



FIRST UU NEWS

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

Not a Big Box in the Suburbs

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse

Last month many of the First UU Past Presidents gathered at El Mercado North. It is such an honor to have spent time with these wise and talented folks. I asked them to stand and talk about their years of service. I asked them what they thought First UU needs, and (if they cared to tackle this one) how they would describe the church if it were a person. Would that person be outgoing or reserved, humorous or humorless, outwardly or inwardly focused, thoughtful or heedless, cautious or reckless, brave or timid? We talked about building, growing, moving, money, controversy, kissing, how people in a church can see the “big picture,” and more interesting matters. (Look for a link on the church Facebook page in a few weeks for more info on this discussion.)

This church has been talking about needing more space for the past twenty years. During years of controversy it ceases to be an issue, but in the past several years of church growth it’s becoming obvious that we are going to have to do something. Some options for congregations who are becoming “root bound” are: building on site, moving into another building, creating new churches, establishing satellite locations, or having a big fight that makes a portion of the church members go away.

What is our plan at First UU?

Some of you have asked whether we are headed toward becoming a mega-church, a “big-box” church, or a church in the suburbs. The draft Long Range Plan says we want to be a church in central Austin. That is a large part of our identity. The Long Range Plan builds on our strengths. As I watch the congregation and listen, here is what I gather: we would like to be a strong social justice presence in Austin. We would like to be an arts church. With our in-house theater company, our art

I imagine the church as a “mother church,” or a “root church,” one that grows Unitarian Universalism by seeding more churches in the Austin area. Why don’t we do that now?

gallery and Art Mission classes, we can grow into using the arts in our outreach. Art and sacred space can combine more and more if we have room for an artist’s studio in the building. We can donate that space to an artist in exchange for them interacting with the church and the community as an artist. (In South Carolina, where I was for years, the town had four studios to give away. Every year they would advertise nationwide and get four young artists to come for a year to enjoy

the free space, fellowship with other artists, and all they had to do was to interact with the town as artists. It changed

the atmosphere of the whole downtown.) We could have an afterschool program for immigrant kids or LGBTQ kids and teach them art or algebra or coding and transform lives that way, if we had the room and the volunteer power. Most of all, since this church has started two other congregations already, I imagine the church as a “mother church,” or a “root church,” one that grows Unitarian Universalism by seeding more churches in the Austin area. Why don’t we do that now? Because our UUA Large Church consultant Stefan Jonasson, when he came to consult, told us that a new church start needs over 200 people to be healthy and have a good chance to establish itself in a sturdy way. It needs that many people and it needs a minister and a staff person and some money! We aren’t strong enough to spare that many people at the size we are now, and we can’t grow much more in the space we have. The plan is to grow to about 800 and then hire an assistant minister who wants a church of his or her own. Give them a couple of years to establish a congregation within First UU and then send them off with



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Women's Spirituality Group

1st & 3rd Saturdays
10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Rm. 13

The Women's Spirituality Group continues our focus on "Explorations of Spiritual Practices." We will start the new year with a tarot/divination spread on January 4th. Bring your own tarot or oracle deck, and we will have extras for women who don't have one. You don't need any prior experience. Then on January 18th we will begin a two-part exploration of The Book of Shadows.

This group is for women who are high school age and older. We are open to new members at all times, and we invite you to join us. For more information please contact: women@austinuu.org.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

With the Turn of the Year

by Michael Kersey

The New Year is a great time to revisit the goals of our community.



Welcome to 2014, everybody! It looks to be a great year for us to move forward with our mission of gathering in community, nourishing souls, and transforming lives.

At last month's well-attended Congregational Meeting, the congregation approved a church budget for 2014 that provides funding to sustain our programs and ministries in the coming year. This year begins with three Town Hall Meetings hosted by the team researching what to do about our building and grounds to sustain us in our mission. There were 532 voting members on our rolls for the December 2013 congregational meeting, a number that does not reflect everyone who is a part of our community, and we expect continued membership growth. We are an engaged and active church and I'm excited about our prospects for this year.

At the start of the year I also think that it's worthwhile to be reminded of the specific end statements that this church adopted in 2010, along with our current mission statement. In practice these are the goals for our church. In my mind, they point towards a promised land to which our mission is carrying us. We aren't there yet, but they help to remind us where we want to go.

