

January
2009

The VISION of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin: As an inclusive religious and spiritual community, we support each individual's search for meaning and purpose, and join together to help create a world filled with compassion and love.



January is Paradox Players Season Ticket Time



Become a Paradox Pal - save 25% off single ticket sales, and support this wonderful theater that supports our church! And there's more - season ticket subscribers get priority seating at performances, recognition in the Programs, and first notice of any special events (like the November Cabaret). Paradox Pals are also invited to the Annual Paradox Party which is held after the Christmas holidays.

Your Season Pass gets you five tickets (two for friends) to all three productions on Opening Night - a \$100 value for \$75. Of course, you can use your Season Pass for any performance you like, not just the Openings. All of this year's plays explore issues of aging and family relationships, starting with SOCIAL SECURITY, a romantic comedy that kicks off the season in February.

Throughout January you can purchase your season ticket at the Paradox Players table in the Gallery on Sundays, or on the website at www.paradoxplayers.org.

FIRST UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF
AUSTIN

First UU Volunteers Honored at Peoples Community Clinic



Our Social Action Committee has partnered with People's Community Clinic for the last several years to help provide medical care to our Central TX neighbors who are underinsured or uninsured. On December 9, at the conclusion of our monthly work group, PCC showed their appreciation by hosting a luncheon for us with health educators and other staff. We assist PCC in a number of ways including preparing patient materials and sending immunization reminders. Additionally, we hope to develop teams to provide childcare for evening Prenatal Education Classes and provide story time to children in the waiting room. If you are interested in helping with any of these activities, please contact Sheri Overton at sherioverton@hotmail.com or 512-847-2685.



New Yoga Covenant Group is Open! Join Us!!

The yoga practice covenant group meets Tuesdays from 1:30 to 3:00 pm in Room 17. We now have spaces available; the class is open to any who want to try it out with the possibility of becoming regulars. It is free. Bring your own mat and any other equipment you want to use. We use videos or DVD's as the method of instruction and have amassed a collection of these. You can bring a video to share. Beginners are welcome, but with this style of instruction, you don't receive much personal attention. Nobody in the class is certified as an instructor, but we are able to follow along with the videos and on occasion, a group member has led the class in a series of postures. Just show up, or contact Mary Jane Ford, 926-4122 or mjaneford@grandecom.net for further information.

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First Freeze Night of the Winter. Thank UUs

Just a small space but **HUGE THANK UUs**: Julia Gregory Poirier, Karen Franks Morgan Walker, Kitty Traylor, Chris Peake, Judy Parken, Dick and Jesse Fralin, Russell Eskew, Mike Wildes, Mary Jane Ford, Ted Beckett, Vince Harrison, J.D. Davis, Wendy Kuo. Mary Ann Stafford. We served more than 30 homeless men,



gave them a good home cooked meal, a warm place to sleep, and a bit of breakfast in the morning. The food included gallons of milk (a treat the homeless seldom get), brownies, corn bread, grilled chicken, cabbage and ham hocks, chili past, sloppy joes rice, salad, stringbeans mashed potatoes, and for breakfast hard boiled eggs, fruit, something crunchy. The winning treat were the Hello Dollies from Julia Gregory Poirier. Thank you all. Between the Sack Lunch Program, the Serving Dinner at the ARCH group, and the Freeze Nite. First UUs are making a difference in our community and we all appreciate it.

Thank you Dotti! We will miss you!

We will miss your sense of humor and your infectious laugh. We'll miss your unflagging good cheer as you tackled so many different tasks. Your flexibility was amazing. You were our fount of knowledge and "go to gal." You gave us your best and it was appreciated more than we can put into words. Thank you again for everything. We wish you all the best. Please stay in touch.

Sincerely, **The Congregation of First UU Austin**

Meet Daniela Hale-Miranda



Join us between services on Sunday, January 25th to welcome Daniela Hale-Miranda to our community. She is the baby daughter of Sean Hale, our Executive Director, and Diana Miranda. This is their first child, and we are thrilled she has arrived. We'll have cake and punch; anyone who wishes to bring other brunch dishes and/or a gift for the proud parents is welcome to do so.

June Beach

Social Action Volunteer



Did you know that June Beach used to run competitively, placing in a number of races and even completing a 13 mile half-marathon? And that she still gets up at 4 AM to work out five or six days a week? Maybe that helps to explain how she gets it all done.

