



## Spotlight On...

### Jim Burson

Jim Burson has been a UU since 1957 when he joined First UU Houston. He also attended the Houston Unitarian Fellowship and appreciated their child centered attitude. Jim and Bobby, his wife, were busy raising their three children at the time. The Barkens and Sally Scot were at the Fellowship too.



Jim moved to Austin and joined First UU in 1990. His family is a UT family. He faithfully attends the Lady Longhorn sports events. Mix that interest in with the theatre and the music at the Long Center, and the operas that are streamed live from the Metropolitan Opera and we see one piece of Jim. Couple that with his thirteen year relationship with the Sunday Morning Book Group that he started when he was active in Adult Religious Education. He was very impressed with that Committee under Andrea and Karen Nealy. He liked that it was tightly organized and offered a diversity of relevant programs.

The Facilities Committee was the first group Jim joined. His mentor was Stan Hutchison. He loved working with Stan on the never ending projects around the church. Not only is Jim an engineer but a handy man as well.

One Saturday years ago when Davidson was new to First UU, Jim walked into the Sanctuary and found him putting up the structure to handle the candles. Jim joined in and the two of them finished the project. The next day, Sunday, the congregation was amazed to see the rows of beautiful red and blue candles ready to welcome them into the Sanctuary.

Speaking of colors Jim joined with Andrea Lerner in her desire to add color to the Sanctuary to make it a more welcoming space. First they brightened the holiday time with a giant wreath and greenery to make the area more festive. After the season another idea was put into practice when the ribbons were placed in the front of the church. Jim engineered the project and various folks joined him over time. I met Jim while he was putting up the ribbons one Sunday and I became his final assistant in the process which was replaced one Sunday by the banners. Jim thinks that it would be great if a committee or group took over the Sanctuary as their project. Maybe that's an idea for someone to take up.

Jim continues to be active in our community especially working with the Transition Team where he provides a long historical perspective that we can learn from. Jim is a giver. He visits folks when they are homebound or hospitalized. He offers folks rides to and from here and there. He reaches out and is gentle, kind and fun. I honor him and all he has done for this community. -Linda Taylor



 **Inside this Issue:** Reports from Janet pg 2, Sean page 3, Paradox Players pg 6, Polka Band at Senior Lunch! pg 9 and much more....



## IN THE INTERIM

My column is longer than usual this issue. When I made copies of the Interim Minister's report to the congregation on Dec. 13, I made too few. Many of you did not receive this report, so I repeat it here. Have a wonderful 2010, everyone!

The specialty of intentional Interim Ministry is very future-directed, and the work I am doing with the First UU Church of Austin is no exception. During the time I have been on staff, since September 1, 2009, I have found that the congregation has proceeded well with the transition it began during the first eight months of the year.

One of the tasks that Interim Ministers are expected to do is to guide congregations to come to terms with its past – honoring its achievements and recognizing its conflicts and disappointments. My observation is that First UU has done very well on the Time-Line project, posting many notes about the congregation's history, especially the events that brought pride and those that caused disappointment. In addition, the area for posting hopes and dreams for the church presented many intriguing ideas for the future. The Transition Team and I will reflect on the results of the Time-Line project in a sermon soon.

Another task that Interim Ministers seek to guide the congregation through is to encourage new leadership, lay and ordained. I am very encouraged by the efforts of the Nominating Committee, begun before I arrived, to develop leadership by means of the seminars this fall. I have no doubt that this project will continue to bear fruit.

I am also pleased that lay leaders are looking carefully at the structure of the committees and other bodies of the church in an effort to make them more effective and inter-related. In addition, the Board continues its progress toward a new style of governance and will soon be helping the leaders and other congregants understand what Policy Governance means, as indicated by Dr. Peter Steinke last winter.

Work on the church's identity, vision, and mission also continues apace, another task that was assigned by Dr. Steinke in early 2009. I am glad to be part of the Bridge-Builders Action Plan which is putting the plans for creating a new identity into practice. This, too, is part of the Interim Ministry agenda.

In addition, I am very committed to guiding the church to the establishment of guidelines of healthy relations, or, in other words, a behavioral covenant for the church. This fits with Dr. Steinke's assignment that the church develop healthy community.

The opportunity to renew connections with the Unitarian Universalist Association and beyond is one that many congregations in transition believe not relevant. However, it is during this very transition that the church relies on the resources of the Association and the district more than ever. I will continue to guide a closer relationship with these entities, and I will also continue to urge congregants to make use of local, district, and UUA conferences and other efforts. The result of all of the work of the interim period is to ready the congregation for new ordained leadership and new directions for the church. As First UU has only had three and a half months of intentional interim ministry, this goal is months away. However, leaders and congregants have made great strides toward readiness.

