



FIRST UU NEWS

We gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice

When God was a baby

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



At the Christmas pageant last year, children picked out costumes from piles the director had arranged on the tables outside the sanctuary. You could be an angel, a shepherd, an animal, or a king. Two beautiful brothers came in already dressed as Batman, and stood reverently by the manger looking at the baby Jesus.

“What did you think about Batman at the manger? Not very historical.” one person asked later.

“Probably not,” I answered, “but there is a lot we don’t know about what actually happened. Historically, we barely know Jesus lived, much less whether he was born in Bethlehem, or whether he was married to Mary Magdalene, or whether he went to India to study in the ‘lost years’ between being a twelve year old talking with the teachers in the temple and beginning his ministry as an adult.” I saw her eyes glaze over with this much information, and circled back to the point. “Right. Odds are against there having been a Batman. But it let those boys be in the story as their real selves at that moment, and that’s worth a lot. It made me smile for a month.”

The baby in the manger is a soul story, if not a historical story. Soul stories are as likely to be true as stories from history, but they are perhaps a different sort of true, and you approach them differently. Before and after doing historical research, Biblical study, and the kinds of work on context and language one does when looking at a story from a Scripture, my inclination is to interact with the story as I would with a dream.

Holding the image of the Divine as a baby in mind and heart, I invite myself to let go of my hold on the Abrahamic God, the ideas about the Divine I can live with or not, the elements of the concept of a God I believe in and those I don’t believe in. A soul story is a dream from the depths of a culture, not an individual.

This is bigger than my squeamishness or my history.

When God is a baby, no one has to be afraid of God. No one has to tremble before God’s wrath. No one has to wonder what they have done wrong, how they have disappointed God. A baby God isn’t mad at you – in fact, it needs you to coo over him, hold him close, smell her head, curl her tiny fingers around your pinkie, protect him and visit her with presents. No wonder Christmas is a well-loved holiday—we get to coo over the baby God, and feel the aching openness of a heart at its very beginning.

Among the ways to understand the Divine is as the spirit of love, the spirit of light, the spirit of life.

Among the ways to understand the Divine is as the spirit of love, the spirit of light, the spirit of life. A baby love, a baby light, a baby life would carry within itself all that it will become, like an oak

within the acorn, like 238 possible tomatoes contained within one tomato seed, like a mighty river that starts as a spring seeping out of the earth in a high and quiet place. The light starts as a tiny spark. A new baby love has all the possibilities in the world, it carries all the hopes and dreams. Later on, as it grows and matures, it becomes more real, and if you are skilled and lucky, it grows richer and deeper. As life starts you care for it and nurture it. You are careful with it. You delight in it. A baby is full of possibility.

What if this is a story about the soul entering the world of the body? The light of spirit and wisdom, the Divine Seed planted in a human being? Some of the founders of our free religion believed that the seed of

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God, a tiny sliver of the light, was in each of us.

I think about the Divine seed, the wise baby, within me, containing the whole of divinity in itself, yet needing to grow. Antoine de Saint-Exupery writes: “the seed haunted by the sun never fails to find its way between the stones in the ground” (“Flight to Arras”). Is my soul the seed, or is it the light? I say it is both. Do we long for the Divine, or are we Divine ourselves? Both. Do we search for God or is God within us? Both.

In times of confusion and doubt, I see myself able to visit my soul like the magi, the wise magicians, and kneel before it with gifts of quiet, respect and love. I can nurture the light, the seed of God within me. I can protect it from the forces of power-over that show up next in the faith story, the forces of fear and control, the Herod power, the light-killing, love-killing power of the outer world and of my inner world as well.

I wish for each of you at this time of the rebirth of the light that the light be reborn in you, that love be cradled in your heart, that you be a seed haunted by the sun, finding your way from the nurturing darkness, past all obstacles, stubbornly and rapturously breaking through to live in the light. ■

PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS**We’ll build a land****by Susan Thomson**

“We’ll Build a Land” is one of my favorite UU hymns. The chorus borrows heavily from Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech in which he quoted from the Biblical books of Amos and Isaiah. “Come build a land where sisters and brothers, annointed by God may then create peace: where justice shall roll down like waters, and peace like an ever flowing stream.”

When we sing this hymn together, I am always reminded of a very important part of our mission that we recite every Sunday: “We gather in community ... to do justice.” We have also established ends, or goals, that further elaborate on how we plan to carry out, or live, our mission. Our end related to justice is as follows: First UU Church of Austin witnesses to justice in our personal lives and beyond, by practicing liberal religious values in the public arena, empowering all people to access the richness of life, providing leadership to the greater UUA community to expand the reach of our movement and partnering with the interfaith community to live our shared values.

For the past several months, I have used this newsletter space to write about three aspects of church growth and how they are reflected in our mission and ends. A fourth aspect is incarnational growth. Loren Mead, author of *More Than Numbers: The Way Churches Grow*, describes incarnational growth as the ability to take the meanings and values of our faith and make them real in the world and the society outside our congregation. It’s how we work together as a congregation to make a difference in the world. We create a community in

which we can deepen our spiritual lives and challenge ourselves to live out our faith. We then engage in the world in order to make it more loving and just.

