



The Monthly Newsletter for
The First Unitarian Church of Providence
Corner of Benefit and Benevolent Streets
Providence, Rhode Island

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 9

All-Parish Events

All-Parish Supper
Friday, January 16

Congregational Conversation
Sunday, January 25

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Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
Frederick Jodry, Music Director
Rev. Christana Wille McKnight,
Community Minister
Posey Kooris, Administrator
Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant
Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator
Jaime Durango, Building Manager
Paul Webber, Evening Security
Tadesse Tsega, Sunday Building Manager

N E W S L E T T E R

Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
Susan Fisher, Editor
Carol Pentleton, Designer

Services in January

January 4 A Look at Our Faith

10:30a

Rev. William Zelazny

Bill Zelazny will explore what it means to have, and to be part of, a larger faith tradition. How does it inform our lives and how can we connect with it?

The Rev. William Zelazny is the District Executive of the Unitarian Universalist Ballou Channing District of Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. Prior to coming to the BCD in 1999, he served at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas, as parish minister and at First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, as associate minister; his pre-ministry career was in municipal government management. He holds a M.Div. from Starr King School for the Ministry, a M.P.A. degree from the University of Kansas, and a B.A. from Kent State University.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

January 11 Truth, Lies, and Meaning

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

James is haunted by H. L. Mencken's caustic observation, "It is hard to believe that a man is telling the truth when you know that you would lie if you were in his place." What exactly is the relationship between truth telling, lies, and the meaning of our lives? James will attempt to unravel some of the intricacies of this question.

This morning's offering will be dedicated to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

First Unitarian's UUSC Committee will host a screening and discussion of the PBS documentary *Soldiers of Conscience* from 1:00p to 3:00p in the Auditorium.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

January 18 Conditional Beings

10:30a

John Green

There is no question racism exists. The bigger question is – what's going to be your response? John Green considers this question as we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on the eve of the inauguration of America's first black president.

John Green is a Providence artist who has been part of the First Unitarian community for more than ten years.

A Communion Service, conducted by the Deacons and Rev. James Ford, follows this morning's worship service.

Young people in kindergarten and older begin in the Meeting House, then go to their classes.

January 28 What Buddhism Has Taught Me about Being a UU Minister

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

James really believes we are a tradition that ministers to each other. In that vein, he will let us in on some trade secrets he has gleaned along the nearly twenty years he has been serving as a "professional" minister, and particularly what he's picked up from spending time with Buddhists of various sorts.

We will be welcoming new members this Sunday. (If you wish to be part of this service but have not yet joined, please contact Katy Killilea, James Ford, or Posey Kooris, in the office.)

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.



NEWS AND NOTES

Path to Membership

Saturday, January 10, 9:00a-12:00p

The Path to Membership class is for those interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism – its values, history, and principles – and about First Unitarian and its programs and people. Current members of the congregation are also welcome to attend and meet newcomers.

The Path Class is led by Rev. James Ford, Cathy Seggel, DRE, and hosted by the Deacons, who will provide brunch. There will be an opportunity to join the congregation at the close of the class.

Registration required by Monday, January 5. Childcare is provided for those who reserve by January 5.

Contact: Walter Sotelo at 401.421.7970 or assist@firstunitarianprov.org. Indicate the age(s) of children you will bring.

Installation Service for

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Sunday, February 8 at 3:00p

In February, we will install the seventeenth settled minister in our 288-year history. This service marks the formal covenant between James Ford and our congregation. Rev. Laurel Hallman, Senior Minister at the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, will deliver the installation sermon, and our former interim minister, Rev. Diane Miller, will give the Charge to the Congregation. Local and denominational guests will join us for this milestone service of worship, celebration, and mutual commitment.

WHEEL OF LIFE

Deepest condolences...

To Susan Hardy and Bill Twaddell on the death of Susan's mother.

To Ginny Adams and her family on the death of her father Thomas Adams.

And to Robert O. Jones and his family on the death of his father Robert O. Jones.

Congratulations to...

Peter and Amy Freedman Bowden on the birth of their daughter Liza Freedman Bowden.



MONKEY MIND

I've found myself in several very interesting conversations of late about our Unitarian Universalist relationship with theism – particularly Christianity – and atheism. Of course, for us the context of such conversations, if they are meant to be something more than cocktail conversation, is how do we engage the great matter of life and death? How do we find our way to meaning and purpose?

It seems we UUs put high value on whatever it is we do being somehow “reasonable.” The worst charge for some of us is that our way into depth is “irrational.” There are, to my mind and heart, endless jokes out of such . . . But, for here, in these few words, I want to return to my recurring theme of the UU “middle way.”

I recall a story I read about a modern-day alchemist who, the writer suggested, would entertain any concept if it were sufficiently unlikely. We need to resist having minds so open our brains are in danger of falling out. Or, at the other end, to be like Heinrich Schliemann, the amateur archeologist who dug right through Troy, destroying most of it, while on his quest. On the spiritual quest, we need to be aware of the danger of missing the forest for the trees.

We can and need to do preliminary sorts about all sorts of things, and can do so without much danger to our intellectual or spiritual integrity. Me, I'm going to live in the world as if it behaves properly and follows generally accepted rules of Newtonian physics, even while understanding these rules only apply at our time and place. But I also need to be prepared – or perhaps it would be better to say I need to be willing to be surprised. Particularly when walking the way of meaning and purpose in life.