One of the barriers to such a happy outcome is the philosophy and practice of stewardship at First UU. As congregants observed with alarm during the fall campaign in 2009, lack of pledge income can lead to serious and enduring cuts in staff and programs, which leads almost inevitably to the deterioration of the church. Although the congregation is learning to adjust to its smaller membership, the need for funding quality programs and administration remains urgent. Financial matters need immediate attention with an eye toward the big picture.

Another barrier to readiness to new ordained leadership and new directions has to do with the continuing and vocal anxiety among some congregants about the dismissal of the former called minister. The church has made great strides toward healing the multiple losses suffered over the years, but there is still a sense of intransigency from some members. In order for the church to commit to new leadership and directions, members will need to set their anxieties aside and go into the future with renewed hope and courage.

It is my pleasure to work with an excellent team of Senior Staff whose reports are also in this appendix. I owe a great deal to them for their insights and support. In addition, my thanks are to the additional support staff and to lay leaders who are of great value to the church. I am also very grateful to the Transition Team, the congregation's lay leaders and think tank for transitional ministry: Nancy Bene, Jim Burson, Michael Kersey, Wendy Kuo, Sharon Moore, Sylvia Pope, and Margaret Roberts. Please thank them when you next see them; they are working hard on your behalf. I am very hopeful that the next months of our ministry together will be fruitful, courageous, and radically hospitable!

Respectfully submitted,

*Janet E. Newman, Accredited Interim Minister*



## Goals for 2010

Overall, we find ourselves on a good path today and have good momentum as we move into the future. Challenges remain, but we have the time, treasure, and talent here to take them on. Significantly, we are doing a better job of identifying those resources, including many that had previously gone untapped, and finding ways to use them more efficiently.

For 2010, we have a great challenge and opportunity in our work, as a congregation, to prepare ourselves to call our next senior minister. I aspire, and I hope this holds true for each of you, to do everything possible to attract a large pool of enthusiastic, highly qualified candidates. This should allow us to find the best possible match for us: a minister well suited for the church we are today and who can help us become the church we want to be. My staff and I look forward to participating in this exciting chapter in First UU's life, and continuing to partner with you to make the most of our opportunities.

### Program Support Goals for 2010

In addition to continuing routine activities, we have set the following goals for particular attention next year.

- Recycling Program – we aim to get a new, sustainable recycling program up and running early in the year.
- New Church Management System – we aim to have a new data system that will increase staff and volunteer efficiency, collect more relevant data, allow better data access (especially for religious education, stewardship, and membership), and provide us with an online calendar of church activities.
- Improved books and financial reports – we aim to transition in January to a new set of books that improve staff efficiency, produce financial reports that are more user-friendly and show the whole of the church's finances, and produce reports that easily provide relevant data to church departments and groups.
- The Church's Mission, Vision, and Purpose – we will provide support to the Bridge Builder Action Team, Board of Trustees, and membership at large as the church undertakes this project.
- Increase Efficiency – we will continue to seek opportunities to decrease costs, use staff and volunteer time more efficiently, and improve the quality of our work.
- Support for Interim Ministry – we will continue to provide material and informational support to our interim minister so that she (and her successor) can dedicate their time and talents to ministry.
- Increase support for Stewardship Committee – we hope to provide more support to stewardship than in 2009, including technology, services, and information.
- Improve the Sanctuary's Audio System – we aim to complete our project to improve the Sanctuary's audio system. This will include the installation of several top-quality Altec-Lansing speakers that the church received as a donation three years ago.
- **Volunteers**

Thank goodness for the talented volunteers who have been so generous with their time this year. They have provided critical support in a variety of areas, without which things would look very different around here. For sake of brevity (and fear of leaving someone's name off), I won't name everyone here. Please know, however, that staff feels great gratitude to all of you and everything you do to help keep operations smooth and bring life to this community.

*-Sean Hale, Executive Director*

## What a Year It Was

January 2009 found us behind the 8 ball: a deficit budget of \$35,000; Congregation members feeling homeless and unrooted; canceled and decreased pledges; the rising economic storm. We went through the year with a solid trail of success behind us: the highly successful Spring Canvass that raised \$100,000 and kept our Church operating; the renewed sense of purpose; and the responsibility of accepting the challenge that was the year 2009.

Our 2010 Canvass fell about \$200,000 short of the \$650,000 that we sought, but we have managed to keep our doors open for all weeks of the year, and we have deepened the sense of responsibility among ourselves.

We begin the year 2010 with a smaller FUUCA roster. But we have begun the year 2010 with a Congregation that has palpably greater unity of purpose, and understanding of the tasks that await us.