June volunteers weekly at the People's Community Clinic in the Medical Records Department. She purges old medical records, makes entries in the computer and boxes the records for storage. One Tuesday a month, she volunteers with a group of other church members putting together educational materials for PCC's patients. This is not her only volunteer gig. She is at the Volunteer Health Clinic one evening a month, logging in patients and pulling their medical records. You may have seen her in the church office every Thursday afternoon. Typically, she copies the Sunday Order of Service and Sunday Bulletin and pulls the large print and Braille music for the service. She is also the contact person for the Mind and Meaning Book Club which meets every Sunday morning. But we're not done yet; from December through April she volunteers with AARP to prepare income tax returns.

June retired ten years ago after working most of her career in health insurance with Blue Cross/Shield and then with TX Medicaid. After growing up in Kansas, she and her husband have lived mostly in Texas where they raised their two boys. She has been a member of FUUCA for five years.

Sandwiched in between all her volunteer hours, June enjoys reading and sewing. She is currently working on a quilt for her oldest son. But her most treasured interest is her two grandchildren, ages 3 & 4. They live in Houston and come to visit most weekends. Making pancakes together on Saturday mornings is a favorite activity. With two little ones around and everything else she does, she's really never stopped running.



Is There Hope Amidst The Pain?

We do not need to think alike to love alike. These words of Francis David are so much easier said than acted upon. In the events leading up to the congregational vote on dismissal of our minister and the aftermath, these words occurred to me often but very sadly too often in the breach than the observance of the sentiment. We claim that we wish a diversity of opinions and then when we disagree about major situations like the performance of the minister we seemed to very quickly fall out of right relationship with each other.

Perhaps the problem is so many people join our movement because "we want to be around people that think like we do." When a point of disagreement comes up in our community then our relationship with each other can quickly sour.

Being around people who have the same opinions as me is certainly comfortable and supportive but only limited growth can occur in such circumstances. I believe we grow when in community with people who challenge us and are willing to stay in relationship with us as we differ and we grow spiritually through the challenge. Our duty as members of this religious community is to hold each other accountable for our actions, values and opinions by calling us to embody our religious values. I believe Davidson attempted to hold us accountable for our values through his sermons. I believe the board felt responsible to hold ministerial leadership accountable to our higher values. Many members of our congregation also attempted to hold all our leadership accountable to values of fairness and openness. These were all good aspects of what happened in the last few weeks. The failure I see is where we fell out of love, respect, and compassion with those we disagree with or were in conflict with. The turmoil surrounding the congregational vote to dismiss Davidson has injured the soul of our religious community. I believe we lost touch with values of trust, honesty and respect for others in the last few weeks. This is shown as many valuable members have chosen to leave our community. The pain is great for all of us.

The hope I find is not that our values failed us but we failed to live up to our values. We failed to stay in relationship with those we disagree with. I have had many people on all sides of the issues talk to me trying to find meaning in what happened and seek to understand their pain. The need to fellowship with those who share our view is understandable and needed. Also to move forward I believe each of us could benefit from getting fellowship of those with differing opinions and listen to them. Hopefully if we listen to them they will reciprocate by listening to us. We will hear why people with similar information as us believed and acted differently than we did. Perhaps, just perhaps, we may understand most of us were acting in what we believed to be the common good for our religious community. Out of this may grow that seed of respect and though this is not quite the same as loving those who think differently from us, it has the potential to grow there. And at least we will be back in right relationship with others and moving forward. I wish us all well on this journey.

Take care,

Brian Ferguson

Ministerial Intern

Seniors' Luncheon

Tues. Jan 13th

Howson Hall at Noon

Soup, Salad & Dessert \$5

RSVP Alice Cashman 837-0988

**PROGRAM: The Life of Brian as told by
Our Intern, Brian Ferguson.**

How did a boy from a small coal mining town (without a coal mine) in the West of Scotland end up becoming a Ministerial Intern at a Unitarian Universalist church in Austin, Texas? Our ministerial intern at FUUCA, Brian Ferguson, will describe the mixture of good fortune, ill-fortune, and intention that has been his life and resulted in him being here in this place and at this time.





Let's Start by Saying "Hi!"

I feel deeply sad for our community. Just about everyone I've seen, including those who voted on December 13th to dismiss Rev. Loehr, have heavy hearts. On that day, more than one person likened our situation to a divorce. When it comes to the pain, turmoil, uncertainty, and hurt that so many of us feel, the comparison seems spot on.

As the night went on, I witnessed a phenomenon that gives me hope for our future. Each speaker, whether pro or con, received loud applause. This shows that people listened to each other and respected the other's viewpoint and feelings, even if they didn't agree. This level of understanding and goodwill transcended the evening's difficult and sometimes divisive subject matter. Our love and care for one another form the primary ingredients for us moving forward.

