

DEACONS' CORNER

The Deacons extend a warm welcome to all the people who attended the Path to Membership Class on November 20, and especially those who signed the Membership Book.

And we would like to thank everyone who participated in the Communion Service on November 7 and remind you of our upcoming services on January 30 and April 21 of 2011.

This is the first year the Deacons have hosted the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner, we hope that everyone who attended had an enjoyable time, and we thank those who participated in the dinner.

We are still working on our calls to members and friends. If you have not heard for us you should be hearing soon.

On December 19, the Deacons will provide the Coffee Hour refreshments, and we invite other committees to volunteer to do likewise.

We wish everyone the best of the holiday season, however you celebrate it.

—The Deacons:

- Robert O Jones, Janet Downing Taylor,
- Senior Deacons;
- Judy Bowden, Mary Finger,
- David Bridgehouse, Russell Gifford,
- Mary Frappier, David Spremulli,
- Ruth Arellana, Jacqui Nye

Lay Ministry and the Care Crew

The on-call Lay Minister for December is Mary Frappier. All referrals or calls to the church this month will be passed on to Mary. She will call upon Care Crew Volunteers for short-term commitments (such as calls, notes, meals and transportation) in response to emergency needs of our church family.

Volunteers for the Care Crew are always welcome. Contact any member of the Lay Ministry Team.

—Lay Ministry Team:

- Mary Frappier, Martha Manno,
- Kate Menard, Rick Richards, Bill Twaddell,
- George Beshers, Andy Barrett.



Monkey Mind

I just got back from a meeting sponsored by the Rev. Donald Anderson, who heads up the Rhode Island Council of Churches. Don has been particularly concerned that the only statewide vehicle for religious conversation – the Council of Churches – is Christian. We're part of that community for historical reasons, but we're kept on under that old rubric of "Christian by courtesy." I'm usually quite uncomfortable at those meetings I've been unable to avoid.

This was different. Don was trying to put together a conversation that might lead to a genuine interfaith organization in our state. Currently, the only organization that even vaguely fits that bill is Brown University's Religious Affiliates Program. So it shouldn't be a surprise that one of the two rabbis present for this meeting, as well as the Muslim chaplain, one of the two Islamic leaders present, were from Brown. Also present were a Baptist minister (well, two counting Don), an Assemblies of God minister, a Roman Catholic priest - and me. They wanted to count me twice because of my dual clerical standing as a UU and as a Zen Buddhist priest, but I insisted the invite came to me through my office as minister of the First Unitarian Church.

And that set me to thinking a bit, particularly here at this season of the year. The Christmas season is an interesting one for us: only a small percentage of us consider ourselves Christian, but this is a season that most of us observe. Crowding into our observances are humanist, earth-centered, Jewish, and Buddhist perspectives, but we adhere pretty closely to the basic structure of the Christmas story.

And I think there are two reasons it's good that we do. First, of course, is that this is a Unitarian holiday, at least in New England. The Puritans of old Boston knew that Christmas was, in fact, a pagan holiday - so they'd outlawed it. Then, in the early and mid-nineteenth century, when Unitarians were traveling to that hotbed of intellectual fervor, Germany, they saw Christmas trees, crèches, Yule logs, the whole shebang. And they said, this is something good - and they brought home with them. The New England Christmas is - top to bottom - a Unitarian affair.

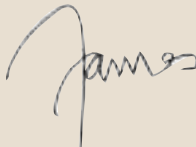
And then there's the second reason: as much as we may weave in more ancient strands of the season of the longest night or Jewish reflections or humanist naturalist insights or, hey, Buddhist views, the bottom line is noticing that this holiday about despair and hope centers on the story of the birth of a baby.

Works for me. As it has for generations of Unitarians and Universalists and now Unitarian Universalists.

At this time of dark, of possible despair, I hope each of us will find a moment when we can look, really look, at a baby. And notice what it brings up for us. Anxiety, possibly. Worry - if you have a hand in that child's upbringing, there should be worry. And, at base, hope. Maybe this child is the one who will do it right. Maybe this child will be the harbinger of new days.

This is the season of that *maybe*. And I wish it growing in your heart. All of our hearts.

May the blessings of the season be with you!



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





Spiritual Pathways

Taking Time

Early winter ushers in a mix of shorter days along with way too much to accomplish. Balancing these times for ourselves and our families can be challenging.

There are practices and rituals that can help us navigate any season. Most of these are simple and require everyone, even the project manager, to take a deep breath. The short list includes: lighting a chalice/candle with words that each person in the family offers, baking cookies for the neighbors, taking a walk outside to notice what others in nature are doing to bundle up in the cold.

Each winter, I remind myself that trees are already preparing their seed bundles for the spring. In other words, there is no better moment to decide what is really important to you and your family and let go of the more stressful happenings. Children of all ages need relaxed time with friends and family and realistic expectations for this season and beyond.