Here in full are our church's end statements:

• **First UU Church of Austin is an intentionally hospitable community where:**

- All people are treated with respect and dignity
- All people of good will are welcomed
- People are supported in times of joy and need
- People find connection with one another in fellowship
- We are fully engaged and generous with time, treasure and talent
- We invite people of good will to find a spiritual home with us
- We engage as UUs in public life

• **First UU Church of Austin nourishes souls and transforms lives by:**

- Engaging and supporting one another in spiritual practice and growth
- Providing worship, programs and activities that awaken meaning and transcendence
- Providing a caring, supportive and safe place to rekindle the spirit

• **First UU Church of Austin witnesses to justice in our personal lives and beyond, by:**

- Practicing liberal religious values in the public arena
- Empowering all people to access the richness of life
- Providing leadership to the greater UUA community to expand the reach of

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our movement

- Partnering with the interfaith community to live our shared values.

This month the Board of Trustees meets on Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 6:30 p.m. The agenda includes monitoring how the church is doing with regards to being intentionally hospitable.

Thanks to everyone who made our “rocking” nativity pageant happen last month. Thanks also to those who make the food, do the clean up, and teach the classes for our Wednesday F.R.E.D. programs. And thanks to those who take the time and put in the effort for the homeless with making sack lunches, serving at ARCH on first Sundays, and hosting on shelter nights. ■

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money and blessings. All Souls in DC did this in the 50’s, and now there are seven UU churches in that area all started by All Souls. Jonasson said Austin is a perfect area to try this again. This is a strong church, a joyous church, and we are doing church better and better as we go. Why not spread that in the central Texas region?

We have a research team looking at all the questions, costs and benefits of the options before us as we grow into living our mission and walking our talk of hospitality and transformation. Three Town Hall meetings will give you a chance to input questions for the research team to explore before they report to the congregation. No need to make all three, just come to one or another of them. Take part either on Jan. 12 after the Forum, Jan. 15 at 11:30 a.m. (bring your own lunch), or on Jan. 22 at 6:45, after the F.R.E.D. dinner. Come tell about your hopes and dreams for what First UU can do to be hospitable to all people of good will who have need of this community. ■



Music Matters

by Brent Baldwin

The First UU of Austin Intergeneration Choir Makes a Joyful Noise to Benefit Drive A Senior

On December 6th, the First UU of Austin Intergenerational Choir and Band participated in a ecumenical holiday concert with twelve other area churches. The choir’s rendition of “Little Drummer



The First UU Choir deliver a lively performance at the “Drive A Senior” concert on December 6. Photo by Tom Thomson.

Boy/Peace on Earth” (as arranged by Brent Baldwin) brought the crowd to its feet. This event is the largest annual fundraiser for Drive A Senior (formerly North Central Caregivers), and it was exciting for our church to play a part!

New Year’s Resolution: MORE SINGING!

The new year is upon us, and what better time to add more music to your life?

The First UU Adult Choir is a non-auditioned group that takes on a wide variety of music. Rehearsals for the new year begin on Wednesday, January 15th, and run each week on Wednesdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. (Childcare is available!)

The First UU Children’s Choir (grades K-3) and Youth Choir (grades 4-8) rehearsals begin on January 12th. These spiritually-enhancing singing sessions run 9:30 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. for families attending first service, and 10:00 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. for families attending second service. Come be a part of this dynamic group of young singers!

FIRST UU IN PICTURES

Fellowship in food!

Photos by Jon Montgomery



Page 4: Congregation members join together in Howson Hall for Thanksgiving 2013.

Page 5: The Men's group meet regularly for both breakfast and the occasional lunch. Join them second Saturdays at First UU at 7:30 a.m.



Our Mission
 First Unitarian Universalist Church
 of Austin

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

Our Covenant of Healthy Relations 
 As a religious community, we promise:

Welcome and Serve

- By intentionally hospitable to all people of good will
- By being present with one another through life's transitions
- By nurturing the spiritual growth of people of all ages

To Nurture and Protect

- By communicating with one another directly in a spirit of compassion and good will
- By speaking when silence would inhibit progress
- By disagreeing from a place of curiosity and respect
- By interrupting hurtful interactions
- By expressing our appreciation

To Sustain and Build

- By affirming our gratitude with generous gifts of time, talent and money for our beloved community
- By honoring our commitments to ourselves and one another for the sake of our own integrity and that of our congregation
- By forgiving ourselves and others when we fall short of expectations, showing good humor and the optimism required for moving forward

The ...





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

Sunday, April 6, 2014,
1:30 p.m.

Congregational meeting

Sunday, May 11, 2014,
1:30 p.m.

Childcare will be provided for each.

Yew Grove Moon Circle

The January Yew Grove Moon Circle will meditate on cycles and circles, where we are and where we hope to go, while we gather together in sacred space. Let's gather in the Art Gallery at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 16. Please come and bring a snack; if you choose, to share.