We will spend the coming weeks asking, then answering, "what now?" and "what next?" If the journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step, then I propose that we begin by saying "hi." Our success depends, at least in part, on the strength of our bonds of friendship and community, so the more we know each other the better. In a church our size, I bet that no single person knows everyone else, but that doesn't mean we can't do better.

So, when we're here in this sacred place, let's make a point of introducing ourselves to at least one new person. It's as simple as extending your right hand and saying "Hi, I'm Sean Hale, have we met before?"

Office Update. As many of you know, the 2009 budget does not fund the Office Manager position, which Dotti Sizer held for the last three years. Her last day was December 12th. She will be missed not only as the person who took care of thousands of details of church business but also as a warm, kind, joyful person who you could always count on for a hug and a smile.

Though we're lucky to have many good volunteers stepping in to help with some office duties, I expect we will run on a skeleton crew through at least January. Though the budget does fund a new, full-time administrative assistant, it will take a while for our new staff member to get up to speed.

In the meantime, we will do our best to respond to your requests and continue doing everything behind the scenes to keep the church running. As these are unusually busy times for us, we may not always respond as quickly as we would like. We do some prioritization to handle urgent matters, and otherwise will get back to people in the order we receive your inquiries. I apologize in advance for any inconvenience and look forward to getting back up to speed so we can fully serve this community.

Sean Hale, Executive Director

Split the Plate

On January 4, our split-the-plate beneficiary is the International Convocation of UU Women. The first international meeting of UU women in February 2009 in Houston will weave global partnerships to enrich women's lives. Sponsored by Southwest Unitarian Universalist Women, a non-profit organization, the convocation will enable women from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas to share their stories, learn from each other, motivate each other, inspire and support emerging leaders, form lasting collaborations to improve women's lives, and celebrate together. Split-the-plate funding will help women of diverse backgrounds and limited resources with their travel expenses.

On January 18, we split the offertory plate with Front Steps, the nonprofit organization that coordinates the local cold-weather shelter program, the sack-lunch program, and a cafeteria for the homeless—all of which are programs in which our church participates. Front Steps operates in the facility known as the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), providing year-round assistance downtown, including 100 beds for the homeless. Services include transportation to shelters at participating churches, distributing blankets, and donated food and lunches to the working homeless. Churches, including First UU, provide food and space to house the increased number of homeless single men seeking shelter on "freeze nights." We also make lunches once a week for the working homeless (sack-lunch program) and provide volunteer teams to serve meals at the ARCH cafeteria year-round.





Dear Members of First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Austin,

Our congregation met Saturday, December 13, and after hours of discussion voted to dismiss Dr. Davidson Loehr as Senior Minister of First UU. Of the 636 members eligible to vote on this emotionally painful matter, 408 — or 64 percent — took part in this decision. As tallied by our UUA moderator, as well as representatives of First UU's Committee on Ministries and other close observers, the official vote was 213 to "dismiss" and 176 to "retain" the Senior Minister, or 55 percent to 45 percent. There also were 19 abstentions, with ballots unmarked for either choice or not placed into the box at all.

Moving forward with the transition in the coming weeks, the Board of Trustees of First UU recognizes Dr. Loehr's desire for closure and intends to work with him to identify opportunities that will help in that regard as he and the congregation make this sad, painful transition. The Board of Trustees is committed to working closely with a UUA team to negotiate Dr. Loehr's terms of departure, while showing compassion to a man who has energetically and passionately served our church for the past eight years. We are also working with the UUA Transitions office to bring in a qualified interim minister skilled in addressing the particular challenges we now face.

Recognizing how difficult this has been for the congregation — regardless of on which side of the matter a member stood — the Board of Trustees realizes the clear need for efforts to help each of us, as individuals and as a community, to heal from the hurt felt in the aftermath of this decision. This is true for the congregation as well as the staff. Consequently, efforts have begun to identify resources and processes that can be tapped into and instituted during the coming weeks and months. We will keep you informed about developments.

We understand and respect the feelings expressed during the past weeks, and we have heard and read the broad spectrum of reactions to the outcome. We pledge to do all we can to work with other church leaders, congregation members and groups within First UU to fix the broken heart of and division within our church community.

The vote December 13 was not the end of this process; it was just the beginning, as now the hard work really starts. We encourage each of you to join together, as a community, and to reach out to one another, helping to heal the wounds.

