



FIRST UU NEWS

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

Did You Know?

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse

Roots

In December, days are shorter and cooler, and we get sweet relief from the heat. Gardeners know that you plant trees in fall because they use the winter to send energy to their roots, growing into the ground, becoming healthy and sturdy enough to stand up to the heat. Some mystics call these days the “Dark Time” of the year. We attend to reflection, reconciliation, and cleaning out the old, useless material in our hearts and minds to make room for growth. We use the darkness to grow our roots. This church is in a time of blossoming – lots of growth and new energy, making room for the children on Sunday mornings, raising our hands if we have seats next to us so the people who come through the doors of First UU can find a place.

It’s very important during this exciting time in the life of First UU that we do not neglect our roots. It’s important to pay attention to growth of all kinds, not solely to numbers. We need to grow in depth, as individuals and as a church. How? Keep attending to your spiritual practice, whether or not you manage to do it daily. Keep trying. Say the Metta Meditation, sing: “when I breathe in, I breathe in peace...,” meditate in some way, perform acts of service and kindness, take quiet walks, cultivate friendships, cook

food to give away, donate time and money to your church community and other worthy causes, notice the miracles occurring all around you, be open to mystery, broaden your meaning when you use the word “us,” do what you say you’ll do, take fewer things personally. Try to be patient with the people in your house.

We are all about becoming good people here, practicing in this community, at work, and in our families. It’s not only about becoming the best people we can be, it’s about being in right relationship with one another, with the people of the earth, and with the earth itself.

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These are the basics to which we return over and over again. First UU will grow in numbers and in depth if we attend to our roots, and this is the time of year to turn our energies and our attention in that direction.

Hospitality

What are we doing about our challenges with space?

You may notice that we have

good participation in “Martha’s Free Breakfast” (named after



Martha Leipziger, whose bequest to First UU continues to fund the breakfast), which brings more folks to the first service on Sunday mornings. We are doing this partly in order to free up space in the second service. Some of our Adult RE groups have scrambled for space down the street at Café Express, in the courtyard, squeezed into the library in order to make room for the children during “prime time” on Sunday mornings, and we are grateful to them for doing that.

More is needed, though. You all suggested names for a team to research the pros, cons, costs and benefits of building more space here on this site or moving to another location in central Austin. This team is at work. It is chaired by Brian and Sharon Moore, and its other members are: Peter Marsh, Julie Lipton, Fred Higgins, John Franks, Eric Hepburn, John Payne, Meg Barnhouse, Sean Hale and Mari Caballero. In January we will have three Town Meetings in which the congregation is invited to brainstorm about questions for the research team to study: on Sunday, Jan. 12 after Forum, around 1:15 in the sanctuary; Wed. Jan 15 in Howson Hall at

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Women's Spirituality Group

The Women's Spirituality Group continues our focus on "Explorations of Spiritual Practices" with an introduction to chi gong and yoga on December 7. On December 21 we won't meet at our regular time in the morning, but instead we will celebrate the Winter Solstice with Yew Grove and the First UU congregation (see page 6).

The Women's 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 who are high school age and older. We are open to new members at all times and hope you will join us. For more information please contact: women@austinuu.org.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Stand Up and Be Counted

by Michael Kersey

Attending and voting at Congregational Meetings lives out the UU principle of democratic process.



The big news from a Board of Trustees perspective that I want the whole congregation to take note of this month is our All Congregational Meeting on Sunday December 15th at 1:30 p.m. Every member of the church is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Friends, visitors, and anyone else who is interested in what happens at an All Congregational Meeting are welcome to attend too, but will not be issued a voting card. Our governing bylaws state: "Individuals who have been members of the church for 30 days or more and who have (as an individual or part of a family unit) made a recorded financial contribution during the last 12 months and at least 30 days prior to the meeting have the right to vote at all official church meetings."

At the meeting Rev. Barnhouse will

present the "State of the Church." Peggy Morton and the Social Justice Team will be collecting ballots for voting on the Second Sunday Special Offering recipients for 2014. Margaret Borden will provide the final "Bridge to the Future Action Plan" report. And we will vote on our Church's budget for 2014. Childcare will be available for the All Congregational Meeting in Room 19.

Also, this month the Board of Trustees meets on Tuesday, December 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the church Gallery (unless it is a Freeze Night, in which case, the meeting will be in one of the class rooms). Board Meetings are also open to the public.

Finally, I want wish you and yours a very happy holiday season from your church Board of Trustees. ■

Thank you, Texas Health Credit Union!