We are experiencing incarnational growth in our church as we work to live our mission and carry out our ends. Please note that our mission and ends refer to “doing” and “witnessing” to justice, not just learning about or talking about justice.

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Our social justice ministry team provides each of us with multiple opportunities to do or witness to justice throughout the year. If you prefer the “hands on” approach, there are many ways to volunteer for freeze nights and sack lunch preparation for the homeless, Hands On Housing, and helping out at People’s Community Clinic and North Central Caregivers. We practice our liberal religious values in the public arena by putting on our yellow “Standing on the Side of Love” t-shirts to appear together at events that reflect our church’s values, such as marriage equality, immigration, women’s health issues and reproductive freedom and education financing. The more of us who are willing and able to do this, the more impact we will



This spring will bring many opportunities to do or witness to justice as we hold our Spring Into Action church-wide social justice project with a focus on immigration issues.

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Kitty Clark: Crusader for Justice

MEMBER PROFILE

Long-time First UU member, Kitty Clark, has lived a political life. Coming from a long line of what Clark calls “yellow-dog Democrats” in Austin and in her native Missouri, it is no wonder that she has spent her adult life working for the Democratic Party. She laughs when she pats the top of her head “This dent is from way too many head pattings at all of the political rallies my father and grandfather took me to when I was a baby.”

Kitty and her late husband, Les Clark, first came to Austin in 1948 so Les could attend graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin. In the mid-50’s they got involved with the UU church in Austin. When asked why they chose UU, Kitty says it was because of her son. “He came home from school one day saying that he was going to hell because he lied,” she says. “Now, neither I nor Les believed in hell, so we decided that we had to find a church with our beliefs. Right at that time we happened to meet a man whose daughter was in our son’s first grade class, and he was a UU minister. He told us a little about UUs, and we were interested in finding out more.”

However, by the time that Kitty and Les started going to the UU church, the man had moved and was no longer the minister. “But, we loved the new minister, Brandoch Lovely,” says Kitty. “He was wonderful.”

“In those days, the UU church was much different than it is today,” says Kitty.

“The congregation was much smaller. We met in public schools because we didn’t have our own building.” Of course, that changed in 1961 when we built the new church on Grover Ave.”

Kitty and Les were very involved in getting the church built. In fact, they were very much a part of the church leadership for many years.

“Les and I both served as president,” says Kitty. “I also was part of getting the Public Forum started, and was involved with that for many years.” Kitty says that she served on so many committees she can’t count them all. In addition to all of leadership roles in First UU, she has been a fixture at the Senior Luncheons for many years.

Kitty is well known in Austin political circles for her activism and her work with the Democratic Party. She served as precinct chair for many years and also as treasurer of Mayor Lee Leffingwell’s political campaign. On her 90th birthday, Kitty was honored with a city-wide proclama-



Kitty Clark with great grandson

tion naming Jan. 13 “Kitty Clark Day.” There was also a party which was attended by several local politicians including Lloyd Doggett and Mayor Leffingwell just to name a few.

Kitty doesn’t come to the First UU services as much as she used to. “I don’t drive any more” she said, and “sometime it’s just too hard to get here.” However, she still attends the Heritage Book Club and church special events. ■

We’ll build a land

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have. Speaking of impact, our church now has a membership in Texas Impact, a state-wide religious grassroots network. This offers a way for us to partner with the interfaith community to live our shared values. And we also have the opportunity now to join forces with other UU’s in a new organization, Texas

Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry. I believe we have a special responsibility to provide leadership in witnessing to justice, advocating on issues that reflect the values we hold most dear, because we are in the state’s capital.

Let’s challenge ourselves to use these

opportunities to live out our faith, to engage in the world and build a land that is more loving and just, “where justice shall roll down like waters, and peace like an ever flowing stream.” ■

A little hard work and lots of fun!

On Saturday, Nov. 10, more than 30 First UU members pulled up their sleeves, put on their gardening gloves and dug in the first annual “Spruce and Juice” grounds work day. The remarkably well-prepared Grounds Committee attracted the partnership of the Green Sanctuary, Fellowship, Chalice Circles and congregation members of all ages.

It was amazing how quickly the clean-up went with everyone pitching in and completing their little part of the garden. Paths were widened, beds were weeded, lovely stepping stones and bricks were revealed, and our wildlife habitat gardens were restored. Everyone helped, young and not-so-young and everyone in between.

A roving photo artist, Richard Petty, documented the event. A dozen folks brought fabulous food for a wonderful garden brunch feast for all the wonder workers, sprites, pucks and leprechauns who transformed the gardens.

We had lots of great musicians on hand to serenade us as we worked to transform the gardens. These included:

Solo Artist, Rob Feeney, guitar and vocals

The Dirgibles followed, which included musicians: Mary Jane Ford, vocals and guitar; Edward Sledge, violin; Jim Barry, keyboard; and Dyanne Cortez, oboe.