Our challenge beginning in 2010 is to build the future: to restore the pension contributions to our staff that we were forced to eliminate; to reinstate the Split-the-Plate Sundays; to become again a Fair Share Church in our national Unitarian-Universalist Association; to grow our numbers. This is where Stewardship, and Membership, and Fellowship, and Religious Education, and the Young Adults, and Yew Grove, and Paradox Players, and all the other parts of First UU come together. This is you. This is us. Welcome to the year 2010.

*-Bill Edwards, Chairperson Stewardship*



# Sunday Worship



The times for the Sunday morning Worship Services are 9:45 and 11:30 a.m

**January 3: “For the Time Being” by Rev. Dr. Janet E. Newman** The first Sunday of the new year offers a perfect opportunity for looking at the past in order to learn from it (retrospect), at the present to make decisions (circumspect), and at the future to go forth with courage (prospect). W. H. Auden’s long poem “For the Time Being” and poetry by Robert Frost will be our guides.

**January 10: “Forgiveness in an Unforgiving Age” by Rev. Dr. Janet Newman** And the second Sunday of the new year is a good time to reflect on what is necessary for forgiveness to happen. My text is a book by Ann Tyler titled, *Saint Maybe*. The book is easily available, and there is even a television movie based on it. Easy-to-take theology in a form we don’t expect!

**January 17: “The Handwriting on the Walls” by Rev. Dr. Janet Newman and the Transition Team** During the weeks that the historical time-line was on the walls – really, windows – many of you shared your proud memories, disappointments, and your hopes and dreams for the church. The Transition Team and I will put these pieces together in a kind of quilt that tells a story of you. An additional offering will be taken for the support of special efforts of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

**January 24: “The Covenants We Keep.” Guest minister is Rev. Stefan Jonasson,** the Director for Large Congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Many of you have had the pleasure of hearing Rev. Jonasson preach and teach. He will be here for the whole weekend to help the church take the next steps into the future through workshops, seminars, and education.

## Bridgebuilder Action Plan Update

To implement the will of the congregation as expressed in the Bridgebuilder Action Plan, our church has hired Joe Sullivan to guide us in defining our values, our mission, and our vision of what we want the future of our church to be. This will address action items listed in Dr. Peter Steinke’s Action Report and in the resulting Bridgebuilder Action Plan drafted by a team of 15 church members and refined with input from all interested church members at six forums scheduled last spring.

Joe will help guide us through a process that will:

- honor the past and our accomplishments,
- identify our strengths, gifts, talents, and hidden potential,
- help us identify a strong, compelling purpose (mission, vision),
- build energy and enthusiasm for that purpose,
- reaffirm the dignity and value of each participant,
- fortify members' commitment to the church, and
- bring us together as a community.

Prior to Joe’s work with our community this spring, in which we hope everyone will participate, Joe will provide training to the board and other lay leaders, including how to participate in and listen during the spring meeting process, and training church members who will act as facilitators during the spring meetings.

Once our church community has determined our values, mission and vision, we will be better able to make changes that will ensure more open, transparent and responsive governance, desires expressed in our Bridgebuilder work last spring.

If you have questions, comments or thoughts about the Bridgebuilder process, please contact Margaret Borden at [m.borden@sbcglobal.net](mailto:m.borden@sbcglobal.net) or 458.4502.

Margaret Borden





## Sunday Forum



The time for the Sunday Forum is 11:30 a.m.

**January 3: Bruce Elfant, Travis County Constable Precinct 5. "Criminal Justice Issues in Travis County; Includes Veterans and Upcoming Census"** Bruce Elfant has been a Travis County Constable since 1993 and currently serves as First Vice President of the Justices of the Peace and Constables Association of Texas. In hopes of helping veterans suffering from mental illness and substance abuse, Travis County is considering a special veterans court docket, which would channel those charged into treatment and social services rather than incarceration. He will also discuss the Census.

**January 10: Mark Updegrove, Director of the LBJ Library, Author, Political Commentator. "Works of the Presidency and Taking the LBJ Library to New Heights of Excellence"** Mark Updegrove, Director of the LBJ Library and is the author of two major works: "Second Acts: Presidential Lives and Legacies After the White House", and "Baptism By Fire; Eight Presidents Who Took Office in Time of Crisis". His previous positions include; Publisher of Newsweek, President of Time Canada, and an Executive with Yahoo! Inc. He's appeared on ABC News, CNN C-Span, Fox News, and NPR. He'll share his insight into the Works of the Presidency and his plans for the LBJ Library

**January 17: Laura Morrison, City of Austin Council Member "An Inside Look Into the Issues Important to Austinites from City Hall"** Laura Morrison was elected an Austin City Council Member in June of 2008. As a Council Member she's the Chair of the City Council's Emerging Technology and Telecommunications Committee, sits on the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee, member of the Public Health and Human Services Committee and the Audit and Finance Committee. She'll share her perspective from City Hall and discuss the critical issues of 2010.