First UU Church is very grateful to our neighbor next door, Texas Health Credit Union. For years they have allowed us to use their parking lot for overflow traffic on Sundays. This kindness has helped us to accommodate many more people here each week than our own limited parking allows. Can you imagine what it would be like to park here on Sundays if they weren't so generous with us?

THCU has also provided us with checking and savings accounts since 2005. We're very grateful to have a friendly place to keep your generous gifts so close by. Thank you!

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noon; and Wed. Jan 22 after the Fred dinner, at 6:45 pm. Find one of those times that works for you and come for the discussion, which Rev. Meg will facilitate.

Canvass

You all made a good stewardship drive. Thank you, Karen Neeley and the team of canvassers!

The average increase in pledges was 8-9%, and many more people renewed their pledges than last year. We will be able to go forward with our determination to focus well on membership and communications. Instead of increasing all committees/ministries' budgets across the board, we are taking \$10,000.00 from the rent from the Girls School of Austin to fund projects the committees proposed as they turned in their budgets. Since the Girls School income is not ongoing, we felt it would be most responsible to fund special efforts with that money rather than ongoing ones. In order to have the congregation represented in these discussions, Pres. Michael

Kersey will participate as the money is allocated.

Christmas Eve

We are having two different Christmas Eve services this year: the 5:00 service is family oriented, and Rev. Mari will preach. Look on page 10 in this newsletter for details about the family activities in the hour before the service! The 7:00 service is intergenerational, as it was last year, and will be a UU Lessons and Carols format with candlelight at the end. We may be hosting Freeze Night, as Tuesdays are First UU's night to work with the homeless if the temperature dips below freezing. We are privileged to do something to remediate the "no room in the inn" situation with which these men are faced every day. Would you be willing to drop off food? To stay overnight? Would you be willing to clean up the next morning, on Christmas? This is an effortful undertaking, and it is hands-on justice work. Let's pull together to make this happen. ■

LGBTQ Spiritual Connections Fair

Sunday, Jan. 26

In January, First UU and the Pride Interfaith Partnership are hosting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Spiritual Connections Fair. It will be a chance for people from all around Austin to chat with members of faith communities (e.g. churches, synagogues, temples) and alternative paths (e.g. Gay Spirituality Discussion Group) that appeal to or welcome LGBTQ folks.

Anyone who would like to help is welcome to attend, either on the day of the event or in our planning meetings. Questions? Feel free to contact Peter at didit@austin.rr.com or at (512) 374-9688.



Music Matters

by Brent Baldwin

Enjoy this month's wonderful music programming accompanying early and late Sunday services!

This Month's Music Programming

December 1

The First UU of Austin Children's and Youth Choirs will share their music during morning services.

December 8

The First UU of Austin Adult Choir will be joined by a chamber orchestra for a very special presentation of

Charpentier's Messe de Minuit pour Noel.

December 15

The First UU of Austin Intergenerational Choir will be on hand to spread the holiday cheer.

December 22

Special musical guests The Therapy Sisters will share their delightfully irreverent take on the holidays. Check them out here: www.facebook.com/thetherapysisters.

Happy holidays from all of us at the music program!

UU fellowship in photos



The UU Heart of Texas Mens Retreat at U-Bar-U last month had 32 men turn out, most of them from First UU.



The head angel in last year's Christmas Pageant poses for the camera.

**Happy Holidays
from First UU
of Austin**

*From all the church staff,
we send our warmest wishes
to you and yours this
holiday season!*

YRUU have fun in fellowship

By Alicia Stadler, YRUU historian

Here is some of what the senior youth group have been up to recently.

During the summer, we painted the walls in room 11 to cover the old writing and prepare for new. New writing is only added under covenant.

In September we had a retreat at U-Bar-U. That was fun! We built our covenant and built stone cairns to mark the paths as our service project.

In October several of us attended the HOT (Heart Of Texas) rally in San Antonio. It is so interesting to meet people from all over the region and do activities. For our service, we painted the fence around a pool in a park.

In November, several of us helped serve ice cream at the party at Zilker Park, we did a service project to help with the gardens at Lamar Middle School, and we had as a fundraiser to serve lunch for the Congregational Meeting.

There's always something fun going on with the youth! ■



Save the Dates!**Pre-congregational meeting**

Sunday, April 6, 2014

Congregational meeting

Sunday, May 11, 2014

*Childcare will be provided for each.***Don't forget Congregational Meeting this month****Sanctuary, Dec. 15
1:30-2:30 p.m.**

The church will vote on next year's budget at this congregational meeting, so please plan to attend.

