learn more, Voices of Our Faith is for you! This class meets for three sessions. During the first session, we will watch a short video about Unitarian Universalism and then reflect on how this faith might match what you're looking for. During the next two sessions, you learn more about how First Universalist approaches religion – what our ministers believe church is for and how our community builds authentic connections. Thursdays, March 7, 14, 21; 7-8:30pm.

New Member Recognition Sunday

New members will be welcomed and recognized by the congregation during worship on the Sundays listed below. We hope you will participate in one of these celebrations! Sunday, March 3, both services; Sunday, June 2, one service only at 10am (summer schedule)

Class Sign Up and Childcare

To sign up for a class, please contact Sandy DiNanni at 612.825.1701 or sandy@firstuniv.org.

Childcare is provided free of charge with at least one week advance notice. Contact Emma Schlatter at 612.825.1701x107 or emma@firstuniv.org.

If you have any questions about these classes or about how to get connected at First Universalist, please contact Sara Smalley, Interim Director of Membership and Small Groups, at 612.825.1701x124 or sara@firstuniv.org.

by Sara Smalley, Interim Dir. of Membership and Small Groups

If you are ready to deepen your exploration of Unitarian Universalism and First Universalist Church, join us for The Path to Membership: Sharing our Journeys. This class includes meaningful reflection, lively conversation, and a more in depth exploration of the history of Unitarian Universalism and the community of First Universalist Church. After sharing a little about our personal religious journeys and learning about the journeys of Unitarian Universalism and First Universalist, participants are invited to imagine where our journey together might take us. This class is offered as a three weeknight series or in a full-day Saturday format and is a requirement for membership. Upcoming Classes: Saturday, Feb. 16; 9:00am – 3pm; Thursdays, April 11, 18, 25; 6:30-8:30pm.

After taking the Path to Membership class, you are eligible to become a member of First Universalist and you are invited to celebrate becoming a member! Join Rev. Schroeder or Rev. Crow as we explore the deeper meanings and expectations of membership in our Celebration of Membership brunch. This class invites participants to discover how they will give, receive, and grow as they make a financial and personal commitment to the life of the congregation. The class will conclude with a celebration ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church! Upcoming Classes: Saturday, March 2; 9:30-11:30am.; Saturday, June 1; 9:30-11:30am.



Photograph by Sara Smalley

The Berkus family, Morgan and Kimberly with daughter Taylor, signing our member book as one of the final steps of becoming a new member of First Universalist Church.



Freedom to Marry Rally

by Laura Smidzik, Cummins Ministerial Intern

I remember my first faith rally in the Capitol Rotunda. It was in 2004 when the Minnesota legislature introduced a constitutional amendment prohibiting recognition of same-sex marriage. The story I've heard says that Unity Church-Unitarian and First Universalist had a healthy competition to see who could get the most people to the rally! Standing on the Side of Love t-shirts were blue instead of yellow back then, and throughout the packed halls UUs from many congregations were visibly showing their love!

I remember taking the elevator up to the top floor of the Rotunda and barely being able to get to the center in order to see the banners from different places of faith draped over every inch of the balcony on each floor. As the numbers of Minnesotans in the hallways continued to grow the spirit in the building was charged with people aware that something significant was happening at that moment.

This was the first time I saw more heterosexual allies than LGBT people from my church come forth in protest. It is hard for me to explain how significant that felt and how it changed my perception of my church. Parents came with kids and church youth groups served as visible symbols of a hopeful future.

The speakers were progressive faith leaders who were able to speak of justice framed in their deeply held beliefs. We listened, we sang, we hugged those we knew and smiled with joy at those we did not. Come stand with us again and show legislators that this is a critical year to be bold and courageous with the goal of full marriage equality for all Minnesotans!



UUs Stand on the Side of Love at the Freedom to Marry Rally in 2011.



I love my Habitat home because I know it was built by people with kind hearts, and when I get old enough to volunteer on the Habitat house, I will so someone else can feel the love and joy ... and pass this happiness down. - Vera Essiomley, age 11

Habitat Advocacy Program

First Universalist is starting a new advocacy program in support of housing and homelessness. We will join an existing program organized by Habitat for Humanity that is designed to first educate oneself, then help MN legislators understand the issues and opportunities involved with housing and homelessness.

Our involvement is wide open, ranging from being willing to receive educational information by email to joining the Habitat staff in meeting with legislators and encouraging their active support for action addressing housing and homelessness.

