

July Newsletter



What is our Summer Action Project?



We want your unwanted

books!! This summer's church-wide social action project is a multi-faceted journey related to literacy. Our partner is Bookspring (formerly Reading Is Fundamental), a non-profit organization that strives to:

- Encourage families to introduce reading early in their child's development.
- Increase the literacy level of our community by changing literacy-related behaviors of parent and child.

- Make book sharing and reading aloud an integral part of family activities from infancy.

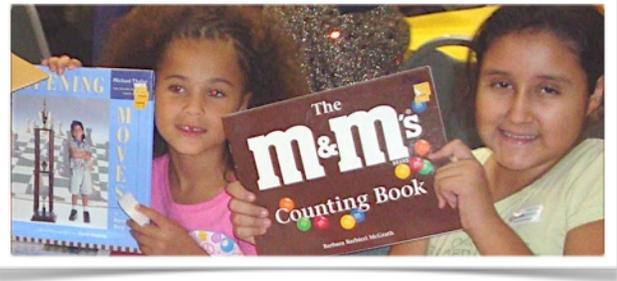
Given that you are reading this newsletter, we venture you agree that books can change lives. However, one of the biggest obstacles to literacy in the United States is a scarcity of books in homes. According to Bookspring's website (bookspring.org), two-thirds of low-income families own no books for their children. First UU will help in two ways:

1. Book drive between July 3rd and August 14th to contribute toward the tens of thousands of books they give to children of low-income families.
 2. Raising funds that will support the programs of Bookspring. The plans for this summer project are still evolving and depend in part on YOU and your ideas! So far, we have the following planned for the weeks ahead:
- Collection barrels will be located near the sanctuary for dropping off book donations.
 - Components of the summer services will highlight the joys of reading and literacy, including the Story for all Ages and some surprises that are in the works.
 - The July 10th special offering will be for Bookspring. Gillian Redfean will introduce Bookspring.
 - Immediately after the service on July 10th, please join us in Howsong Hall and enjoy literacy-related activities
 - We are suggesting the book "You've GOT to Read This Book!: 55 People Tell the Story of the Book That Changed Their Life" (304 pages). In August we will discuss the book. Check our bookstore for the book or order on-line: www.amazon.com/Youve-GOT-Read-This-Book/dp/B000O17CYW/ref=cm_lmf_tit_16

- A Hogwarts Camp UU social action afternoon devoted to Bookspring.
- An end-of-the-project celebration on August 14th, which will include a pot-luck, a work session to sort and mark the books, discussions of what we've read, and the chance to share our individual stories about the books that have influenced us or changed our lives.

How can you participate? There are many options!

- Check out the social action bulletin board – we will post updates there as they occur.



- Watch for developments via the First UU website: austinuu.org/Literacy
- Bring in books! Any books are fine – the website and bulletin board will list books of particular interest to Bookspring
- Give generously during the special offering
- Come have fun during the after-church activities
- Read the selection *You've GOT to Read This Book*
- Let the coordinators know if you have ideas for how to help grow the fun of this shared project

Coordinators for this project are Vicki Almstrum (CYPC co-chair), Corinna Whiteaker-Lewis (Social Action chair), and Cynthia Loudon (Adult R.E. chair).
PICTURES: Taken by Vicki Almstrum during the Bookspring service project at Hogwarts Camp UU 2010



Sunday Worship

The time for Sunday Worship is 10:00 a.m.

July 3: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of What? by **Brian Ferguson**. This is one of the most famous phrases in the US Declaration of Independence. The phrase refers to people being endowed with such unalterable rights. From a UU perspective, our religious principles reflect respect for life and liberty throughout but say nothing about happiness. We search for truth and meaning with a focus on working for truth and justice therefore are we just an unhappy bunch of people? What is the liberal religious perspective on happiness and is it a worthy goal to pursue? The worship service will explore these and other questions, and at times may even do so in a happy manner.

Brian Ferguson, Consulting Minister to the San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Last August, Brian completed a year of chaplaincy training at Seton Hospital in Austin. He served as the ministerial intern here in 2008 and also the Live Oak UU Church. Brian has a Masters of Divinity from Starr King School for the Ministry, the UU seminary in Berkeley, California. Brian's ministry is driven by the desire to explore and improve the human condition in an interdisciplinary and holistic way.

A native of Scotland, Brian earned an Applied Physics degree from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, and worked for 24 years as an Electronic Design engineer and project manager. Brian is joined on life's journey by his partner and our office manager, Natalie Freeburg, and seven year old daughter, Isla Ferguson.