Documents for Congregational Meeting

The agenda and other documents for the congregational meeting, including the 2014 budget proposal, are ready. You will find hard copies posted in the church mail room, or you can view and download them online: <http://bit.ly/congmtg2013>.

Voting list for Congregational Meeting

We have posted the voting list for the congregational meeting in the hallway next to the mail room. Please take a moment the next time you're at the church to make sure your name appears on it and that you're eligible to vote at the upcoming congregational meeting.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about any of the above, please contact me directly: Sean Hale, sean@austinuu.org.

Join us for Winter Solstice Celebration**Saturday, Dec. 21
6:30 p.m.
Howson Hall**

Come one and all to a family-friendly Solstice celebration on the longest night of the year. Children of all ages are welcome for an evening of song, story, and ritual, sponsored by Yew Grove and the Women's Spirituality Group.

We will gather at 6:30 p.m. in Howson Hall and the celebration begins at 7:00, followed by a dessert potluck. Come dressed in seasonal costumes and finery. And bring scraps of fabric, ribbons, and beads for creating our Solstice God and Goddess.

Please bring your favorite holiday sweets as well! We'll provide Wassail, hot chocolate, and hot tea. We hope to see you in our circle! Questions? Contact women@austinuu.org or yewgrove@austinuu.org.



Member Spotlight: Erik Olson

Moving from Milwaukee to Austin, he knew he wanted to find a group of friends and even though he hadn't belonged to a church in many years, he created a home for himself and found friends at First UU Church of Austin.

Erik Olson sings in the choir, teaches middle schoolers how to make robots out of Legos and after a season of volunteering at First UU's temporary shelter for 50 homeless men on freezing nights, he's taking over as Freeze Night Coordinator for the Social Action project.

When he attended the Connections Fair in 2012 and learned about the shelter, which the church is hosting for its 18th year, it grabbed his heart. Erik remembers living in New York City himself at one point and spending a couple of months without a permanent home.

One evening he was locked out and rode the subway all night, which Erik said helps him relate to the anger homeless people may feel. He snapped himself out of the anger with rational thought but said he understands if he hadn't had the resources to find housing the next day, he may not have been able to overcome his anger.

"In Austin, I felt generous and thought it would be awesome if I could prepare my roast beef, potatoes and carrots for the men, and hopefully they would leave feeling good about the kind, friendly people at our church."

Former Freeze Night Coordinator Mary Ann Stafford said she appreciates Erik's cheerful manner and ability to keep the volunteers laughing. "He smooths the course of the evening

with his ability to solve problems the guests present," Mary Ann said. "It's unfortunate people who don't volunteer never get a chance to taste his specialty dishes."

New volunteers are always welcome and may sign up by emailing Erik at freezenight@austinuu.org. A variety of jobs are filled by volunteers, from something as easy as dropping off bought items like bananas or dinner bread, or preparing hot main dishes or sides for 10 or 20 people. Others volunteer to serve the men dinner, clean up, do dishes, host and visit with the guests, or spend the night in the Gallery, next to Howson Hall, where the men sleep on the floor.

Erik said when volunteering at the shelter, he thinks about what Rev. Meg says about 'active listening.' "It's sad to hear people judge these guys without hearing their stories. No one wants to be homeless," Erik said. "The men are super grateful for what we do to feed them a hot meal and give them a place to sleep during the cold weather."

Erik may have joined First UU to find friends, but now the church community has also found a dedicated friend in him. ■



New Freeze Night Coordinator Erik Olson gets tips from Kitchen Manager Kami Cornell as he prepares to oversee food service and clean-up for 50 homeless men in Howson Hall.

Heritage Book Club

Our December meeting is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 9th at 7:00 at Don and Pat Laird's home (129 Durange Trail, Georgetown, TX).

We have no book to read this month; instead we have several new, best selling fiction and nonfiction books available to party attendees. You may bring your own unwrapped book to offer other attendees.

We have a hot tub to enjoy before or after the potluck. Please RSVP to Pat Laird at (512) 669-2774. Directions will be sent out later. Please consider carpooling.

We will be back on our normal schedule in January, meeting on the second Friday night with the book "What Teachers Make" by Taylor Mali.

For further questions, contact either Pat Laird or Sally Scott: (512) 453-2289.

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

SafePlace: Let the Light Shine

by **Lynda West**

In the early 80s, when I first volunteered with SafePlace, no one talked much about domestic violence. What was then called The Center for Battered Women had a four-bedroom house on Enfield, the location of which was kept secret. Only a few women could be given shelter at one time; there was always a waiting list and women had to find other accommodations after a month. As women had a hard time finding work and housing in that length of time, they were often back within a few months.