Habitat has joined with many other organizations concerned with these issues including the Wilder Foundation, the Downtown Congregations, and MN Housing Partnership, to name but a few. All advocacy activities are non-partisan.

Rally (continued from page 1)

Capitol Rotunda! It is a critical way to show state legislators that we want them to be proactive around marriage following our historic push back of the constitutional amendment.

Put on your Standing on the Side of Love shirt and join hundreds of other UUs at this interfaith event and demonstrate the strength of our faith in action.

Register at OutFront MN (<https://out-front.wufoo.com/forms/k7w2r3/>) and make sure to note you are from First Universalist. We will be tracking numbers toward our goal of 175 or more.

A Home Takes Love

by Peg Meier

The last nail is pounded. Paint cans are stored. The house is dedicated, and the family has moved into its new Habitat for Humanity home. You might think First Universalist's commitment is over. Not so.

Volunteers with Habitat's Neighborhood Family Partners step in. New homeowners, especially those from warm climes, need to learn to close off outside water faucets before a hard freeze. If there's a leak under the kitchen sink, more has to be done than catch drips in a bucket. Want a nice-looking fence?; here's how.

Michael Undlin of First Universalist has helped a family for a year. With a Habitat checklist in hand, he goes over home maintenance lists with the family each season. He said, "It's enjoyable, fun and really helpful to the family. They're so appreciative." Now that the first family is launched, he re-upped with a second.

Martha Bird, another church member, is helping Melo Lawson, a single mom from Togo who has a job, attends college and has three children living with her. Martha advises on upkeep – "You need to put salt on that slippery sidewalk" – but she and the family have gone beyond the mandatory four-season sessions.

"The most interesting part is getting to know the people," she said. "Doing the house stuff is just an avenue for that."

Martha has advised Melo on record keeping, landscaping, using libraries, paying taxes, and reaching proper authorities about a bullied child. She is invited to birthday and graduation parties and has had the family to her home. She sensitively told them that when an American invites people over for 2pm. Sunday, it's not acceptable to arrive at 6pm. "So many fascinating cultural differences," Martha said.

Martha had tried to help with Habitat home-raising, but "there are people who want to build, and people who don't. This program fits me much better."

Barry Johnson heads the First Universalist partnership program. Teaching a homeowner to change furnace filters is just fine, he said, but it's the ensuing relationships that matter most. His wife, Karen Johnson, helped register a child for school. They both connect the family to community resources. He said, "When you're over there

at their house, you can see ways to help the family settle in."

Seven First Universalists are Habitat family partners. Want to join in? Please contact **Barry Johnson** through the church.



Waste Disposal at First Universalist

by Julie Gottesleben

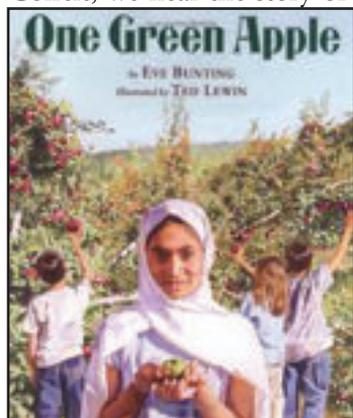
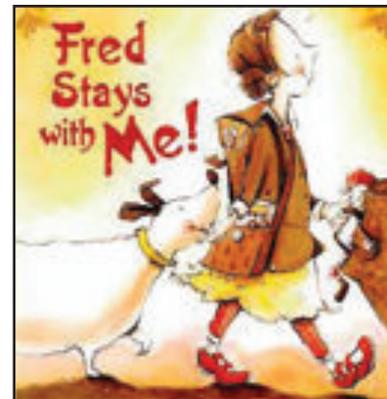
Thank you, thank you, thank you, to everyone who has sorted their trash and recycling at the church at various events. We are all doing a great job! There is a new sign posted just inside the kitchen with a clear chart of where to toss which items. If it is still unclear, just ask someone for some help. A couple new changes are coming our way with our vendor, Randy's Sanitation. We can now recycle clean plastic containers other than just bottles, with our metal and glass containers. These might include plastic items like deli & bakery boxes and trays, cups, yogurt, cottage cheese, margarine tubs, jar lids etc. Just make sure to look for one of the recycling numbers (#1-7) and rinse well before recycling. Another change that is coming in early 2013 (probably by the end of February) will be single sort for all recycling (paper, cardboard, glass, metal & plastics). Organics and trash will remain separate. Some people have expressed interest in seeing how the recycling is sorted at the other end when it leaves us. We are trying to set up a little tour at the plant in Delano for those who might want to see how this process works. It will be during a typical work day and we will give some advance notice so you can sign up if you are interested.