We urge you to bring forth your ideas, energy and commitment, joining together in what will be an arduous journey — but one filled with opportunity for growth, as individuals and a church community. Sincerely,

Sheila Gladstone, President

Nell Newton, Vice President

Luther Elmore, Treasurer

Shannon Vyff, Secretary

Phil Hastings, Trustee

Bonny Gardner, Trustee

Derek Howard, Trustee

Jeff Hutchens, Trustee

Michael West, Trustee

Eric Stimmel, Trustee

Mark Kilpatrick, Immediate Past

President (ex-officio)

Thank UUs for the Stewardship Campaign

Thanks to all who helped with the pledge drive as committee members, canvassers, event planners, party hosts, testifiers and table workers: **Margaret Roberts, Mark Skrabacz, Mary Jane Ford, Keith Savage, Michael Sweet, Joseph Hunt, Kae McLaughlin, Michael Trice, Jean Davison**, the Church office staff and Bookkeeper **Jim Scott; Don Smith, Sheila Gladstone, Stephan Windsor, Luther Elmore, Bob Porter, David Leibson, Jim Barry, Melanie Walter Mahoney, Linda West, Shannon Vyff, Nell Newton, Mike West, Eric Stimmel, Bonny Gardner, Phil Hastings, Mark Kilpatrick, Marian Maxwell, Elizabeth Gray, Eugene, Edward, and Patrick Balaguer, Rose Ann Reeser, Eric Hepburn, George and Barbara Denny, Linda Taylor, Joyce Wilson, Kathryn Govier, Jeanette Swenson, and Andi Windham.**

Your generosity will help the church move forward through hard economic times, and stressful circumstances. If somehow you have not yet pledged your financial support for 2009, you can still do it. Your pledge is important to the church, to enable us to continue our existing programs for 2009. You may mail your completed pledge card to the church office, call it in to Jim Scott at 452-6168 ext.14 in the church office, email it to jim@austinuu.org or to Mary Jane Ford, mjaneford@grandecom.net. You may also stop by the Membership table on the 2nd or 4th Sundays of the month, where pledge cards will be available. Thank you for recognizing that this church is more than just a minister, a building, a congregation. It is community, fellowship, a place of service, love, compassion, learning and enriching our spirits.



Help Wanted at First UU!

This will be the space available for those groups who need assistance. A new way to volunteer and get connected! Send your request to news@austinuu.org and it will be published in announcements, bulletin, & newsletters. Be sure to add your contact info !!

The Web Committee Help needed

The Web Committee needs more people to help with the website in the following areas:

- page editing and creation /need basic knowledge of HTML graphic design to add more images to the site
- recording and editing sermon files
- CSS knowledge to edit the look of the sermon blog.

If you are interested in assisting the web committee, please contact us at webmaster@austinuu.org.



Who? Whoo? Whooo?

That's not an owl calling. That's your Nominating Committee: Who will help and be of service to our community? Who will give of their time, their talents? Who is committed to healing this church and moving forward? Who will benefit from the fellowship, the caring and compassion that come from giving of oneself?

Winston Churchill said it best: You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give. It is time for everyone to sign up, show up, and help re-make the life of this church. There are as many opportunities for help as there are people in the church. Committee work, caring work, hands and ladders work. All of it needed, all of it nourishing YOUR spirit and the spirit of this community. Contact any member of the Nominating Committee for further information: **Elizabeth Gray, George Denny, Don Smith, Sally Scott, and Jean Davison..**

Reader's Theatre

Wouldn't it be fun if lots more folks just showed up Monday January 12th in Room 13 at 7:30 out of curiosity.

I was told to do that awhile ago and spent a great evening with people reading plays aloud, taking turns with parts, and having a good time in the process. Be sure that newcomers are always welcome and I can attest to the fact that experience is not necessary. Who knows perhaps one Monday Reader's Theatre will produce actors for the Paradox Players performances. Join in or at least give it a try. January 12th at 7:30 in Room 13.



Meals on Wheels and More: A Big ThankUUs

During this holiday season, Meals on Wheels and More gratefully acknowledges what your church does for our clients. Thank you for caring about the homebound, disabled, frail people in our community by sharing your facility with Meals on Wheels. Being able to use space in your church as a Meals on Wheels pickup site helps make meal delivery possible throughout Austin, Round Rock, Manor and surrounding areas. Without convenient host sites like yours, our wonderful volunteers would be unable to deliver meals to over 2200 people five days a week, six meals a week, and in some cases seven meals a week. From your facility we are serving 114 homebound people who are receiving 741 meals a week. Being able to use space in your church also keeps the costs of operation down which allows us to serve more people. Our volunteers enjoy coming to your church. They enjoy the ease of being able to quickly pick up the meals they need and then deliver them to clients who live in the neighborhoods nearby.

We appreciate and thank you for this partnership. Your contribution makes such a difference in the operations of meal delivery which affects every client we serve. Meals on Wheels and More wishes you all a Happy New Year filled with joy and peace. Very truly yours, **Suellen Mills, VP Volunteer Services.**



Thank UUs

Serving the Homeless at



ARCH!