Things have changed a lot since then. Domestic and sexual violence are now very public issues. Vice President Joe Biden was in town in late October to “cast a light” on domestic violence when he visited the National Domestic Violence Hotline. SafePlace provides emergency shelter, counseling, transitional housing and so much more for abuse victims. They have a wonderful campus, scores of volunteers, and a full time professional staff. You would think with all of the awareness, attention, and resources focused towards ending sexual and domestic violence, SafePlace would have put itself out of

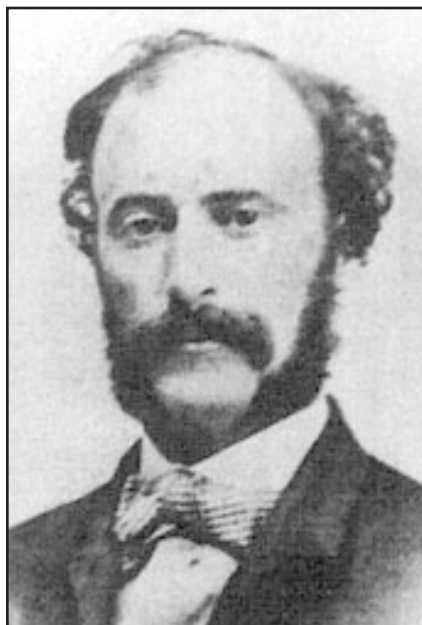
business.

Unfortunately, Julie Spann, executive director of SafePlace recently told the Austin American-Statesman that on a day when 397 people were served, 197 people were on a waitlist for services ranging from emergency shelter to counseling. The job isn't done yet.

First Unitarian Universalist of Austin has been very generous in its emotional and financial support of SafePlace. On December 8, SafePlace will be the recipient of the social justice offering. Please give generously and let the light shine a little brighter.

UU HISTORY LESSON

Howson Hall came to be thanks to the Wheelocks



Edwin Miller Wheelock (1829-1901) was a New Hampshire Unitarian minister of abolitionist sympathies. He was a Civil War chaplain on the Union side, first superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind (1872-74), and later was the first minister of our church in 1892.

But it was Wheelock's daughter, Emilie Wheelock Howson, that became better known than her father through her bequests. She inherited a considerable fortune from her brother Charles, who died in 1927. When she died in 1957, she left a million dollars to various charities.

The largest single group of gifts went for schools and libraries in Austin's black community. The local Unitarian church, the American Unitarian Association, the Women's Club, Farley's Boys Ranch, and The Austin Library each received \$100,000.

The Austin Unitarians used their inheritance to purchase land and to build Howson Hall and an education wing.

Read more from the biography of Rev. Wheelock on Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography: <http://bit.ly/uu-emw>.

PARADOX**PLAYERS**

Come enjoy the fun of Readers' Theatre

by Gary Payne, creative director

An integral part of Paradox Players is its Readers' Theater,

which has remained popular since the earliest meetings in 1999. Readers' Theater meets on the second Monday of the month, September through May, at 7:30 pm in the Gallery at the First UU Church. We welcome anyone in the Austin community. Plays are read and discussed without rehearsing or memorizing, and roles are shared to accommodate all those attending. The evening is just for fun—no acting experience or proficiency required. Come join us and let your inner actor out, or just observe. There's nothing else like it in the city of Austin.

It's not too late to buy a Paradox

Players Flex season ticket and save from 30 % to over 50% (depending on what nights you attend) on admission to our remaining two shows of the season. It's an incredible deal and promoted only to First UU members. Order online at www.paradoxplayers.org/events/season-tickets/.

We continue to have open positions for several key positions within Paradox Players, including Box Office Manager, PR Director and Volunteer Recruiter. If you would like to get involved with this vibrant artistic ministry of First UU, contact Chairperson Susan Thomson (paradoxplayers@austinuu.org) or Artistic Director Gary Payne (info@paradoxplayers.org). ■

Fresh Trim for the Holidays!

Seeking trim painters for continued work with Freshen UUp! At the end of December and beginning of January, while the building is officially closed and the Girl's School is not holding classes, the plan is to organize several small painting parties. If you are interested in spending time --two hours, four hours; one time, several times--on these fun and worthwhile tasks, please contact project coordinator Vicki Almstrum at freshenUUp@austinuu.org.

Have you always dreamed of going to Alaska?