Families All Matter at First Universalist Church

by Lauren Wyeth, Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries

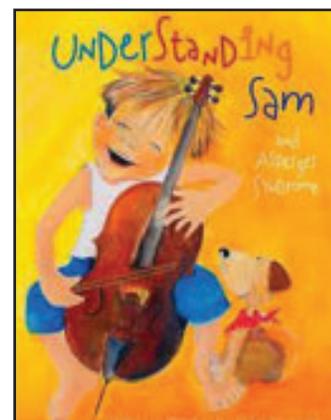
Each year for five weeks in January and February, our Kindergarten and 1st grade kids participate in the Families All Matter Book Project. Through reading engaging stories, we deepen our understanding and respect for all families, and the many cultures and experiences that shape them. The books and discussions are both empowering and supportive. We aim to provide our children with the tools, knowledge and courage it takes to build inclusive and fair communities, both inside and outside our church walls.

This year's themes include divorce/break-ups, immigration, adoption and disability. In *Fred Stays with Me* by Nancy Coffelt, we hear the story of a young girl who tells about how she and her dog Fred move back and forth between



her parents' homes. In *One Green Apple* by Eve Bunting, Farah, a recent immigrant who is Muslim, describes a field trip to an apple orchard with her new school. And in *Understanding Sam* by Clarabelle van Niekerk and Liezl Venter, we learn some of the common characteristics and behaviors of kids with Asperger's while appreciating Sam as a unique and talented person.

This year, the Families All Matter unit will culminate with the creation of a welcome quilt in our downstairs Religious Education hall. Please take some time to visit the children's artwork, and their messages of welcome, on display from Feb. 10 through mid-Mar.



A Spiritual Practice and Artistic Expression

The Senior High Overnight

by Katie Heaton, Youth Ministries Coordinator



On Saturday, January 19 First Universalist youth in grades 9-12 gathered together at church for a night of spiritual practice, games, art, and good food. The retreat was planned and hosted by the 11th and 12th grade youth for their younger peers. It included workshops in yoga, led by senior high youth Claudia Cooperstein, and Reiki, by local energy healer Charles Murphy. Harden Cadiz led a moving worship in which participants used small group sharing to explore memories of feeling spiritual or at ease. Under the guidance of Helen Risser, the group also completed a large canvas painting designed for as gift for young ones attending Children's Chapel. At the end of the evening, adult senior high advisor Deborah Allan led a candle decorating activity and Tim Dirr helped youth prepare snacks for consumption during the late-night movie. The next morning the tired and happy group feasted on Brugger's bagels, then attended worship service in the Sanctuary together. The senior high youth would like to thank their advisors and adult chaperones for the guidance and support.



Soy de Todo el Mundo

by Allison Wyeth

Teaching 5th grade Religious Education this year has introduced me to some really amazing people - the kids. Of course, the other RE teachers are a fascinating and dedicated bunch and I love working with them too. And all of us together, kids and teachers, are a group of people who think and care deeply. I've come to expect that.

But, a few Sundays ago, something happened I didn't expect. We were working on an activity to help the kids appreciate the power of their roots and the effects those roots have on who we are. There was an introductory poem to this lesson and it prompted us to answer the question, "Where am I from?" by writing our own poems in the same style. After hearing the usual groans and sighs from a class you've just asked to write a poem (UUs come in all sizes), there followed a moment or two of consideration, and then one child raised her hand and asked if it was okay to write the poem in another language. "Why not?", I replied aloud to the whole class.

Ten minutes later, as we sat in our circle, we were treated to poems about the memories, names, tastes, smells and more that root us to our physical and metaphorical homes. And these poems were in Russian, Chinese, English and Spanish (and the translations were included). As one child's poem reminded all of us, "Soy de todo el mundo," (I am from the whole world). I was humbled to have this lesson, one the world today needs dearly, appear in my 5th grade class at First Universalist on a regular Sunday morning.

Middle School Overnight

6th-8th graders Saturday, Feb. 16

Middle schoolers will have fun with friends, great food and a special worship service. We'll also create art, skits, music and recorded interviews that will be used in the production of a short video featuring First U's middle school youth. To register or for more information, contact Katie, katie@firstuniv.org.