Thanks to everyone who came out to help:

Bill Walters, Elizabeth Gray, Liz Kesterson, Carla Jo Schaefer, Richard Petty, Wayne Kesterson, Sylvia Pope, Beki Halpin, Richard Halpin, Sue Cassel, Kelly Traylor, Karen Pope, Allen Pope, Ethan Love, Geri Neemidge, Paige Neemidge, David Neemidge, Peter Schneider, Linda Buehlmann, Pat Bulla, Greg Thompson, Veryan Thompson, Tomas Rodriguez, Monty Newton, Robert Norris, Mina Loomis, Dale Bulla, Louann Sledge, Edward Sledge, Shanteka Sigers, Amsden Siegers, Jacob Hodges, Joseph Hodges, Edison Hodges, Jennifer Loehlin, Joan Bennziger, Dyanne Cortez, Mary Jane Ford, Bob Porter, Tom Martin, George Denny, Barbara Denny. ■



The Dirgibles: Edward Sledge, Mary Jane Ford, Dyanne Cortez, and Jim Barry



Veryan and Greg Thompson lend a hand.



A lot of hands and hard work transformed the garden



Monty Newton with other First UU members hard at work

All aboard the train!

On Saturday, Nov. 3, around 85 1-2-3 pledgers and their guests rode the Hill Country Flyer from Austin to Bertram. The trip was in celebration of the 2013 Stewardship Campaign and to recognize those First UU members who committed to the multi-year pledge.

Participants got off the train in Bertram to visit the historic train museum in the station before the return trip to Austin.

Train travelers partook of libations, gourmet sandwiches, and lively conversation.

Special thanks to Stewardship Committee co-chairs, Sean Ramsey and Chris Heidel for coordinating the event. Thanks also to the following people who helped make the event such a success: Jenna Opperman; the Whiteaker-Lewis Family (Corinna, Dale, Bridget and Audrey) Monica and Bob Smoot; Toby Heidel; Evie Windham; and Margaret Borden. And, thanks to all First UU member who so generously pledged. ■



Nicole Smith and Guest visit with new member Carol Edwards.



Tom and Susan Thomson



Wendy Kuo and Klondike Steadman get tickets checked.

Eclectic Folk Jam

Friday, Dec. 14
Howson Hall
7:00–10:00 pm

The Eclectic Folk Jam, an open jam session for singers and instrumentalists, is held on the second Friday of every month. Bring drinks and snacks to share. Contact Pete and Kim Akenhead at 512-834-0188 or Mary Jane Ford at 512-926-4122 or singalong@austinuu.org. ■

UU/Quaker Singalong

Saturday, Dec. 22
7:30–10:30 pm
Friends Meeting House

Please bring snacks and finger foods, musical instruments, and copies of songs you want to sing. Christmas songs are encouraged and “Rise Up Singing” songbooks are provided. This is an alcohol-free event. Contact Larry Vaughn 512-469-0029 or Mary Jane Ford at singalong@austinuu.org. ■

A hearty thank you to NAMI Walk volunteers

The UU Churches in Austin were well represented at the NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) Walk in October, where more than \$285,000.00 was raised.

These monies will go a long way for this wonderful cause, which will help erase the stigma of mental illness in our community. We are still accepting donations and will be for the next several weeks.

Kathryn Govier and Donna Pauler, are co-captains. For more information, please call 512-832-6379. ■

Money saving green tip Wastewater averaging begins Nov. 2012

Save water and save money. Many folks are not aware that their waste water or sewer bill is averaged over three months in the winter when outside watering is at a minimum. From November to the end of February—the lowest three months of water use—are averaged, depending upon when your meter is read. That amount will be your wastewater cost for the next 12 months. So remember that every drop you save through February, will save you all next year. ■

SOCIAL ACTION

New group seeks justice at the Texas Capitol

Politically inclined UUs met to create a new project, Action for Justice, and the initial 12 members both agreed on three top issues and named First UU Austin new member Samantha Fredrickson as the coordinator.

“As soon as I started attending First UU, I felt at home,” Samantha said. “This was a church that I knew would nourish both my spirit and my inner activist. It was so easy to jump right in. Everyone has been so welcoming and inspiring and I am really looking forward to working with such a great group of progressive activists.”

Samantha moved here from All Souls UU church in New York, and is the executive director of the Texas After Violence Project, a non-profit focused on educating the public about capital punishment in Texas. In New York, Samantha worked as an attorney for the New York Civil Liberties Union, where she focused her efforts on advocacy and lobbying. She’s excited to use her lobbying experience to coordinate First UU members

to promote our UU values when the state legislature convenes in January and eventually in local issues. The group will also network with other coalitions including Texas Impact and eventually the budding Texas UU Justice Ministry as we primarily focus on women’s health, immigration and education issues.

“I feel strongly that we need to advocate for the inherent worth and dignity of each person,” Samantha said. “We, as UUs, have the power to be a driving force in this legislative session. By banding together we can be a voice of reason and respect to counteract the hateful and discriminatory rhetoric that is sure to fill the halls of the Capitol during this next legislative session. I’m excited to work with all of you to make meaningful change.” Others interested in joining Action for Justice should attend the next meeting Monday, Dec. 10 at 7:00 pm in Rm. 13-A. If you can’t make the meeting and want to contact Samantha, email her at justice@austinuu.org. ■

Help us shelter the homeless

Join us in doing justice by either bringing prepared food or serving 50 homeless men, whom we shelter at First UU in Howson Hall on Tuesday nights when it’s freezing outside. Whether you want to pick up items such as bananas, eggs, milk or bread or prepare main dishes or sides such as stews, soups or vegetables, we welcome your help. We also need volunteers to sign up for time slots when they can set up and serve, clean or host our guests. We work in conjunction with the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) as they provide city buses

to bring the men to us and pick them up the next morning. Most of the men have jobs and need to get to work early the following day. Let’s bring them inside for warmth. Stop by the Social Action table in the gallery and sign up for a couple of Tuesdays as we provide a meal and shelter throughout the winter season.