What about embarking on an Alaskan trip while meeting fellow UUs? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2014** is for you! Four Alaskan UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program this summer as we celebrate our 18th year! See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Sitka with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife including

moose, bear, whales, bald eagles, seals, and caribou. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Enjoy all that our beautiful state has to offer.

Programs are led by Dave Frey, member of the farthest north UU congregation. Visit www.whalecoastak.org, call 907-322-4966, or email dfrey@whalecoastak.org. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

Lifespan RE highlights

by Rev. Marisol Caballero



Virgin of Guadalupe Program by Rev. Marisol Caballero at BookWoman

As part of their monthly “Getting to Know the Goddess” talk series, Rev. Mari Caballero will present “Mary, Mary, Quite Revolutionary” on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, from 7-8:30 p.m. at BookWoman (5501 North Lamar). Mari will reflect on the symbolism of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a feminine image of the Divine. How might our local “goddess,” native to the Americas, speak to us during this season that focuses heavily on Her offspring? How might She unite diverse populations in compassion, perseverance, and justice?

Passionate About Comprehensive Sex Ed?

Consider becoming a certified OWL facilitator! Our Whole Lives is a nationally renowned, comprehensive sex education curriculum that emphasizes healthy interpersonal relationships. OWL is available in levels from kindergarten through adulthood. First UU Church of Austin is planning to offer OWL once again during the spring semester.

Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church in The Woodlands, TX will be holding a Jr. High OWL certification training Jan. 24-26, for volunteers willing to teach this level in the spring. Please email Mari at mari@austinuu.org if you are interested in this opportunity.

Christmas Cookie and Ornament Decorating Party! Howson Hall, 4:30-5:00 p.m.

Join us before the 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service to sing along with Christmas carols and sip hot cocoa, tea, and coffee while decorating cookies and ornaments!

Second Annual Christmas Potluck Feast! Howson Hall, Dec. 15, 12-1 p.m.

Join us after the second service Christmas Pageant in Howson Hall for a holiday feast! Please bring a large portion of sides, desserts, salads, or a vegetarian main dish option to share!

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Annual Christmas Pageant, December 15th

Don your best bathrobe and come ready to take the journey to Bethlehem on December 15th, 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. For those who have never experienced a First UU Church of Austin Christmas Pageant before, you are in for a real treat with this most treasured tradition! All (especially children) are encouraged to participate with no prior rehearsal. Costumes will be laid out in the lobby to choose from and our narrator will invite all of our nativity characters up on cue! In this half-scripted, half-improvised, but always sincere pageant, the whole congregation comes to imagine the story of Christmas. This is a worship service not to miss!

Need Help Wrapping Those Holiday Gifts?

Our Sr. High Youth group will be saving you much-needed time this holiday season by wrapping your presents for you! This youth group fundraiser will take place at the Howson Hall stage during coffee hour, on December 8th and 15th. Please bring in your gifts along with gift labels and they will be beautifully and discreetly wrapped for \$2.50/gift. If you would like to donate wrapping paper, gift tags, ribbon, and bows to this effort, they would be greatly appreciated as well! All proceeds go to the Sr. Youth Group Fund to help purchase new couches for the youth room.

No F.R.E.D. Christmas or New Year's Day

Our weekly gathering for Fellowship Religious Ed. and Dinner (F.R.E.D.) will not be taking place on Wednesday, Dec. 25th or Jan. 1st. There will also be no RE classes during this time.

Please do come join us regularly for great food, wonderful company, and enriching programming. Dinner is just \$6 a plate, and kids under 12 eat free! No reservations or sign-up required, just show up hungry!

Red Tent Women's Circle Continues Monthly

Red Tent, a monthly women's ministry that gathers women of diverse ages and backgrounds for connection and support in a women-only space, will continue to meet every third Tuesday of the month from 6:30-9 p.m. Please contact Mari: mari@austinuu.org for more

information.

“Join us in this grassroots movement among women that builds support for women locally in these important times. Honor your life as a woman, your bleeding cycles, your need to gather, our need to be in time that is not structured to see what can be created when we slow down and give ourselves time to connect and collaborate.”

-Excerpt from <https://www.facebook.com/RedTentMovement>.

Alzheimer’s and Dementia Support Ministry

Looking to join a group that addresses concerns about Frontal Lobe Dementia, Old Timers, or “where did I put that thing and what was it” disease? A combined group is forming for the afflicted and their caregivers. It will be a place to discuss concerns, find information, share resources, and get support. If you are interested in getting involved or finding out more info, please talk to Tom Bodine at coffee hour, or email him at tom@tommythegeek.com.