Ushers Greeters and
Lay Leaders



Many thanks to our FUUCA volunteers for November 24 and December 7: **Cecile Hollyfield, Eric Hartman, Kristy Quigley, Leslie McCulloch, Kim McKnight, Jessica Cairns, Julia Gregory and Elaine Carpenter.**

On the first Sunday and fourth Monday of each month, teams of four volunteers serve dinner, cafeteria-style, from 5:30-8:00 pm to 100 homeless men at ARCH (Austin Resource Center for the Homeless) in downtown Austin. No training is required. Call a coordinator to set a date. You will receive a general information sheet right away and a reminder closer to your service date.

We are currently signing up volunteers for Monday, Jan. 26 and Sunday, Feb. 1 and thereafter. If you have any questions or wish to volunteer, please contact the coordinators: First Sundays: **Mary Ann Copp** mac624@tstar.net, 830-693-5920 **Karen Franks** kfranks46@yahoo.com, 512-670-2221 Fourth Mondays: **Christy Seals** seals@loop-d.net, 512-217-9056

Thanks to our volunteer ushers, greeters, and lay leaders who make our Sunday morning services run smoothly. Lay Leaders: **Jeanette Swenson, Brian Ferguson, Melita Cantu,** Ushers and Greeters: **Nahdiah Hoang, Gwen Carroll, Peter Langlois, Kitty Traylor, Luther Elmore, Don Smith, Grace Amborski, Martha Northington, Colin McIntyre, Lynn Westbrook, Doug Ginn, Dwayne Windham, Annie Smith, Mateer Hudgens.**

More PCC Volunteers in 2008

In addition to those who helped at Sunday work sessions, the following members volunteered at Peoples Community Clinic in 2008: **Grace Amborski, June Beach, Michele Caponi, Elaine Carpenter, Karen Cleary, Karen Franks, Wendy Miller, Sharon Moore, Nancy Neavel, Martha Northington, Sheri Overton, Cindy Raab, Louise Reeser, Rose Ann Reeser, Suzy Reid, Mary Ann Stafford, and Veryan Thompson.**

More Members of our Community...Thank UUs!

Our church is a community, and it lives and breathes thanks to the contributions of members. Several months ago, First UU set up a Security Team to review safety procedures for the church. Led by **Barb Denny**, it also included **Lara Douglas, Dotti Sizer, Craig Campbell, Nell Newton, and Karen Saadeh.** They identified some problematic bushes that needed to be removed. **Nell Newton** passed the message on to Grounds Chair **Elizabeth Gray**, who agreed to include this needed work in an upcoming workday. Participants **Pat and Dale Bulla, Monty Newton, Veryan Thomson,** and **Dick Lavine** cut down the bushes (a non-native species that wasn't considered particularly valuable). **Bill and James Freeman** came in later and chopped up the remaining brush. After coordinating with Facilities Chair **John Payne**, Barb Denny then obtained a stump-grinding service to remove the protruding stumps, thus eliminating a potential trip hazard. The Grounds Crew replaced the removed bushes with two flowering quince to complement one that **Daesene Williams** has been caring for over the years. Look for early spring blooms from this trio of shrubs. It takes a village to run this church: what have you done lately to be and feel a part of this community?

Unsung Heroes...ThankUUs to Tom Martin and John Payne

At the Annual Fall Congregational meeting, a spontaneous standing ovation recognized the contributions of two unsung heroes in our midst: John Payne and Tom Martin. John is the guy with a white beard and--often--a hammer in his hand. He's been the Facilities Chair for several years, and coordinates all building stuff: lights, toilets, roofs, painting you name it. He keeps the place from falling down. Tom Martin works on our various media systems: videotaping services and forum, microphones for meetings, amplification and lighting. The sort of stuff we all take for granted, until it doesn't work and we realize how much we rely on it. Tom keeps us in the "taking it for granted" mindset, so we can concentrate on the sermon or forum that we came for. Heartfelt thanks to both of these generous, dedicated volunteers.



Sunday Worship Services 9:45 and 11:30

January 4: Hope. Rev. Kathleen Ellis. Minister at Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Church.

January 11: The Seven Deadly UU Sins. Rev. Bret Lortie, First UU Church of San Antonio. What are the seven sins, or negative actions against one another and Nature, that a liberal religious tradition is most challenged to address? After much futzing with the original deadly ones, one finds that as categories, they aren't bad—just badly in need of reinterpretation through a Unitarian Universalist lens.