Annual budget approved at Congregational Meeting

Your congregation approved its annual budget as proposed at its December 15 meeting. With pledging up more than 8% this year, we have been able to significantly increase the portion of the budget dedicated to social justice efforts. You can still view the budget and the other business discussed at the meeting online here: <http://bit.ly/congmtg2013>.

In addition to the budget, we have been able to provide more than \$12,000 in special, one-time funding to support mission-critical church ministries. View more information about this online: <http://bit.ly/specialgrants2013>.

See page 7 for the results of the Monthly Service Offering vote from the congregational meeting.

Find Your Wings in this leadership workshop

**Jan. 25, Rm. 15
9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

Leadership has been described as “evolving self-discovery”—we learn leadership through experience, feedback, reflection, role models, theory and discovering our passions and goals. It requires us to connect with others, and every person has their distinct way of leading. Come explore your leadership style in the “Find Your Wings” leadership workshop.

Registration for the workshop will begin at 8:45 a.m. The morning session (9-11 a.m.) led by Meg Barnhouse and Wendy Erisman, will focus on the Myers-Briggs personality type indicator, and the afternoon session (11:45 a.m.-2 p.m.) led by Kathryn Ehler, will feature

the Enneagram personality model. Lunch is included.

This free interactive workshop is designed to give participants the opportunity to discover what type of leader they are. Attendees will learn all about a variety of leadership styles, both similar and different to their own. In addition, everyone will come out of this workshop knowing how to utilize his or her best leadership assets within our beloved community.

First UU needs your leadership skills and talents. To register for the workshop or for more information, contact Wendy Erisman at werisman@alumni.rice.edu or 512-461-5411. Additional information will be available on Sundays in the gallery, beginning January 5th.

FROM THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAIR

The 2014 Monthly Service Offering results are in!

By Peggy Morton

Healthcare for women and families resonated with First UU church members as they voted for ten nonprofit social justice organizations to receive money from special collections in 2014. They also showed their support for the homeless, children, elderly, immigrants and human rights.

From the 120 ballots submitted, Planned Parenthood grabbed 90% of the votes followed by Safe Place with 77% and People's Community Clinic with 74%. Two newcomers joined the ranks with top votes going to Casa Marianella, which helps new immigrants transition into life in the U.S. to learn English and find jobs and housing; and Girls Rock Austin, which offers scholarships to empower young at-risk girls with music education, performance, mentorship and community building. Other groups to receive financial support from First UU include: Austin Child Guidance Center, Drive A Senior (formerly North Central Caregivers), Front Steps, Hands on Housing and the UU Service Committee.

With 26 worthy groups receiving nominations by church members, it was tough to only choose ten. Two social justice recipients for special

collections will be named by the Spring Into Action church-wide project committee and the Summer Religious Education Department.

All First UU Austin members had a chance to nominate social justice projects from Nov. 10 to Dec. 8, and then to vote for ten of the 26 nominated projects after both worship services or during the Congregational meeting Sunday, Dec. 15. Another 18 worthy projects didn't make it this year, but 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 Austin from the local work being done with nominees ACLU Texas, Austin Interfaith, Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera, Citizens Climate Lobby, Community Yoga, Grassroots Leadership, iACT, Inside Books Project, Texas Freedom Network, Texas UU Justice Ministry, The Care Communities of Austin, Threads of Hope, Transgender Education Network, Tree Folks, UBarU Retreat Center and UU United Nations. Three Social Action Committee members helped with counting the ballots and crosschecking for accuracy: John Keohane, Judy Sadegh and Karl Weston. ■

Heritage Book Club

More big changes! To better accommodate schedules, the club voted to meet at 5 p.m. every second Sunday. So our next meeting will be on Sunday, Jan. 12. We'll meet for a potluck at Tom and Barbara Moran's home: 4504 Dolliver Drive, Austin. Contact: 512-232-6488.

This month's book is "What Teachers Make" by Taylor Mali—a must-read for all teachers. If you read ahead, the February book will be "Killing Jesus" by Bill O'Reilly.

The group is open to everyone and we welcome new members. Hope to see you there. For more info, contact Sally Scott: 512-453- 2289.

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

Girls Rock Austin: Nourishing souls, transforming lives

by **Erin J. Walter**

As a program participant and a board member, Girls Rock Austin has been a life-changing experience for me—and for hundreds of girls and women around Austin. The organization embodies my UU values and our church mission, so I'm excited and honored to share a little about it.

What is Girls Rock Austin?

GRA is a local, grassroots non-profit dedicated to empowering girls and women of all backgrounds and abilities through musical education and performance. Run by a small, engaged board of directors, three part-time staff members, and a core of dedicated volunteers, the organization puts on Girls Rock Camps each summer, as well as Ladies Rock Camp (coming up February 15-17).