Winter Play Date

Kindergarten - 2nd grade families

Sunday, Feb 10 after both services



Please join Kindergarten through 2nd grade RE families for a winter play date after church on Sunday, Feb. 10 from 11:30am until 2:00pm at Lyndale Farmstead Park. We have an activity room and kitchen reserved for indoor games and a potluck lunch. The park has a sledding hill, skating rink, warming hut and ice skates available.

Dress warmly, and bring a dish to share and your favorite sled! Lyndale Farmstead is at 3900 Bryant Ave S in Minneapolis. (Older and younger siblings are welcome, too.)

Save the Date!

Religious Education Family Overnight

K-5th grades Saturday, Mar. 16

Join us for an evening of fun and games, including a family-friendly worship experience, group singing and a talent show. Many of our kids (and adults, too) say this is their favorite night of the church year. The annual event culminates with early morning bagels with a minister. Come build community and make memories.



Children grades 1-5 are welcome to join the Children's Choir anytime. Contact Mary Bohman, mary@firstuniv.org.

First Elders Gathering

A Wonderful Beginning

by Laura Smidzik, Cummins Ministerial Intern

The Rev. Jen Crow held Hopes and Histories listening sessions when she arrived this past fall. One of the session I attended was specifically for elders of the church. The participants shared rich stories and meaningful memories of First Universalist and how it has been significant in their lives. I recall stories of the full church procession from the Girard Avenue South building to our current church home in 1993; the powerful connections formed through the Association of Universalist Women (AUW); the impact of Rev. Cummin's work in Selma during the civil rights movement; the joy of working on the First 150 Years history project; and our visible opposition to the Vietnam War. Deep roots to this church and our faith exist through the lives and stories of those who have been a part of First Universalist for 30, 40 and going on 50 years!

There was also discussion of a desire to return to some of the daytime gatherings for elders that existed previously. I am delighted to be in the role of reinvigorating an elder group. We held our first meeting on Jan. 3, 2013. The room was set with ten chairs in a circle and a chalice in the center. I had determined that given the timing (post-holidays) I would be grateful if we had three people in attendance since any number would make for an important connection. By the time the meeting began the circle had expanded over and over again until we had 26 elders in all!

The time passed quickly as each person shared a story of a connection to the church and hopes for what this group may be in the future. More beautiful stories emerged – moving stories of singing together until the spirit was noticeably out of the Girard Church before processing to this building and stories of significant church leadership provided by people in the circle. There were also challenging stories about First Universalist serving as a refuge for individuals whose values differ from their families, and about a longing for us to step up more boldly with anti-war efforts like we did in the past.

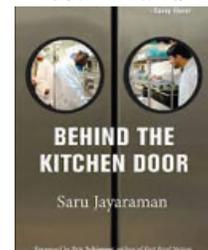
We have another elder gathering scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 6 from 10:30 to noon in the Cummins room. Rev. Justin Schroeder will join us. I hope that anyone (60+) who is interesting in joining us please feel free to come or contact me at laura@firstuniv.org or 612-825-1701 x120 if you want to be on the email list.

Association of Universalist Women Spring Retreat

AUW Members' early-bird registration period is Feb 10-22. You can join AUW when you register. Non-members must register Feb 24-Mar 1. Registration forms will be available starting Feb 3 at AUW table in the Social Hall on Sundays and at church office on weekdays, as well as on the AUW website www.1uauw.org to download.

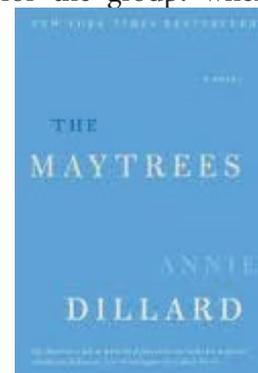
Book and Discussion: Behind the Kitchen Door