January 18: Disembodied Dreams: What is the Sound of One UU Practicing?: Ron Phares, Seminary Student at Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Martin Luther King Jr. & Barak Obama respectively represent a Dream and the Embodiment (though not the entire realization of) that dream. This is a political and cultural example of how dreaming prepares us for embodiment. That being said, embodiment is itself not an end but a continuing means. It literally changes the machinations of our brains and patterns of our lives. Unitarian Universalism is a very good dream. But dreams need bodies to be realized. How can we - or how do we - embody our values and our spirit? Where and how can we do this better?

January 25: Opinion Industries and the Community of Faith Preacher. Rev. Eliza Galaher of the Wildflower Church in Austin. Rev. Eliza Galaher will explore the role of the church in calling us back from what Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams called "opinion industries" to the community and *communication* of faith.

February 1: How is wisdom different than intelligence? Eric Hepburn. What role should wisdom play in governing the application and use of our intellect? This sermon will take a look at means-ends rationality as an example of applied intelligence and ask questions about how a wisdom concept like karma can be understood as a way of framing, focusing, and managing means-ends thinking to avoid the trap of unintended consequences.

Public Affairs Forum: Sundays—11:30 a.m. Howson Hall

January 4 Speaker Race and the Upcoming TX Legislative Session. Speaker: Prof. Sherri Greenberg, LBJ School of Public Affairs. The biennial TX Legislative session begins with the Speaker of the House election on Tuesday, January 13th, 2009. The present TX House Speaker, Tom Craddick, is challenged by a number of opponents. Greenberg will share her thoughts on the speaker's race as well as the upcoming 2009 TX Legislative Session. Sherri Greenberg served as a member of the Texas House of Representatives for 10 years.

January 11 A Botanical Garden for Austin: Why Austin needs an independent, non-profit Botanical Garden. Speaker: Dr. Craig Nazor, Professor. As Austin continues to grow, there is need for a facility to help Austin focus on what this means to our rapidly disappearing plant communities both in Austin and around the world. Dr. Nazor will explore the arguments for a botanical garden independent of the city, state, and university. Throughout his life, Dr. Nazor has nurtured a keen interest in the natural world. In 2000, he was hired by the Hartman Foundation to design and install the plantings for the Hartman Prehistoric Garden at Zilker Botanical Gardens. He is also currently the Vice President and Membership Director of the Cycad Society, an international society promoting the cultivation and conservation of ancient plants.

January 18 Distorted Justice. Speaker: Mary Ellen Felps, Attorney. About 12 years ago, Mary Ellen Felps witnessed the execution of a prisoner. Ever since then she has been involved in the death penalty process, and has given legal help to 25 death row inmates. A lifelong resident of Austin and UT Law School graduate, Ms. Felps works for the Social Security Administration and is involved in federal appeals.

January 25 Austin's Past and Future: Is Austin Going in the Right Direction? Speaker: Frank Cooksey, former Austin Mayor. Austin has witnessed a great deal of change during the last 20+ years. Frank Cooksey, Mayor of Austin from 1985-1988, will share with us Austin's past and also where Austin might be going. Frank will focus on city government, policy, and the future of Austin

Events Happening Every Week During the Month of January

Every Sun. 9:30 Mind & Meaning Book Gr., Rm 13-A
 9:30 Sunday Morning Book Gr., Rm 13-B
 9:30 Philosophical Discussion, Rm 7
 6:30 YRUU, Rm 11
 Every Mon. 6:30 Sack Lunch Program, Kitchen
 Every Tue. 10:00 Art Studio, Rm 13
 1:30 Yoga Covenant Group, Rm 17

Every Wed. 1:00 Philosophical Discussion, Rm 13
 7:30 Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 7:00 Tai Chi, Rm 15
 Every Thu. 7:15 Scandinavian Dance, HH
 5:30 Yoga, HH
 Every Sat. 10:00 Mighty Platypi Campfire USA, Rm. 11& 15