The focus of the camp is on female empowerment, with music as the vehicle for positive messaging. It's not about creating the next American Idol. It's about showing girls and women that they can write music, play instruments, sing, and perform as well as anyone—and knowing that is the spark for a bright future. GRA shows girls that they have what it takes—"the inherent worth and dignity"—to rock at anything they set their minds to. Having role models and mentors who can share your experiences is a big part of that.

One mother of a Girls Rock camper wrote: "You don't know what

this means to [my daughter]. She told me every day of camp last year that she felt like she was home...I can't thank you enough for the positive influence you have on my daughter's life."

It was at Ladies Rock Camp—the 3-day adult version of Girls Rock Camp—that I first became involved in GRA. The camp helped me jump back into music, my first love, after years focused on motherhood. It got me playing and performing again, brought me into an empowering community of women, musicians, and activists, and lit up my very being with joy. I bring that joy with me everywhere, to all parts of my life, today.

I know some version of this story is true for hundreds of girls and women around Austin (and at Girls Rock Camps around the world). Girls Rock Austin has been partnering with the Settlement Home for Children since 2011, and last summer nine girls in residential foster care attended our camp for free.

What happens at rock camp?

Qualified female counselors instruct girls ages 10-17 in guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, or vocals. Armed with new or enhanced skills, campers form bands and learn to write original songs together to perform at the camp's finale. Previous camp workshop topics have included team-building, women who rock, decoding images of girls and women in popular

culture, exploring gender/identity issues, music journalism and 'zine making, how to get started in the music business, and much more.

On stage, campers come alive. When one band is on stage, the rest of the campers and their families and fans cheer at the front of the stage, often throwing their arms in the air like screaming teens when the Beatles first came to America. You can see the self-esteem, the empowerment, the sheer joy on the faces of everyone in the venue. Come to a camp showcase, and you will never forget it.

What's does First UU's support mean?

So much! In 2013, Girls Rock Austin doubled our weeklong youth camps from two to four. We took a huge leap of faith to serve twice as many girls, many of whom are on partial or full scholarship. We can reach hundreds—thousands!—more with the generous support of individuals, businesses, foundations, and churches. Our dream is year-round programming, lessons, and a building of our own.

GRA is growing, and we can't do it without you. Thank you so much for your time and support. Here's to a rockin' new year!

For more info, go to girlsrockaustin.org. Ladies Rock Camp is coming up Feb. 15-17, 2014. Register at girlsrockaustin.org/ladies-rock-camp.



Support Paradox Players, Help First UU!

by Gary Payne, creative director

We've had such an influx of new members at First UU over the last two years that we think it's worth giving everyone, newcomers and old-timers, some information on Paradox Players that may not be common knowledge.

We performed our first shows in the Spring of 2000 and 2001 in the sanctuary. Audiences were almost exclusively First UU members and friends of the cast. We just managed to break even financially early on, but we persevered and were soon performing on the Howson Hall stage and eventually producing three shows a year.

Audiences have increased dramatically over the years. We now draw from the community at large, as well as the church, and are considered a significant player in the local performing arts scene. Did you know that our success has allowed us to pledge thousands of dollars to the church every year, in increasing amounts? This fact alone makes us

unique in the UU universe. In fact, Reverend Barnhouse has made it clear she would like to see Paradox Players play a leading role in First UU becoming a vibrant "arts" church, a vision she shared with those attending last month's congregational meeting.

We have a loyal following among First UU members but would love to see more members, new and old, at our shows. Keep in mind that by supporting Paradox Players you are in fact financially supporting First UU. As our attendance figures grow, so will grow our financial pledge to the church; plus you are treated to an evening or afternoon of professional, quality theater.

If you've never been to a Paradox show, consider giving us a try in February with the touching, warm comedy, *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*. Visit our website at paradoxplayers.org for more information or to make reservations.

Here's hoping we see you at a show in 2014! ■

**Legalize Human
"I Have a Dream:
Telling Stories,
Building Community,
& Reaching for
Equality"**

**Saturday, Jan. 18
The Q Austin
(3408 West Ave.)
2-4 p.m.**

How can we reach toward equality in social, cultural, and political spheres? What can we do together or individually toward equality for all people? Bring your stories, dreams, & ideas to an open discussion about creating change. Everyone is welcome! Contact: info@legalizehuman.org.