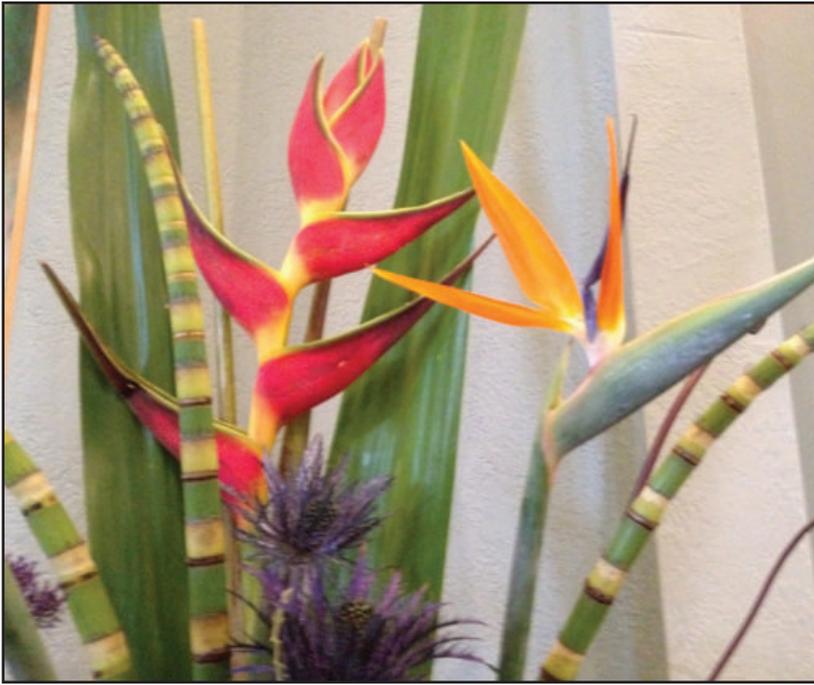
This year, UUs across the nation are learning about how our food-related choices affect human rights and environmental justice. *Behind the Kitchen Door* is a book that UUs in many congregations will be reading as part of an effort to change the national conversation about our food system and how the people who work in it, many of whom are immigrants, are treated. Read this item from UUSC http://www.uusc.org/category/blog_subject/economic_justice and plan to buy the book between Feb. 11 and 23. Contact Chris Bremer at bremer101@yahoo.com if you plan to read the book; we'll schedule a discussion group in late February or early March.



Women Who Read

This is a reminder for our next evening meeting of Women Who Read, next Monday, January 28, at 6:30 PM in the church social hall. We will all be meeting at the church this time, because that had been agreed to when our two hostesses signed up last June. The hostesses are Katie Johnson and Stephanie Clarke, and the book we are discussing is Annie Dillard's *The Maytrees*. Please RSVP Katie at K8848mn@gmail.com or 651-334-8848 or Stephanie at Clar0491@edu.mn or 617 680-0270. Before the book discussion Liz Permar and Carol Gilbert will moderate a brief discussion to sort out some further issues for the group: when we will begin dividing between church and a home, getting volunteer hostesses for the church if we decide to start right away, and setting up a system to have assigned group leaders for both groups.





Photograph by Janet Mills

*This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.*

Theodore Roethke

We hold in our hearts and prayers:

Journeys

Jim Mickman and **Sarai Brenner** and their family, as they work through the issues of tumor-induced end of life and home hospice care.

Passings

Lou and Sharon Quast and their children, as they mourn the death of Lou's mother, Jannette, age 95, who passed away Jan. 3. The family celebrated her life on Sunday, Jan. 20 in St. Paul.

Former First Universalist member **Christine Walthour**, who died peacefully in her sleep Jan. 2, after a long and valiant struggle with cancer. Her memorial service was held at First Universalist. Our love and support go to Christine's husband, Brian McElrath, and son, Guillermo.

9th Graders **Zoe and Jackson Eilers**, (children of **Angie and Mark Eilers**), who will miss their friend, Carly Christenson, from St. Louis Park High School, who passed away on Jan. 8 from complications related to the flu. They will miss her beaming light.

Emily and Blair Christie, as they celebrate the life of Blair's mother, Carol, who passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 8 after a bout of pneumonia. Carol was a lovely Nana to their daughter, but never got to meet their new baby son.

Blessings

We celebrate the marriage of Nathan Elliot (son of church members **Lynne Stanley** and **Chris Elliot**) and Lisa Harn, who were married last Sunday, Jan 6th.

Celebrate the marriage of Louisa Quast & Kevin Lunch. Louisa is the daughter of **Lou & Sharon Quast**, sister of Isabelle Quast.

Congregational Care: What is it?

By Margit Berg

It's something we all do informally every time we reach out to listen to and care for a fellow congregant. But more formally, it's a program of the church whereby we make sure that people experiencing a life event or going through transitions, are recognized and supported.