You might use a portion of your precious hours to reach out to the larger community during these winter holidays. Children and youth in our congregation are continuing some helping traditions this year. Fifth-graders anchored the Thanksgiving coat drive. The sixth/seventh grade led the collection of coffee, tea, and cocoa for our Community Food Share Pantry. The eighth-grade Coming of Agers and their mentors are sponsoring First Unitarian's UU Service Committee Guest at Your Table program. The Senior High youth and their advisors are facilitating the Holiday Gift Drive for the Rhode Island International Institute and Camp Street Ministries. The sixth/seventh grade youth and teachers will be selling UU Service Committee cards and gifts. Youth and young adults plan to participate in the Amnesty International Write-a-thon.

Taking time for what we value is the ultimate spiritual practice. Unitarian Universalists of all ages celebrate holidays, each in their own way, from the traditions of their families of origin as well as their chosen faith. My hope is that we will remember to breathe along the way.

Warm wishes for health, peace, and time,

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
401.421.7970
dre@firstunitarianprov.org

Take a Peek! (No More Cardboard Principles)



I am very proud of the seven handsome UU Principles banners that are now hanging on our Auditorium chapel wall. This has been a dream since we remodeled the Auditorium in 2001. I hope you will stop by to admire them – and then thank Amy Webb, Acting DRE Assistant and designer extraordinaire, who created them!

–Cathy

Guest at Your Table Boxes



Boxes for our Guest at Your Table program are still available in the Parish House. This annual holiday program supports the vital work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee to promote justice, civil liberties, and economic rights of people around the world.

Stop by the church office if you need a box for your family or take one to share with friends. Keeping the box in a prominent place, such as the family meal table, will remind you of this important work and opportunity to share generously. The filled boxes will be collected on January 9.

Holiday Gift-giving with a UU Flair

If you choose to purchase gifts during this holiday season, please consider options that are connected to our UU faith tradition. Some suggestions: books from the UUA Bookstore and Beacon Press at our Atrium Bookstore, chalice jewelry and more from the Church of the Larger Fellowship (at www.clfuu.org), and gift certificates to Star Island Liberal Religious Education Week or other UU camp/conference centers. Also, look for environmentally friendly, "green" gifts for family and friends. More ideas appear on page 7.

Save the Date: Annual Pasta Supper

Saturday, January 29

The eighth-grade Coming of Age Class and their families are making plans for the annual Pasta Supper. Look for details in the January newsletter. Meanwhile, note the date on your calendar now!



Considering Our Budgets...

As we approach the middle of the church fiscal year, it's a good time for each of us to look at how far we have come with fulfilling our pledges for the current fiscal year. (You can contact the church at any time to find out how much you have fulfilled.) As you think about your personal budget at year's end, think also about the church's operating budget and your important part in it. It is very helpful to church cash flow if contributions arrive regularly throughout the year.

The continuing economic problems may be causing unexpected challenges for some among us. Everyone's pledge is important to the financial health of the church, and much of our church budget is based directly on the pledges we made last spring. If your situation has changed and you are concerned about fulfilling your pledge, please contact our treasurer, Tony Allen (tonyallen15@aol.com). Since each pledge is very important, we want to be able to plan around any difficulties in pledge fulfillment.

On the other hand, if your pledge level anticipated personal economic difficulties from which you were spared, you may wish to give more than you pledged. This could help to balance any shortfall from those who were not so blessed and can help you to stay in the target range of 2 percent to 3 percent of income.

Thank you again to each of you for your contributions. You make everything we do together possible.

-Canvass Committee:

*Jim Barfoot, Neil Bartholomew (chair),
Herb Fried, Graham Nye*

Reminder about Access and Parking



Space for the vehicles of visitors and the handicapped are part of what makes First Unitarian a warm, welcoming church. Please leave the spaces marked off for Visitor Parking and Handicapped Parking for those who need them. There are two of each in the church parking lot, and more handicapped space can be found on Benevolent Street. When using any of the handicapped parking spaces, be sure to display your handicapped placard to indicate your eligibility for the parking spot.

Thanks for your continued cooperation.



Sight Lines

Well, we are into the heart of the year here at First Unitarian, and things are very busy! The core of dedicated volunteers giving so much of their time to the church is impressive. There are still lots of opportunities for folks who have not found their niche to get involved. Please speak to a member of our Nominating Committee if you are interested in serving your church.

I am glad to report that things are going very well and only getting better! I would like to bring everyone up to date on just some of what has been happening, and on where we are heading.


One of the great events in recent history here took place on October 15 - the Parish Supper, which included the panel discussion on transgender issues. Many who attended - and we had a good crowd - raved about the evening. We owe a huge thank you and bravo to Jim Estey and to the members of the Standing on the Side of Love Committee.

On October 30, five members of our leadership team attended the Ballou Channing District Fall Conference. This was a great day of inspiring talks, excellent workshops, and important networking. The day began with a wonderful sermon entitled "The UU Revolution." Workshops included Growing Congregations of Diverse People and Realizing Racial Justice.