Come see the special Paradox Players performance: "The Duck Variations"

**Friday, Jan. 17, 7- 8 p.m.
Howson Hall**

As a special Friday evening entertainment offering, First UU's Paradox Players invites you to attend a free staged reading of David Mamet's *The Duck Variations*, featuring two long-time actors and church members Ed Farrell and Ed Nichols, as two

gentlemen of a certain age, George and Emil. This pair, mostly seated on a bench in the park near a lake somewhere in the northeast U.S., have a series of dialogues about ducks, about stuff going on around them and, in a sense, what life's all about. The adult play, introduced by Paradox Players' artistic director Gary Payne, will last under an hour. You will be entertained!

Lifespan RE highlights

by Rev. Marisol Caballero



Be a 2014 Surprise Pal!

Consider becoming a Surprise Pal this year! Surprise Pals is an annual project that provides opportunities for the development of intergenerational connections. Here's how it works: interested adult church members submit to a background check and are paired with a child in our congregation to exchange letters and small, meaningful gifts over the course of several weeks. The adult "surprise pal" and the parents of the child are aware of the pairing, but the identity of their "surprise pal" is not revealed to the kid until a party that ends the project and allows for face-to-face conversation and laughs! This project introduces the children of our congregation to trusted adults within their church community whom they might not otherwise meet. The project will run from Feb. 16 to March 23 this year. If you are an adult interested in being a child's "surprise pal," visit the Lifespan RE table in the gallery during the month of January to sign up.

All are welcome to F.RE.D. Nights!

Fellowship, Religious Ed. and Dinner (F.R.E.D.) continues this semester with dinner at 6 p.m. for \$6/plate (kids under 12 eat free) followed by classes, choir practice, and other church activities. Come join us! No reservation required.

Film Screening and Discussions:

Hitler's Children

Jan. 15th, Rm. 13, 7-9 p.m.

Is evil genetic? Can sin be inherited? In this film, "the descendants of Adolf Hitler's inner circle—including Hermann Goering, Heinrich Himmler and Amon Goeth—come to terms with their infamous surnames and the role their families played in the Holocaust." (netflix.com)

What the Bible Really Says

Rev. Meg has had several requests for a Bible study class. In these three meetings we will talk about how we read the Bible, how we can approach its history, poetry and prophecy, and we will view the whole sweep of the story of the generations and events presented by the Jewish and Christian scripture. Join us on Jan. 29, Feb.

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

12 and 26, from 7-8:30 p.m.

"Building the World We Dream About" continues Rm. 13, 7-9 p.m

In an effort to become an intentionally anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural and radically hospitable congregation, First UU is embarking on a two-year workshop series, "Building the World We Dream About," by Dr. Mark Hicks, the Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Join us in this journey to realize the Beloved Community. Contact: mari@austinuu.org.

Spring Curricula, Children and Youth

See weekly order of services for times of RE sessions!

Chalice Children, Pre-K (3 and 4-year-olds)

Based on the premise that children learn best through experience, this program helps nurture spiritual growth, creativity and a sense of community through imaginative activities and rituals, such as rhymes and finger plays.

Creating Home, K-1st

The sessions include stories from Unitarian Universalist and other traditions, hands-on activities to make learning accessible to individuals with various learning styles, and structured opportunities for questioning, reflecting, and self-expression. The program introduces children to the Unitarian Universalist heritage, including rituals, songs, and traditions of our faith, and stories about Unitarian Universalists whose words, songs, and deeds have helped to shape the faith home that participants share.

Signs of Our Faith: Being UU Every Day, 2nd-3rd

"Signs of Our Faith" guides children to do their best to live faithful lives every day. It presents fourteen traits or values that most Unitarian Universalist love, including the quest for knowledge, reverence for life, supporting one another on our faith journeys, and public witness. Children examine how their lives can and do exhibit these traits and values, and come to understand that their faith is a living faith whose histories and teachings are fortifications for living faithfully in a complex world.

Windows and Mirrors, 4th-5th

This program nurtures children's ability to

acknowledge their own experiences and perspectives, and to seek out, care about and respect those of others. Sessions unpack topics that lend themselves to diverse experiences and perspectives—for example, faith heritage, public service, anti-racism and prayer. Underlying the program is the lesson that there are always multiple viewpoints.

Popcorn Theology, Jr. Youth Group

This curriculum uses clips from both recent and classic Hollywood movies to discuss theological and ethical issues with middle schoolers, while relating the material to UU identity and community involvement. Themes include: personal ethical agency, oppression, power and responsibility, and fear.

Our Name is Earl, Sr. Youth Group

Youth are invited to explore religious concepts through the life of Earl Hickey as he goes on a spiritual quest to be a better person. Based on the television series “My Name is Earl,” youth will learn about our Unitarian Universalist values and principles and define their ideas about the afterlife, sin, covenant, and many other important concepts that become part of our personal credos.