As to the major surprise for all of us, I believe the secret to life and to death and to our place within that is found in how we are all connected. It's that interdependent web thing. And it turns out it isn't just philosophical; it is an experience, a way of encountering the world.

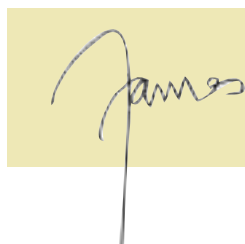
And, I've noticed people who throw themselves into path of spiritual exploration when they come to this interdependence thing as a personal experience; encounter it in two very different ways. For one it is the unshakable evidence of God. For the other it is the play of nature and needs no supernatural superstructure.

I suggest the middle way that informs our liberal religious way is to not cut off either description, to not deny either as someone's authentic experience. Nor, to cut off that description, whether it is ours or not, as possibly informing us on our way. So, for me, pretty non-theist by taste buds, I find myself often best informed about the depths of the way when reading Christian, Jewish and Muslim mystics. Because of my tribal connections, particularly among the Christians.

And, I know, I know from the bottom of my heart, they're teaching me, pushing me beyond my limitations. And, may I suggest here at the beginning of another year, one of the genuine gifts to us, as Unitarian Universalists is this invitation to hang out with people who have dramatically different takes on reality.

And, if we embrace the middle way, be reasonable, but also heartfelt, that conversation, this companionship, will guide us, will take us where we need to go.

See you in church,



Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday,
9:00a-12:00p Appointments are recommended.
min@firstunitarianprov.org





SPIRITUAL
PATHWAYS

That's Where the Light Comes In

I find the new calendar year a fine time to look back and forward, just as Janus (the Roman god of doors, openings, beginnings, and endings) implies in the name of the first month. In our chapel worship for children and youth, we will explore balanced messages of hopes and dreams and honor the inspirational life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We will look for ways to appreciate what we have accomplished, while challenging ourselves to be better and stronger human beings. This winter, the Religious Education Committee will focus on current goals, evaluate curricula and safety practices, and stretch our creative energy toward new and fresh ideas.

We can always do more, make fewer mistakes, cover the bases. But can we stop more often and take stock of all that has gone well? The habit of looking at our best efforts and gleaning inspiration for next steps is worthwhile and feels good.

One example of the fine experiences of students and teacher teams in our Spiritual Pathways Program is from our sixth-grade Neighboring Faiths group. As part of their UU faith development, they are learning about the world's religions and how those faith traditions are connected to their Unitarian Universalist faith. In the words of the teachers:

There has been much activity in our sixth-grade class this fall. We began the semester with earth-based traditions: exploring the timeless nature of Native American faith, the connection to the cycles in nature, and the importance of music, ritual, and storytelling. Special guest Donna Mitchell, a Wampanoag poet and storyteller, shared her stories and beliefs and composed a beautiful circle affirmation with our students. We then moved to the ancient faith of Hinduism, culminating in a trip to the Vedanta Society of Providence. The students met Swami Yogatmananda and asked many thoughtful questions including the meaning of Om, the role of a Swami, why he likes all colors, and the story of Ganesh. He spoke on the history of the Vedanta Society in Providence and the common threads to Unitarian Universalism.

We are now exploring the many winter celebrations over hot cocoa and will begin our study of Buddhism, preparing for our trip to the Zen Center in January.

It is a true pleasure and honor to work with these students.

Namaste, Amy Webb, Sally Barker, Jim Edwards and Mardee Carson

This time, when making resolutions about improving this or that in our lives, I hope we can be more forgiving and be sure to honor the positive message of balance that January brings.

Singer, songwriter, poet and novelist, Leonard Cohen wrote,
 "There is a crack in everything...that's where the light gets in."
 Take good care in 2009,

Cathy

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
 401.421.7970
 dre@firstunitarianprov.org
 Office Hours: Monday-Friday and Sunday

NEWS AND NOTES

**Welcome to our Acting DRE Assistant,
 Janet Hinton**

I am happy to announce that Janet Hinton has come on board as the Acting DRE Assistant for the remainder of this school year, filling in for Jill Cicero, who has left to spend time in Mexico. Janet brings experience in UU RE and a helpful, energetic spirit. She is a member of our congregation who has been a wonderful leader of the third-grade teaching team. She is also the mother of Alejandro and Antonio Hinton, valued members of the Senior High Youth Group. The position is 10 hours per week, in support of our Spiritual Pathways program. I look forward to working with Janet.

— Cathy

Return Your "Guest at Your Table" Boxes

UU Service Committee Guest at Your Table boxes will be collected on Sunday, January 4, by our seventh- and eighth-grade class. Please leave your filled boxes to baskets outside the Haynes classroom in the Atrium.

The Wholly Family Service – Is It Your Family's Turn This Year?

We are looking for families interested in participating in the Wholly Family Service on February 1. This intergenerational service has become an annual tradition that allows us to share diverse family stories that connect us to one another.

Contact Cathy at 401.421.7970 or
 dre@firstunitarianprov.org



MONEY MATTERS

The U.S. is in recession. The Dow is down. Unemployment is up. But if you'd like some good news, read on.

From July through November, pledges are coming in faster than last year. Donations from people who didn't pledge? Also up. The fall auction? Ditto. Rental income? The same.