Leadership training was provided at the church to all new committee people on October 31. November saw the successful formation of our new Ministry Council. Members have been recruited for the Council and will become part of our Budget Committee later in the year. The Council has been convened and has planned a series of meetings prior to making priority recommendations to the Prudential Committee. The focus of our Fall Leadership Retreat/All-Ministries Event, postponed from September, was solidifying our five-year plan. Our superb facilitator/consultant was the Rev. Erik Wikstrom, the Worship and Music Resources Director for the UUA.

The November meeting of the Prudential Committee was one with a full and important agenda. Sadly, it was announced that Katy Killilea, our Membership Coordinator, has asked to be relieved of her duties. Katy has done a superb job around making us a truly more welcoming community, and she will be sorely missed. Among the many items the Pru Comm discussed and acted upon were: approval of the first step in seeking a congregational vote in support of marriage equality in Rhode Island, formation of an ad hoc committee to develop a scope of work plan for capital improvements at First Unitarian, review and revision of the Prudential Committee's Priorities and Goals (which will be evaluated again in June of 2011), and presentation of the new publicity/advertising campaign developed by John Dooley and his Outreach Committee. This important initiative is an integral part of our major focus for the future of our church - the growth of our congregation. This is now our most important work!

Have a beautiful holiday season!
In peace,



Stewart Armstrong, Jr., President
pres@firstunitarianprov.org

From the Treasurer

At the end of October, four months into our fiscal year with a fiercely lean but realistic budget, things are looking good. Pledges are on time. Expenses are being held in check, partly from recent cost-cutting measures such as saving on building insurance through a higher deductible, and saving on utilities by replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lights and improving our buildings' insulation.

The total of our three endowment funds now stands at \$3,876,196, an increase of 2 percent year-to-date. Rental receipts are coming in as anticipated.

I have been urged to remind people that pledge payments are tax deductible for the year in which you make the payments, so think about making an extra payment toward your pledge before December 31. With or without the IRS carrot, thanks to all for your generosity and support.

-Tony Allen, Treasurer



Around the Church

Our Membership Coordinator

I'm sad to report that our wonderful founding Membership Coordinator, Katy Killilea, has resigned in order to find time for her free-lance writing. I want to say how grateful I am, as are the Prudential Committee and senior staff, for everything Katy has done to create a consciously welcoming atmosphere by accompanying visitors and newcomers as they discern whether this is their spiritual community and, for those who do find their spiritual home here, helping them integrate into our common life. Thank you, Katy!

And thank you to Jenn Nardone for being willing to step into Katy's shoes as our Acting Membership Coordinator. As Membership Committee chair, Jenn has been working closely with Katy, and we look forward to a smooth transition. There will be a full search for a permanent Membership Coordinator starting later in the spring.

—Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Thank you! I have loved serving as your Membership Coordinator. What a fun job! I know I'm lucky to have held the position and am grateful to you all for having me. Entry into our congregation has become easier for newcomers and new members thanks to everyone's great efforts. Volunteer greeters, Newcomers Café hosts (both official and unofficial), committee chairs, Deacons, church leaders, and the whole staff have worked hard to improve the newcomer experience. It has been an honor to be part of it all!

Jenn Nardone is stepping into a great position - it's interesting and fun and funny. I wish her the best, and I can't wait to see what will happen next!

—Katy Killilea

Are You UU?

Of course you are or you wouldn't be reading this newsletter. Over the past few years, the church has embarked on a series of activities - such as the greeter program, Newcomers' Café, and hiring a staff Membership Coordinator - to make our beloved community a more welcoming place for visitors. Now we are ready to let more people know that we are here!

Last spring the Prudential Committee charged John Dooley with setting up and chairing an Outreach Committee for the purpose of creating a comprehensive outreach plan to bring in more people to our congregation. Over the last eight months, the committee has been developing a dynamic multimedia campaign that includes social media ads on Facebook and Google, bumper stickers, Questioncards, bus shelter posters, and television ads on *The Daily Show*, *Colbert Report* and MSNBC.

The next step in this dynamic outreach campaign belongs to you! Can you put a bumper sticker on your car? pass out Questioncards when you're asked what this campaign is all about? make a financial contribution to help expand the campaign? This is arguably one of the most important investments you can make in your church, your community, your state, and your world.

Contact: John Dooley (dool@cox.net)

Benevolent Bounty a Great Success!

I'm happy to announce that our annual church dinner and auction, our congregation's largest fundraiser outside the annual operational canvass, was wildly successful. The dinner was spectacular, the auction wild and fun. And we raised about \$7,500, well above what the Prudential Committee hoped for when putting together this year's budget.

The hands that went into this are numerous. However, some people absolutely must be named for leading and working: Holly Dobbs, Tom Getz, Betty Finn, Rachel Morrison, Lachlan Franquemont, Bruce Boucek, Graham and Jacqui Nye, Dorothy Fibiger, Nancy Weiss-Fried, and Martha Manno. The problem with putting together a list like this is that I know I've missed someone. Please forgive that. And, please, when you see any of this gang around church, say thank you. You guys are the cat's pajamas!