**January 24: Terri Burke, Executive Director of the ACLU of Texas "Righting Texas' Civil Wrongs"** Terri Burke has been Executive Director of the ACLU of Texas for two years. A lifelong journalist, Terri was previously a political and investigative reporter with the Dallas Morning News and the Austin American-Statesman. Despite urban area election results our legislature and our courts continue to bow to a small percentage who would rewrite the U.S. Constitution to match their extremist views. Only through integrating grassroots education with lobbying and litigation can we stop the shotgun assault on the Constitution. She'll discuss the ACLU of Texas' strategic campaign to change state laws.

**January 31: Susan Cooper, Founder of BodyBusiness and M.A. Psychologist "Rise and Shine: Feeling Good and Longevity"** Susan Cooper, Founder of BodyBusiness and M.A. Psychologist will inspire us to let go of lethargy and rise and shine. She is well known for her excellence in fitness programming. BodyBusiness is rated as one of the top 10 aerobics studios in the US by Shape Magazine. Susan is on the Board of Directors of the International Health and Racquet Sportsclub Association, representing 9,000 fitness and health facilities in 74 countries. Hang onto your seats as Susan Cooper discusses feeling good and longevity.



## Announcing PP's Tenth Anniversary Season!

To commemorate this very special milestone in 2010, Paradox Players will offer a world premiere, and two Austin premieres. Opening Feb 12 will be *SHARDS OF LOVE*, a romantic comedy written by artistic director Paullette MacDougal especially for the "Valentine slot" of our tenth anniversary season. In eight short vignettes, this comedy explores the less-than-perfect love relationships of couples ranging in age from their 20's to their 90's – in farcical, funky, wistful, sweet and murderous variations. Four directors will collaborate to bring us this world premiere – Lisa Foster, Charles Hill, Joni McClain and Pearl Meltzer. The cast includes six "old favorites" and two actors new to our stage.



June brings us *CHARLIE COX RUNS WITH SCISSORS*, by Michael McKeever. This modern comedy, an Austin premiere directed by Lisa Foster, features a conservative middle-aged man who finds himself unexpectedly wrestling with love and death in the Arizona desert.

*INCORRUPTIBLE*, by Michael Hollinger, winds up our season in October. Monty Python meets the Marx Brothers in this zany farce set in a dysfunctional 13<sup>th</sup> century French monastery. Gary Payne will direct this Austin premiere.

If you don't already have your 2010 Season Tickets, you can purchase them on our website ([paradoxplayers.org](http://paradoxplayers.org)) or at the PP table in the Gallery in January. As always, each Season Ticket includes two free passes so you can share the Paradox Players experience with your friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.

### Readers' Theater



will meet Monday evening, January 11, at 7:30 in room 13.

We always welcome anyone who enjoys reading aloud, no experience required.



## Nominating Committee has a New look and feel...

### Read carefully and see where YOU fit in!

In January 2010, the Nominating Committee begins the search for new and continuing committee chairs to recommend to the Board and for a slate of two new Board members to present to the congregation at the May 2010 congregational meeting. Active recruiting begins in January, and we hope that you will consider taking on or continuing in a leadership position at First UU. Our goal, an open recruiting process, is to have a committed, enthusiastic, and prepared group join the leadership of our church for 2010-2011.

On Sunday, January 17 at 1:00 p.m., the Nominating Committee will hold a second forum to discuss and answer questions about leadership and the Nominating Committee's changing role. We do hope that you will attend and bring your questions and ideas for leadership. Applications and sample interview questions will be available at that meeting.

Sample questions might include: How long have you been a UU? How have you served UU churches, including ours, in the past? What specific skills / experience / education do you have that you would share with our church? What is your current area of interest and / or desired level of service? In the past year, have you participated in Reconciliation Bridgebuilders, attended committee and/or board meetings?

On Wednesday January 20, the Nominating Committee will kick off a one year series of Leadership Development classes using Harvest the Power, a UU curriculum. Our goal is to develop an expanded a pool of leadership for our church. The twelve classes be held every third Wednesday at 7 PM following Meet and Eat. We hope you will consider participating in the classes, which will build on the successful series of leadership classes that Michael Kersey led in the fall.

We hope that you will consider a leadership position in our church. Leadership and committee service are an important part of UU religious commitment. If you would like to participate in the 2010-2011 leadership of our church, contact any member of the Nominating Committee: Sandra Ries, Chair; Tyler Anderson; Mike LeBurkien; Jennifer Loehlin; or Jeanette Swenson.



Mike and Jeanette

## A Time for Promises

At last, 2009 is past! A year full of trials, and an “interesting time” in the “ancient Chinese curse” sense of the phrase. The new year is a time to reflect on what we’ve achieved, what we hoped for, what we fell short on, and what we’ll try for again. To look at the sad remnants of broken diets, and see what can be salvaged now that the holidays are over—and to celebrate the challenges we’ve come through.