July 10: The Virtues of Leadership by **Rev. Mark Skrabacz** Leadership may be about power, but effective leadership is about sharing the power. Powerful leadership is interpersonal rather than strictly personal. Leadership is not necessarily about being a successful individual. A good leader is successful when the community being led works together and when its members excel. Join our worship today to explore the topic: what makes successful leadership.

Mark Skrabacz was a member of First UU before he was called 2 years ago as minister for the UU Church of the Hill Country in Kerrville. He has served as a leader of Boy Scouts, athletic teams, student government, boards of directors, and now for a church. Pastor UU Church of the Hill Country. Trustee of UBarU. Yoga and Meditation Instructor. Master of Divinity, Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley. Initiated Elder (NM Men's Wellness Community)

July 17: Are UU's Inside Traders?: by **Michael LeBurkien**. UU's are inside traders of honest religion and keep the wealth of the Good News Message of our religion to ourselves. We deprive the public at large of a chance to invest in meaningful spirituality, while we gorge on the spiritual wealth, so readily available to UU's. Insider Trading is considered to be criminal activity by the US Dept. of Justice. How can we stop this criminal behavior?

Michael LeBurkien. Rabbi Emeritus Houston Cong. for Reform Judaism, past: Assistant DA Brazoria Co. Texas Assistant Attorney General, 1st Lt. US Infantry, Army.

July 24: Love and Fear: by **Gary Bennet**. The Beatles sang, "Love is all we need"; Machiavelli thought fear was more dependable. We will explore the impact of the two principles that run deep in our psychology and biology.

Gary Bennett After a peripatetic childhood as a preacher's kid in Texas and the South, Gary Bennett received degrees in history from Rice and Cornell before spending a career teaching mostly math (go figure!) in Cheltenham Township, Pennsylvania. After retiring, he persuaded wife Amy to head for warmer parts, and they have been members of First Church since 2005 (and active UUs much longer). Three adult daughters live in Boston and Seattle.

July 31: So Let It Be Written... by **Eric Hepburn**. What is our relationship with the written word? It stands to reason that for the author the word was important, perhaps sacred. In our search for the sacred, the holy, insight, and truth we have unprecedented access to the writings of the past and present. Does a non-doctrinal approach to the search for meaning place this catalogue of accumulated human knowledge and thought 'on-the-table' as potentially transformative writing? I would argue that it does and I will explore this possibility by talking about my own relationship with the written word, especially the transformative impacts of some fantasy and science fiction in my life.

Eric Hepburn is a member of First UU, where he serves on the board of trustees. He holds a master of arts in sociology, a bachelor of science in civil engineering, and has been working as the Director of Information Technology at the School of Architecture at University of Texas of Austin for the past eight years. He reads, writes, and delivers sermons because he thinks its fun. His tradition of writing and delivering an annual sermon at First UU started in 2006.

Letter from Andrew Young, Interim Religious Education Coordinator

The summer is upon us. Rev. Lena Breen, our Interim Director of Religious Education for the past months, has returned to her home in the Pacific Northwest. Our new two year Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Barbara Stoddard, will arrive in August. I will be our Interim Religious Education Coordinator until Barbara gets here. My job? Make sure that the religious education program runs smoothly. There won't be any major changes. I am available to discuss any questions you have concerning the religious education program over the summer.

Our summer curriculum centers around earth based spirituality, specifically that of Native Americans. The curriculums focus on our seventh principle: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. The kids will be learning about nature, ecology, and discussing myths and legends of Native American tribes. We need volunteers to help with classes through August. If you're new to the church and/or haven't had a chance to volunteer in a classroom, I whole heartedly suggest that you come by the RE office on Sunday and chat with me about it. Helping to instill values of love, honesty, and forgiveness in the children while also teaching them about earth based spirituality and ecology is a rewarding experience. You don't need to be the parent of a child in order to volunteer in the religious education department! As the old saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and that is doubly true for religious education. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call me at the church (ext 305) or email me at andrew@austinuu.org.
*Andrew Young-
Interim Religious
Education Coordinator*