—Rev. James Ishmael Ford



WHEEL OF LIFE

Continued healing thoughts to **Marida Hollos**. Condolences to:

Liz Palter on the death of her father last month

Richard Boober on the death of his mother, Fannie Boober, at the age of 95

On the Move:

Jan Swearer has moved into transitional care in Northfield, Minnesota, close to her youngest son and three grandchildren and to Carleton College, where her late husband, Howard, was president before coming to Brown. Contact information is available from the church office.



HATS OFF TO . . .

Many thanks to **Elesa Amand**, who will be stepping down as Distribution Coordinator, for all your contributions to the Pantry!

Our October Coffee Hour Providers:

Mary Kollar, Philip Swayze, Suzanne Craig, Mary Finger, Tiffany Reed, Ruth Worthen, Elsie Buffum, Kate Menard, Elke Jones, Erica Napolitano, Anne Connor, Barbara Gloria, Linda Barron, Joyce Boober, Kate Guilbault, David House, Liz Palter, Vikki Bristlin, Betty Finn, the Transylvania Partner Church Committee, Melissa Guillet, Emily Conner, Lynda Gulley, and all of you who brought something in to surprise us.

Winter Storms and First Unitarian

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff decide if church will be cancelled. A cancellation decision will be made by 7:00a on Sunday and conveyed to media outlets: TV channels ABC 6, NBC 10, WPRI 12, Fox Providence, RI PBS and radio stations 630WPRO, 920WHJJ, 1180 CCNX news radio, 1290WRNI, Lite Rock105, B101, 94HJY, 92ProFM, 98.1Cat Country, 93.3Coast FM, 95.5 WBRU.

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

The Women's Alliance:

The Art of Felt Making 🌐

Monday, December 6, 2010

Business meeting: 10:30a, program: 11:00a

This month's program will feature Alliance member Temple Fawcett, who will demonstrate the ancient art of felt making: technique and imagination with unspun fleece.

A catered luncheon (\$9.00) follows the program at 12:00p. The program and luncheon are open to everyone.

Save the Date:

January All-Parish Supper 🌐

Friday, January 14, 2011

Program: "Our Resolutions"

Our January program will feature the Kevin Broccoli Show on the theme of "Resolutions." Kevin is a talented and creative Rhode Island author and storyteller who writes engaging and entertaining monologues about the human condition and recruits local actors to perform them. This is a performance that tells humorous and poignant stories about some of our best intentions – aspects of our lives that we decide to change, like dieting or bad relationships – and what happens when our resolutions do or don't work out. Plan to join us for a fun evening!

Coffee Hour Co-op! 🌐

Our Sunday after-service Coffee Hour is a cooperative effort. We need providers for December. You can bring in home-baked or store-bought goods – cheese, crackers, and fresh fruit are welcome alternatives.

Sign up with Janet Downing Taylor at the Coffee Hour Bakers Table in the First Parlor any Sunday during Coffee Hour.

Church Directory Opt-Out

We'll be issuing a new (non-photo) directory in January. If you do **not** want your information to appear in it, please contact the church office before January 5, 2011 (admin@firstunitarianprov.org or 401.421.7970).



Community Life

The Holiday All-Parish Supper 🌐

Friday, December 17 (Note the date: a week later than usual)

Everyone – young, old, and in between, newcomer and old-timer – is welcome at the All-Parish Suppers and the program following. Reservations for the meal are strongly requested.

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

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

7:45p Program in the Meeting House: A Child's Christmas in Wales



Join us for this special holiday celebration featuring Aurea Ensemble's presentation of Dylan Thomas's beloved story, narrated by veteran Rhode Island actor Bob Colonna. The program will include musical interludes of old English carols and holiday chamber music from earlier times performed by our own Fred Jodry (voice and harpsichord), vocalist Kate Lohman, and a string quartet led by Charles and Consuelo Sherba. This will be an enjoyable evening for children (elementary through high school) as well as for adults. Heavily discounted tickets for the performance will be on sale in the Parish House on Sundays

and on the evening of December 17 for people who attend the dinner.

You can register for the dinner by filling out the sign-up sheet in the Sunday Meeting House Times and dropping it in the collection plate; or you can see Jim Estey at Coffee Hour or call the church office in advance at 401.421.7970.

To support the Food Pantry, please bring coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and/or marshmallows (no glass bottles) if you can.

Win a Quilt for Yourself or as a Gift!! 🌐

Raffle Drawing: Sunday, December 12

The Women's Alliance is raffling a handmade quilt designed and fashioned by Alliance members. You can see the quilt and purchase tickets at the Alliance table in the Atrium each Sunday up to and including December 12. Tickets are \$5 each or three for \$12.

The Quilt Project is a fund-raiser for the Alliance, which makes annual donations to church projects and local charities.

Atrium Art Gallery



The Gallery hosted a wonderful opening for Jim Barfoot's show on November 11. People outside our congregation also came and were intrigued by Jim's pieces; he had fun explaining the "birth" of each work.

The December show is the Atrium Annual Group Exhibit, which will last throughout the holidays, closing on January 9. It will be followed by a joint show of two artist-photographers and a poet: James Corbin and David Bridgehouse with poems by Doris Bridgehouse.