But how about expenses? At 5/12 (42 percent) of the fiscal year, expenses are 37 percent of the budgeted amount for the year.

A few people have reported they will have trouble meeting their pledges this year. But thanks to all those who are able to keep their pledges up to date or have already paid their pledges in full, pledge income is right on schedule, very close to that 42 percent mark. In short, this is a happier treasurer's report than might have been predicted, but a reminder that we are part of an interdependent and, sadly, recessionary web.

— Tony Allen, Treasurer

Congregational Conversation

Sunday, January 25

Topic: Growing Our Ministries

This will be a chance to hear about and talk about the progress we as a congregation have made on our priorities for this year. We'll also take some time to consider our goals for the coming year.



SIGHT LINES

Setting Priorities

We met in the Auditorium – about 25 of us – members of the Prudential Committee, our governing board, along with the chairs of our standing committees. We met to talk about the priorities of the congregation as we head into the season of fundraising and budgeting for next year.

Martha Rice Sanders, our president-elect, served as convener and moderator. The meeting began with reports on several important new initiatives at the church this year. Katy Killilea, our new Membership Coordinator, talked about the work that she and the Membership Committee are focused on – which she described somewhat tongue-in-cheek as “repelling fewer newcomers” – and described the specific steps she and the committee have taken to ensure that newcomers feel welcomed. Mary Frey spoke about her work with Rev. James Ford to develop a Lay Ministry program that relies on a core of lay people to provide care and support for those in the congregation who are in need.

Cathy Seggel, our Director of Religious Education, described the possibilities for strengthening our adult religious education program. Martha, standing in for Bob Cox, reported on Bob's work with the Rhode Island UU Legislative Ministry, an initiative involving UUs from several congregations in Rhode Island who are focusing on social justice issues before the RI legislature. I rounded out the reports by sharing some of the new initiatives that have been discussed by the Prudential Committee, including a commitment in principle to a paid sabbatical for Cathy Seggel next year and the possibility of becoming a teaching church for ministerial interns.

The participants then separated into groups clustered around the four core ministries of our congregation – Spiritual Life, Community Life, Social Justice, and Stewardship – to discuss how these and other initiatives should fit into our priorities for next year. When we reconvened, each ministry reported on its conversations. Julie Meyers said that many in Spiritual Life Ministry discussion placed a high priority on continuing to support the Membership program and our new Membership Coordinator and on development of the Lay Ministry program. Opinions on becoming a teaching church were more mixed: while everyone agreed that it was a worthy goal, many felt that the cost involved – an approximately \$7,000 stipend – might not make it feasible next year.

Kate Menard reported that the Community Life Ministry stressed the importance of supporting a comprehensive Membership program, to encourage involvement in the life of the congregation and to reach out both to new people and to longer-term members who may have become less involved. Ginny Fox relayed the Social Justice Ministry's discussion that the economy was creating hard times for many people, which called on our congregation to be both open and welcoming to newcomers looking to be part of a faith community and to look for ways to help people in the wider community who find themselves in difficulty.

Jay Glasson rounded out things with a report on the Stewardship Ministry's three priorities: adopting an annual budget that relies less on earnings from our Property Fund endowment and more on annual pledges; setting aside endowment income for major upkeep of our facilities, including replacement of an aging boiler and refurbishment of the interior of our Meeting House; and, given the importance of fundraising, investing more dollars in our annual fundraising efforts.

These planning discussions now move on to a smaller group of representatives from the PruComm, each of the ministries, and the Budget Drive Committee for further development. We should be hearing more from them in January and February.

Good things,

Cy O'Neil, President
pres@firstunitarianprov.org
401.272.9454



TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP

January All Parish Supper - Friday, January 16

(please note the date: a week later than usual)

5:45p Social Hour: Bring hors d'oeuvres to share and wine for your own party if you wish.

6:15p Potluck Dinner: Please bring a dish to share that serves at least 8 people. You can bring a main dish, a vegetable, a salad, or a dessert.

7:45p Program in the Auditorium: The Current Recession and Rhode Island's Economic Future



Speaker: Dr. Edinaldo Tebaldi, Professor of Economics at Bryant University and Manager of the New England Economic Partnership

We are clearly in a recession. Why did it happen and, more important, how should we as individuals and as a nation respond? How should one behave (financially) in a recession environment? Professor Tebaldi will discuss these issues and will pay special attention to the impact of the recession on the Rhode Island economy and the prospects for the state's economic future. Our speaker is a popular lecturer who has an uncanny ability to explain complex economics in understandable lay-

men's terms. Questions and discussion will follow his talk.

Childcare for infants and young children will be available for those who sign up in advance. Call Jim Estey at 401.351.1748.

Reservations for the dinner are strongly requested. Fill out the sign-up form in the Meeting House Times, see Jim Estey at coffee hour, or call the church office at 401.421.7970.

February All Parish Supper – Friday, February 13

Program: "Inflections of Love," a Valentine's Day celebration

Presenters: The Aurea Ensemble

This talented group of performers returns to entertain us with an uncommon concoction of romantic songs, poetry, stories, and chamber music – celebrating the many facets of love. Poets such as Galway Kinnell and W. H. Auden and composers such as Fauré and Chopin will be represented. Chris Turner and Nigel Gore will recite. Charles and Consuelo Sherba and others on a string quartet, George Lopez on piano, and vocalist Gigi Mitchell-Velasco will perform.