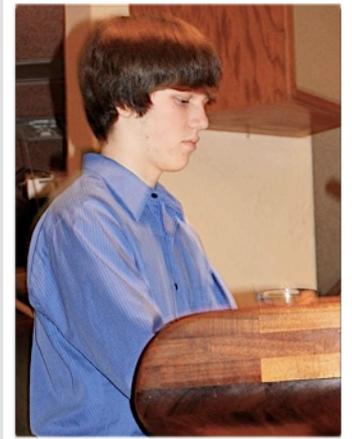
Claudia

Coming of Age Youth

Speak Their Minds

Over the past year four of our 8th and 9th grade youth have been exploring their own spirituality in our Coming of Age program. We discussed birth, death, love, sadness, God,

the divine, hope, faith, community, service, marriage, fear, identity, and meditation. The youth learned how to lead a worship service, how to talk about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist from their own heart, and how to really understand what they personally believe. The youth grew closer to one another and became more connected to each other, the church community, and our denomination. They joined Central Texas youth at a Coming of Age retreat at U-Bar-U. The fruit of their labor was a credo which is a statement of one's personal beliefs at a specific point in time. As UUs we understand that our beliefs change over time. In fact, one of our core principles is that everyone has the right to a responsible and free search for truth and meaning. Another core principle is to encourage each other in that spiritual growth. In line with this principle, the youth came before the congregation on June 12th and read their credo



Henry

statements so that we all can accept and encourage them in their search. As one of the adults that was helping to facilitate their journey, I am very proud of all four of them. If you see Nik, Audrey, Henry, or Claudia in the hall, be sure to let them know how proud we are of them for not being afraid to speak their minds. *Andrew Young*

DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

Know Your Southwestern UU Conference:



Our conference is composed of professional paid and volunteer staff. It provides 78+

congregations in our conference with high quality training opportunities, consulting services and resources and supports Lifespan Faith Development. See the SWUUC 2010-2011 Annual Report and learn more about our conference at: <http://swuuc.org/>



Southwestern UU

Conference: Growing

Healthy Covenant Groups:

Oct. 14-16, 2011; guest speaker Peter Bowden; at UBarU

Conference Center near Kerrville, TX

Southwestern UU Fall Leadership

Conference: Nov. 11-13, 2011 at Glen Lake, TX

Chalice Lighter Program Spring 2011 Call

As a Chalice Lighter you are asked to contribute for a growth project elsewhere in our district. Members are being asked to contribute, as one of their three calls this year, a minimum of \$10 to help the Horizon UU Church in Carrollton, Texas, complete their new Fellowship Hall and entrance to the church; they have already raised much of the money for capital improvements on their own, but need a boost to get over the top. Learn details at www.HorizonUU.org.

The two principles that underlie the Chalice Lighters Program are: (1) many hands make light work; and (2) what goes around, comes around. Recent projects were to help the San Marcos Fellowship, the Fellowship of Hidalgo County and Huntsville Church. In the past 11 years, both Wildflower and Live Oak Churches have received grants. There may come a time in the not too distant future when our church will need a little help from our friends!

Consider joining the Chalice Lighters now. The cost can be as low as \$30 per year, and you can be



Denominational Affairs Ministry Co-chairs, Rob Feeney and Karen Franks

denom@austinuu.org

Join the SWUUC YoUU Cruise!



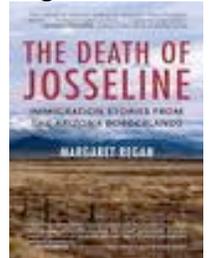
Galveston-Cozumel, October 6-10, 2011!!!

This cruise is open to all Unitarian Universalists and will focus on our inner landscapes. Beyond having a great time with other UU's, you can develop a new spiritual practice or share one that has worked well for you. We will be re-charging -filling ourselves up- so we are fueled enough to continue to change the world. Families are welcome. **Time is running out to save your spot**, so call Gary Ashorn at 1-800-365-8497 today! Don't hesitate to call us for more information at 817-446-0099. **More details** at: <http://swuuc.org/pages/services/cruise.php>

Our UUA "Common Read" book:

Congregations are being invited by the UUA to engage in a "Common Read" of the Beacon Press book on immigration issues, *The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona-Mexico Borderlands*.

In addition to migrant stories, the book describes the work of the Border Patrol, without vilifying it, and the humanitarian group, No More Deaths, which is a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson. Reading this book would contribute to our preparation for attending the 2012 social justice UUA General Assembly in Phoenix, AZ. To get your copy of this book, see Melanie at our church bookstore on Sunday.