We look forward to visiting with you in the Gallery, or you may contact Peggy Morton at freezenight@austinuu.org. Help us do justice and possibly transform your own life by being there for someone else. ■

Volunteer to help grow the TXUUM

The Texas UU Justice Ministry is a new statewide justice ministry working to get its non-profit status to organize Texas UUs throughout the state. Four churches have already joined to give voice to our Unitarian Universalist values in the public arena and work to educate, organize and advocate for public policies that uphold our Unitarian Universalist principles, along with joining other nonpartisan, interfaith organizations on issues of shared interest. In order to move forward, the TXUUM needs a few volunteers:

1. TXUUM has won a \$20,000 UUA funding grant to pay for a part-time director. We are looking for an Austin-

based UU who has experience working with the Texas Legislature, political action groups and/or lobbying. This individual will join forces with the six-member steering committee to coordinate the 59 Texas UU congregations. The first grant will be available the first of January, so we have the funds for a small salary starting at the beginning of the year.

2. Join the one webmaster, who would like to find a team of four.

3. Join 3-4 who could collate and mail out info to all Texas UU congregations and fellowships showing an interest.

To volunteer for any of these jobs, please contact Peggy Morton at socialaction@austinuu.org. ■

Chalice Circles allow people to connect in close community

“The greatest gift we can give another is our presence.” Thich Nhat Hahn

First UU’s Chalice Circles are part of a movement that is transforming the religious landscape of Unitarian Universalism in the United States – Small Group Ministries (SGM). SGM are an effective way of building relationships within our church family along with exploring our spiritual journey. Chalice Circles allow members to connect in close communities through shared thoughts and experiences and enable them to practice listening and speaking from the heart. To be heard deeply by another is truly an amazing experience. “What we’ve learned is that Small Group Ministry is the single

most effective way to provide people with a sense of roots, place, belonging, sharing, and caring.” Effective Church Leadership, by Kennon Callahan.

In January, registration for the Chalice Circle (CC) program will open and

church members or others who support the ministry of the church can join one of these small groups that meet twice

monthly. Stop by the Chalice Circle table in the Gallery after services starting in January or contact Lisa Carrell, CC coordinator, at chalicecircles@austinuu.org for more information or to register. ■



Make new friends ... share a supper!

Attending Sharing Suppers is a great way to meet newcomers and long-time UUs from across the greater Austin area. These suppers are casual adult dinners held the third Saturday of each month.

Groups of 6-10 people gather in various participants’ homes, and everyone contributes to the dinner. Sharing Suppers are open to anyone in the church, You don’t have to be a member to participate. Sign up for one dinner at a time with no long-term commitment. Participants take turns hosting and planning the meal or helping co-host in another’s home. The next Sharing Supper is Dec 15. Signup deadline is Dec. 9. Contact Jeanne Barker at sharing@austinuu.org. For monthly reminders, join the email list: sharingsupper-subscribe@yahoo.com. ■

Senior Luncheon

Tuesday, Dec. 11
Howson Hill
12:00 noon

Join us for soup, salad & dessert. Only \$5. The Dirgibles with Mary Jane Ford, Edward Sledge, Jim Barry, Jeanne Barker will provide musical entertainment. They will be playing traditional and original Christmas music. RSVP to Alice Cashman 512-837-0988. ■

Hands on Housing crew does it again!!

On Saturday, Oct 27, about 45 “eager beaver” UUs from First UU, Live Oak UU, Free Souls Church, and San Marcos UU Fellowship pitched in to paint and repair an elderly couple’s East Austin home. Here’s what our all-UU team accomplished:

- Power-washed the house in advance to get it ready for painting;
- Brought supplies, tools, and equipment needed for the technical tasks;
- Scraped and painted all the siding and trim;
- Replaced the den and kitchen windows and sheetrock around the den window;
- Replaced screens on the existing windows;
- Repaired a rotten window sill;
- Repaired electrical wiring and replaced the front and back porch lamps;
- Painted a metal bench, Mrs. Brooks’ favorite place to sit outside, a wire rooster, and two standing candlesticks;;
- Spruced up the backyard plant bed;
- Painted the mailbox post and put new numbers on the mailbox ... and much, much more!

THANKS to all of our hard-working volunteers:

Charlene Ansley; Bruce and Jeanne Barker; Ed Boisserain; Mia Burton; Beverly Donoghue; Ray and Michael Easterlin; Russell Eskew; Dave and Sharon Fitzpatrick; Chuck Freeman; Sandra and Sabia Guardado and Matt and Dante Nelson; Becky Harding and Claire, Ming, and Rebecca Roberts; Matt Harris; Liz and Wayne Kesterson; John Logan; Virginia Luehrsen; Kathy Lunny; Ethan Love; Lashanna Martin; Richard Mauldin; Alan and Molly May; George McIntosh; Jon Montgomery; Peggy Morton; Monty Newton; Joyce and John Phelps; Mark Rumple; Rob Sartin; Peter Schneider; Loretta Sedlock; Klondike and Mei Lin Steadman; Carolyn Swinnea; and Michael West.

