



FIRST UU NEWS

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

What if you were really loved?

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



I haven't yet made a New Year's resolution this winter. For the past 10 years or so, my resolutions have been very short, and they have come to mind, one by one, in late December. The first one was "Tell the truth." I never thought I didn't tell the truth, but as I tried to keep the resolution on a moment-to-moment basis, I realized how much a small lie lubricates social interactions.

I found a way around those and counted down the months till I could indulge in them once again.

About some things, you just have to lie. Clogging, for example. I had someone ask me once how I liked clogging. (We used to live in the Appalachian region, and there was a good bit of it going on at fairs and festivals.) I answered that clog dancing held a special place in my heart. It does: the place where I imagine hell, if there were one, and what it would be like. For me it would be filling out paperwork while a flatbed truck full of white people clogged in the background to a speeded-up track of "Give Me That Old-Time Rock and Roll."

Telling the truth was what I paid attention to that whole year, discovering that my untruths mainly consisted of lies I told to myself.

"Be quiet" was the next year's resolution. It floated into my head during prayer and meditation. I did an inner double take. "What? I make my living speaking. How can I be quiet?" The Universe responded with—well, with quiet. I had to figure it out. It turned out that I needed to pay attention to being quiet inside, to not having to have an answer for every question I was asked, to being content to let others dominate a group discussion, to not voicing every opinion that was in my head.

Over the years there have been some easy resolutions and some hard ones. Who could have known that the year I resolved to "enjoy life" would turn into one big challenge? There you go. The Universe/God/Spirit/Wisdom is like that sometimes.

This year no resolution came to mind. I've been working on a question, though: "What would it be like if you felt really loved?"

Maybe the resolution is to wonder about this question. When I feel loved, my mind breathes better. My body relaxes. My behavior steadies. Something in my spirit opens like a rose. I want to feel it if I can, from the people around me or from the Spirit of Love that flows like an ancient river through the universe.

On my first CD, I printed a quotation from a letter Martha Graham sent to Agnes de Mille. According to Agnes de Mille: "I was bewildered and worried that my entire scale of values was untrustworthy ... I confessed that I

had a burning desire to be excellent, but no faith that I could be. Martha said to me, very quietly,

"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.' "

When I feel loved, it's easy to keep the channel open, and that's really what I want.

Maybe I could get really good at loving the world just every other day. Maybe on that day I could love myself

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"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique ..."

What if you were really loved?*continued from page 1*

as well. Just every other day, let go of self-improvement and challenging other people's mistakes. I invite you to think about doing this, too. Every other day, maybe we could let go of wondering if we are good enough, of wondering if we are doing it right. Every other day rest, if we can, in the warm animal pleasures of wind, water, food, earth, friends, love and beauty. Every other day put in abeyance the drive to feel that we are smart enough, thin enough, cool enough, doing enough.

The reason I wonder about doing it every other day is that, having read Kant, I have to ask what the world would be like if all of us did this every day. I'm not sure how well it would work. Maybe we would melt into self-satisfied goo. On the other hand, the world would be sour and clammy if we didn't do it at all. So, on alternate days we can all agree that this is New Age pap, and we can sharpen our intellectual claws in ourselves and one another with edgy glee.

It's January. I'm growing aware that I do have a resolution for the year: I get to wonder about love. Maybe being grounded in love makes change easier, rather than lulling us into staying the same. Maybe if we felt safer we would grow more freely. What if we felt really loved? This year, I mean to find out. May you feel it as well. ■

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**How big are we? Why does it matter? ... conclusion****by Susan Thomson**

Several months ago I began using this newsletter space to share with you my thoughts about growth at First UU. These are based on a book by Loren Mead, "More Than Numbers: The Way Churches Grow."

Mead describes four aspects of church growth, the most obvious being numerical growth. The others include:

- Organic growth—building the organizational structures and infrastructure and developing the practices and processes that result in a dependable, stable network of human relationships and systems in which we can grow and from which we can make a difference
- Maturation growth—the ability of a congregation to encourage all members to grow in the maturity of their faith and deepen their spiritual roots and religious imagination
- Incarnational growth—the ability to take the meanings and values of our UU faith and make them real in the world beyond our walls, our efforts to make the world a better place.

Too often churches focus on numerical growth and to some extent organic growth to the detriment of maturational and incarnational growth. Most of us would agree that our church should be about maturational and incarnational growth. In fact, I was struck in thinking about Mead's aspects of church growth how much our church's mission reflects a desire for maturational and incarnational growth. "We gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives and do justice." We also have three sets of ends, or goals, that expand upon our mission: nourishing souls, trans-

forming lives, witnessing to justice and providing intentional hospitality. Our mission and our ends were discerned by the board from input from the congregation provided during a series of sessions called "Bridge to Our Future" in 2010. I believe implicit if not explicit in our mission and our ends is a desire to grow. Certainly we don't want to limit nourishing souls and transforming lives to the lucky ones of us who have already found our church. We don't want to limit our hospitality to just ourselves, do we? And as more of us witness to justice by taking our values and our UU faith out beyond the walls of our church, more people will learn about and want to join our community.

Organic growth, the other aspect of church growth, presents the greatest challenge to us now. This has to do with infrastructure, including space and facility issues. Rev. Meg has held three town hall meetings to discuss our future and space concerns. I attended all three meetings to listen to what you had to say. There seemed to be general agreement that our facilities are not adequate to meet the needs of our current congregation, much less the size we might become. A variety of opinions were expressed about solutions, both short and long term, but we are very early in the process of making any kind of decisions.

