

January 2008



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Office Hours:
Tuesday evenings
5 – 7 p.m.
Wednesday mornings:
Jan 9, 23 & 30th, 10 a.m. – 12
Thursday mornings
10 a.m. – noon

President:
Linda Shroyer

Past President:
Eric Devore

President Elect:
Julie Pajer

Vice President:
Heather Stoa

Treasurer:
Mark Sorensen

Secretary:
Mary Lovell

Board Members at Large:
Ron Shafer
Dave Snoeyenbos
Denise Renfro

UUFD Trust Board:
Ken Robertson
Vern Thistlethwaite
Dave Snoeyenbos

Upcoming Services

All Sunday services begin at 10:15 AM.

There is religious education for children and child care for babies.

January 6 — “And Her Name Is Grace” with Rev. John Biedler

Call it serendipity, synchronicity, coincidence, a fluke, chance, or luck; call it one door opening as another closes, a positive attitude, karma, God, Gaia, or divine providence, whether we understand it or even believe in it, there is something in the world that continues to bestow gifts of abundance and surprise, delight and hope, happiness and awe, whether or not we deserve it. In weakness, we are upheld; in failure, we learn and grow, in despair, we can still find hope; in grief, peace. There’s a benevolent, beautiful, elegant force at work in the world. And her name is Grace. As I share in this sermon how she has graced my life, I invite you to look where she has appeared in yours?

January 13 — “Do Religions Bring Peace?” with Rev. John Biedler

After being snowed out last month, I bring to you what I would have said: Because the major religions of the world have over the centuries grown and developed within powerful, warlike nations, it may be no surprise that "thou shalt not kill" may in actuality be more of a tribal mandate about not taking life from within one’s own group. If historians are correct, what are we to conclude about the effect on individual lives, not merely of Christianity, but of any of the major religions of the world, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism? Does religious conviction really effect moral action within their societies? What motivates your own moral actions day to day? Discussion to follow the sermon.

January 20 — “May Compassion Grow” with Rev. John Biedler

Joseph Campbell in his conversations with Bill Moyers has two definitions for compassion: 1) "compassion is the natural opening of the human heart to another human being." and 2) "compassion is the awakening of the heart from self-interest to humanity." Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh writes "we know that our compassion is firm and authentic when it is not contingent on the other person being lovable." In my work for Dove, Inc. as I help the disadvantaged here in Decatur week in and week out, I have had to learn from and apply the great wisdom tradition of Buddhism my work. Today I share that journey.

January 27 - "Climate Change: Scientific Facts and Deniers's Fantasies." with Ron Shafer

There is a world-wide consensus among scientific organizations and climate scientists that severe climate change is real and that human activity is significantly contributing to the problem. Yet, there are those who deny this reality. Who are they? What scientific evidence do they have to support their position? Who is to gain if the deniers are correct? Who finances the denial of climate change? What are the possible consequences to sentient life on the planet if we continue to ignore the problem?

Next Newsletter deadline: January 15, 2008

Monthly Themes

Each month we explore a new theme at UUFd. In the month of January it will be the art of living with Grace and Compassion. The purpose of these topics in sermons, children's R.E., newsletters and discussion is to inspire deeper meaning and purpose as we ourselves explore these themes. The goal is to contribute to the shaping of our country's culture and future by becoming the change we want to see in the world. With these ten themes we will investigate the language and knowledge needed to dialogue with people of different views on issues such as faith, values, ethics and religion. Please join us in this journey by attending these services.

The themes for 2007-2008:

September -- Building Community

October -- Knowing your Calling in Life

November-- Gratitude's Gifts

December -- Peace on Earth

January -- With Grace & Compassion

February -- Spiritual Practices & Prayer

March -- Letting Go

April -- Salvation Defined

May -- Truth , Is it Relative?

June -- The Power of Transformation

Religious Education Classes

January 6th — Celebrating our 1st principle - accepting one another

January 13th — Our African American brothers and sisters

January 20th — Who was Martin Luther King?

January 27th — Keepers of the Earth - learning from our Native Americans



Chocolate Extravaganza!

I thought this idea might be worthwhile for our fellowship to try if there is interest. Over the years the sponsoring group had been very successful and had raised a considerable sum for their group recipient of choice. We work hard to raise money to meet our Fellowship's budgetary needs. I suggest that we need as a Fellowship to help other community groups who can make the Decatur area a better place as well as to improve the lives of our neighbors. I know all of us give and volunteer as individuals. I suggest we plan to hold the Saturday before Valentine's Day (it may be too late for this year, maybe not) a "Chocolate Extravaganza" or Chocolate Bazaar". Members and friends are asked to make an especially good (even special and exotic) recipe containing chocolate for the sale. The public would be invited in to purchase. We would have some valentine theme decorations and food items would be presented in such a way that they could be used by our customers as gifts as well as for their own glutinous desires. Our Social Action Covenant group or some other of our committees could designate the recipient for the year. It could be a different recipient each year. Let me know what you think and if you are willing to provide a luscious chocolate something. Vern Thistlethwaite, vthistle@insightbb.com, (217) 429-5923

Calendar of Events

January 2008

(All activities take place at the Fellowship, unless otherwise noted. Visitors are always welcome!)