You won't want to miss this exciting program!

Heavily discounted tickets will be available for people who attend the supper.

Fellowship News

Thanksgiving Dinner at the church was a happy event thanks to: Nancy Weiss-Fried for cooking the turkeys in our own kitchen (filling the Parish House with wonderful smells) and for the delicious gravy; Mary Frappier for thinking of the many details that enhance our experience and bringing great food, and all the guests who brought tasty casseroles, side dishes, and desserts. Special thanks to: Shannon and Lincoln Oliver-O'Neil for greeting guests and collecting donations, and to Lincoln for organizing board games. Also to Cy O'Neil for bringing the wood and building us a cozy fire. Jay Padroff graciously played background piano through dinner and then Rod Luther treated us to some soft jazz. And everyone participated in cleanup - capped off by Bruce Boucek's jumping to the head of the dishwashing line - and staying there! Thank you, everyone!

— Fellowship Committee: Carol Adams, Chair; Jim Estey, Mary Frappier, Kate Menard, Janet Noble, Gerry Spremulli, Dave Spremulli

SATURDAY SOCIALS

These Saturday evening potluck suppers are for adults – newcomers, old-timers and in-betweeners who would like to meet new friends in the congregation.

Reservations: Space is limited and reservations are required. To reserve space and select a menu item to bring for either dinner, please call Kate Menard at 401.437.6322.

A Special Invitation: Lach Franquemont extends a special invitation to those on the younger side, single, coupled, and/or with young children and anyone who would like to get to know this group in our congregation.

Saturday, February 7

Hosts: Cy O'Neil and Wendy Oliver
130 Woodbury Street
Providence, RI

Time: 6:00p to 9:00p

Host: Lach Franquemont
28 Pitman Street, #3
Providence, RI

Time: 5:00p to 8:00p

If you would like to host a future Saturday Social, please contact Carol Adams at 401.433.4365 or carol.adams6@cox.net

Round-the-Table Dinners, January 10

The sign-up period has passed, but there may still be an empty spot or two for these dinners. Check with Janet Noble at 401.732.0256 if you'd like to participate.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Monday, January 5



11:00a Program
Our speaker is Dr. Stanley Aronson, Dean of Medicine Emeritus at Brown University and the writer of a widely read and enjoyed weekly column in the Providence Journal.

His topic will be "The Children of St. Thomas."

12:00p Catered luncheon

(\$9 or bring a sandwich)

NEWS AND NOTES



Guest speaker Grace Akallo (Photo by Richard Boober)

A Record-breaking Write-a-thon for Human Rights

On December 7, First Unitarian again hosted the Providence gathering for the annual Global Write-a-thon for Human Rights. We joined over 400 communities across the U.S., and groups in more than 35 countries, in celebrating International Human Rights Day, and the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption by the U.N. of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The afternoon program of preparing letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience was highlighted by the moving testimony of our two guest speakers, Grace Akallo, a former girl soldier from Uganda, and Mohamed el-Jahmi, whose brother is a prisoner of conscience in Libya; together they lit the ceremonial Amnesty International Candle of Hope. Grace also signed copies of her book, *Girl Soldier*. U.S. Senator Jack Reed dropped in to show his support and meet our special guests.

The more than 100 participants also enjoyed a table laden with refreshments and holiday goodies.

And at the end of the afternoon, we had over 700 letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience in ten countries, breaking our old record!

Thanks to all who helped, in so many different ways.

*Sponsored by the World Affairs Committee
and Providence Chapter of
Amnesty International*



CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Some Questions about Becoming a Welcoming Congregation

The Welcoming Congregation Committee has been talking and listening to First Unitarian's friends and members. While most of the congregation is enthusiastic about becoming a Welcoming Congregation, we've heard a couple of questions we need to address.

Don't we want to be welcoming to everyone? Why are we limiting this program to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) people?

Yes, we welcome everyone to our congregation – regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnic heritage, mental health issues, or socioeconomic class. However, we have to consider that for centuries GLBT people have been persecuted, and even murdered, in the name of religion. As a religious community, we need to make an extra effort to assure gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people that they can safely bring their authentic selves to First Unitarian.

Right after Barack Obama was elected president, a Welcoming Congregation committee member exchanged emails with a lesbian friend who wrote, "Today I actually feel enfranchised, such an interesting feeling." This means that most of the time she does not feel enfranchised in our society. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation is a public assertion that we understand that GLBT people feel excluded and threatened, that we have educated ourselves, and that First Unitarian is a rare and safe place where they can be themselves and be welcome.

We believe there are many GLBT folks in the region who know they want a spiritual community. What they don't know is that First Unitarian is here, exactly what they're looking for, and ready to welcome them. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation is a way of reaching out to people who need what we have to offer: an authentic and challenging spirituality, a loving religious community, and a dynamic denomination that brings transformative and healing love to the world.

What about welcoming the wider community – becoming more diverse racially, ethnically, socio-economically?

We agree enthusiastically that First Unitarian will be enriched by throwing open its doors to the wider community, welcoming all, and becoming more diverse in every way. We believe that becoming a Welcoming Congregation is a first step in this process. Educating ourselves in the needs, sufferings, and perspectives of the GLBT community prepares us to open ourselves further to the needs of the wider community. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation prepares us to take our place as a leader in the social justice issues of the region.