A special “thank you” to:

- John Phelps, the morning shift lead and group picture photographer, and Matt Nelson, the afternoon shift lead;
- Tom Bodine, Richard Mauldin, Peter Schneider, John Payne, Natalie Freeburg, and Beverly Donoghue for loading and lugging ladders, tables, and supplies to and from the work site;
- Bruce and Jeanne Barker, Ethan Love, and Monty Newton, our terrific technical crew, for working miracles; and
- John Logan, also part of the technical crew, who made sure that each of the nine old windows had custom-made screens.

Our volunteers did a wonderful job on the Brooks’ home, and they are so pleased with the improvements. The house looks so different now that one of their sons

didn’t recognize it and drove right past it! Kudos to each and every volunteer! You definitely made a difference for these homeowners!

Hands On Housing is a city-wide workday organized by Interfaith Action of Central Texas (IACT) twice a year to assist low-income homeowners with needed painting and repairs. First UU has participated in Hands On Housing since the early 1970s. ■



The kids get into the action, too.



Bruce and Jeanne Barker, Bertha and Alving Brooks, and Monty Newton



The afternoon crew

PARADOX PLAYERS

New children’s theater from Paradox Players

Paradox Players is proud to present our first Children’s Theater production consisting of three stories: “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” “Too Much Noise,” and the original script of “Maarsenbrook Moosegaroo” by our own playwright, Don Fried. The Children’s Theater Company of adult actors and puppeteers bring the magic of theater to young children, ages 3 to 6, using the story dramatization format. Between the stories there will be interactive songs for the audience. This first show will be presented in Howson Hall on Sunday afternoon, Dec.16 at 3:00 pm. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$3.00 a person.

In addition to the Howson Hall matinee performance, the Paradox Players Children’s Theater Company will

be performing at local elementary schools. Our show will be the first live theater experience for many of the children in the audiences.

Jean Boehme, a member of First UU, is the director and producer of these performances. She has an M.F.A. in Children’s Theater from the University of Texas. As the storyteller, she draws upon her 10 years of experience doing story dramatization in her classroom as a Pre-K AISD teacher. Contact: Jean Boehme at joboej@hotmail.com. ■

Readers’ Theater

Join us Monday evening, Dec 10, at 7:30 pm in the gallery for the fun of reading aloud without memorizing or rehearsing! We’ll be reading an assortment of one-act plays. Newcomers welcome, no experience required. ■

First UU serves it up at Thanksgiving potluck

Thanks to Michael and Irene Tobis for planning a wonderful Thanksgiving feast for First UU members and their friends and family on Thanksgiving Day. And, thanks to all of the other volunteers who prepared, served and cleaned up!

Around 80 people gathered in fellowship to celebrate this holiday of thansgiving and gratitude. There was lots of turkey and all fe fixins’ as well as plenty of sides and desserts. No one left hungry!

Just a few short months ago, Michael and Irene were new First UU members. Now they are seasoned veterans having pulled off an amazing culinary event. They and all of the participants demonstrated the true UU spirit. ■



Kami Cornell, Vicki Almstrum and Kyle clean up in the kitchen.



Vicki Almstrum and Kami Cornell show a little Thanksgiving spirit.



Many happy UUs enjoy a turkey feast.

Curricula for fall

Pre-K:
Rainbow Seekers

K-1st Grade:
Picture Book UUism

2nd & 3rd Grade:
Moral Tales

4th & 5th Grades:
UU Explorers

Jr. High Group
10:45-11:45 am

Sr. High Group
10:45 am-12:45 pm

For full curriculum descriptions, see the September newsletter.

Fall schedule

9:15-10:30 am
& 10:45 am-noon

Preschool
(3 and 4 year olds)
Kindergarten-Grade 1
Grades 2-3
Grades 4-5

9:15-10:30 am only

Two Children's Choirs
(first service)

10:45 am-noon only

Jr. Youth Group
(Grades 6-8)

10:45 am-12:45 pm

Sr. Youth Group
(Grades 9-12)

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

December religious education highlights by Marisol Caballero

Just as the turkey and dressing is finally settling in my stomach, it's time to start celebrating and feasting some more ...UU style! This year, we will be moving the annual Christmas pageant from a weekday evening, to Sunday Dec. 16, so that the whole congregation can enjoy this tradition during the worship services! After the second service, we will be celebrating with a Christmas potluck luncheon. We ask that every family bring a side dish or dessert. The main courses will be provided.

Some of you may remember the Surprise Pals project that some in the congregation participated in. In this effort to provide opportunities for intergenerational connections, willing adult church members submit to a background check and are paired

with a child in our congregation to exchange letters and small, meaningful gifts. The adult "surprise pal" and the parents of the child are aware of the pairing, but the identity of their "surprise pal" is not revealed until a party that ends the project and allows for face-to-face conversation and laughs! The project will run from Jan. 13 to Feb. 24 this year. If you are an adult interested in being a child's "surprise pal," visit the Lifespan RE table in the gallery during the month of December to sign up. ■



Marisol Caballero is interim director of Lifespan Religious Education at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin

Coming of Age 2013

This Spring we will be offering a Coming of Age class for high school youth at First UU Church of Austin. This class delves into the big questions of religious belief and helps youth come to a better understanding of their own personal belief system and how it relates to our shared Unitarian Universalist values. As part of this process, youth will be matched up with mentors from the congregation who will support them through this process. The program will culminate with each youth writing a credo statement and presenting it to the congregation during worship. A credo statement is a statement of a person's beliefs at a given point in time. We expect that different people will have different

beliefs and that those beliefs may change over time.