Here is what I believe. Unless we choose not to live our *continued on page 3*



MEMBER PROFILE

**Brooks Lewis ...
feet on the earth, head in the sky**

“Earth-centered religions have been a part of Brooks Lewis’ spiritual life since the 1960s. Lewis, the new leader of the First UU Yew Grove group, started out as a Buddhist more than 40 years ago. Around that same time, he had several friends who followed the Druid Path, which he also explored. Why an earth-centered spiritual journey? “Experience in nature is tangible and brings up the deeper question of ‘how do I fit in this experience?’ The earth centers us even as we reach toward the sky and the stars,” says Lewis.

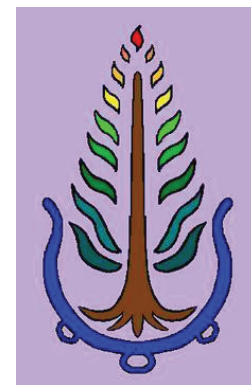
Growing up gay as a southern Baptist in Mississippi and Texas, Lewis learned as a teenager that he was damned because of who he was. At that time, he was also involved in the civil rights movement and couldn’t reconcile his beliefs on that issue with the church’s. In fact, he and his entire family left the southern Baptist church at the same time. “My parents were both born and raised in the south,” he says, “and while they recognized that they had beliefs that were intrinsically tied to that upbringing, they wanted me and my siblings to be different and to think for ourselves. I appreciate the fact that they encouraged us to question and to not accept the status quo.”

Lewis has been involved with First UU for more than 10 years. He joined the church because he saw it as an umbrella community for a wide range of groups. “It



is the kind of place where things can come together, where we can look at life with curiosity rather than judgment. It is a welcoming community that provides an environment where all kinds of groups can explore their spiritual paths. There is no dogma or creed that everyone has to adhere to.”

Lewis is particularly happy that the First UU provides a place where once every month people can gather for the Full Moon Circle. “These are open to anyone of any spiritual tradition as long as you come with an open heart,” he says. “That is what makes First UU so special ... it is inclusive.” ■



Earth-centered rituals

This is the focus of the Yew Grove rituals.

We humans stand with our feet upon the earth and our heads toward the sky.

We honor our connection to the Mother by witnessing the cycles of nature. We acknowledge the Five Directions: north (earth), south (fire), east (air), west (water) and center (heart or spirit). We ask the Mother for compassion.

We honor our connection to the Father by looking up and out at the sky. We ask the Father for light.

We concentrate on our intentions as shaped by our needs and the cycle of the moon. Each of the 13 moons have a particular place in the cycle of the year.

We share bread and juice or seasonal fruits and vegetables to illustrate our connection to one another and gratitude for the gifts of the earth. ■

How big are we?
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mission or if we decide it only applies to us and not to newcomers, we will continue to grow numerically as we grow maturational-ly and incarnationally. This is a good thing because it means we are living our mission. I think that’s my answer to the questions: how big are we and why does it matter? It matters because if we are not growing in all the different ways Mead describes, we are not making the difference in the world that

we want to make. I hope as we continue to dialog with Rev. Meg about organic growth and our facility needs, we reflect on what facilities we need in order to be intentionally welcoming to more people. What facilities do we need to nourish more souls and transform more lives? What facilities do we need to witness to justice in the many ways we do so at First UU, or would like to do if we had the space? Let’s talk about it. ■

A special thank you to Kitty Traylor

First UU member and Usher/Greeter Coordinator Kitty Traylor is resigning her position effective the end of January. Kitty has been the coordinator for more than five years. She has done an excellent job recruiting and training volunteers, creating schedules, and making sure that volunteers are available every Sunday ... and, most important, that everything runs smoothly Sunday after Sunday. Thanks, Kitty. ■

Mark your calendars!

First UU Pre-congregational Meeting, Sunday, April 28 and Congregational Meeting, Sunday, May 5. More details to follow.

Men's Fellowship December Breakfast

They cooked, talked, listened, laughed, ate breakfast and, yes, they cleaned up. On Dec. 8, 22 members of the Men's Fellowship joined together for breakfast, fellowship and good conversation. Special guest Jason Edwards, son of Bill and Ann Edwards, shared his recent experiences living in Ethiopia.

The Men's Fellowship group, which welcomes men from all over central Texas, gathers for breakfast on the second Saturday of each month (except when it coincides with a retreat). Men from many congregations (First UU, Live Oak, Wildflower, UUCHC, UUSA, Congregation Beth Israel, Shir Ami) in addition to friends and family participate in this monthly event.

All men of good will are welcome and encouraged to bring guests. Come join us for a hearty breakfast, with fellowship and conversation that will carry you through the day.

The Men's Fellowship is a self-sustaining group, so a donation of \$5 for breakfast helps support the group's activities. Fellowship members also do all of their own cooking, setup and clean up. ■



Jason Edwards



Members of the Men's Fellowship gather together for breakfast and good conversation.



Joe Linsalata doing clean up in the kitchen

First UU Christmas pageant shines!

Sunday, Dec. 16, was a very special day, particularly for Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus ... and the wise men, three kings, shepherds, bunnies, angels and others who gathered around the manger. First UU children dressed up and acted out the “soul story” of the birth of Jesus and dressed up in a wide array of creative costumes. The pageant featured great Christmas carols by both the adult and the children’s choirs and lively interaction from the children and the congregation. The pageant was written by our own Gillian Redfearn.