Curriculum Spotlight: “Our Name is Earl”

By Sean Briscoe, Religious Education Coordinator

This year, our Senior Youth Group has been utilizing a new approach to their lessons. “Our Name is Earl” is a multimedia Unitarian Universalist curriculum based on the popular TV show, “My Name is Earl.” The curriculum is written by my wife, Natalie Briscoe, the UUA Regional Healthy Congregational Life Consultant for the Southern Conference. The main purpose of this Religious Education programming is to create a medium that allows high school youth to engage in meaningful conversations about bullying, forgiveness, relationships, and atonement in a way that uses humor and wit. The curriculum builds in a useful component of self-evaluation, theological evaluation, and relationship building to create a holistic UU foundation for young minds to grow and become adult members of our UU community.

The format for this type of curriculum is set up in 26 lessons corresponding with the 26 episodes in the first season of the “My Name is Earl” show. Each one has a lesson that the anti-hero, Earl, is learning while trying to make himself a better human being. Earl is a man who,

having done bad things his whole life, is given a second chance by winning the lottery and sets out to make amends with all the people whom he has treated badly throughout his life.

Earl battles acts of discrimination that are perpetrated on classmates by making attempts to help them and try to improve their lives. As Earl tries to make amends, he finds that the impact he had on some of these people’s lives was not at all what he had expected. As the class moves along in the material, they write and develop a better understanding of how they affect those around them and gain a greater understanding of their place in the greater UU community.

One of the end products of this class is a guide to helping the youth develop an articulated UU theology that they can use in the youth-led service at the end of the school year. Here is what a couple of our youth group members have to say about the curriculum:

“The best way to learn morals is to find out everything that shouldn’t be done. Thanks Earl.” - Kate Windsor

“The conversations sparked by the shallow humor of the show are generally very meaningful and are surprisingly quick to jump to very serious topics. It creates a light air while watching, and provides for comfortable discussion after.” - Mary Emma Gary

To get in on the fun, consider joining the crucial ministry provided by youth group advisors and Sunday School teachers!

Teacher Training, January 25 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Volunteer Sunday School teaching and youth group advising is one of the most engaging forms of Unitarian Universalist spiritual practice—just ask any of our wonderful volunteers! This ministry takes love, dedication, and a passion for UUism, but it also takes TRAINING! Please join us at our next session. We will focus on new curricula for all grades, some philosophy of religious education, classroom organization, and management tips. We will also be going over security, safety, and supervision policy to continue to promote a safe learning environment for our students. We also look forward to getting input on how to better serve the volunteers that we currently have and integrating new volunteers that have joined this important ministry over the last several months. We are excited for this next semester and look forward to engaging in the faith formation of our youngest UUs! ■

Action for Justice meeting

Monday, Jan. 13
Rm. 13
7 p.m.

Join us for our first meeting of the year! An organizer from Austin Interfaith will be training the group on organizing skills so that we'll be better equipped to talk to the congregation about what social justice issues are important to us all. Newcomers are welcome! Questions? Email us at justice@austinuu.org.

January Seniors Luncheon

Wednesday, Jan. 8
Howson Hall
12 p.m.

The speaker will be Palmer Wright, long-time UU member and former chair of the Public Affairs Forum. Palmer will talk to us about his memories of the Great Depression. His teenage years were enhanced by the wealth of his parents as they moved from the depressed Midwest to the sunshine life of Hollywood.

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

People's Community Clinic: Thanks for the books!

We are very pleased and thankful to Laura Rice who added to our Children's Book Drive for People's Clinic by donating 80 brand new books! That brought the total books donated by members and friends of the church to 373! What a wonderful job, thank you to everyone.

Anyone who would like to join our monthly Tuesday Morning Collating Group is more than welcome. We meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Clinic's Conference Room at 2909 North

IH35. For January we will meet on Tuesday, January 14th. We usually finish by noon and those who have the time go to lunch together. It is a pleasant, social and conversational time to visit with other members and friends of the church. No long-term commitment is necessary.

For those who are interested in other volunteer opportunities at the Clinic you may check their website, www.austinpcc.org or contact the church's committee at pcc@austinuu.org.

Public Forum presentations to be broadcast on ChannelAustin

The following Public Affairs Forums have been scheduled for broadcast during the month of January. Each talk will be broadcast at 6 p.m. every Sunday on ChannelAustin channel 10-10. You can also watch it online at channelaustin.org/watch/streaming10.

Sunday, January 5th:

J. David Bamberger, owner of "Selah Ranch" habitat restoration project. His topic was "Habitat Restoration and the Quality of Life."