The Coming of Age class will meet every other Sunday afternoon from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in Rm. 11, starting on January 13. The meetings are scheduled for this time so that high school youth may attend Our Whole Lives and Coming of Age on alternating Sundays. Mentors will meet with the youth once a month during a scheduled event, such as a luncheon or dinner.

If you are interested in being a mentor, or if you would like more information on the Coming of Age curriculum, please contact Andrew Young at andrew@austinuu.org. ■

Our Whole Lives - Spring 2013

Our Whole Lives (or OWL for short) is our church's comprehensive sexuality education curriculum. The curriculum was co-developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ. It covers a wide range of age-appropriate topics on sexuality and gives our children and youth a safe space to ask questions and receive factual answers.

This spring we will be teaching two OWL classes at First UU Church of Austin. The first class will be for youth in the 4th through 6th grades and the second will be for high school youth. Although all OWL curricula are comprehensive and include the same underlying principles of sexual health, self worth, responsibility, justice, and inclusivity, each curriculum is designed to address the needs which are most important to the children and youth in a specific point in their development. For example, whereas the high school curriculum focuses more on healthy relationships, STIs, and making healthy choices, the 4th-6th grade curriculum focuses more on the biology of reproduction and on concerns that youth have when going

through puberty.

All OWL classes are led by trained OWL facilitators. Both classes will meet every other Sunday afternoon at 2:00 pm starting in January and running through May. The 4th-6th grade class will go until 3:00 pm and the high school class will go until 4:00 pm. A group for parents of the youth who are in the class will meet at the same time. Trained OWL facilitators will be available during these meetings to answer any questions that parents have and to give the parents a better idea of what is being taught in each lesson. The high school class will also include a church lock-in during the semester.

There will be a parent orientation at 2:00 pm on Jan. 6 in Rm. 11 for high school parents and in Rm. 13 for 4th-6th grade parents. More details will be given at this orientation and parents will have a chance to look through the curriculum and discuss it with the facilitators. If you have any questions, please feel free to email Andrew Young at andrew@austinuu.org. ■



“Guest at Your Table”

Each year we pay special attention to gratitude and generosity by participating in the UU Service Committee's (UUSC) annual fundraiser, “Guest at Your Table.” Since 1975, UU households have placed the colorful “Guest at Your Table” box on their dinner table and contributed to it at every meal. Each contribution helps to fund the work of the UUSC's global work. The UUSC is an organization that, “through a combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis. [The UUSC's] work is built on the conviction that all people are entitled to basic human rights, which transcend divisions of class, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and gender.”

We kicked off the program at First UU on Nov. 18, and are pleased with how many have participated. Please keep your box and continue your generous contributions through December. To participate in this project, pick up your box at the RE table in the gallery or the welcome table in the lobby. ■

Music matters

Caregivers benefit Concert

Friday, Dec. 7

The First UU Intergenerational Choir will participate in the annual North Central Caregivers' holiday concert at St. Louis Catholic Church (7601 Burnet Road) on Friday, Dec. 7 at 7:30 pm. They will be joined by 10 other Austin church choirs in this multi-denominational event.

For more information, contact Brent Baldwin, Director of Music brentb@austinuu.org. ■

Pergolesi Magnificat Sunday, Dec. 9

The First UU Adult Choir will ring in the holidays with a seasonal Magnificat during morning services on Dec. 9. This classic work will feature members of the Austin Symphony Orchestra and Conspirare.

Don't miss! ■

Sharing Suppers for the Toddler Set

Wee ones, bring your families for play, potluck dinner, and conversation. We'll take turns hosting in our child-proofed homes. The December Little Supper will be held on the second Thursday, Dec. 13 at 6:00 pm to allow for holiday travel. Beginning in January, we'll resume meeting on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm. Please RSVP to robin.w.richardson@gmail.com by Dec. 4. We all have young children, so if you're tired, late, or overwhelmed by the thought of bringing an entree, you'll be in good company! ■

The Mind and Meaning book group

**Cafe Express
Sundays
10:30 am-12:00 noon**

Currently Reading:
Thinking Fast and Slow
by Daniel Kahneman.
We will discuss Part II,
Chapters 10,11,12 Sunday
December 2. We have
been covering about 3
chapters a week. ■

Youth program update

by Kira Azulay

In October, we had our first rally of the year. Being new and a freshman, I met many new people. Next month I will get to see them again because the high school youth are going on a retreat with the rest of our HOT (Heart of Texas) cluster. This includes the churches of Live Oak, Wildflower, and First UU of San Antonio.

The retreat will held Dec. 14-16, and is youth planned and led. We will cook all our own food and organize the whole thing. The dean from our church is Nik.