In a sense, one of First UU’s promises this year is to write its own resolutions, promises to strive toward through the year. There’s a wonderful Greek word, [*eudaimonia*]*eudaimonia*—in a sense, the word means happiness, but in another sense, it’s a word of process—the act of living well, being well, brings one closer to happiness through the act of striving.

And so we strive toward diversity, within the comforting uniformity and security of a church wall. We pledge to be a generous church, when we’re battenning down our financial hatches during a hard recession. We promise to create a vision of understanding and love, from a place of deep division. All of this knowing full well that we compromise every day—but with a goal to work toward, growing from the journey.

This year—this spring, we hope!—we’ll be making a promise, a covenant, away of relating to each other within the context of our church. This covenant will recognize many of the pledges we’ve made informally—promises to respect our mutual differences, to strengthen our community together.



Promises come in many shapes. Each New Year’s diet starts out pre-broken (they always start after the holidays, after all). Some promises are just pretty words on a page, or a version of ourselves that we wish ourselves to be. And some promises can never be reached, but we enrich ourselves by striving to reach them.

*Jacob Williams, Co Chair of Membership*

## Fellowship Committee News

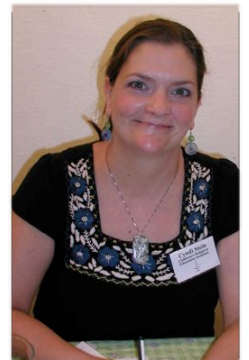
In March ’09 congregants were invited to attempt to re-boot the Fellowship committee. We learned that, although assumedly responsible for several all-church events, the committee itself had been low in membership for many years and tended to burn out the Chair. When I accepted the role of Chair, I was heartened that the other members were very active at First UU already. We promised each other to set small goals and not get burned out.

In the Fall we hosted our first all church events--first Wednesday Eat and Meets. We fulfilled our goals: working together as a committee, recruiting volunteers; celebrating the work of the Church; providing fellowship time on busy evenings. Planning, hosting and cleaning up after all-congregational events demands a lot of time, energy and focus. It was a lot of work! In November it was time to review and perhaps begin work on a covenant. During this process it became clear that the committee had over-committed to a variety of church activities. This level of honesty is essential for the long-term health of our community. What this means at this time as the chair is that I am looking for new members who have time to spend on church gatherings. If this sounds intriguing send me an email

The take away messages are:

1. Fellowship is happening every week at First UU and YOUR participation is VERY IMPORTANT. Whenever you come together, someone is working very hard to support that even; find the person and thank him or her profusely-maybe even offer to help.
2. Volunteer to be that person.
3. All Fellowship inquiries should be sent to me at [ewethington@austin.rr.com](mailto:ewethington@austin.rr.com) (or left in the box in the volunteer office).
4. The next All-Church event scheduled is Easter Brunch. Please consider joining.

The Fellowship Committee Celebrates the **Volunteer** efforts of our Eat and Meet Coordinator CYNDI STEIN  
Thanks for the planning, shopping, cooking, volunteer directing, cleaning and everything!



## A Very Happy New UU Year Indeed!

As we enter 2010, our church is engaged in or is about to begin many terrific activities to implement the Bridge Builders Action Plan (BBAP) we developed. The BBAP lays out a set of strategies for helping us reach our full potential as a church. The BBAP includes the following four major issue areas (though in a different order):

### **Community:**

We are already doing much to foster community. Our Interim Minister has included such community-building activities as greeting one another and welcoming our guests during Sunday Services. The Membership Committee greets our visitors outside the Sanctuary every Sunday and has reinvigorated our Meet and Eat gatherings. Members of the Board of Trustees also greet and speak with visitors and church members each Sunday. The Nominating Committee has launched leadership development classes to ensure our community continually develops new leadership and supports our current leadership. These are just a few examples.

In January and February, Janet and her Transition Team will present the results of the timeline that has been available outside the sanctuary. This information will help us develop a “Covenant of Right Relationship”. Think of this covenant as a set of “rules for the road” that will guide us on our journey together toward most fully becoming a community that is caring and loving yet also encourages a free and open exchange of ideas and beliefs.

### **Values/Mission/Vision:**

This was the most cited issue area when our congregation developed our BBAP, yet these terms get used so much they can become almost “buzz” words and lack clarity. The following may be helpful in defining them:

*Values* address questions such as what qualities of our religious community will we carry forward in our future? What about our church is most meaningful and inspiring to us? What do we hold most dear? What three to five ideals do we all share most deeply?