After the service, First UU members gathered for a Christmas potluck lunch with lots of great food, conversation and fellowship. ■



Mary and Joseph with baby Jesus



Christmas bunnies



First UU adult and children’s choir sing together.



Jeanette Swenson with bunny and angel



Little Bunny



Gillian Redfearn and friend

Work for a non-profit

Looking for a volunteer position that will turn into a paid part-time job? Do you care about promoting our UU values in the public arena and have the organizational skills to work as an executive director of a non-profit in conjunction with other coalitions?

Our new Texas UU Justice Ministry wants you or someone you know to join forces with the six-member steering committee, which has recently earned a \$20,000 grant from the UUA to coordinate our political action for justice among UUs throughout Texas. We want you to have experience working with the Texas legislature, political action and/or lobbying. Interested individuals please email Peggy Morton at socialaction@austinuu.org. ■

Donate peanut butter and hygiene products

While dedicated First UUs have been diligently bringing non-perishable food to our baskets set up outside the sanctuary on each Sunday worship service, Caritas is now asking specifically for jars of peanut butter and hygiene products for the homeless. Let's make a change and bring a little protein and cleanliness into the lives of the good people served by Caritas. ■

SOCIAL ACTION

Social Justice special offerings for 2013

Whether it's newcomers or old-timers, our Social Justice Special Offerings in 2013 will help us finance local justice projects in the new year. Three newcomers to receive monthly offerings next year include:

- The Texas Freedom Network, which supports research and education efforts promoting religious freedom, individual liberties and quality public education;
- Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry, which is organizing Texas UUs and raising the voice of UU values publicly by seeking to have those values enacted into legislation and promulgated in public policy; and
- U-Bar-U Retreat and Conference Center, located near Kerrville, Texas, which has served as a retreat and conference center for UU congregations for 10 years.

Old-time social justice projects still grabbing the hearts of First UU members to receive offerings next year include:

- Austin Child Guidance Center, providing comprehensive outpatient mental health services to thousands of children (ages three to 17) and their families;
- Front Steps, providing a pathway home through shelter, affordable housing and community education by offering real answers and real solutions to the needs of people experiencing homelessness;
- Hands on Housing, providing volunteer teams and building supplies to repair homes owned by low-income Austin residents. First UU organizes these projects each spring and fall;
- North Central Caregivers, where the UU donation is used to ensure seniors

in central Austin have the assistance needed with transportation, home visits and grocery shopping;

- Planned Parenthood, supporting a woman's right to choose when and if she will have children and protecting her reproductive health. They also provide high-quality, affordable health-care that gives individuals the power and ability to take control of their lives, their health and their future.
 - Safe Place, working to end sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing, prevention and social change, and providing safety for individuals and families affected by sexual and domestic violence; and
 - Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, advancing human rights and social justice in the U.S. and 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.
- From Nov. 15 through Dec. 7, First UU members nominated 18 groups. On Sunday, Dec. 9, and then again on Dec. 16 members voted for 10 groups to receive the 2013 special offerings.
- Another eight worthy projects didn't make the cut this year. Perhaps we'll move toward supporting more projects in the future. Meanwhile, we may see a couple of new social action projects sprouting at First UU from the local work being done with American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Texas, Grassroots Leadership, Open Door, Texans After Violence Project, The Riecken Foundation, Threads of Hope, Truth Be Told and Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office. ■

First UU members gearing up for Texas legislative session

In January, members of First UU's new Action for Justice committee will get right to work on promoting UU values in the Texas Legislature.

Action for Justice, a committee under Social Action, was formed as a way to get First UU members involved in lobbying and political issues. The group is focused mainly on the issues of women's health, immigration, and education, and will be partnering with non-profit organizations and faith groups throughout Texas.

The committee held its first official meeting on Dec. 10, and by the end of the meeting the group had already decided to participate in a handful of rallies, events, and lobby days during the 2013 Texas Legislative session.

These include: a Service of Witness on Jan. 8, the opening day of the legislative session, sponsored by Texas Impact; a Rally for Choice to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade on Jan. 22, sponsored by the National Women's Political Caucus (tentative, awaiting approval of city permit); the Save TX Schools March and Rally

on Feb. 23, sponsored by Save Texas Schools; and a Lobby Day on March 7, sponsored by Planned Parenthood. The group also will participate in Texas Freedom Network's Rally for Contraception, which will be held sometime in February (date TBD).

To kick off the 2013 legislative session, a small contingent from Action for Justice is hoping to meet with the Travis County delegation in the House and Senate in early January.

Action for Justice will hold regular meetings throughout the legislative session and will be inviting speakers to these meetings who can help educate the group on the issues of women's rights, immigration, and education. Future meetings are scheduled for 7 p.m. on Jan. 7, Jan. 28, Feb. 25 and March 18 at First UU.

All First UU members and friends are invited to participate in all of these meetings and events. If you have any questions or for specific details about the upcoming events, email the Action for Justice chair Samantha Fredrickson at justice@austinuu.org. ■

Volunteers needed ... Peoples Community Clinic

We need more volunteers for the second Tuesday collate group at People's Community Clinic. We have taken on additional responsibilities and need more help.

We meet next on Jan. 8 in the workroom at PCC. Arrive any time after 9:30 a.m. and leave when you need—we are always finished by noon. You don't need to participate each month, just as you can. There are usually around four to eight of us and it is a nice opportunity to visit with each other. Please email Sheri Overton at pcc@austinuu.org. ■

January special collection: Texas UU Justice Ministry

Texas legislators will learn about our Unitarian Universalist values by way of the newly formed Texas UU Justice Ministry. First UU will help fund the network as we donate generously to all 12 monthly special collections throughout 2013.