“Creating Family in CommUUnity” in San Diego invites UUs nationwide to challenge oppression

Diverse, Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) and Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) present a full weekend Regional Conference January 17-19, 2014 at First Unitarian Universalist Church in San Diego, California.

“Creating Family in CommUUnity” sets the stage for intergenerational exploration of ways we examine, redefine and name ourselves in relationship to others. With openness and welcoming we build beloved community, sometimes grappling with tough issues of oppression and privilege, yet always circling back to celebrating with love, joy and compassion. Together we seek reconciliation of the human family. Youth are very welcome! Home hospitality is available upon request.

Find out more by contacting Jan Carpenter Tucker, roarwithsoul@cox.net, or 619-527-2850. Get more info on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/JTWSD>.

DRUUMM provides support and advocacy for Unitarian Universalist (UU) People of Color (POC) and works to build a community in UUism. We work for self-determination, justice, and equal opportunity; empower our various ministries; celebrate our diverse heritages; overcome racism through resistance; and transform and enrich UUism through our multicultural experiences. We strive for an accountable relationship with our allies of Anglo/European descent for the purpose of building a larger UU community committed to transforming UUism into an anti-racist, ethnically

multicultural movement.

Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) exists as a response to a request by DRUUMM, for a group of white anti-racist allies to serve as partners in the journey of transforming our faith movement and the world. Our mission is to confront racism in ways that are accountable to communities of color and by creating opportunities for white UUs to understand white privilege and unlearn white supremacy.



A BIG THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for all the donations and to our walkers at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walk in September. The UU Uniques team, from the three UU Churches here in Austin, raised \$1483.00. This surely helped put NAMI Austin over the goal set for this year!

Happy Holidays,
Karl Weston and Kathryn Govier, Co-Captains

December Seniors Luncheon

**Wednesday, Dec. 11
12:00 p.m.
Howson Hall**

The program for December will be the New Austin Polka Band with our own Dan Wilson, upbeat music for the season.

Soup, salad, and dessert will be served for \$5. Please RSVP to Alice Cashman: (512) 837-0988.

Nominate Monthly Special Offerings for 2014 Now

So many social justice nonprofits and so little money.

But First UU Church of Austin members will have a chance to vote for their ten favorites to receive monthly special offering donations in 2014, Sunday, Dec. 15, either after Worship Services at the Social Action table in the Gallery or at the Congregational meeting at 1:30 p.m.

There are multiple ways church members may acquire a nomination form: from the FUUCA Community Bulletin Board at the Social Action table in the Gallery any Sunday, by downloading the file at <http://bit.ly/MSOform2014>, or via email request at socialaction@austinuu.org. Nominations

must be submitted by midnight, Dec. 8. No exceptions.

As a nominator, members must commit to:

- 1) Testify to the congregation about their nominee when the plate is passed,
- 2) Write an article for the newsletter and an announcement for the weekly Order of Service about the organization,
- 3) Invite a representative of the organization to visit congregants in the gallery on the day of the offering to provide further information about volunteer opportunities, and
- 4) Provide proof of 501c3 status.

Let's get those nominations in by Dec. 8 and plan to get out the vote Dec. 15.

People's Community Clinic Thanks You

The final count is 293 books for the People's Community Clinic's Children's Book Drive. The clinic sends their thanks to all our members who so graciously donated books for their various outreach programs for the children under their care. The need for books goes on and we will probably have another drive in the spring. If in the meantime, you are in a "cleaning mood" and want to get rid of books for children in the elementary grades, contact us at pcc@austinuu.org and we will take them to the clinic.

We always welcome anyone who would like to join our Collating Group. We meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Clinic's Conference Room at 2909 North I H 35. For December it will be on Tuesday the 17th.

Usually we are done by noon and those who have the time go to lunch together. It is a pleasant, social and conversational time--as I say, a "whistle while you work" atmosphere. Come once, come every time, no commitment!

For those who are able or are interested in other volunteer needs of the Clinic, you may check their website, www.austinpcc.org. They have needs for office help, for people who can read to the children in the waiting room, and other opportunities to participate in the work of the Clinic. The site has applications and immunization requirements that are necessary for volunteers who work around the patients.

BridgeBuilder Completion

Report shows First UU's progress

In the spring of 2011, Joe Sullivan, a consultant hired to help our church create a mission statement and improve our governance, complimented our board on what an excellent job we had done in guiding our church in these efforts. When told we simply followed the action plan we created as recommended by a consultant, he responded, "Do you know how many consultant reports are sitting on shelves gathering dust?"