What is the Welcoming Congregation Program?

The UUA says, "The Welcoming Congregation Program is a completely volunteer program for congregations that see a need to become more inclusive towards bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people. It consists of a series of workshops developed by the UUA. The goal of the workshops is to reduce prejudice by increasing understanding and acceptance among people of different sexual orientations."

What's next?

Within the next month, the Welcoming Congregation Committee will kick off its activities by distributing a questionnaire to the congregation. This questionnaire is entirely anonymous and confidential, so you are free to respond candidly. The committee will use the results to assess ourselves as a congregation and plan our next steps in the process of earning the status of Welcoming Congregation. Stay tuned for announcements in the *Meeting House Times*!

For more information, contact a member of the Welcoming Congregation Committee:

Brian Paradis at 617.827.2335 or briananddeacon@comcast.net

Michael Currier at 617.680.6083 or mpcurrier@gmail.com

Jan Seymour-Ford at 401.305.5361 or seymourford@gmail.com



CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

News from the Membership Coordinator

You might have noticed some buzz around the issues of hospitality - or you might be wondering, "What is that new Membership Coordinator doing for fifteen hours each week, anyway?" Let me share with you some of the initiatives that have already begun.

In terms of hospitality:

- ▶ We've increased the number of greeters each Sunday to meet guests and to help answer their questions.
- ▶ The "Welcome" area in the Meeting House is much more visible and is consistently stocked with supplies.
- ▶ We now offer a Newcomer's Café each Sunday in the Paneled Parlor - a quieter alternative for guests who might find our regular coffee hour bewildering or hard to navigate. Newcomers will find coffee and a snack, and church members who are interested in meeting them.
- ▶ We're working on a solution to the crowded nametag area.
- ▶ Many, many people are involved in the hospitality effort, including James Ford, who greets people as they enter the Meeting House; Michael Currier, who recruits and trains ushers; and the Prudential Committee, which has stepped up to provide a month's worth of greeters - to name just a few.

In terms of the Path to Membership:

- ▶ Every guest is encouraged to fill out a Welcome card (found in each pew) or to sign our guest registry. Gathering information more consistently allows me to keep track of how many visitors are coming, what questions they have, and how we can get them the information they want.
- ▶ Every visitor is sent a note, inviting them back and offering them assistance in finding out what they want to know about First Unitarian.
- ▶ A New Member Welcome Ceremony is slated to take place during the service on January 25. We're actively encouraging new members and potential members to take part in that ceremony.
- ▶ James and Cathy are leading a new Path to Membership class on January 10. New members will be encouraged to become actively involved in church life, especially within their first six months.

The response to these steps has been overwhelmingly positive, so please continue to share your ideas and observations. And if you would like to volunteer to be a greeter, don't hold back! Look for me at Coffee Hour.

— Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator

We Have Funded Our Fourth Village Bank

A heartfelt thanks to church members and friends who supported our Village Bank program through the Sunday offering on November 25. Your generosity made possible a donation of \$4,000 to the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) to provide small loans to women in Haiti.

Loans are repaid within four months, in weekly installments. Recipients are required to set aside a minimum savings of 20 percent of the loan amount. Once a member pays off her first loan, she may borrow again. FINCA repayment rate is 98 percent.

Besides this new bank, church donations have already funded two banks in Guatemala and a previous bank in Haiti.

For more information, contact Sara Slate at 401.435.2039 or sslate@cox.net.

NEWS AND NOTES

New Picture Directory Coming in January

The First Unitarian picture directory is scheduled to be distributed in January to those who had pictures taken. At the back of the directory is contact information for everyone who did not opt out of being listed the directory (even if they did not have a picture taken).

The church office is producing a separate directory (without photos) with the same information as at the back of the picture directory.

If you do not find your name in the contact listing, the following reasons may explain why:

- ▶ You are a newcomer to the church since September 2008 and were not given the chance to opt out.
- ▶ We do not have you listed in our church database or the information listed is not complete.

For more information, please contact Posey Kooris in the church office at admin@firstunitarianprov.org or 401.421.7970.

Winter Storm Cancellation

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff decide if the Sunday worship service will be cancelled. A decision will be made by 7:00a on Sunday morning and conveyed to TV channels 10 and 12, and radio stations WJAR, WHJJ, WPRI, WWBB, WHJY, and WSNE.

If church is open during a storm, no one should make heroic efforts to get to church. Use your best judgment about whether it is safe to drive or come on foot. If the City of Providence announces a ban on street parking, remember that parking will be extremely limited.

Atrium Bookstore Open Every Sunday

The Atrium Bookstore offers books on a variety of topics including daily meditations, Buddhism, Bible studies, inspiration, environmental concerns, poetry, global values, family life and rituals, and stories for children. Suggestions are welcome for specific titles, authors, or general topics. Preference will be given to titles available through the UUA Bookstore in Boston. All profits go to First Unitarian.

Further information: Irene Allen at iallen112@aol.com

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Ushers Are Always Needed!

Ushering on a Sunday morning is a wonderful way to get involved, meet people, and be part of our worship service. Ushers greet people as they arrive for the service, help them with questions, and take the offering from the congregation. To find out how you can sign up, contact Michael Currier at 617.680.6083 or mpcurrier@gmail.com.