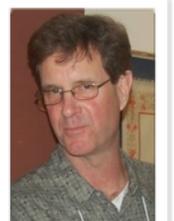


UUA Channel on YouTube:

This channel introduces our faith and promotes UU values and beliefs:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/UUAElectronicComm>

assured that the money will go, with almost no overhead charges, to the UU projects in our area where it can do the most good. As a member, you receive automatic notification of the three yearly calls. Please send your check, made out to SWUUC Chalice Lighters, to: Chalice Lighters, SWUUC District Office, 6720 Brentwood Stair Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76112. OR: donate through <http://swuuc.org/pages/stewardship/chalice-lighters.php>, using PayPal. Also, no one will complain if you make your donation LARGER than \$10. -Gary Bennett



Grounds Work Day - Fun in the Sun!

Saturday, June 18 marked the first “grounds work day” for 2011. A great turnout of approximately 15 volunteer workers greeted one another on a really hot morning. Not to be deterred our happy group of volunteers set out to trim, clip, rake, water, spread new mulch, clean benches, level the seams of the courtyard slabs and generally perform much needed maintenance on the grounds. Through the expert guidance of member volunteers, great strides were made in improving the overall health and appearance of the church landscape.

The Saturday morning work crew was a great mix of long-time volunteers and new faces. Sharing work on a common goal and then seeing immediate results was a bonding event for our volunteers and this benefits the church in many ways. If you missed the opportunity work with us on June 18 ----- do not worry, there will always be grounds maintenance tasks that need volunteers. Additional work days will be scheduled. A vision for our grounds has been established that will make us all proud and your support is needed to make that happen.

A big THANKS to all the volunteers for your hard work.

-Bill Walters



Playground Pick Up!

In parallel with the grounds work session, eight volunteers gathered on the children's playground to address some safety issues, do some clean-up, and plan for additional tasks. The energy and enthusiasm led to fewer weeds, looser sand, new sandbox sand, and a primed steel tunnel (which is awaiting a final coat of bright yellow paint!

We also used the opportunity to plan for improvements to come over the next few months! It was especially fun to work on the playground

while all the great work was happening on the rest of the church grounds. We look forward to the next workday -- please watch for announcements. We'd love to have more volunteers join us!! -Vicky



Summary of June 21 Board Meeting

The president welcomed new members to the board. Discussion included the goals of having a board member act as greeter before and after service each Sunday.

The board reviewed the audit committee report and approved the committee's suggested priorities for audit, beginning with payroll. Priorities are subject to change as the board moves forward with its monitoring plans. The question of policy regarding large unrestricted gifts was referred to the Policy Work Group for research.

The board conducted an exercise to define moral ownership and who the moral owners of the church are. The results were referred to the Policy Work Group for refinement to include in our policies.

Susan Thomson reviewed the results of the June 15 FUU Café. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have “conversations that matter.” Because of the quality of ideas and thoughts shared, we decided to continue future linkage efforts using the appreciative inquiry model.

The board created the following work groups to assist the board in its governance work: linkage, policy, monitoring, and governance process. These groups will change as board work changes.

We gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives



ALL CHURCH TECH GROUPS MEETING

We will have a combined meeting Sunday July 10 at 11:30 in the Sanctuary.

If you have any interest in audio, video, web or computer support, Movie Nights or any aspect of technology in service to the church come meet us and find out what we do.

All ages and skill levels are welcome, all you need is an interest and a few spare hours. For information contact firstuutech@austinuu.org

Third Wednesday Meet and Eat Summer Break

Since the fall of 2008, the Membership Committee has sponsored Meet and Eat each month. After nearly three years, we have decided to take a break in July and August. We also agreed that the September Meet and Eat, a third FUU-CAfe, will be the last dinner sponsored by the Membership Committee. We owe a huge thank you to the loyal and hardworking Committee members who have been there to shop, set up, prepare food, and have dinner on the table at 6 p.m: Kitty Traylor, Kathryn Govier, Alice Cashman, Joyce and Dan Wilson, Barbara Weeks, Jacob Williamson, Cyndi Loudon, Beverly Donoghue. I would also like to thank cooks Jacob Williamson, Cyndi Stein, and Nahdiah Hoang.

Our two goals have been: 1) increase Meet and Eat attendance 2) provide a forum for various groups in the church. The forum at each dinner would give people an opportunity to talk comfortably with each other about specific issues and events at First UU. As a result, we have worked with groups in the church including the Board, Nominating Committee, Religious Education, Social Action, Paradox Players, Stewardship, Settled Minister Search Committee and Bridge Builders. We have also welcomed new members; UUA Moderator Gini Courter; Interim Minister Janet Newman; our new settled Senior Minister Meg Barnhouse; International Conference on Women delegates from Live Oak, Wildflower, and our own church. Monthly attendance has grown from a low of 16 to an average of 50 people, and the conversation is lively and thoughtful.