First UU Austin is a strong, healthy church that has worked hard to overcome its challenges and succeeded. This report is in celebration of our church's successful completion of the action plan created to aid our healing following a divisive vote to dismiss the called minister in December 2008. Our leadership immediately began reconciliation efforts that included listening sessions facilitated by our own listening ministers and by

the board and hired Peter Steinke, a church consultant, to recommend how best to move forward. After publishing his BridgeBuilder Action Report, Rev. Steinke directed us to create an action plan from that report. We have completed the work envisioned from that plan, most significantly our mission statement, healthy relations covenant, and governance changes, the last which include increased accountability.

A brief report of our accomplishments will be given at our December congregational meeting. The original action plan along with item-by-item statements of how each task was addressed is available on our church's web site.

Direct any questions about the completion report to Margaret Borden at healthyrelations@austinuu.org.

Learn about the library and help us grow our collection!

**Sunday, Dec. 1
Gallery**

Please drop by the library table in the gallery to learn more about us before and after worship services. We will also be glad to accept your donations of Amazon or Half Price Books gift cards to help us acquire books to improve our collection. Thank you for your generosity! Questions? Contact library@austinuu.org.

Public Forum presentations to be broadcast on ChannelAustin

The following Public Affairs Forums have been scheduled for broadcast during the month of December. Each talk will be broadcast at 6 p.m. on ChannelAustin channel 10-10.

Sunday, December 1st:

James Galbraith, PhD. His topic was "The Economic Crisis of 2008: Five Years and Counting."

Sunday, December 8th:

Lisa McGiffert, Senior Policy Analyst for Consumers Union. Her topic was "Keeping Patients Safe: Making Progress but Still a Long Road Ahead."

Sunday, December 15th:

Nelson Linder, President of NAACP Austin. He discussed "Equity as a Basis for Government."

Sunday, December 22nd:

Anne Dunkelberg, Associate Director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities. She discussed "The Affordable Care Act."

There will be no broadcast on the fifth Sunday in December, but keep a lookout in upcoming newsletters and bulletins for more Public Forum broadcast info!

Eclectic Folk Jam

Friday, December 13
7-10 p.m.
Room 17 @ First UU

The Eclectic Folk Jam, an open jam session for singers and instrumentalists, is held on the second Friday of every month. We have "Rise Up Singing" song books, and some people like to bring copies of their favorite songs to pass out. Bring drinks and snacks to share.

For more information 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, December 28
7:30-10:30 p.m.
Friends Meeting House
3701 E. MLK Blvd.

Please 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, round-robin format, held on the fourth Saturday of every month.

For more information, contact Larry Vaughn at (512) 469-0029 or Mary Jane Ford at singalong@austinuu.org.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

DECEMBER 1**How Did We Get the Bible?**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

If the Bible, a combination of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures, didn't drop out of the sky onto the top of Mt. Ararat, where did it come from? How was it put together? Why are there four gospels instead of six? Did God write it? Does it have mistakes? How do we read it as religious liberals?

DECEMBER 8**A UU Faith Story: John Murray**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

One of the sources from which UUism draws is the "words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love." John Murray brought Universalism to the New World. How did he get from being in an English debtor's prison to being a chaplain in General Washington's army?

DECEMBER 15**Christmas Pageant**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Participate in Intergenerational joy and sweet, sweet music as the shepherds, angels and royalty gather around the newborn holy child.

DECEMBER 22**A Sudden Flame, an Extraordinary Journey**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Solstice is the night, holy to the ancients, where we wait in darkness for the return of the light. What kinds of things spark in us to lift us from a place of unseeing, a place of uncertainty?

DECEMBER 24**Tuesday Holiday Service**

5:00 p.m. Family Service

REV. MARI CABALLERO

7:00 p.m. UU Lessons and Carols

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

DECEMBER 29**Surplus Anxieties**

REV. MARISOL CABALLERO

We carry around so many stresses with us in our daily lives. As we leave behind the rush of the holidays and think about beginning 2014 anew, we will ask ourselves which of these burdens are worth our effort to carry, and which ones might we set down? This service will explore the spiritual discipline of examining and sorting our anxieties in this way, while engaging in the spiritual discipline of self-care.

THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

DECEMBER 1

On The Front Lines of the Wild West: Money in Texas Politics

WITH ANDREW WHEAT

Andrew Wheat, research director of Texans for Public Justice, will talk about the impact of big money in the almost-everything-goes environment of Texas politics. TPJ, an Austin-based watchdog group formed to challenge political corruption and corporate abuses, brings intensive research and public advocacy to bear on debates over political reform, consumer protection, civil justice, and corporate accountability.