How can we support people? First of all, we need to know about individual needs. You can call the church office and talk with the receptionist, 612.825.1701, talk with Jen Crow, our Minister of Program Life, Ext. 103, or contact **Margit Berg**, margit.berg7@gmail.com or 612.377.4776. You may call about yourself or on behalf of someone else, and we will contact that person. If you want to be listed in the Cycle of Life, we will initiate that.

We have a large cadre of volunteers that can provide: 1) transportation for special appointments or rides to church, 2) meals in time of illness, 3) hospitality at memorial services, 4) visits to people and delivery of flowers from the Sunday service or a comfort shawl, and 5) other miscellaneous help. The Congregational Care team also sponsors an annual blood drive, support groups, and speakers on issues of health and end-of-life planning.

Our TRUST parish nurse, Pat McLaughlin, 612.822.2394, is a good resource when there is a need for a referral to a community service. TRUST also has an important service that those in South Minneapolis may want to know about and that is a chore program for those over 55 or disabled people for indoor or outdoor chores. They charge on a sliding fee scale. Call TRUST at 612.827.6159. See their web site for other programs, www.trustinc.org.

The Choir



Singers who would like to join the choir on a regular basis are always welcome. Rehearsals are from 7:00-9:00 on Wednesday evenings. Prior experience and the ability to read music are helpful, but not required. Contact randy@firstuniv.org or visit the website at firstuniv.org/music/choir.

Children's Choir

All children in grades 1-5 are welcome to join First Universalist's Children's Choir, directed by Mary Bohman. No experience necessary. We sing music that reflects our Unitarian Universalist values, build music skills, and have loads of fun! Rehearsals are Sundays 10:35-11:10am in the Cummins Room. Come any Sunday to sign up, meet the director, and sing with the choir. For more information, contact Mary at mary@firstuniv.org.

Universal Folk Orchestra

Emphasizing folk songs and instrumental chamber music we use words and sounds to more fully express our spiritual values, and we have a lot of fun doing it. Our main purpose will be to make music together. We meet every Sunday 6-7:30pm in the Sanctuary. Bring instruments, musical scores, recordings. Contact Ruth Mackenzie (ruth@firstuniv.org) or John Jensen (pianojj@earthlink.net).

Rise Up Singing

Rise Up Singing: Community Song Circle at First Universalist Church is an informal group of musicians and singers who gather to sing for fun on the first Thursday of each month. They sing from the Rise Up Singing songbook.

And you only have to love to sing to join 'em...you don't even have to be very good!

Come and lift your voice in communal singing on the first Thursday of each month from 7-9pm in the Chalice Room. Contact the group leader, Allan Steinhauer, 612.309.5632 or arstein01@hotmail.com for more information.

We are open to all that want to have a good time, including children. We go around in a circle picking songs and singing them together. The Rise Up Singing songbook which has 1,200 songs to choose from is our primary songbook, and you are also welcome to bring your own song handouts. We have a piano and welcome all instruments, especially a guitar player to help lead us in song. We don't repeat a song in the same evening, and we always have fun. Come for just one song or a whole evening of singing. We hope to hear you there.

Remember to embrace your voice and lift it in joyous song!



Universal Jazz Band

There are so many ways to join the music at First Universalist Church. Along with opportunities in Jazz Band and Folk Band, we are assembling a list of brass, woodwind and string players to accompany hymns, and provide solo and ensemble work to accompany the choir. Please contact John Jensen, pianojj@earthlink.net, or Randy Buikema, randy@firstuniv.org, to express your interest.

Buddhist Meditation

Buddhist Meditation and Study group on Monday evenings – newcomers welcome! We will be revisiting Gil Fronsdal’s book, “The Issue At Hand: Essays On Buddhist Mindfulness Practice.” This book is a group favorite as we explore intentions in our lives.

During the winter session the group will be co-facilitated by Susan Hagler and Susan Nelson who are both Zen Buddhist priests in the Soto school. If you have any questions please direct them to Susan Hagler at susanhagler13@gmail.com or 612.825.7780. There is a session fee of \$45 for the nine weeks; please know the fee can be waived if need be. Mondays, Jan. 28—Mar. 25, 7-8:45pm, Cummins Room.