Over the past few weeks, we've been doing some interesting things in Youth Group. We talked about fairness, and how it factors into our everyday lives, politics, and as a part of the UU community. But we had fun too.

One week we did team-building games and activities. I really enjoy team-building because, even though the talks are interesting and very important (at least to me), I think it's important that we don't take ourselves too seriously. We need an opportunity to get to know these people who we are talking to about really important, and sometimes very personal, issues.

On the weekend before Thanksgiving, we did our social action project. We wrote letters to Malala Yousafzai,



the teenage girl from Pakistan who was shot in the head by the Taliban for speaking about why girls should be able to go to school.

Youth Group has been doing many interesting and amazing things and I look forward to it every Sunday. ■

Special offering for December

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonsectarian organization that advances human rights and social justice in the U.S. and around the world.

Through advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis. Current humanitarian efforts include projects responding to crises in Somalia and East Africa, the Japan earthquake, war in Uganda, the earthquake in Haiti, political unrest in Kenya, and genocide in Darfur. We also engage local communities through our service-learning program, JustWorks, which introduces participants to the work of our domestic and overseas partners. Our work is built on the conviction that all people are entitled to basic

human rights that transcend divisions of class, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

We rely on our members and supporters—people just like you—to fund our programs.

UUSC is an associate member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), but receives no general financial support from the UUA, nor from federal or state governments or institutions, ensuring our independent voice. UU congregations and individual members support UUSC as a way to “do justice.” For more information about UUSC programs and how you can be involved, go to uuscc.org. Diane Duesterhoeft, our District UUSC representative, will be here on Dec. 9 and will have materials in the gallery for anyone interested in learning more about UUSC. ■

Seeking nominations for 2013 monthly special offerings

The recipients of these special offerings are charitable, justice-seeking, non-profit organizations that advocate and promote our Unitarian Universalist mission to nourish souls, transform lives and do justice. If you know of a worthy organization that you would

like to nominate, pick up a nominating form at the Social Action table and submit it in the envelope on the Social Action bulletin board or to Judy Sadegh at uuuno@austinuu.org by Fri., Dec. 7. ■

A NOTE ABOUT SPECIAL OFFERINGS

On the second Sunday of every month, our church collects a special offering. Your generous donations at the worship service go to the First UU Justice Fund, which is divided among worthy organizations thereby extending our church's mission into the greater community. Organizations are nominated and then approved by the congregation.

Executive director wanted for U-Bar-U

U-Bar-U Retreat and Conference Center is conducting a search for an executive director. We are a Unitarian Universalist camp and conference center located in the Texas Hill Country near Kerrville, Texas. The executive director will live onsite and will oversee operations, hire seasonal staff and market the facility to UU organizations and other groups. The ideal candidate will have experience in camp and/or hospitality operations, marketing and staff supervision. We hope to have the executive director in place by Jan. 2013. Please send resume or any inquiries to president@ubaruu.org by Dec. 10. ■

Floater needed

If you see one of our members circulating around greeting visitors with a big smile on his or her face, that is one of our “floaters.” A “floater” is a member who has generously agreed to donate his or her time to make visitors and new members feel welcome when they attend one of our Sunday worship services. If you would like to participate in this important program, please contact either Gary Payne or Rue Wood, co-chairs of the Membership Committee, membership@austinuu.org. ■

Christmas choral concert set for Dec. 7

Choirs from all supporting congregations of North Central Austin Caregivers will gather at St. Louis Catholic Church to usher in the Christmas Season in style. Our choir, under the direction of Brent Baldwin, will be among the choirs performing.

The event is free. A free-will offering will be taken to support the services that North Central Caregivers provides all year to older adults in this area. The program will begin at 7:30 pm. ■

Join the Heritage book club

Heritage Club meetings are on the second Friday of each month. We have a potluck supper at 7:00 pm and book discussion at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome, even if you have not read the book.

December's book is: *A Walk in the Woods*, by Bill Bryson. The December Heritage Book Club will meet on Dec. 14. RSVP is preferred but not mandatory to frances_morey@yahoo.com. ■

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

DEC. 2

Sweet Honey from Old Failures

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Spanish poet Anthony Machado wrote: "Last night, as I was sleeping/I dreamt—marvelous error!—that I had a beehive/here inside my heart./And the golden bees/were making white combs/and sweet honey/from my old failures."

In our culture we have to make straight As, be partnered up with an attractive person, raise children who are accomplished and useful, have a good job, and stay healthy and strong. What use is failure?

DEC. 9

Rekindled

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Hanukkah is coming, one of the many celebrations of the return of the light to the northern hemisphere. What is the story of Hanukkah? Albert Schweitzer wrote: "At times, our own light goes out, and is rekindled by a spark from another person." Whose light could you rekindle? Who rekindles yours?

DEC. 16

Christmas pageant!

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE AND MARISOL CABALLERO

Costumes will be laid out on tables, and children will choose what role they would like to play in the pageant. Rev. Meg and Mari will lead the service.

DEC. 23

Blue Christmas

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

The holidays are an unmitigated delight for some, and a hard time for others. For most of us they are a mixture of feelings, memories, hope, beauty and family. The Blues express longing and determination. We'll talk about having the blues, and playing the blues.