*Mission* defines our shared purpose. Based on our values, what shall we work on to accomplish together? What overarching differences do we hope to make and for whom? One of the best descriptions of shared purpose I have ever seen is one in which we ask ourselves to complete the following: “First UU Austin *exists* to ...”

*Vision* propels us toward our future. If we live our values and purpose, how will it change our lives, our church community, the community beyond our church, indeed, our world? How will we know it and how will we measure these beneficial differences?

In March and April, we will begin a series of sessions to start working together to define and express our values and purpose. We invite you to join us in this exciting effort, as we connect more deeply with one another and embark on our future together.

### **Governance:**

Beginning in February, we will begin a transition to a form of governance that the UUA and many “breakthrough” UU churches have adopted to help them succeed and thrive. Called “Policy Governance”, this form of governance embeds our values, purpose and vision into the decision-making structures of our church. It requires that we establish a set of “ends” that will allow us to measure whether we are accomplishing our vision. It establishes an Executive Team, consisting of our Minister and Executive Director, who have accountability for running our church operations and our ministries and programs, allowing the congregation of the church and our leadership to concentrate on, well, being a church. It allows us to focus on the spirit of our church because the body is being well-nourished and well-cared-for.

This form of governance also sets into place specific monitoring, using measurable results, to ensure accountability and transparency. Perhaps most importantly, it helps ensure that our values, purpose and vision do not become merely pretty words on paper, because it requires us to live those values and concentrate our governance on our purpose and vision.

### **Clergy Roles and Responsibilities:**

All of the activities above will aid us greatly as we move toward eventually calling a Settled Minister. By having clear lines of authority and accountability, a Covenant of Right Relationship and a clearly laid out set of values, purpose

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The board has appointed a Bridge Builders Action Team consisting of me, Brendan Sterne, Margaret Borden, Sean Hale and Janet Newman to help steer several of these activities forward. Please feel free to speak with any of us for more information. I can always be reached by email to [secretary@austinuu.org](mailto:secretary@austinuu.org). I look forward to working with everyone toward our very happy new UU year.  
*Chris Jimmerson, Board of Trustees Secretary*



ARCH work program.

One group of volunteers discovered that they all lived in south Austin. They loved the project but hated fighting the rush hour traffic to get to the church on Monday evening. Now, the team meets on the second Monday of each month at a team member's home, assembles the lunches, and enjoys an informal potluck dinner together. "We have ranged in age from 4 to 84. We enjoy each other's company and there's a way for everyone to contribute to the effort," said team coordinator Rose Ann Reeser. Participating in December's Second Monday team effort were: John Payne and Rose Ann Reeser (hosts), Eve Gilbert, Carol Ginn, Bryan Uecker and Miriam and Adrienne Murr, and Michael West. Other 2d Monday team members: Louise Reeser, Joan Schenker, Lynda West. If this sounds like a good project for you, watch the weekly announcement sheet for time and place - and join a team.

## Denominational Affairs

I recently returned from a hard-working and exciting weekend, at the Fall SW District conference in Glen Rose, TX. Three of us from our church were there, Margaret Borden, Scott Butki, and I.

Part of the electricity was to have over 140 Unitarian Universalists from 26 congregations in Texas, plus almost a dozen more congregations from Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri and Oklahoma. In fact almost every congregation in Texas was represented, except for some of the fellowships.

There were six tracks. Margaret, Scott, and I chose differently. My choice was "Beyond Fundraising" led by Dr. Wayne Clark from the UUA. He, and now I, see stewardship as much more than raising money, though money is part of it. It really is about telling your story, hearing other stories, and building community.

I wish more of you would have been there. It did cost Keohanes \$270, plus travel, and a 3½ hour drive for me. I think what I learned, and the connections I made, will prove very worthwhile, both for volunteer work in our church, and for life. I hope you consider going to the Spring district conference in Plano, April 23-25. I plan to.

**The Southwest UU Women's Conference next February 26-28 in Dallas.** Interested women can find information of the SW district [www.swuuw.org](http://www.swuuw.org) or by emailing Kathy Calhoun of First Unitarian in Dallas, who is one of the many UUs I met in November: [kathywcalhoun@gmail.com](mailto:kathywcalhoun@gmail.com). *John Keohane, Chair of Denominational Affairs.*

## Seniors' Luncheon

Tuesday, January 12th

Howson Hall at Noon

Soup, Salad & Dessert \$5

RSVP to Alice Cashman 837-0988

**Program: Dan Wilson and his new Austin Polka Band.** It's an eclectic mix of musicians who are too skilled to play in the Austin Symphony. The program will feature arrangements of the renown Forrest L. Luchtel. You are most welcome to dance to the music. After the program the band will sign CD's if you happen to have any. (Ho! Ho! Ho!)