My hope is that another ministry or committee at First UU will take over Meet and Eat and make it their own event. *Jeanette Swenson*



Join us with your ideas! Summer Adult Education Meeting:

The Adult Religious Education (ARE) committee needs more members. Many changes are coming and we need your voice!!! Be a part of changes! Do you want to have a say in Adult Religious Education offerings? Do you want to propose a learning activity for the fall?

Everyone is welcome to attend our next meeting on Thursday, July 14 at 7:00 p.m. in the RE office. If you are interested in presenting a course for the fall, please complete an application form which can be found on the church website. Additionally, if you are proposing a new course for the fall, please attend the meeting. For more information, please contact Cyndi Loudon at 512.804.6413.

Attention New Members and Visitors! Sharing Supper July 16th

On the 3rd Saturday of each month our church has Sharing Suppers and you are invited to attend. These suppers are held in private homes by members of our congregation. Most of the people who attend are involved in different activities and are most willing to help you learn more about our church. But don't come just to learn about the church. Many folks have made new friends at these dinners. The next Sharing Supper is July 16th. For more information and to sign up, please call Linda Buehlmann at 323-5334 The last date to sign up is Sunday, July 10th.

First UU's Special Offering for July...

Book Spring

serves over 21,000 children in Austin each year on AISD campuses, in local Head Start centers, and other child development centers. Last year the school based programs in Austin put over 50,000 brand new books into the hands of children who might not otherwise have books of their own. Last year the school based RIF (www.rif.org) programs in Austin put over 50,000 brand new books into the hands of children who might not otherwise have books of their own.



Welcome Praise, Welcome Newcomers!

What a coup – favorable publicity for both the church and Paradox Players! Our recent production of *Independence*, the lead article in the June 10 Arts section

of *The Chronicle* reads "...it's so nice to know that the good people at this church can be accepting and supportive of more radical points of view." Indeed our selection of plays has ranged from contemporary to



classic, but always seeks to provoke thought and laughter. The subject matter of the June play – the struggle for independence within a dysfunctional family – was both disturbing and inspiring. We thank our audience and volunteers for their appreciative support.

Opportunities to join this band of "radical" theater buffs abound – all kinds of talent are needed! If you enjoy the strategies of marketing, the literary art of selecting plays or the technical side of producing a show, please contact Bill Walters at

Senior's Luncheon

See you in September. Second Tuesday
is September 14th.

The Mommy Meals team provides twice-weekly meal delivery to families who have welcomed a



new baby into their family. One of the many moms, Valerie, had this to say about the program. "*The Mommy Meals program provided us with an incredible amount of support when we brought home both of our daughters.*

At a time when we were running on little sleep and dealing with the many transitions of adding another person to our family, it was wonderful to get so much help from our church community. We have also participated in the program as volunteers, which has been a great way to give back and to connect with other families at First UU."

If you or someone you know is expecting a baby (birth, adopted, or otherwise), contact Melanie Haupt (mkhaupt@gmail.com) to get your Mommy Meals calendar set up.

Yew Grove Moon Circle:



July 14th at 7:30 p.m. Gather with us under the full moon. Let the mirth and reverence within us unfold. This is an intimate, inspiration-led time to connect with the lunar energies & each other.

We do not exclusively follow any one tradition. We do offer an opportunity for you to express your appreciation for nature whether you are Deist or Atheist; Pagan, Christian, Buddhist, or any or none of the above. We have fun doing it, too! Bring your open heart and join us under the circle of oaks to the south of the sanctuary, and come ready to howl!

First Unitarian Universalist

Church of Austin

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Next Newsletter Deadline

15th of the month

Please submit information to



Photographs in the First UU Newsletter are from Jane Parsons and Margaret Roberts. Thank you both!

Camp UU Hogwarts

The magic begins July 25th

- **Waiting list** only for regular campers (entering grades 1-6)
- **Prefects may still apply** (entering grades 7 through college)
- **Adult volunteers needed to serve as:** house elves, professors, sports directors, chaperones, set-up/clean-up



Questions? Contact the camp leaders at campuu@austinuu.org

Website: <http://austinuu.org/wp2011/religious-education/camp-uu-hogwarts/>