Church Events Through the Month of January

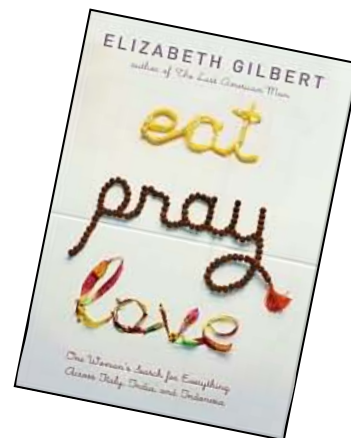
Jan. 1 Thu 7:00 Yoga (Becky Ballou), HH
 Jan. 2 Fri
 Jan. 3 Sat 2:00 Memorial Service for Dail Herschberger
 Jan. 4 Sun 1:00 Media Tech Committee, HH
 Jan. 5 Mon 6:30 Sack Lunch Program, K
 7:00 Green Sanctuary Committee, Rm 13.
 7:00 Village Country Dancing, HH
 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 6 Tue 7:00 Intern Committee, Rm 11
 7:00 Paradox Players, Rm 17
 7:00 Yew Grove Pagan Monthly Mtg, Rm 13
 Jan. 7 Wed 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, HH
 7:00 Young Adults, Rm 17
 7:30 Reader's Theater, Rm 13
 Jan. 8 Thu 6:00 Adult Religious Ed., Rm 9
 7:00 Eckhart Tolle Discussion, Rm 13
 Jan. 9 Fri 7:00 English Country Dancing, HH
 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 10 Sat 10:00 Mighty Platypi Campfire, Rms 11,15,17
 Jan. 11 Sun
 Jan. 12 Mon 7:30 Reader's Theater, Rm 13
 Jan. 13 Tue 6:30 Board of Trustees Mtg, Gallery
 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 14 Wed 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 15 Thu 6:30 Eckhart Tolle Discussion, Rm 13
 7:00 Library Committee, Rm 17
 Jan. 16 Fri

Jan. 17 Sat 9:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, HH
 Jan. 18 Sun
 Jan. 19 Mon 7:00 Village Country Dance, HH
 Jan. 20 Tue 6:00 Board of Trustees Mtg, Gallery, K
 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 21 Wed 6:00 Eat and Meet, HH K
 7:00 Building Committee, Gallery
 7:00 Facilities Committee, Ofc
 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 22 Thu 7:00 Eckhart Tolle Discussion, Rm 13
 7:00 Young Adults, Rm 17
 Jan. 23 Fri
 Jan. 24 Sat 9:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, HH
 Jan. 25 Sun 3:00 Brent Baldwin Recital, Gallery, S
 Jan. 26 Mon 7:00 Finance Committee, Rm 13
 Jan. 27 Tue 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 28 Wed 7:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, Rm 17
 Jan. 29 Thu 7:00 Eckhart Tolle, Rm 13
 Jan. 30 Fri 6:30 Imbolc (Yew Grove) Ritual, Rm 13
 Jan. 31 Sat 9:00 Paradox Players Rehearsal, HH

Key for Abbreviations: S Sanctuary
 HH Howson Hall K Kitchen
 G Gallery O Administration Office
 Young Adults _ Formerly FUUCyaa



Adult RE
Announces
The Book for the
2009 Read In!



Discussion date is set for
Sunday, Feb. 22, 2009

Elizabeth Gilbert's "Eat, Pray, Love" is built on the notion of a women trying to heal herself from a severe emotional and spiritual crisis.

More details coming in the next few weeks..... **Get Reading!!!**

UU Sing-a-long January 24th

The Sing-a-long is happening this month on Saturday, January 24, from 7:30 to 10:30 at the Friend's Meeting House on 3701 E. MLK Blvd. Please bring snacks and finger foods, musical instruments, and copies of songs you want to sing with the group. For more information contact Larry Vaughn 469-0029 or email lavest@sbcglobal.net. To be added to the email list, contact Mary Jane Ford at mjaneford@grandecom.net. The fourth Sat. is the regular default date. We use Rise up Singing as our standard songbook and copies of this are available. Solos, original songs, and your personal favorites are welcomed.

CampFire USA Adds Class

CampFire USA– the Mighty Platypi will be starting an Adventure Club (2nd thru 5th grade). Our first meeting will be on Saturday, January 10th at 10:00 a.m. in Room 17. If you have any questions please contact Andrew Young: Andrew@austinuu-campfire.org.

Children's Religious Education: What are they learning about!

Children in Kindergarten through Second grades studied the "Special Times" curricula and focused on our Jewish Heritage. They studied many of the different Jewish Holidays and the spiritual reasons they are celebrated. They read stories from the Torah that are told during the different holidays to understand that these "fun" celebrations have a deep spiritual significance for people. The children also ate traditional holiday food such as, Challah and apples dipped in honey for Rosh Hashanah; Hareset and Matzho from a Seder plate for Pesah. We listened to and sang traditional Jewish songs and even built a miniature Sukkot!

The 3rd through 5th graders studied from "Living the Promise" curricula which covered stories of the Torah. From the Creation, to the Exodus, the children learned of the Jew's physical and spiritual journeys and the faith that carried them through. The church also held a "High Holy Days" celebration which many of the children attended with their families. This celebration was led by Rev. Loehr and Michael LeBurken. The children were delighted to hear rabbi LeBurkin sound his Shofar!