Chi-Gung

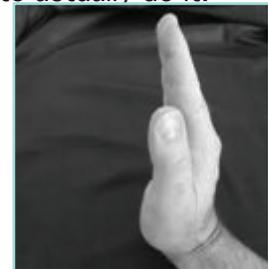
All are welcome to join Chi-Gung at First Universalist. Chi-Gung is a centuries old form of meditative exercise that centers the mind, increases self awareness, builds internal energy, and develops a healthy, flexible body physically and spiritually. Chi-gung practice can diminish physical pain, stress, depression, and isolation. You may sit or stand as needed, so the class is suitable for people with physical limitation or illness. Instructor Pat Gottschalk is a member of First U and has an 18-year practice as a certified Shiatsu practitioner. Participants are encouraged to make a \$35 donation to First Universalist, but all are welcome to attend no matter your economic circumstance. Fridays, 10-11:30am, nine sessions Jan. 11—March 8, Chalice Room.



Mostly Silence Meditation

The Mostly Silence Meditation Group will meet the first Thursday of the month, beginning Feb. 7 from 5-6:15pm. Newcomers and drop-ins welcome, even if you’ve never meditated before. Those who have experienced the group have appreciated meditation with other people in a group, and having it on one’s calendar provides a specific opportunity to actually do it.

The group starts with a reading and check-in in the Chancel Room (left door behind the Sanctuary), then moves to a walking meditation in the Sanctuary, followed by a sitting meditation in the Meditation Room. We then return to the Chancel Room for reflection and closing words. Any questions, contact Michael Dotson at 612.419.4260 or mdotson904@att.net.



1 Friday

10:00am - 11:30am Chi-gung

7:00pm - 9:00pm AUW-Friday Get Connected

2 Saturday

9:00am - 4:00pm Day of Service

3 Sunday



10:30am First Step Class

12:15pm First Step Class

5:15pm - 7:30pm Universal Folk Orchestra Rehearsal

4 Monday

7:00pm - 8:45pm Buddhist Meditation and Study Group

7:30pm - 9:00pm Jazz Band Rehearsal

5 Tuesday

6 Wednesday

10:30am - 12:00pm Gathering of Elders

7:00pm - 9:00pm Choir Rehearsal

February

7 Thursday

Stonecutter's Build Day

6:30pm - 8:30pm Healing the Heart of Democracy

7:00pm - 9:00pm Rise Up Singing Folk Group

8 Friday

10:00am - 11:30am Chi-gung

9 Saturday

7:30pm - 10:30pm Valentine's Dance



10 Sunday

11:30am - 2:00pm Kindergarten-2nd grade play date

5:15pm - 7:30pm Universal Folk Orchestra Rehearsal

11 Monday

7:00pm - 8:45pm Buddhist Meditation and Study Group

7:00pm Visual Arts Committee

7:30pm - 9:00pm Jazz Band Rehearsal

12 Tuesday

6:30pm Will Divestment of Big Oil Save our Planet

13 Wednesday

7:00pm - 9:00pm Choir Rehearsal

14 Thursday



3:00pm - 5:00pm Freedom to Marry Day at the Capitol

15 Friday

10:00am - 11:30am Chi-gung

16 Saturday

Middle School Overnight

9:00am - 3:00pm Sharing Our Journeys Class

17 Sunday

10:30am First Step Class

12:15pm First Step Class

5:15pm - 7:30pm Universal Folk Orchestra Rehearsal

18 Monday

7:00pm - 8:45pm Buddhist Meditation and Study Group

7:30pm - 9:00pm Jazz Band Rehearsal

19 Tuesday

6:30pm - 9:00pm Library Committee

20 Wednesday

7:00pm - 9:00pm Choir Rehearsal

21 Thursday

6:30pm - 8:30pm Healing the Heart of Democracy

22 Friday

10:00am - 11:30am Chi-gung

23 Saturday

24 Sunday

5:15pm - 7:30pm Universal Folk Orchestra Rehearsal

25 Monday

5:30pm Women Who Read Potluck (Large Group)

7:00pm - 8:45pm Buddhist Meditation and Study Group

7:30pm - 9:00pm Jazz Band Rehearsal

27 Wednesday

7:00pm - 9:00pm Choir Rehearsal



28 Thursday

February



Don't miss the Valentine's dance on February 9 at 7:30pm - 10:30pm. Dance your socks off to the big band sound of the First Universalist Jazz Band while you support the music program of the church in one fell swoop. This is a great evening of twisting torsos, swaying arms, and an all around good time!

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