## SECOND MONDAY SACK LUNCH TEAM MIXES SERVICE AND FUN!

*Michael West, John Payne, Miriam and Adrienne Murr make sure that each lunch is complete.*

Every Monday evening for the past several years, FUUCA members have assembled 30 sack lunches and delivered them downtown to the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless. These lunches provide a nourishing mid-day meal for homeless men in the



**Brent Baldwin**  
Music Director

# MUSIC MATTERS

## MUUSICAL NOTES

### WHY DO WE SING?

There are many reasons we humans lift our voices together and sing. Some have a song they simply must let out of their heart. Others enjoy the community that comes with group singing. But did you know that many make a joyful noise because singing is actually good for your health?

According to a study by the University of Frankfurt in Germany, it was discovered that choral singers possessed higher levels of immunoglobulin A and cortisol (markers of enhanced immunity) after they sang than they did prior to singing. Other reported benefits are higher energy level, increased lung capacity, better posture, asthma relief, and enhanced feelings of relaxation, mood and confidence.

### WHY DO WE NOT SING?

*"I'm too busy and stressed!"* Many people with highly stressful jobs find choral singing so relaxing precisely because rehearsals help filter out the endless internal noise of work and life stress.

*"My 3<sup>rd</sup> grade music teacher told me I couldn't sing, and I haven't sung since."* A tragically common tale. You probably didn't have a bad voice – just a very bad music teacher.

*"I can't read music,"* or *"I haven't sung since [fill in a long-past year, grade level, age]."* Welcome to the club – you fit the demographic of most first-time FUUCA Choir members! We make it our mission to work together and help one another meet the musical challenges before us.

*"I'm not sure that singing in a choir is for me,"* or *"I'm not sure I'm ready to make that sort of commitment."* Any potential choir singers are encouraged to try out a rehearsal or two before committing to one of our choirs. If it feels right – terrific! If you decide it's not your cup of tea, that's also okay – every church needs good listeners!

### WHEN DO WE SING?

The **First UU Adult Choir** rehearses each Wednesday from 7:30-9:00pm in the Sanctuary and sings for select Sunday services. **Spring rehearsals begin on Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.** For questions and/or more info, contact Brent Baldwin at [brentb@austinuu.org](mailto:brentb@austinuu.org).

The **First UU Children's Choirs** rehearse **between Sunday services (10:40 - 11:45 AM)** in the RE wing, and sing for select Sunday services. **Spring rehearsals begin in January.** Questions? Contact Choir Parent Coordinator Chris Heidel at [chris@chrisandtooby.com](mailto:chris@chrisandtooby.com).



## Great Moments in UU History

This will not be your ordinary course, for here there will be no slew of names and dates. We'll dig into Channing and Ballou, because they set a background, and who they were provides a foundation for why we are called Unitarian Universalists. Then we will delve into three areas of recent history.

This course is in four sections, offered without charge, every Wednesday evening in January, 2010, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4700 Grover Avenue, Austin, TX, from 7:00-8:30 pm. Subjects: Channing and Ballou, Humanists of the early 20th c., Civil Rights leaders of the mid-20th century, Late 20th century UU merger and beyond.

We already have 19. Will continue till the room is full. You must register to take this course: Scott Butki ([scott@austinuu.org](mailto:scott@austinuu.org)) or John Keohane ([keohane@prodigy.net](mailto:keohane@prodigy.net)) By *John Keohane*

## Great Decisions Discussion Groups

Sign up now for Great Decisions Discussion Groups which will be meeting Sundays at 4 to 5:30 p.m. during February and March. The resource books will be on sale in the Gallery Sundays in January for \$20. Sign up now for the class and buy your book while they last. Class will be led by Judy Sadeah. The discussion topics for 2010 are:

**Special envoys**

**Preventing genocide**

**Global crime**

**U.S.–China security relations**

**Global financial crisis**

**Russia and its neighbors**

**The Persian Gulf**

**Peacebuilding and conflict resolution**

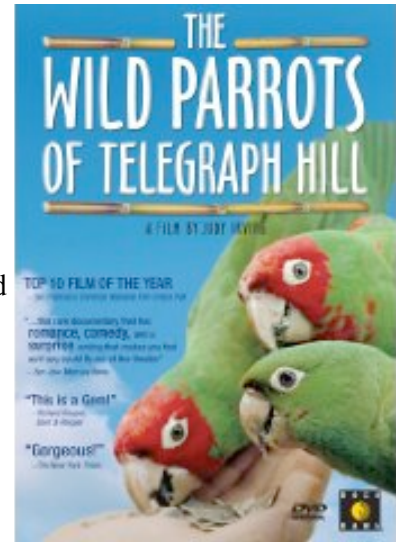


## Spiritual Movie Night

The January Movie will be The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill, a documentary about a flock of feral South American parrots in San Francisco and a man, Mark Bittner, who cared for them. It is based on a memoir by Bittner. The movie with a discussion following will be at 7 p.m. Friday Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>.