Andrew Wheat has written award-winning columns for the Texas Observer based on TPJ research. His group uncovered the information that led to the indictment and conviction of Tom DeLay and others for funneling corporate campaign contributions into the coffers of candidates for the Texas legislature. Wheat's background also includes a stint as a writer covering national and international corporate mischief for Ralph Nader's Multinational Monitor magazine.

DECEMBER 8

Will Austin Move Beyond Coal in 2014?

WITH JEFF CRUNK

Coal power may finally be nearing an end in Austin. The city council, Mayor Leffingwell, and Austin Energy all seem ready to do without this dirtiest of fuels that still provides about a quarter of city power. But we've been here before—what's different this time? And what is the best way for Texas' premier green city to quit its 30-year-old coal habit? Two paths seem open, to sell or to retire. Each course has its advocates. Which decision Austin makes will have a lot to say about the kind of community we are today and the kind of community we wish to become.

Jeff Crunk, a volunteer with the Sierra Club's Austin Beyond Coal, enjoys visiting with fellow Austinites about the fraught and complicated relationship Austin and the rest of the state continues to have with coal. He believes that fuels like solar and wind are better choices for Austin right now, and that power without coal will mean

a world of difference for our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

Jeff is a graduate of Baylor University with a Masters degree in history. He attended the University of Kansas for advanced degree work in Environmental History. Jeff grew up enjoying the outdoors in central Texas on his family's land west of Waco and lots of camping trips with the Boy Scouts of America. Since the birth of their daughter in 2008, Jeff and his wife Sharon have made a choice to be active in the struggle to preserve a livable climate. They ask for your help.

DECEMBER 15

Rainforest Partnership: Tropical Rainforests and Why They Matter

WITH NIYANTA SPELMAN

Rainforest communities want to save their forests and their way of life. Niyanta Spelman uses capitalism to help them do it.

When a community in the Amazon gets an offer from a big corporation – or even just a chance to clear cut some land and plant a crop – residents are rarely in a position to refuse. Niyanta's nonprofit, Rainforest Partnership, helps rainforest communities say no by helping them find and develop opportunities to make an income from the forest itself: sustainably gathering and selling palm fibers, building an eco-lodge for birdwatchers, or making and selling artisan products. Since 2008, her Austin-based organization has helped to save tens of thousands of hectares of Amazon forest, gaining international recognition for its ability to put economic power in the hands of indigenous communities.

Being an international citizen comes easily to Niyanta, who grew up in Tanzania, went to boarding school in India, and worked for a lobbying firm in London before landing in Texas. Before founding Rainforest Partnership, Niyanta spent several years running a management consultancy, and worked for the Legislative Budget Board, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Texas Legislature. She has a BA in biology from UT-Dallas and an MPAff from the LBJ School at UT Austin. She is very proud of her two sons, Jasiel and Ronan, and is married to UT professor and city councilmember Bill Spelman. ■

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

(512) 452-6168

www.austinuu.org

Senior Minister

Rev. Meg Barnhouse

Director of Finance
and Operations

Sean Hale

Assistant Minister &
Director of Lifespan RE

Marisol Caballero

Director of Music

Brent Baldwin

Membership Coordinator

Chad Stanton

Communications Coordinator

Victoria Valadez

Board President

Michael Kersey

president@austinuu.org

**First Unitarian
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4700 Grover Ave.

Austin, TX 78756

FROM THE GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Thank the hackberries!

Chances are you've probably heard someone say "hackberries are trash trees." We've heard that when discussing trees on the church grounds.

It's true that hackberries have relatively soft wood that's prone to breaking, which makes them less than ideal for certain uses--shading parking areas, for example! However, hackberries are the single most common tree on church property (they comprise nearly all the trees on the east and south-side property lines) and they provide great services to our urban ecosystem.

Did You Know?

- There many species of birds who eat and depend on hackberry fruits.

- Hackberry fruit is also a favorite among many of our urban mammals such as the gray fox and the ring-tailed cat.

- Hackberries help stabilize stream banks and riparian areas and are often the first to establish an area.

- They're fast growers, quickly providing shade and habitat for wildlife.

- The fruit of the hackberry tree is edible! You can make delicious hackberry jam out of it!

All of these qualities make hackberries an invaluable species, and part of a diverse and healthy ecosystem in our urban forest. So next time you see a hackberry, you may want to say thanks! ■