We focus on TXUJ in January as the state legislature convenes on Jan. 8. It's important to know that our donations will support the good work being done as we "practice our liberal religious values in the public arena," according to our church ends.

It's frustrating at times to feel like

Austin works alone politically as a thoughtful, progressive mind for a bobbling Texas head. However, we have 59 UU congregations in Texas and other UU fellowships of like-minded UUs who join us in thinking critically and wanting "all people to access the richness of life."

While First UU has its own new Action for Justice group of political activists, it is important for us to network with fellow Texas UUs.

The UUA has also recognized the importance of the TXUJ and has awarded it a \$20,000 grant, which is

dependent on a significant matching investment from Texas UU congregations and individual memberships. We need to show our Austin commitment as we donate generously to our 2013 monthly special offerings.

Join us at the worship service Sunday, Jan. 13, and plan to donate generously to our Social Justice mission by way of the special collection. ■

Freshen UUp: improvements, fun, and fellowship!

During the last half of 2012, efforts around First UU's interior have resulted in visible progress throughout the building: the gallery, Howson Hall, the administrative offices, the welcome center, the RE office; however, there is still more to do!

Next steps include prepping and painting the trim and doors in Howson Hall, the little room at the juncture of the foyer / Howson Hall / gallery, and the hallways from the kitchen all the way around to the back playground. We hope to finish all of these projects by early February, but need additional folks to help make this happen!

Want to serve as part of the painting crew for one of these projects? Are you part of a group (committee, ministry, book group, Chalice Circle, and so forth) looking for a service project? Please consider volunteering here by contacting the Freshen UUp project coordinator, Vicki Almstrum, at freshenUUp@austinuu.org. For longer term involvement, please join the Yahoo group by sending an email to Freshen-UUp-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. ■

Interfaith Environmental Network Energy Action Team update

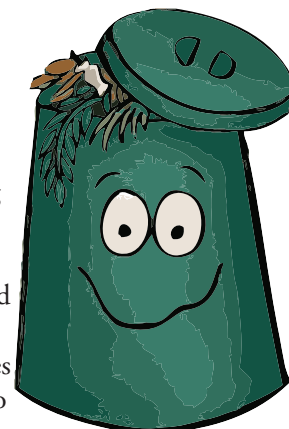
The Energy Action Team, sponsored by First UU Green Sanctuary Committee, will meet the first and the fourth Mondays from January (only fourth Monday in January) through March in Rm. 15 at First UU. The meetings are scheduled from 6:30-9 p.m. All First UU members are invited to participate.

The IEN Energy Action Team is a group of representatives from Austin's faith communities organized by the Interfaith Environmental Network of Austin to address the challenges and opportunities we face today with global warming, climate change and meeting the world's future energy needs. Climate Buddies, an Austin-based coalition of energy professionals, are facilitating and consulting our team. Together, Climate Bud-

dies and the IEN Energy Action Team are developing effective local strategies for individuals and congregations. These strategies are designed to

build a sustainable future for both our local and global communities. The IEN Energy Action Team currently consists of more than 20 members and is founded on the recognition of preserving and improving the interdependence of human life and the well-being of creation.

For more information, please contact green@austinuu.org. ■



Even this guy wouldn't have enough arms

We Unitarian Universalist expect a lot from our ministers: inspiring sermons; compassionate care; well-run administration; local, national and international awareness and social justice action. Even this guy wouldn't have enough arms. Since cloning Meg isn't an option, we decided to get her some more arms.

Over the next couple of months, you will be receiving a call from a pastoral care associate telling you that you are in their touch group. These volunteers will be checking in to see how you and yours are doing, whether you have joys or concerns or needs with which they can help.

The volunteers went through two months of training with Meg and representatives from Threads of Hope



and will continue monthly training. They want to make sure everyone in the congregation has a contact person whom they can reach if they have a concern, a crisis, a joy to share or need a listening ear. The pastoral care associates want to be supportive of you in times of joy and of difficulty and to be additional arms for Meg because, as much as she would like to, she can't be everywhere. The PACs can listen, help coordinate with congregational care or other church groups, but most of all, they want to get to know you. ■

PARADOX PLAYERS

The play's the thing—with Paradox Players

Did you know that one of the most vibrant theater companies in Austin is right under your nose? Paradox Players, now in its 13th season, produces three shows a year, often to sold out audiences, on the Bethke Stage in Howson Hall. In the spirit of First UU goals, we select scripts that tackle social issues, provoke thought and raise the spirit. We also have a long-running Readers' Theater (second Monday of most months) and a brand new Children's Theater (did you bring your kids to see "Billy Goats Gruff" last month?)

The actors you see in our productions are drawn to Paradox from all over Austin and beyond. What you may not know is that for every actor on stage we need an army of volunteers doing set construction, backstage and front of house work, and more.

Without a complete team of volunteers we simply couldn't provide the near professional productions and seemingly seamless evenings of theater we are known for in the Austin community.

To that end, we are hosting an "open house" and informal presentation about what it takes to produce a play on Sunday, Jan. 20. Join us in Howson Hall for sandwiches at 12:30 p.m. followed by a "show and tell." This will be geared toward anyone interested in getting involved with Paradox Players, or just curious about how the magic of theater works.