Community Food Share Food Pantry

Our monthly food pantry serves needy people in the Providence area. Each third Monday afternoon, we set up our "grocery store" in the Atrium, help clients select food items, and clean up afterwards. Our next distribution day is Monday, January 19. To get involved, contact Elesa Amand at 401.253.9602 or Sara Slate at 401.435.2039.

Resolve to Be a Coffee Hour Baker!

A good New Year's resolution would be to sign up to bring baked goods and other treats to keep up with the crowd each Sunday at our Coffee Hour. Sign up with Janet Downing Taylor in the First Parlor during Coffee Hour. You'll go home with a reminder so you won't forget!

Habitat for Humanity Work Group

Our Habitat Work Group volunteers once a month with the Providence Habitat chapter. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome – the only requirements are a willingness and ability to do physical work, and minimum age of 16. Our next work day is January 15. Sign-up is required as space on each month's crew is limited. Contact Peter Van Erp at 401.351.4881 or petervanerp@cox.net.

Support Camp Street Ministries

If you shop at Eastside Marketplace, you can donate your receipts to help Camp Street Ministries in Providence. The Women's Alliance provides a box in the Atrium where you can leave your receipts. Camp Street receives, from Eastside Marketplace, 1 percent of the total of the donated receipts to support their programming.



UUSC at First Unitarian Presents *Soldiers of Conscience*

Sunday, January 11, 1:00p-3:00p in the Auditorium

The First Unitarian UU Service Committee is pleased to present the PBS documentary *Soldiers of Conscience*, a realistic yet optimistic look at war, peace, and the power of human conscience. From West Point grads to drill sergeants, from Abu Ghraib interrogators to low-ranking reservist-mechanics, soldiers in the U.S. Army reveal their deepest moral concerns about killing in war. The soldiers' message: every soldier wrestles with his conscience over killing. Although most decide to kill – some refuse.

Made with official permission from the U.S. Army, this film includes footage of basic training and the war in Iraq. It is not recommended for youth under age 13 as it contains graphic images of war and adult language.

Come see this award-winning documentary and share your thoughts and feelings in small-group discussions after the screening. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted for the work of the UUSC.

For more information, contact Dianne Mailloux, First Unitarian UUSC chair at 401.353.0137.

RI UUs for Social Justice: Building a Legislative Ministry

Next meeting: Thursday, January 15, 7:00p-8:30p (location to be announced)

On Saturday, November 8, the Rev. William Murry, former dean of the UU Meadville-Lombard Theological School at the University of Chicago, led a legislative ministry workshop for the Rhode Island UUs for Social Justice (RIUUSJ) at the Westminster Church in East Greenwich. Twenty-six people attended from six UU congregations in Rhode Island.

On Sunday November 9, Rev. Murry preached on "Spirituality and Social Justice" at First Unitarian. He encouraged the congregation to enrich their spirituality by participating in a legislative ministry. During a meeting at Coffee Hour, 17 members and friends expressed their interest in becoming active members of RIUUSJ.

That afternoon, the RIUUSJ Steering Committee met at Westminster Church to begin putting into practice Rev. Murry's workshop recommendations. The group discussed the critical role of our UU ministers, strengthening communications in each congregation, establishing annual membership dues, seeking initial funding from the UUA and UUSC, and developing incorporation papers.

At the next RIUUSJ Legislative Ministry meeting, on January 15, we will be preparing for the new session of the RI General Assembly, and how it copes with a \$350-million-plus deficit. All interested First Unitarian members and friends are urged to attend. (Car-pooling from the church can be arranged.)

For more information, contact Bob Cox at rcox45@cox.net or 401.274.8384.

UU Women's Chorus Sings Again!

Six Sundays, from January 4 to February 8, 12:00p-1:30p

UU Women's Chorus will be singing together again for six weeks in January and February. All women of the church are welcome to join in. This is a wonderful opportunity for women who are not involved with the regular (Sunday choir) music program to spread their musical wings, and a great chance for mothers and daughters (especially teenagers) to share a church activity. You do not need to be able to read music to join the Chorus. Come for a week or two or six, you will always be welcome. The Chorus meets in the Choir Room in the basement of the church.

For more information, call Beth Armstrong at 401.253.7987.



GETTING INVOLVED

Looking for a Few Good Musicians!

Sundays, March 1 and 8, rehearsals at 12:00p-1:30p; and Sunday, March 15 at the service

Got a musical instrument that you haven't played in years? It's time to dig it out from your closet and build up those musical muscles: The First Unitarian Community Orchestra/Band is making a return appearance!

We've been invited to play for the Sunday morning service on March 15; so March 1 and 8, we'll rehearse some hymns and a few other well-known pieces to play as a prelude and perhaps a hymn.

This is a fun opportunity to get together and make music. It's also a good way to encourage middle or high school-aged children who play in school bands to get involved in a church activity.

Leader: Stew Armstrong, former band director and school music teacher (and brass player). Please contact Stew at 401.253.7987 (home), 401.523.8018 (cell), or via email at bestar3@cox.net before the end of February with your name and instrument, so we can prepare parts for everyone.