Save the Date

Upcoming Children's Religious Education

January

1/4 Return Guest at Your Table boxes and envelopes to Church Office

February

2/8 Valentine's Day Party & Surprise Pals Kick- Off



Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group

Eckhart Tolle is a spiritual teacher and author who was born in Germany and educated at the Universities of London and Cambridge. He is the author of the #1 New York Times bestseller, **The Power of Now** and the highly acclaimed follow-up **A New Earth**, which are widely regarded as two of the most influential spiritual books of our time.

Readers of **A New Earth** & **The Power of Now** already know that Eckhart has the rare gift of being able to convey the deepest spiritual truth in clear and simple words. The essence of Eckhart's teaching is spiritual awakening, which means accessing the dimension beyond time and conditioned thinking. Discussion sessions are a valuable opportunity to allow yourself to let go of "who you think you are" and be the Presence behind all thought, the stillness behind all motion. You may learn how to access Presence for yourself and sustain it in everyday life.

We will be meeting every Thursday, 7:30 to 9:00, starting January 8th in Room 13. We will show a video of Eckhart at the January 8th meeting. The following meetings over the next ten weeks will be a discussion of **A New Earth**.

A donation of \$5.00 per person is requested which will be donated to the First UU's Adult Religious Education program. **Should you have any questions contact Joe Linsalata 512-327-5000 or Linsalata@austin.rr.com**

New Programs for Children's Religious Education

Coming of Age Program Starting In January Our Religious Community will be running a coming of program for 8th-9th Grades. This exciting program will help youths prepare to enter adulthood by recognizing and honoring the emotional, mental, and spiritual changes this involves. Please contact our Director of Religious Education, Lara Douglass, for more information about this important Rite of Passage.

Children's Chapel On January 18th Our Religious Education Program will be running an age appropriate Children's worship service for K-6 children on 18th January. Please contact our Director of Religious Education, Lara Douglass, for more information.

Denominational UUpdates

As you put money into the Guest at Your Table boxes, remember where the money is going: the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee might be considered the third leg of our religious affiliation. That is, if we are a religion that touts "open minds, loving hearts and helping hands," the UUSC is all about the "hands." Because it is politically activist, it remains independent, without direct denominational funding. Consider also shopping at the UUSC Online Store.

Upcoming events:

International Convocation of U*U Women (First Ever!) in Houston, Texas. Dates: Thursday, February 26th, to Sunday, March 1st. For registration and program information, go to <http://portal.icuww.com/>.

"Leading Congregations Into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future," a UUA event in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Dates: Friday, April 3, to Sunday, April 5. Information at <http://www.uua.org/events/multiracialmulticultural/index.shtml>.

SWUUC Spring Conference, hosted by the First Unitarian Church ("Church of the River"), Memphis, Tennessee. Dates: Friday, April 24 to Sunday, April 26. Look for further information on our district website: <http://www.swuuc.org/>.

First UU Book Clubs Meet Sundays

The Mind and Meaning Book Group meets in room 13A at 9:30 a.m.

Currently reading "In Search of Memory; The Emergence of a New Science of the Mind" by Eric Kandel. For further information contact June Beach 512-382-7551 or email junem-beach@aol.com

Sunday Morning Book Group meets in Room 13B at 9:30 a.m. We will discuss *Ethics* on January 4, 2009. On January 11 we will start *From Whom God Hid Nothing* by Meister Eckhart. Contact for this Group is Jim Burson 794 1086

Future Readings:

Answer to Job by CG Jung

Mediations by Marcus Aurelius

Heart of Christianity by Marcus Borg

A Theory of Everything by Ken Wilbur

The Manduka Upanishad

**FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF AUSTIN
4700 Grover Avenue
Austin, TX 78756
*One Church. Many Beliefs.***

Minister: Rev. Dr. Davidson Loehr

**Executive Director:
Sean Hale**

**Director of Religious Education:
Lara Douglass**

**Director of Music: Brent Baldwin
President, Board of Trustees:**

Sheila Gladstone

Ministerial Intern:

Brian Ferguson

Church Phone: (512) 452-6168

Church Fax: (512) 453-5912

E-Mail: info@AustinUU.org

www.AustinUU.org

Next Newsletter Deadline

January 15th

***Please submit information to
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Top Ten List for 2009 Resolutions

- 10...Take 10 long walks each month
 - 9...Apply moisturizing lotion to 9 toes
 - 8...Drink 8oz of water 6 times a day
 - 7...Change your undergarments 7 times each week
 - 6...Drink 8oz of water 6 times a day (really)
 - 5...Show someone your appreciation 5 times each month
 - 4...Attend services at FUUCA 4 times each month
 - 3...Enroll in 3 Adult RE activities
 - 2...Invite 2 friends to FUUCA
 - 1...Allow yourself some time alone
- Peg Frye, Adult Religious Education*