We welcome members, near members and visitors alike. If you'd like to know more, contact Gary Payne, Paradox Player's Artistic Director, at 512-799-5872 or capcitymystery@swbell.net ■

Theater goes ... mark your calendars!

On Friday, Feb 8, Paradox Players brings you, our valued season ticket holders and other members of First UU, a special Valentine bouquet (sorta), courtesy of William Shakespeare. "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" is an irreverent, fast-paced romp through the Bard's extensive playbook. Join three (that's right, only three) madcap men in tights as they weave their wacky way

through ALL of Shakespeare's comedies, histories and tragedies in one wild evening that will leave you breathless and helpless with laughter. After you catch your breath, meet the actors and enjoy fine food and refreshments at our opulent (sorta) Opening Night reception.

"The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" runs Feb. 8-24, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m., plus a Valentine performance on Thursday, Feb.14, at 8 p.m. All performances will be held on the Bethke Stage in Howson Hall. Call 512-744-1495 or visit paradoxplayers.org to make reservations. FREE childcare will be provided on Sunday, Feb.10, and Saturday, Feb.16. ■

"The funniest show you are likely to see in your entire lifetime"
Montreal Gazette



Eclectic Folk Jam

**Friday, Jan. 11
7-10 p.m.
Howson Hall**

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

UU/Quaker Singalong

**Saturday, Jan. 26
7:30–10:30 p.m**

Please join us at the Friends Meeting House, 3701 E. MLK Blvd. Bring snacks and finger foods, musical instruments, and copies of songs you want to sing. Copies of "Rise Up Singing" are provided. This is an alcohol-free event. Contact Larry Vaughn 469-0029 or Mary Jane Ford at singalong@austinuu.org. ■

Readers' theater

**Monday, Jan. 14
Gallery
7:30 p.m**

Join us in the Gallery for the fun of reading aloud without memorizing or rehearsing! We'll be reading an assortment of one-act plays. Newcomers welcome, no experience required. ■

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education highlightsby **Mari Caballero****Children's RE**

Hello all,

This year keeps zooming past! "Time flies...", as they say! RE was a busy department this past fall semester. We launched a new Sunday school program model, using a talented and highly qualified team of volunteer teachers and assistants

from within our congregation. This gave our children an opportunity to get to know and learn from this wonderful community of some of the best Austinites I have had the privilege of meeting. In turn, several members of our congregation were granted the joyful privilege of getting to know and learning from some of the cutest, funniest, and most insightful kids in town. If you would like the opportunity to engage in this delightful spiritual practice of teaching during one of our worship services, please contact Laine Young, teacher coordinator at laine@ustinuu.org. Training/orientation is Jan. 20 at noon. Lunch will be provided. We launch the new curricula and spring Sunday school semester on Jan. 27.

This past semester, the children in grades pre-k through 5th concentrated on curricula that helped them to understand themselves and articulate their faith as Unitarian Universalists. This spring, we are beginning curricula that focuses on helping the children to understand and articulate the beliefs of faith traditions outside our own, while continuing to develop strategies for ethical decision-making.

Pre-K (3 & 4 year olds):**We Are Many, We Are One**

This tried-and-true curriculum, by Colleen McDonald, continues to introduce our youngest learners to playing and working cooperatively, expressing their feelings about themselves and others, recognizing congregations as places where we meet friends and care about our community, appreciating how individuals and communities are alike and yet different, viewing nature as a gift that requires our care, and celebrating the different religions and cultures of our world.

K-1st: Picture Book World Religions

Last semester, this class explored Unitarian Universalism through children's literature. This course, by Kate T. Covey, focuses on Eastern religions. Each lesson begins with a picture book. This class also will engage in sharing ideas and fun arts and crafts.

2nd-3rd: A World of New Friends: Introduction to World Religions

This new curriculum, by Sara L. Sautter, begins each unit with an introduction to a new "friend," a fictional child who belongs to a different faith tradition. Children will have the chance to explore the beliefs, traditions, and celebrations of various cultures and faiths through the eyes of this fictional peer through stories, discussion and hands-on activities.

4th-5th: Why Do Bad Things Happen?

This timely oldie-but-goodie curriculum by Charlene Brotman, et. al. (supplement by Cathy Cartwright) begins deeper discussion (and other activities) with our older children around issues of life and death and other complex questions through the perspective of various world religions. This course will serve as a nice segue for our fourth through fifth graders from traditional Sunday school to Jr. Youth Group, as they prepare for transition in sixth grade.

Adult Religious Ed. Update

This fall was not any less busy for adult RE than for our Sunday school and youth groups. We launched our second year of Chalice Circles and have continued to offer classes such as book discussion groups, Yoga and Mindful Meditation. We also have offered several fellowship opportunities, such as Women's Spirituality and our Young Adult group, as well as training in pastoral care. We also have learned about becoming a better ally to historically marginalized communities and individuals.

I am pleased to report that the RE department will sponsor an even more robust array of programming this spring semester! Please read the article on page 11 about F.Re.D., our new Wednesday night multigenerational program, and the Adult RE courses offered then. Also note the announcement on page 11 about another new course, the "Not-So-Big-Life" book discussion group. Keep your eyes peeled for the rebirth of Evensong at First UU. More information about that will be in next month's newsletter.

*Please note that the deadline for proposals for fall 2013 RE programming is April 15. Email mari@ustinuu.org for more details on the application process.

Looking forward to a great 2013 in Religious Ed.! ■

In Faith, Mari

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

Introducing... F.Re.D.!