Looking ahead, we will feature another photography show, by Frank Scheel, in February; and in May the Cerulean Group, a group of artists, including our own painter Irene Allen, will show their work.

There may be a few open spots for the spring months, pending various confirmations, for anyone interested in showing their work.

Contact/information: Chiara Romano van Erp (romano-vanerp-design@cox.net)



Holiday Happenings

Helping Our Neighbors: Our Annual Gift Drive

Sunday, November 28 to Sunday, December 19

First Unitarian's Annual Gift Drive is one way our congregation reaches out to help Rhode Island families in need during the holiday season. This year's recipients are from the International Institute Rhode Island (IIRI) and Camp Street Community Ministries (CSCM), both based in Providence. These organizations have sent the following information to guide our gift giving.

From IIRI: Since recent refugees' needs are so basic, a gift card allows them to buy their own winter clothes (gloves, hats, socks, long underwear) or other essentials and avoids leaving them with gifts that are inappropriate for their culture, education level, or circumstances. Gift cards may not be as exciting to give as other things, but they make a big difference in these people's lives. Recipients range from newborns to 87-years-olds and come from many countries, including Ethiopia, Thailand, Iraq, Iran, Tanzania, and Bhutan. Most of this population depends upon public transportation, so gift cards to K-Mart, Walmart, Price Rite, or Ocean State Job Lot are especially useful. Fancy envelopes and gift bags are not necessary. You may insert gift cards in greeting cards.

From CSCM: Gifts are needed for all ages: toys, books, games, socks, and tights for boys and girls; toiletries, stationery, and trinkets for men and women; winter clothing/coats are always needed for families served by Camp Street Ministries.

You can pick up a reminder card in the Atrium during Coffee Hour from Sunday, November 28 until December 12. Please bring your gifts to church by Sunday, December 19.

In keeping with First Unitarian tradition, our Senior High Youth Group and advisors will be facilitating this project.

Village Bank Sale of Guatemalan Handicrafts

Sundays, December 5 and 12 (and possibly December 19)

Get your holiday shopping done early! Beautiful Guatemalan handicrafts will be on sale in the Atrium in December. The handicrafts – from two sources in Guatemala: Mayan Hands and UPAVIM – will include table runners, jewelry, purses, scarves, shawls, candles, Christmas items, and baskets. You can stop by our display table either before or after the church service.

Two groups of women will be helped by your purchases – those who have made the items in Guatemala and those who will receive loans from a new Village Bank in Haiti that First Unitarian is helping to fund through this sale.

Village Banks are a cost-effective way to improve the lives of women and children in less-developed countries. The funds are loaned to the women and, on repayment, are loaned to a new group of women. Thus, the same donation helps many women. First Unitarian has funded four Village Banks and last year donated to help Village Banks in Haiti get reestablished after the earthquake.

Donate Christmas Plants to Decorate the Church for the Holidays

Through Sunday, December 12

Each year at Christmastime, our sanctuary blooms in a bright profusion of poinsettias and evergreens. Each plant is a tribute to a loved one, donated by a member of our congregation.

To give poinsettias to decorate this holiday season, you can fill out the form included in the Sunday order of service or you can contact the church office (401.421.7970 or admin@firstunitarianprov.org). Please provide the following:

- In Memory or Celebration of (first and last name/s of person/s for each plant)
- Your name (as you want it listed in the order of service on December 19)
- Your phone number (in case we need to contact you)
- Donation of \$20 per plant per person
- Donations must be received in the church office by Sunday, December 12.



Holiday Gift-giving with a UU Flair

Shop the Atrium Bookstore!

Open every Sunday during Coffee Hour

Once again, the Atrium Bookstore looks forward to helping First Unitarian members and friends find the perfect book for the coming gift-giving season. Besides the books that we get from the UUA's own Beacon Press and Skinner House, we have begun to offer books from Sky-light Paths Publishing, an interfaith publisher of various faith traditions. And don't forget: we also carry books written by several church members and by our own minister, James Ford.

UUSC Holiday Cards and Gifts

Sundays, December 5, 12, and 19

Our sixth/seventh-grade class is selling beautiful greeting cards and other fabulous gift items – including T-shirts and water bottles – from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee through December 19 (or until the cards/gifts are all sold). Look for them at the RE table in the Atrium during Coffee Hour. Proceeds benefit social justice efforts of the UUSC.

GLBT Greeting Cards

Sundays in December during Coffee Hour

Christmas cards, commitment cards, and anniversary cards for GLBTs and their families and friends will be on sale in the Atrium during December. These beautiful, welcoming greetings are being offered by the Standing on the Side of Love Committee; proceeds will support our social justice programs.

Gift Ideas from the Church of the

Larger Fellowship

CLF's Online Gift Shop offers religious resources, chalice jewelry, and other products for UUs and religious liberals. Proceeds further CLF's good works in the world. Learn more and browse the Gift Shop at www.clfuu.org.

Give a Membership in the Church of the Younger Fellowship

Church of the Younger Fellowship (CYF) keeps young adults who are away from home for college, military, or volunteer service programs connected with their UU faith. Find information about free trial membership at www.uucyf.org.