DEC. 24

(Monday, Dec. 24)

UU Lessons and Carols 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

We will have readings, sing carols, and light candles together to celebrate Christmas.

DEC. 30

Is There a Place for God in Unitarian Universalism?

WITH ANDREW YOUNG

Our Unitarian Universalist faith has a long history of religious diversity. Since the 1930s, Unitarian churches have slowly moved away from God centered worship. In an effort to not offend newcomers and non-theistic members, most of our congregations are unwilling to use the language of divinity in our services. As a linguist and someone called to the ministry, this has been a topic that I have often contended with. Is there still a place for God in our UU faith? Andrew Young is a first year seminary student at Starr King School for the Ministry. He is also in his third year as Youth and Young Adult Programming Coordinator here at First UU Church of Austin.

THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

DEC. 2

From Harry Houdini to Lyle Lovett: The Importance of the Paramount & State Theatres

WITH DR. JIM RITT

For nearly a century, the Paramount and State Theatres have been the historical cornerstones to Austin's arts district. It is essential to ensure the physical and fiscal soundness of these two extraordinary theatres, not only as bastions of live performance, but as significant engines of economic growth and prosperity for downtown. This presentation will cover both the historical aspects of the Paramount and State Theatres, as well as the reasons why their successful existence is essential to our city.

Jim Ritts was named chief executive officer and executive director of the Austin Theatre Alliance in May 2011. The Austin Theatre Alliance has the management and operational responsibilities for the Paramount Theatre, State Theatre and Moon-tower Comedy & Oddity Festival.

DEC. 9

For the Cause of History: the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

WITH DR. DON CARLETON

Dr. Carleton, executive director and founder of the Univ. of Texas at Austin's Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, will give an overview of the mission, components, services, and programs of the center. The Briscoe Center is a unique combination of institutions, including a research library and archive; a program of research initiatives resulting in books, films, exhibitions, lectures, and performances; and the administration of three important historical museums: the

Sam Rayburn Museum (Bonham, Texas), the Briscoe-Garner Museum (Uvalde, Texas), and the Winedale Historical Complex (near Round Top, Texas). Dr. Carleton is the executive producer of the award-winning historical documentary film "When I Rise," which premiered at the SXSW Film Festival in Austin in March of 2010, and was broadcast nationwide on PBS in February of 2011. Listed in "Who's Who in America," Dr. Carleton has joint senior faculty appointments in the UT Departments of History and Journalism.

DEC. 16

Make Peace a Priority Again: Re-evaluating the Approach to Teaching Diplomacy in a World Changed by 9/11

WITH ROBERT HUTCHINGS

Robert Hutchings is dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The Univ. of Texas at Austin. He was past chairman of the U.S. National Intelligence Council in Washington. He has also served as fellow and director of international studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Director for European Affairs with the National Security Council, and special advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State, with the rank of ambassador.

DEC. 23

No Forum

DEC. 30

No Forum

Full Moon Circle

Thursday, Dec. 27

Join Yew Grove in our sacred circle in the Art Gallery at 7:00 pm (new time). Our circles are open to anyone of any spiritual tradition, so long as you come with an open heart. Each circle is intended to be thought-provoking and insightful. We each have our own path on our spiritual journey, we honor your choices as you make the decisions which lead you to your Source. This is an intimate time to join in sacred space and be safe, mindful, and welcome. YewGrove@AustinUU.org. ■

Winter Solstice Celebration

Friday, Dec. 21

Join the Women's Spirituality Group and Yew Grove for an evening of song, story, and ritual as we celebrate the Solstice on the longest night of the year. We will gather at 6:30 pm in Howson Hal. The celebration begins at 7:00, and will be followed by a dessert potluck—please bring your favorite holiday sweets! Children are welcome. We hope to see you there! Questions? Contact women@AustinUU.org or yewgrove@AustinUU.org. ■

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

512.452.6168
austinuu.org

Senior Minister

Rev. Meg Barnhouse

Director of Finance
and Operations

Sean Hale

Interim Director of
Lifespan Religious Ed.

Marisol Caballero

Director of Music

Brent Baldwin

Director of Membership
and Communications

Carla Jo Schaefer

Board President

Susan Thomson

president@austinuu.org

Congregational Vote!

Sunday, Dec. 9, 1:30 pm

On Sunday, Dec. 9, the First UU of Austin Congregation will gather to vote on the annual budget and potentially other issues as well. Remember: in order to vote, you must meet the qualifications described in the bylaws, Article II, Section 4: "Individuals who have been members of the church for 30 days or more and who have (as an individual or part of a family unit) made a recorded financial contribution during the past 12 months and at least 30 days prior to the meeting, have the right to vote at all official church meetings." If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about any of the above, please contact Sean Hale,

First UU Director of Finance and Operations, sean@austinuu.org or 512-452-6168 x 308.

Documents for the Dec. 9 Congregational Meeting, including the agenda and the 2013 budget proposal, are posted in the church mail room or you can read them online here: <http://tiny.cc/xo62nw>.

The voting list for the Congregational Meeting are posted in the hallway across from the mail room. Please take a moment, the next time you're at the church, to make sure your name appears on it and that you're eligible to vote at the upcoming Congregational Meeting. ■

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

4700 Grover Ave.
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