On Jan. 16, we begin our weekly F.Re.D. programming! Who's Fred, you ask? F.Re.D. stands for Fellowship, Religious Ed., and Dinner. This is an idea that is catching on throughout our movement, which will allow us to eat together, chat together and learn together each Wednesday night at First UU. Dinner will be a suggested donation of \$6/person and will always include a soup, a casserole, a simple salad, and bread. Each week, either the soup or casserole will be vegetarian. After great times at dinner, the fun continues as the children go off and play or watch a movie in childcare. Teens may continue to have fellowship in the youth room. (If a critical mass shows up regularly, we will consider a more structured teen RE.) Adults may go to choir practice or attend a class. Below are descriptions of our offerings:

Spirit in Practice, a Tapestry of Faith curriculum

led by Marisol Caballero

Jan. 16-May 22, every other Wednesday

This class is designed to help Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines, or practices, of the spirit—practices that help them connect with the sacred ground of their being, however they understand it. Spirit in Practice affirms religious diversity while seeking unity in our communal quest for meaning and wholeness. “Whether participants follow a path they identify as Humanist, Jewish, Christian, Pagan, Theist, Atheist, Agnostic, Mystic, and/or any of the other paths we follow in our diverse congregations, the Spirit in Practice workshops offer a forum for learning, sharing, and growth that can enrich their faith journeys.” (uuu.org) Register at the LRE table in the gallery. There is a \$15 fee, and scholarships are available.

Compassionate Communication

Elizabeth Gray & Michael Kersey
co-facilitators

Feb. 6-May 15, every other Wednesday

The Dalai Lama says “We can deal with our emotions creatively and employ our intelligence in a beneficial way.” But if you are not always so great at using your emotions and intelligence in a way that works for you, the Dalai Lama says, “despair not ... what distinguishes us as human beings is that we are capable of positive change.” This compassionate communication course strives to help us focus on practical positive change in how we interact with others. Using several texts as a basis for discussion, participants will reflect upon current communication styles and explore new techniques, such as dialogue, appreciative inquiry, balancing advocacy and inquiry, and emotional intelligence.

Elizabeth Gray and Michael Kersey will facilitate the classes. Class size is limited to 12. Register at the LRE table in the gallery. There is \$15 fee, and scholarships are available. Two books are required for this course: “Emotional Intelligence 2.0,” by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves and “Crucial Conversations: Tools For Talking When Stakes Are High,” by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler. ■

Spring Semester 2013 Children & Youth RE Calendar of Events

Jan. 13-Feb. 24 - Surprise Pals sign-up throughout the month of December, party on Feb. 24

Jan. 18-20 - Houston Youth Rally

Feb. 10 - Valentine's Party, Howson Hall

Feb. 22-24 - SWUUC Youth Ministry Extravaganza at Camp Allen

March 22-24 - North Texas Youth Rally

March 29, 6-8 p.m. - Passover Seder, Howson Hall

March 31 - Easter Celebration. We will be collecting canned food during the month of March.

Youth-led Worship Service (TBD)

Youth Bridging Ceremony (TBD)

April 21 - Intergenerational Worship- Gaia Psalms

May 19 - “Thank-an-RE-volunteer” Sunday!

May 26 - Intergenerational Worship- Flower Communion

Women's Spirituality Group

On Saturday, Jan. 5, the Women's Spirituality group will be working with the "Web of Change," a magical tool for setting in motion the changes you would like to see in your life in 2013. We will each make a web collage that represents these changes. On Jan. 19, we'll return to the "Rise Up and Call Her Name" curriculum and focus on White Buffalo Woman (Lakotas of North America).

The Women Spirituality group meets on the first and third Saturday mornings of each month, from 10:30 a.m.-12 noon in Rm. 13. This group is for women of high school age and older. We are open to new members at all times. For more information, please contact Linda Webster, women@austinuu.org. ■

Youth group update

The junior and senior youth groups will be working on the playgrounds in January. They will be weeding, painting, and adding wood chips as needed. The senior youth group will host a lock-in for all high school UU youth in central Texas on Jan. 4. They also will be attending a state-wide youth event the weekend of Jan. 18-20 in Houston. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Andrew Young at andrew@austinuu.org. ■

"Not so Big Life" book group begins Jan. 9

The bigger-is-better idea that triggered the explosion of McMansions in home design has spilled over to give us McLives. In her bestselling "Not So Big House" series, Sarah Susanka showed us how to change the way we live by adjusting the physical space we inhabit. Now, in "The Not So Big Life," Sarah takes her revolutionary philosophy a giant step further by showing us how to change the way we live by fully inhabiting each moment of our lives.

"The Not So Big Life" reveals that form and function serve not only architectural aims, but life goals as well. Just as we can tear down interior walls to open up space, it shows us that we can tear down our fears, assumptions and conditionings in a way that opens us up to new possibilities so we can start passionately engaging in the things we long to do.

In addition to the weekly chapter discussion, we will be encouraging our members to complete the exercises that are listed throughout the book. Feel free to jump in at any time; it is recommended, but not necessary, to attend all of the meetings or to start at the beginning.

"The Not So Big Life" book discussion group will be showing a video of author Sarah Susanka at Casa de Luz, in the Cielo room South on Wednesday, Jan. 9 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. For the remainder of January, book discussions will be held every Tuesday from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at First UU. Please visit <http://www.meetup.com/not-so-big-life-Austin> for additional information.