Sunday, January 12th:

Jane Tillman of the Travis Audubon

Society. Her topic was "Backyard Birding in Central Texas."

Sunday, January 19th:

Brandi Clark, owner of Austin Econetwork. She discussed "Preventing and Recovering Food Waste."

Sunday, January 26th:

Andrew Wheat, Research Director of Texans for Public Justice. He discussed "On The Front Lines of the Wild West: Money in Texas Politics."

Keep a lookout in upcoming newsletters and bulletins for Public Forum broadcast info!

GREEN SANCTUARY: INSIDE BOOKS PROJECT

Your contributions are making a difference!

Because of you, lives have been transformed. Souls imprisoned in the most desperate of places have been truly nourished. The simple justice of sharing your gently used paperback books to Texas prisoners through our Green Sanctuary's project partner, Inside Books Project, has made a life-changing difference.

One Texas inmate wrote, "It is so dangerous, dark and scary behind these prison walls. Your books provide a safe, sane and healthy alternative to the daily terror. Thank you again and again."

Leave your paperback contributions at the gallery bookstore. All are welcome, especially dictionaries, sacred texts, bilingual books, trade training books and just darn good reads. A \$20.00 tax-deductible receipt per box or bag of books is available on the bookstore door. We can take your books on Sunday or any other time.

We meet the second Monday of every month to send the books to inmates. Questions? Call Beki or Richard at 512-288-4080 or green@austinuu.org. Thank you, again and again!

**Help Wanted:
LGBTQ Spiritual
Connections Fair!**

**Sunday, Jan. 26
Howson Hall
2-4:30 p.m.**

The First UU and the Pride Interfaith Partnership's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Spiritual Connections Fair is right around the corner! 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. Especially on the day of the event from 1-5 p.m. we will need greeters and other forms of assistance. Questions? Feel free to contact Peter at didit@austin.rr.com or at 512-374-9688.

GREEN TIPS FROM GREEN SANCTUARY

Protect your trees from oak wilt

If you are new to the area, oak wilt is an incurable disease that primarily attacks red oaks and live oaks. Both of these species are in the "red oak family." Oak wilt is caused by a fungus spread by sap beetles, interconnected tree roots, and not properly cleaning pruning tools. Once a tree is infected, it lasts about three months. The city of Austin has lost over 10,000 trees so far and many more will be lost.

What can you do to prevent oak wilt? First of all, plant diverse tree species so that the disease won't spread through a monoculture. Yards that have mainly red oaks and live oaks are a prime target

for the spread. There are many good oak alternatives that are native and well adapted here. The ones below are all in the "white oak family" and are resistant to oak wilt:

- Monterey oak or Mexican white oak
- Chinquapin oak
- Bur oak
- Lacey oak

Winter, particularly January, is the time to plant trees. This gives them a chance to get their roots established before the heat of summer. If you are planting oaks this year, consider those that are oak wilt resistant. Your neighbors will thank you!

Animal Blessing Service

Sanctuary, Feb. 2

On February 2nd, we will have an animal blessing service. Please bring your well-behaved, house-trained animal and pictures of your other animals. Most cats will probably have to be in cat carriers. Birds will probably have to be in cages. Snapping turtles should be held by their owners, the same with chickens. We will have a wonderful time! Look for more info about this service in February!

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

JANUARY 5

Burning Bowl Service

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Here at the first of the new year, we bring things for the fire, to let them go from our lives. Outmoded habits, grudges, practices, ideas, maybe a relationship that has become destructive, a worry you are willing to release...any or all of these things can go into the burning bowl.

JANUARY 12

Architecture and Spirit

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

As we think about how to make our church more hospitable, let's talk about the language of space, how buildings communicate. If "architecture is frozen music," what tune are we playing?

JANUARY 19

The Magic of Music

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

They say that magic is changing consciousness at will, and music certainly does change how we see the world. Looking through your windshield, does the music playing in your car not seem like a soundtrack to what you see? Can music cheer or spook you? What does music do to your brain?

JANUARY 26

Resolution Disillusion

REV. MARISOL CABALLERO

By this point into the new year, so many of us have already gotten mired in self-judgment over our "failure" to make good on New Year's resolutions. What do our Sources, such as Buddhism's practice of loving kindness, have to say about such goal-setting and personal criticism?

A special announcement from Rev. Meg



Kiya and I are happy to announce that we got married by the fire on Dockweiler Beach, Los Angeles on December 31, 2013. Thank you to my colleague, Rev. Darrel Richey for officially marrying us. He's from Texas so that's all right.