CONTINUING PROGRAMS

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.

Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction will be available at 6:45p. We are a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha.

<http://www.boundlesswayzen.org>

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford
(benevolentstreetzen@gmail.com)

Natural Wisdom and Compassion Meditation

Every Wednesday at 7:00p

These guided meditations of love and wisdom from Tibetan Buddhism have been adapted into new forms that can touch the hearts and minds of people from all backgrounds and faiths to help each of us bring out the best in ourselves within our relationships, service, and social action.

Contact: Ken Bent (kenbent@cox.net)

Reimagining Religion

Tuesdays, December 14 and 28, 7:00p

We continue our examination of Ecclesiastes, seeking insights from a recent translation by Lloyd Geering, a professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, and from the introduction to his forthcoming book on his favorite Wisdom sage. Discover why this famous scholar has frequently translated the Hebrew *Elohim* as "Nature" rather than "God."

Texts may be requested from Tom Hall.

Leader: Tom Hall (twh2nd@aol.com)



Spiritual Development

The Ethical Thing

First Tuesdays, December 7, 7:00p

December Topic: Ethics and Drug Policy

How do we know what's the right thing to do? Whether we know it or not, we engage in ethical thinking almost every day as we negotiate our way through life. Our relationships, our work, our leisure, indeed all our choices have an ethical ingredient. Each month, this group offers lively discussions of ethics as it applies to the big issues ("What are rights and who has them?") and the small ("Is it okay to use those address labels if I don't make a donation?"). Topics will be selected by the interests of the group, and topics and readings will be posted before each gathering.

This month's topic - ethics and drug policy - will focus on the questions of prohibition, legalization, addiction, and harm reduction in an ethical framework. The United States' "war on drugs" is 30 years old, and during that time, the production and use of illegal drugs, drug-related crimes, corruption, incarceration, and deaths have only increased. What is the right thing to do about this complex and entrenched problem?

Suggested reading: www.hanskoechler.com/Wodak-Ethics_Drug_Policy.pdf

All are welcome.

Contact: Carol Pentleton (carol@thedigitalartist.com)

Drop-in Chalice Circle

Tuesday, December 28, 7:00-9:00p

This open drop-in Chalice Circle at the church is an opportunity to experience the spiritual practice and see if it is right for you. At Chalice Circles, you connect with other church members on a deeper level. It is a chance for those with busy lives to slow down for just a moment. All are welcome!

Session facilitator: Dianne Mailloux



UUMeN

Sunday, December 12, 7:00-9:00p

Topic: The Pursuit of Happiness

In the Declaration of Independence, we are encouraged to pursue happiness. What is it that makes us happy? Is happiness what life is all about? When we are happy, do we lose initiative? Is it harder for us to be creative, to have new thoughts, to pursue challenges and unfamiliar experiences? Should we maintain a spirit of discontent?

All interested men are welcome to join us for discussion and for fellowship.

December facilitator: Tony Allen (401.521.3908)

Sunday Pulpit Flowers

We all enjoy the wonderful floral arrangements each Sunday in the Meeting House. The pulpit flowers are provided by members and friends of the congregation to honor a loved one or celebrate a special occasion. You can donate flowers for a particular Sunday service; after the service, you can take them with you or give them away.

Contact: Jacqui Nye (funjac@hotmail.com; type "Flowers" in the Subject line)



Social Justice

Food for Thought from the Food Share Pantry 🌍🌱

Distribution Day, Monday December 20, 1:00p 6:00p



December is . . .

coffee, tea, hot chocolate
and marshmallow month.

The Food Share Pantry is First Unitarian's community of volunteers who coordinate all aspects of our monthly food distribution in the Parish House Atrium for our neighbors in need. It is our largest social justice program, and it takes lots of human energy to make it happen.

Share in our passion for food! We have a variety of volunteer opportunities for all who wish to be involved and help fulfill our mission and commitment to the community.

- **Food Bank Shoppers** – We are in serious need of shoppers to go to the RI Food Bank in Cranston once a month to pick up pre-orders and choose items from the shelves to bring back to First Unitarian. You would need a van or wagon, be able to lift heavy boxes, and have time (approximately two hours) during weekly work hours. You would be partnered with an experienced shopper. *Our Pantry cannot exist without this task, and we are painfully low on help!*
- **Recycling Volunteer** – We go through a lot of cardboard that needs to be dealt with at the end of our monthly Distribution Day, as well as boxes to return to the Food Bank. Someone to oversee this portion of operation would be great.
- **Storeroom Organizer** – Our food is stored in the Meeting House basement, and the inventory often needs sorting, organizing, counting, etc., to ensure enough food each month.
- **Distribution Day Volunteers** (third Monday of each month) – We work in three shifts: Set-up: 1:30-3:30p; shopping with clients: 3:30-5:00p; clean-up, recycling, restocking food: 5:00-6:00p.