If you have any questions, contact Joe Linsalata at 512-327-5000 or linsalata@austin.rr.com. ■

Heritage Book Club update

The Heritage book club, an all Austin UU group, meets on the second Friday of each month. We have a potluck at 7 p.m. and book discussion at 8 p.m. January's book is "Billionaires and Ballot Bandits" by Greg Palast. Host is Jim Tucker at 8300 High Oak, phone 345-2728. RSVPs are requested but not required. For those who like to read ahead, the February book is "The Bonesetter's Daughter" by Amy Tan.

topics designed to help explore spirituality and life's greater meaning. Chalice Circles are a great way to meet and get to know other congregants at a level that is hard to achieve just by attending services, visiting in Howson Hall or serving on committees.

Look for tables in the Gallery after services. Someone will be there to answer questions and register new participants. You also can contact Lisa Carrell at chalicecircles@austinuu.org for more information. ■

Sign up for Chalice Circles in January

Registration is underway for First UU's small group ministry program, Chalice Circles. The program is comprised of several small groups that meet regularly to deepen the participants' connection to the church and its members. Individuals in these groups share their thoughts and feelings on a variety of

Surprise Pals update

The sign-up deadline has passed for Surprise Pals, so now adult gift-givers/pen-pals will be paired with an elementary-age child. Parents will be notified of their child's secret "surprise pal." There will be a reveal party on Feb. 24 in which pals will have the chance to meet one another! ■

DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

Chalice Lighter program, winter 2013 call

One of the surest signs of the changing seasons is the regular appearance of Chalice Lighters calls. Chalice Lighters are members of the Southwestern UU Conference who are called on three times per year to contribute \$10 each (or more, as the spirit moves you) to help a church or fellowship in the district get over a financial hump. These are grants to UU churches with almost no overhead costs. Recent calls have included the San Marcos Fellowship, the Fellowship of Hidalgo County, the Huntsville Church and the Horizon Church in Carrollton, all Texas churches.

The SWUUC is sending out a call to support First UU Church of Houston. The church has requested the grant to create a multi-site church, which will join the congregations of First UU Houston, Northwest Community UU Church and Thoreau UU Congregation into one church with three campuses.

If you are not already a member of the Chalice Lighters, consider joining now to receive automatic notification of each call. Whether you are current member or not, please send your check, made out to SWUUC Chalice Lighters, to Chalice Lighters, SWUUC District Office, 6720 Brentwood Stair Rd., Fort Worth, TX 76112. You also can donate through <http://swuuc.org/pages/stewardship/chalice-lighters.php> using PayPal.

Southwest UU Women's Conference

Feb. 22-24 at the Omni Bayfront Hotel, Corpus Christi, Texas

Women and girls 13 years and older, join UU women from across our district at "Making Waves on a Sea of Change" Southwest UU Women's Conference 2013! The conference features Kimberly Dark, storyteller, speaker, performance artist, activist, and scholar, and Kit Holmes, Grammy Award nominee, multi-instrumentalist, and singer-songwriter.

Workshop tracks include:

- Spirituality and Ritual: Rhythmic Waves for the Soul
- Creativity: Waves that Curve into Being
- Social Justice: Making Waves for Justice
- Women and Families: Splashing in the Waves
- Music and Movement: Making Body Waves

For information on registration, pricing, worship, lodging, t-shirts, workshop tracks, maiden program, area attractions, and the schedule, see the Denominational Affairs bulletin board across the hall from Meg's office or this link: <http://www.swuuc.org/brochure#workshops>

SWUUC Spring Conference and Annual Meeting

April 19-21 at First UU Church of San Antonio

This SWUUC event, "Journey to Justice," will be held close to home this year! Social justice has been a hallmark of Unitarian Universalism. How do we navigate on the justice path with so many needs in our world and in our own communities? The answers lie "deep in the heart" of who we are and who we want to become.

Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz, president and CEO of UUSC, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, a nonsectarian organization that advances human rights and social justice in the U.S. and around the world, is the keynote speaker. He also has served as the executive director of Amnesty International USA, is an ordained UU minister, and a former president of the UUA. Fabulous singer-songwriter Peter Mayer will be the special musical guest.

For information about the conference schedule, breakout sessions, lodging, child-care, registration, and cost, see the Denominational Affairs bulletin board or visit <http://www.uusouthland.org/swuucspring2013.html>. ■

Yew Grove Moon Circle

**Thursday, Jan. 17
7 p.m.
Gallery**

We will be shifting our Moon Circles to meet on the third Thursday of each month. www.austinuu.org/yewgrove. ■

Brigid's Bardic Circle & moon ritual

**Feb. 14, 7 p.m.
Rm. 17**

Come for the song, story, and poetry of this special celebration. Talented poets, singers, and storytellers will entertain you on this traditional evening of honoring the spoken word. Yew-Grove@AustinUU.org. ■

Floater needed

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

Music matters

Intergenerational Choir raises funds for North Central Caregivers

On Dec. 7, the First UU Intergenerational Choir engaged in holiday outreach as they participated in the annual North Central Caregivers benefit concert. Singing "Christmastime Is Here" from a "Charlie Brown Christmas," the IC performed to a packed house at St. Louis Catholic Church alongside 12 other area church music groups.

Children's Choir -- now at a new rehearsal time!

We have received numerous requests for a later Children's Choir rehearsal time. As a result, we will be rehearsing from 10 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. this season. While the new time slot no longer runs concurrently with RE, you may still sign up your child through the RE registration page. Primary Choir (K-3) will meet in Rm. 11 and Secondary Choir (4-8) will meet in Rm. 13.