The Mitten Tree Returns

As winter blows itself into full force, it is once again time for our First Unitarian Mitten Tree. For the past two winters, with support from the kindergarten, the Knitting Connection and other members of our congregation have made the tree outside the front entrance to the church "bloom" throughout the coldest months of winter. Mittens, hats, scarves, and gloves are hung on the tree near the Benefit Street sidewalk, where they are available to people from all walks of life who need them. Last year, more than fifty warm items were "harvested" from our trees.

We will be collecting new or gently used mittens, hats, scarves, gloves, and socks in the Atrium during January, February, and March.

This year, we hope to collect enough "warmings" to branch out and support another tree in our city.

If you'd like to learn to knit some of these warm items, the Knitting Connection will be delighted to provide instruction, support, and some materials, any Tuesday night at 7:00p in the Parish House.

For more information, contact Kathy Ahlquist at katherine.ahlquist@gmail.com.

Update from Transylvania Partner Church Project

The Transylvania Partner Church project has attracted more potential travelers for our proposed trip to Transylvania this summer. And at the first of the new year, our youth will be teaming up with youth in our partner church in Szentegyhaza for the "getting to know you" phase of the project. This letter writing is not limited to just our youth and may eventually include the Women's Alliance or other groups in our church.

Fund raising projects are being planned, including a goulash dinner with music and speakers in the spring to support a project at our partner church: possibly a free-standing bell tower which we might help them build. Watch future newsletters for more details on this and other Partner Church projects.

The Partner Church Committee meets the second Sunday of each month, and all are invited to participate, even if only to learn more about being part of another pilgrimage to Transylvania.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Printer Cartridge Recycling Program

Recycle your printer cartridges – and help out First Unitarian! Just put your empty cartridges in the collection box in the Atrium – the church receives cash for the empty cartridges, which are recycled into new, compatible ones. You can buy these remanufactured cartridges at up to 80% savings at www.inksmile.com.

Contact Posey Kooris at 401.421.7970 or admin@firstunitarianprov.org.

Sunday Meeting House Flowers

The flowers that grace our pulpit each Sunday are given in honor or remembrance of special people in their lives by members and friends of the congregation. If you would like to provide commemorative flowers, contact Betty Finn at 401.726.1867.

HATS OFF!

To Richard Boober for the many photos he has taken including the newest one, the cover of the picture directory...

...to Providence City Councilman Cliff Wood and the members of Local Union 1033 for their generous food donation to the Community Food Share Pantry for the December 15 distribution...

...to Phil Swayze for playing guitar in chapel...

...to Amy Webb and Flannery Brown for their work in helping the Sunday school bake for Food Share Pantry clients...

...to Judy Bowden for her spirited leadership of the Common Thread dance and the Christmas Pageant...

...to Our Coffee Hour providers last month: Melissa Guillet, Mary Kollar, Tom Getz, Sarah Cappelli, Mary Frappier, Paul Hossfield, The Community Food Share Committee, Anne Connor, Gaia's Hearth, Susan Harrison, Kate Ferguson, Elsie Buffum, Kate Menard and all of you who brought something in to surprise us...

...to Becca Seggel for the wonderful face-lift to our church Web site (take a look at www.firstunitarianprov.org).



**Benevolent Street Zendo:
An Ongoing Zen Meditation Group**
Every Monday at 7:00p

Boundless Way is an interfaith Zen community, maintaining close connections with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association. (All three of its senior teachers, including our minister, James Ford, are also Unitarian Universalists.) Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction will be available to those who come at 6:45p.

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford at benevolentstreetzendo@gmail.com
We are a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha. More information: www.boundlesswayzen.org

Knitting Connection
Every Tuesday, 7:00p-9:00p

Join others in the congregation for an evening of knitting/crocheting and conversation. Bring your own project or work on our group project: knitting warm items for immigrant families in Olneyville. Beginners are always welcome!

No registration necessary.
Contact: Julie Meyers at kelmey@cox.net

UU Women
Second Tuesday, January 13, 7:00p

The world is full of repeating patterns – cycles of light and dark, periods of economic growth and decline, times of joy and times of sorrow. This month we will explore the repeating patterns in our own lives. We will draw personal timelines to look at relative highs and lows throughout our lives, then focus on those situations in which we have been the happiest.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Terri Smith at 401.941.6865 or essceetee123@yahoo.com

Reimagining Religion
*Second and fourth Tuesdays,
January 13 and 27, at 7:00p*

Reimagining Religion is an ongoing attempt to employ the best recent scholarship in coming to grips with issues raised by radically new developments in the study of religion and thereby achieving a fuller appreciation of what religious literacy entails in the twenty-first century. The group currently discussing the need to enunciate a “non-



**GROWING IN
WISDOM AND SPIRIT**

mythical” world theology, drawing on Lloyd Geering’s autobiography, *Wrestling with God*.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Tom Hall at 401.647.2925 or tw2nd@aol.com

Green Sanctuary at First Unitarian
Second Sunday, January 11, 9:30a

A Green Sanctuary congregation lives its commitment to the Earth by creating a sustainable lifestyle for its members as individuals and as a faith community. Sustainable living is about more than material comfort; it is about choosing to live in a way that nurtures life, builds relationships, and rejects material consumption as the sole determinant of happiness. Our program goals include building awareness of societal environmental issues and injustices, motivating community action, and fostering a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Bekah Greenwald at bekah@apeiron.org or 401.521.3446

Spiritual Cinema
No meeting in January

These viewings and discussions of wonderful movies that have only limited distribution will resume on the third Sunday in January. For information about the Spiritual Cinema program, visit www.spiritualcinema.com.