There are many other ways to contribute to our First Unitarian Community Food Share Pantry. Bring in this month's food items and place them in the barrel in the corner of the Atrium. Help raise awareness, raise funds, or coordinate special food drives. Do you speak Russian, Portuguese, or Spanish? Translators are greatly appreciated to help our clients shop on Distribution Day.

Contact: Martha Manno (Mmanno7@comcast.net), Amy Webb (amy.webb7@verizon.net),
Elesa Amand (eles2@verizon.net), Nori Duncan (nori.duncan@gmail.com)

Support the Food Pantry: Buy a Magazine! Buy Two!! 🌍

Every Sunday during Coffee Hour

Contributions have been rolling in to our magazine recycling project. We now have *Science, Utne, Archeology, Scientific American, Poetry, Rolling Stone, Motorcycle, Fishing, Yoga, Shape, and Self*, to name but a few additions. Thanks to all who have contributed fabulous magazines.

Now we need you to buy some of those magazines for a donation of 50¢ or \$1. All money goes to our Food Share Pantry to help buy items not available from the Food Bank. Our goal is to generate \$100-\$150 a month through donations on magazines. Imagine how much one magazine can generate for the Food Pantry if we keep recycling it!

Here are some ways to recycle magazines: take some to the gym to share, restock your bathroom, keep some in your car for those "waiting" moments. Have a blast with the family: cover small boxes with magazine pictures to make display or storage cases; make gifts, ornaments, and collages with kids, even Christmas presents perhaps!

And please consider volunteering an hour of your time to help set up the magazine recycling table; talk to folks and generate donations; help put away magazines and count the donations.

Contact: Ruth Arellana (rkarellana@yahoo.com)

Our October Community Collection

The offering on Sunday, October 17, was dedicated to English for Action, which provides English as a Second Language classes and leadership training for and with community residents in the Olneyville section of Providence. The collection raised \$970. Many thanks to all who so generously donated.

Kimberly Kohler, Education Director at EFA, sent the following note: Thank you so much for this vital contribution to EFA's work! The money couldn't have come at a better time. We have decided to use half of the money to sustain our supplies budget for the Our School children's arts-based literacy program, and the other half we plan to use to weatherize our offices so that we are more energy and economically efficient.

Standing on the Side of Love 🌍

The SSL Committee has sponsored many activities this fall, and we're enthusiastic about taking a stand on marriage equality in Rhode Island and standing up against prejudice against immigrants and Muslims.

There are many reasons to visit us at the Standing on the Side of Love in the Atrium during Coffee Hour:

- Buy GBLTQ-friendly Christmas cards.
- Sign up for our email lists.
- Sign marriage equality cards for Rhode Island legislators.
- Buy pins, magnets, bumper stickers, order a T-shirt.
- Find out what we're planning for the coming months.
- Admire our ad in the *Options* news-magazine.

Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association, the SSL program is dedicated to standing up against identity-based violence and injustice. SSL welcomes participation from all faith communities, creating a regional coalition working against racism, homophobia, and targeting of immigrants.

Information: visit the SSL table at Coffee Hour, our Facebook page, or the program website at www.StandingOnTheSideOfLove.org

Annual Write-a-thon for Human Rights 🌍👤

Sunday, December 5

See the Back Page for details

Knitting for a Better World 🌍👤

Every Tuesday, 7:00-9:00p

Come join fellow knitters for a casual evening of knitting and conversation. Work on your own project or join in one of our many group efforts – knitting warm clothes for immigrants learning English through English for Action in Olneyville, prayer shawls for women in the Middle East, dolls for children in Haiti, or our new Hundreds of Hats project (see main column). Beginners are always welcome. We have plenty of yarn, needles, patterns, and friendly advice to get you started.

Contact: Julie Meyers (kelmey@cox.net)



Habitat for Humanity Work Day 🌍👤

Saturday, December 18

The First Unitarian Habitat Work Group volunteers once a month with the Providence chapter of Habitat for Humanity Rhode Island (www.habitatprov.org), which usually has several houses under construction. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome; the only requirements are a willingness and ability to do physical work and a minimum age of 16. Our work day is the third Saturday of each month. Sign-up is required as space on each month's crew is limited.

Contact: Peter van Erp (401.351.4881 or peter-vanerp@cox.net)



Social Justice

Hundreds of Hats! 🌍👤

Knitting for a Better World, our First Unitarian knitting group, has challenged itself to provide "Hundreds of Hats" to help our neighbors combat the winter cold. Two hundred hats, to be exact! To reach our goal, we have invited other groups of knitters to join in this effort. Members of First Unitarian are especially invited to knit (or buy) a hat or two to help reach this ambitious goal.

In addition to hats, the group will be collecting scarves, mittens, socks, and sweaters for three community organizations: English for Action, Harrington Hall men's shelter, and our own Mitten Tree outside the Meeting House. Contributions can be dropped off in the Atrium.