Roger Ebert says of viewing the movie: "You walk in expecting some kind of North Beach weirdo and his wild-eyed parrot theories, and you walk out still feeling a little melancholy over the plight of Connor, the only blue-crowned conure in a flock of red-crowned conures. "Connor had a mate, Bittner tells us, but the mate died. Now Connor hangs around with the other parrots but seems lonely and depressed, a blue-crowned widower who can sometimes get nasty with the other birds, but comes to the defense of weak or sick birds when the flock picks on them...." Join us for a discussion of the movie and the important and integral connection between humans and other animals.

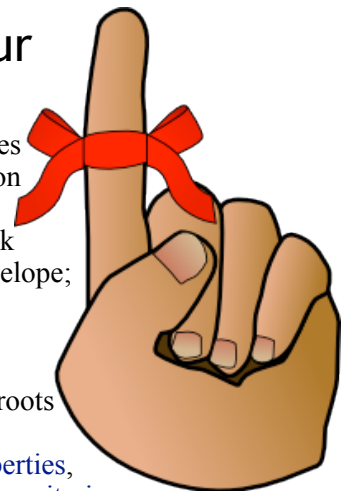
\$5 for Adults, \$2 for children. Popcorn, drinks, and snacks will be available. There will also be a children's movie.  
- *Scott Butki*



## Reminder: Guest at Your Table Drive

Each year at this time friends and families in our congregation participate in the UU tradition of Guest at Your Table. Our Guest at Your Table drive began on Sunday, Nov. 22. Many folks took home a beautiful Guest at Your Table box or envelope; this helps the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee put our shared principles into action around the world. 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**.

In each household, we suggest that your Guest at Your Table box or envelope is placed in a prominent spot, often at the family meal table. When family and friends gather to enjoy their blessings, they can reflect on the contributions of their Guests and share generously. We will return our boxes and envelopes in early January 2009.



## **First Unitarian Universalist**

**Church of Austin**

**4700 Grover Avenue**

**Austin, TX 78756**

***One Church. Many Beliefs.***

**Interim Minister**

**Rev. Dr. Janet Newman ext 304**

**Executive Director:**

**Sean Hale ext 308**

**Director of Religious Education:**

**Lara Douglass ext 305**

**Director of Music: Brent Baldwin**

**Board President: Nell Newton**

Church Phone: (512) 452-6168

Church Fax: (512) 453-5912

E-Mail: [info@AustinUU.org](mailto:info@AustinUU.org)



## **Bits and Pieces**

**January Sharing Suppers- A Great Way to Start the New Year.** Sharing Suppers will be held on the third Saturday in January. Please mark your calendars for January 16<sup>th</sup> and join others for food, conversation and laughter. Groups of 6 to 10 people gather in various participants' homes. Everyone in the church, new or established, couples or singles are very welcome to attend. It's easy to sign up – just call Linda Buehlmann at 323-5334 or email her at [lindabuehlmann@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lindabuehlmann@sbcglobal.net). You may also sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board outside Room 8. Check your calendars and **sign up today and, definitely, no later than Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>**. Visitors are very welcome.

**This month's Sing-a-Long will be held on the fourth Saturday, January 23,**

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. Copies of "Rise Up Singing" will be available. Please do not bring alcohol, since this is not a custom of the Quakers. For more information contact Larry Vaughn 469-0029 or email [lavest@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lavest@sbcglobal.net). To be added to the email list, contact Mary Jane Ford at [mjaneford@grandecom.net](mailto:mjaneford@grandecom.net).

### **Alternative Holiday Gift Fair**

Thanks to all who helped make this year's Alternative Holiday Gift Fair a great success! It is not possible to put on an event such as this without a group of committed volunteers. Thanks too to those of you who participated. We collected over a thousand dollars for UU and FUUCA projects and Alternative Gifts International. Other projects collected their own donations. The fair trade Guatemalan crafts from UPAVIM were very popular as well.

If you have suggestions or would like to help with the Fair next year, please contact Judy Sadegh, [jsadegh@yahoo.com](mailto:jsadegh@yahoo.com)

### **Heritage Book Club**

Our January meeting will be Friday January 8th, 6:30 p.m. Host: Tom Clark, 1216 Piedmont, 78757, phone 453-1986.

Book: John Grisham's *The Innocent Man* February book is the 2010 Mayor's Book Club selection-Oscar Casare's *Amigoland*. Since there were 14 attendees at the December meeting, we decided to see whether we would have better attendance if we had potluck suppers at the meetings. So we will have a potluck at the January meeting. Bring your own drink and a dish to share.