Contact: Marilyn Eanet at 401.433.1299 or meanet@cox.net; or Maureen Johanson at 508.557.1173

UUMeN
Second Sunday, January 11, 7:00p-9:00p

Topic: Living Fully in a Recession
The reality of the current crisis means that we are now living in a different economic environment. What impact is the recession having on our lives as men and on our nation? Are there lessons to be learned? How are our lives likely to change in the short term and in the long run?

What might we do to meet the challenges of the recession so that we can continue to live well? All interested men are welcome to join us.

No registration necessary.
Facilitator: Wayne Peacock 401.885.8488

Gaia’s Hearth

Gaia’s Hearth was formed to create a harmonious spiritual environment for nature-based traditions to worship together. There are a wide variety of paths and traditions within Paganism. We welcome people of all paths to join us.

Cornerstones of Wicca

*Thursdays, January 8 and 22, 7:00p-8:30p
January 8 – Review (Catch-up) or Movie
January 22 – Besoms, Wands, and Staffs*
This ongoing class offers instruction in the basics tenets of Wicca as well as the practical techniques of magical work for an intensive, homework-oriented experience. Our members come from varied magical backgrounds and experiences.

Registration requested.
Leader/contact: Diane Donnelly at dianednlnly@yahoo.com

Sylvan Circle

Second Sunday, January 11, 12:30p-1:30p
At this family-friendly gathering, we all share, learn, and teach each other as we pass around a talking stick and explore all types of traditions. Each meeting starts with the Celtic Tree of the month January’s tree: the birch) and then “branch out” to explore and honor each other’s paths. Children are welcome to participate, as sometimes they are the best teachers.

No registration necessary.
Leader/contact: Arte Ezikovich nimuix@cox.net



THIS MONTH @ FIRST UNITARIAN

January 2009

"What if everything is an illusion, and nothing exists? In that case, I've definitely overpaid for my carpet." — Woody Allen

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<u>1</u> NEW YEARS DAY Church Office Closed	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>4</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Membership Committee 12:00p Womens Chorus 12:00p Green Sanctuary 12:15p Gaia's Hearth 12:15p	<u>5</u> Women's Alliance 11:00a Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>6</u> Lay Ministry 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>7</u> Prudential Committee 6:00p	<u>8</u> Deacons 6:00p Stewardship Committee 7:00p	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u> Path to Membership 9:00a – 12:00p Round Table Dinners
<u>11</u> Green Sanctuary 9:30a Transylvania 12:00p Womens Chorus 12:00p UUSC Movie 1:00p Sylvan Circle 12:30p UU Men 7:00p	<u>12</u> Nominating Committee 7:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>13</u> Re-imagining Religion 7:00p UU Women 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>14</u> Worship Committee 6:30p	<u>15</u> Wicca??? 7:00p	<u>16</u> Parish Supper 5:45p	<u>17</u>
<u>18</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Communion 11:30a Womens Chorus 12:00 Spiritual Cinema 7:00p	<u>19</u> MARTIN LUTHER KING Church Office Closed Food Pantry 4:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>20</u> Knitters 7:00p	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>25</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Congregational Conversation 12:00p Womens Chorus 12:00	<u>26</u> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>27</u> Re-imagining Religion 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>28</u> Executive Committee 7:00p	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u> <i>(All our spot illustrations this month are of ancient and unusual calendars.)</i>

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A Letter from the Women's Alliance

Since 1882, the Alliance has existed for three purposes – to support the church and its denomination, to serve the community, and to provide members with friendship, support, and spiritual and cultural stimuli.

Our organization is unique in the church in that it is an autonomous society of dues-paying members. Our meetings, which are open to all, are held on the first Monday of every month and feature exceptional speakers and wonderful, gourmet lunches. Coming up in future months, we will hear Dr. Stanley Aronson (January) and Scott Wolf, Executive Director of Grow Smart Rhode Island, among others.

The Alliance takes care of the parlors in the Parish House (notice the restored couches in the Hearth Room) and has made significant contributions to the kitchen. We also make annual contributions to worthy local community organizations, including Planned Parenthood, the Samaritans, Big Sisters, Crossroads RI, the Community Food Bank, and Camp Street Ministries.

We invite women of all ages who are able to attend the Monday meeting, at least on occasion, to join us. Dues are \$20 annually. We invite everyone to help in our fundraising efforts.

Here's how:

- ▶ Buy your coffee from us – available in the Atrium each Sunday. This organic, fair-trade coffee, processed locally by New Harvest Coffee Roasters, is available to you at a price lower than you will find at retail outlets. By buying from us, you are benefiting your budget, the environment, a worthy local business, and coffee farmers, while at the same time helping fund our projects.
- ▶ Order delicious homemade desserts from us at Easter time.
- ▶ Volunteer to participate in one of our projects – we can always use more coffee salespeople and cooks. We promise – it will be fun!

In community,

Marilyn Eanet, President, The Women's Alliance

For more information, call or email Marilyn Eanet (401.433.1299 or meanet@cox.net) or stop by the Coffee Table on Sunday morning.