Adult Choir -- now with childcare!

In order to better accommodate singers with children and grandchildren, Wednesday night Adult Choir rehearsal (7:30-9:00 p.m.) now features free childcare. Make a New Year's resolution to add more singing to your life! ■

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

JAN. 6

Burning Bowl Service

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

It is good to begin the new year by clearing out old regrets and resentments. Come toss those things into the fire and get a fresh start.

JAN. 13

The Delicate Art of Forgiveness

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

What does forgiveness entail? Does one have to "forgive and forget?" How do we forgive ourselves? Another sermon having to do with our Covenant of Healthy Relations.

JAN. 20

This New Thing Called Universalism

WITH MARISOL CABALLERO

Evangelical minister Rob Bell received much media attention over his book, "Love Wins." He has come to a Universalist theology (although he doesn't use this terminology) and has been widely condemned for it by the evangelical community. Join us as we explore Universalism's history and delve into why this idea still causes such an uproar. Also, why does the concept of God's unconditional love remain so unfamiliar that Bell's conclusions are reported in mainstream media as a brand new idea? What part do we play, as Unitarian Universalists, in such widespread unawareness of Universalism?

JAN. 27

"The Eightfold Path"

WITH REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Buddhism teaches that there is a way to overcome suffering by coming to an understanding of the way the world is, and by living in a certain way. There is no requirement that you believe in it, they say, you just try it to see if it works.

THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

JAN. 6

A Town Hall Meeting: Three Levels of Government and How They Serve You

WITH LEE LEFFINGWELL, SARAH ECKHARDT & DONNA HOWARD

Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell, Travis County Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt, and State Representative Donna Howard will describe how state, county, and city government cooperate to create and implement programs that serve and protect the public interest. All three public officials are current or former members of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, share common values, and live in our Austin community. Come prepared for some good discussion!

JAN. 13

The Importance of Composting in our 21st Century Food System

WITH JASON SANDERS

Jason Sanders, Recycling and Composting Coordinator at Texas Disposal Systems, will discuss the importance of food waste composting, the use of finished compost, and its relevance to the entirety of the food system. The U.S. food system is mechanized, specialized, centralized, and globalized ... and is unsustainable. Jason's presentation will take you from the farmer's gate to the consumer's plate, and (hopefully) back to the farmer's gate.

As a sponsor of this Forum, the Green Sanctuary Committee invites you to join us after the presentation for further discussion of these issues facing our planet. Join us at Central Market, 4001 North Lamar, around 1:30 p.m.

JAN. 20

New York City to the Texas Legislature: How Did it Happen?

WITH REP. ELLIOTT NAISHTAT

In Nov. 1990, Rep. Naishtat was elected to the District 49 seat in the Texas House of Representatives. He has been re-elected 11 times and serves as a member of the Human Services Committee and vice chair of the Public Health Committee. In prior sessions, Rep. Naishtat served on the Government Organization Committee, the Juvenile Justice and Family Issues Committee, the Urban Affairs Committee, and the County Affairs Committee. Rep. Naishtat also is a founding board member of the Legislative Study Group (House Progressive Caucus).

JAN. 27

Sensible Immigration Reform: Lessons from Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom

WITH DR. RAY MARSHALL

Ray Marshall, Ph.D., is holder of the Audre and Bernard Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin. He is author of more than 30 books and monographs, and has written extensively on immigration policy. This includes "Migration and domestic labor markets: Auctions and employer demand versus public policy" (EPI, 2012) and "Value-Added Immigration: Lessons from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom" (EPI, 2011). Professor Marshall served as secretary of labor in the Carter administration, and is founder of the Economic Policy Institute.

Annual giving statements

Thank you for your generosity over the past year. Your church office will spend the month of January closing up the books and accounts for 2012. This includes verifying the completeness and accuracy of the records. After that is finished, we will mail statements to everyone of their giving during 2012 (January through December). Your giving statement will go in the mail no later than Jan. 31. ■

Senior Luncheon

Tuesday, Jan. 8
Howson Hill
12 noon

Join us for soup, salad and dessert. Only \$5. John Loehlin will read selections from his book "Verses of a Young Man"—light verse on topics ranging from "A Bestiary" to "Of Time and the Weather." Listeners should find these verses accessible, entertaining, and occasionally even nostalgic.

John Loehlin is a retired Professor of Psychology (UT) and is married to church member Marj Loehlin. ■

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

512.452.6168
austinuu.org

Senior Minister
Rev. Meg Barnhouse

Director of Finance
and Operations
Sean Hale

Interim Director of
Lifespan Religious Ed.
Marisol Caballero

Director of Music
Brent Baldwin

Director of Membership
and Communications
Carla Jo Schaefer

Board President
Susan Thomson
president@austinuu.org

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

4700 Grover Ave.
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Winter Solstice celebration

The Winter Solstice celebration was a great success. On Dec. 21, more than 40 First UU members and guests joined together for a family-friendly evening of song, story and ritual to celebrate the solstice on the longest night of the year.

Co-sponsored by Yew Grove Pagan Interfaith and Women's Spirituality Group of First UU Church, it also celebrated the rebirth of the Sun Child in each of us, including the story of the first Yule Song, and ending in the spiral dance. The celebration was followed by a dessert potluck, which was enjoyed by everyone. ■



Brooks Lewis, Josef Ricketts and Jacob Williamson



The Neemidge family