Contact: Kathy Ahlquist (Katherine.Ahlquist@gmail.com or 401454.7936)

Getting to Know Them: The UUA and BCD

This month: The Unitarian Universalist Association

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), of which First Unitarian is a member:

- Helps congregations take action on their values with "how-to" resources
- Keeps national media informed of UU activities and positions
- Implements General Assembly social justice decisions (more on GA later)
- Acts in coalition with other organizations
- Makes grants to further UU principles
- Publishes books consonant with UU principles through its Beacon Press

The annual meeting of UU congregations – General Assembly – occurs in June. UUs from across the country gather to vote on key issues; hear dynamic speakers; participate in moving worship services and informative workshops; connect with craftspeople, social action groups, professional resources, etc.; network with congregational leaders; and witness our faith in action.

This year, General Assembly will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina from June 22 to June 26. Flights to Charlotte are really inexpensive. Who wants to go? Let me hear from you!

Contact: Beth Armstrong, Denominational and Interfaith Connections (bestar3@aol.com)

Neighborhood Social Justice

Sunday, December 5 at 12:15p and Thursday, December 16 at 7:00p

A Successful November

Many thanks to all who donated blankets and/or toiletries for the Harrington Hall men's shelter last month. We filled several bins, and Ocean State Job Lot donated 130 new blankets! A summary of Cathy Orloff's November 7 talk on equal land rights is available at the NSJC table during Coffee Hour. A study group on this subject is forming for early 2011.

A Special December Drive

NSJC has been asked to help Children's Friend collect "baby stuff": disposable diapers, wipes, and baby formula. Children's Friend last year served 26,000 children and families, most of whom live in extreme poverty. This year the need is greater than ever. We'll have bins at the NSJC table on Sundays.

The David St. Germain Memorial Fund

The NSJC has begun the discussion of allocating the monies in the David St. Germain Memorial Fund. The fund has collected approximately \$3,000 thus far. Donations are still being accepted. We would like to involve the entire congregation in this allocation process. Ideas regarding the distribution of this fund may be submitted in writing to the suggestion box at the NSJC table. All ideas must be submitted by Sunday, December 12.

All are invited to our monthly meetings. Hope to see you there.

Contact: Joe Salvatore (joesuu@gmail.com)

December 2010

"Weekends don't count unless you spend them doing something completely pointless." – Bill Watterson

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u> Ministries Council 5:00p Prudential Committee 6:00p Meditation 7:00p	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Mentor/Mentee 12:00p Neighborhood Social Justice 12:15p Write-a-thon for Human Rights 1:00p	<u>6</u> Women's Alliance 11:00a Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>7</u> The Ethical Thing 7:00p Lay Ministry 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	<u>8</u> R.E. Committee 6:00p Meditation 7:00p	<u>9</u> Deacons 6:00p Worship Committee 7:00p	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>12</u> Sunday Service 10:30a UU Men 7:00p	<u>13</u> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>14</u> Canvass Committee 7:00p Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	<u>15</u> Standing on the Side of Love 7:00p Meditation 7:00p	<u>16</u> Neighborhood Social Justice 7:00p	<u>17</u> Parish Supper 5:45p	<u>18</u> Habitat for Humanity 8:30a-2:00p
<u>19</u> Multigenerational Christmas Pageant Service 10:30a Membership 12:15p	<u>20</u> Food Pantry 1:00p-6:00p Benevolent St. Zendo 7:00p	<u>21</u> Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	<u>22</u> Executive Committee 7:00p Meditation 7:00p	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> Christmas Eve Services Family Service 5:00p Candlelight Prelude 8:45p Contemplative Service 9:00p	<u>25</u> Christmas Day
<u>26</u> Sunday Service 10:30a	<u>27</u> Church Office Closed All Week Benevolent St. Zendo 7:00p	<u>28</u> Church Office Closed All Week Chalice Circle Drop In 7:00p Reimagining Religion 7:00p Knitting for a Better World 7:00p	<u>29</u> Church Office Closed All Week Meditation 7:00p	<u>30</u> Church Office Closed All Week	<u>31</u> Church Office Closed All Week New Year's Eve	

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Human Rights Sunday – December 5, 2010

Write-a-thon and Open House, 1:00-5:00p

Our special guest speaker for this year's Human Rights Sunday is Ruth Lal Hmachuani. Under threat of arrest and pursued by the Burmese military, she and her family made a difficult, dangerous escape to Malaysia. Arriving last year with refugee status, they have been resettled in Providence.

This will be our twenty-third Write-a-thon for Human Rights. Join fellow congregants and other concerned citizens in our community in writing letters for victims of human rights abuse and human rights defenders at risk in Congo, China, Burma, Iran, and other countries. These appeals do succeed. We provide all necessary materials.

Refreshments and prizes make this event festive as well as solemn. Suitable for families.

From Amnesty International:



Your Words Have Power

They can bring FREEDOM to prisoners of conscience. They can demand JUSTICE for survivors of torture. They can offer HOPE to human rights defenders at risk.

Your words can SAVE LIVES

Each year hundreds of thousands of people across the world mark International Human Rights Day by taking part in Amnesty International's Write for Rights Global Write-a-thon - the world's largest letter-writing event. We write letters to demand that the rights of individuals are respected, protected, and fulfilled. In doing so, we show solidarity with those suffering human rights abuses and work to bring about real change in people's lives.