We will have a big party here, where we wish it had been legal for us to tie the knot, on January 18 at 6 p.m at First UU. Bring a potluck dish and wear something plaid in honor of the Scotland honeymoon this August! No gifts please.

THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

JANUARY 5

Zero Waste

WITH BOB GEDERT

Zero Waste = Reduce, Redesign, Reuse, Repair, Rebuild, Refurbish, Refinish, Resell, Repurpose, Recycle, and Return to the Earth.

On December 15, 2011, Austin City Council adopted the Austin Resource Recovery Master Plan, as a roadmap toward achieving zero waste. Zero waste is a paradigm shift from waste management to materials management.

As the City of Austin embarks on the journey toward zero waste, Austin Resource Recovery is transforming from a waste management collection agency into a materials management agency. Part of that transformation includes re-evaluating our core services, searching for operational efficiencies, and realigning our services within the framework of this new direction.

Bob Gedert is the Director of the Austin Resource Recovery Department for the City of Austin. He is considered a leader in zero waste implementation strategies and believes that zero waste can be achieved through a pragmatic application of "Materials Management" through citizen, business and government partnerships.

JANUARY 12

The Texas Center for Actual Innocence: Who We Are and What We Do

WITH TIFFANY DOWLING, J.D.

Tiffany Dowling is a Clinical Instructor and Staff Attorney at U.T. School of Law. She will describe the mission and operations of the Texas Center for Actual Innocence, a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation at the U.T. School of Law. The Center screens and investigates claims of innocence from Texas inmates when there is evidence that suggests they may be innocent, or that their incarceration results from a constitutional error during trial that prevented evidence from being introduced that might have proved innocence. Ms. Dowling teaches and supervises law students in the

review and investigation of post-conviction innocence claims. They have had some notable successes in exonerating inmates of crimes.

Tiffany Dowling began her career as a Deputy Counsel and Program Attorney for the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center and trained Texas Municipal Court judges. She also served as an Assistant District Attorney for Travis County, Texas until she joined the U.T. School of Law Faculty in 2007.

JANUARY 19

How Did Texas Get Into This Mess and Who Will Lead Us Out?

WITH JIM CULLEN

In the early seventies, the state paid about 80% of the cost of higher education and about half of the cost of education provided by school districts, and Texas had a well-funded highway program. Now the state pays only about 20% of the costs of higher education, as tuition costs for colleges have skyrocketed. The legislature is directing more state funds to private "charter schools" and leaving public schools filled with challenging students underfunded. The state isn't keeping up with highway maintenance and has now licensed foreign corporations to build new highways and run them as revenue-generating tollways. The Texas Legislature has slashed funding for family health clinics and has refused almost 10 billion dollars in federal funds to expand Medicaid to cover one million working Texans who are uninsured. Will Senator Wendy Davis provide the leadership needed to reverse these trends? Will the Texas media allow Democrats to hold a wealthy few Republicans responsible for decisions that have impacted Texans so adversely?

Since 1995, Jim Cullen has been the founder and editor of the Progressive Populist, an independent bi-monthly journal of politics and economics based in Manchaca, Texas and published out of Storm Lake, Iowa. Jim is an honors graduate of University of Dallas, and has worked for various newspapers, including the Dallas Gazette, the Irving Daily News, the Shreveport Times, the Longview News and Journal, and the Beaumont Enterprise.

see Jan. 26 forum event on page 16

**First Unitarian
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THE FORUM, *continued*

JANUARY 26
**OpportunityTexas—
Tools for Low-Income
Texans in the Fight
Against Poverty**

WITH DON BAYLOR JR.

Don Baylor, Jr., a senior policy analyst with the Austin-based Center for Public Policy Priorities, will talk about his work to expand economic opportunity and mobility for low-income Texans. His focus is on helping Texans of modest means help themselves “learn, earn, save, and protect” to achieve financial stability. This statewide OpportunityTexas campaign stresses education for postsecondary success, creating pathways to good jobs, asset building, and consumer protection.

Baylor was recently appointed to the

Consumer Advisory Board of the new federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Baylor will discuss the role of this independent federal agency, originally proposed by Harvard law professor Elizabeth Warren (now a U.S. senator from Massachusetts), in promoting fairness and transparency for mortgages, credit cards, and other consumer financial products and services.

An eighth-generation Texan, Don Baylor, Jr., joined the CPPP in 2004. Before coming to the center, he crafted and advocated living-wage, anti-predatory lending, and affordable-housing legislation before the New York city council and New York state legislature. He holds a B.A. from Georgetown University and a M.A. in African American and Southern History with honors from The University of Wisconsin-Madison. ■