Wednesday, January 2nd

- 10:00 a.m. to noon—Wednesday Morning Covenant Group

Friday, January 4th

- 1:00 p.m.—UU Men's Group - Tuscany restaurant

Sunday, January 6th

- Noon — Program Committee Meeting

Monday, January 7th

- 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.—Social Action Covenant Group

Wednesday, January 9th

- 6:00 p.m.—UUFD Women's Book Group at Tina King's home.

Thursday, January 10th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, January 11th

- 1:00 p.m.—UU Men's Group - Tuscany restaurant

Tuesday, January 15th

- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 6:15 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.—Christian Practices Covenant Group

Wednesday, January 16th

- 10:00 a.m. to noon—Wednesday Morning Covenant Group

Friday, January 18th

- 1:00 p.m.—UU Men's Group - Tuscany restaurant

Monday, January 21st

- 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.—Social Action Covenant Group

Thursday, January 24th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, January 25th

- 1:00 p.m.—UU Men's Group - Tuscany restaurant

Tuesday, January 29th

- 6:00 p.m. —UUFD Outreach Committee meeting—Perkins Restaurant

Group discussion topics:

Social Action Covenant Group— taking action on social and political issues important to Decatur, Illinois and the nation, we strive to lead and inform the congregation on important social justice issues. Please join us and help make a difference in our community.

Wednesday Morning Covenant Group—We are launching into a new book Constructing a Life Philosophy by David L. Bender. Visitors are always welcome.

Women's Book Group— The book is Animals, Vegetables and Miracles by Barbara Kingsolver. Bring a dish to share. RSVP to Tina at 877-6768.

Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group—See notes on pg. 6

Christian Practices Covenant Group—We will start anew on January 3rd with each session starting at 6:15 and ending at 8:15 p.m. Come explore the possibilities of the Christian faith. Guests are always welcome.

UUFD Outreach Committee Meeting—We will discuss ways we can let our community know what we are about and that we are available to them.

Letters from John...

If you attended the lecture series I did a few years ago at the Fellowship on “*The Enneagram and Spirituality*” or last year’s series “*On Understanding the Bible*,” you won’t want to miss this next set of lectures I’m doing beginning in March. In multi-media and discussion format, this series will reach across the disciplines to synthesize the teachings of religion, psychology, physics, mysticism, sociology, and anthropology with an aim to guide the audience to an integration of the spiritual, subjective world of ancient wisdom and the objective, empirical world of modern knowledge. I know this is a long sentence, and even taller order, but attempt it I shall.

Many would argue there is no more critical and pressing topic in the modern world than this, with direct influence not only in academic and theological circles, but in national politics as well as in local school boards, in international relations and in small town community concerns.

In this series I will reveal an already existing accord between ancient spiritual wisdom and modern scientific knowledge. As a long-time reader and student of the Bible, world history, philosophy and the broad fields of scientific inquiry, I will step up to the challenge of articulating how science and religion can be approached in ways that allow for their reconciliation and integration, and on terms that will be acceptable to both camps.

It has been said that science has given us the methods for discovering truth, while religion remains the single greatest force for generating meaning. Yet the two are often seen as mutually exclusive, with wrenching consequences for humanity. Not any more. Please sign up for this series on the foyer table at the UU Fellowship, 3773 N. MacArthur Rd. The series begins Wednesday evening, March 5, 2008 from 7 – 9 p.m. and continues at that time on each 1st and 3rd Wednesdays through May.

In Faith,
John

p.s. Next month I will share with you in this column the experience of being with my father and family at his recent death, Dec. 15, 2007. For many of you it will be a resonant chord.

Further Reading on Grace

Small Graces: The Quiet Gifts of Everyday Life, by Kent Nerburn (May 1998)
 Amazing Grace: The Story of America’s Most Beloved Song, by Steve Turner (2003)
 Natural Grace: Dialogues on Creation, Darkness, and the Soul in Spirituality and Science, by Matthew Fox
 The Alphabet of Grace, by Frederick Buechner
 Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods, by Marilyn Sewall
 Saving Graces: Finding Solace and Strength from Friends and Strangers, by Elizabeth Edwards (Sep 26, 2006)
 Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics, by Carol L. Flinders

Rev. Biedler’s Hours

Office hours for Rev. Biedler in January are Tuesday evenings from 5 – 7 p.m.; Wednesday mornings Jan 9, 23 & 30th, 10 a.m. – 12; and each Thursday morning from 10 a.m. – noon. You may reach John at the church office by calling (217) 875-5442; or by calling his cell phone at (217) 972-2184.

UU Christian Group

The Unitarian Universalist Christian Group has completed a successful 6-month covenant, and is re-forming beginning in January. Our first meeting is January 15, from 6:15-8:15 at the Fellowship. We will tentatively meet every first and third Tuesday of the month from then on.

All are welcome to join us for this meeting. Please come if this is something you would like to be a part of. No commitments are necessary, and child care may be provided in the future if a need is determined. For more information, you may contact Jennifer Sekosky at (217) 425-4091.



Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group

The Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7 pm in the Fellowship sanctuary. The group will not meet January 1 (New Year's Day), but will have its next meeting on January 15th. The discussion group seeks to explore the teachings and spiritual philosophy of Eckhart Tolle, a contemporary mystic, through discussions, audio-visual presentations, and silent meditations. Presently we are viewing and discussing a spiritual retreat with Eckhart Tolle filmed in Costa Rica a few years ago. This event was attended by Marcelo Lepeley. Contact Mel Weinstein (217) 763-0509 for additional information.

2007 Congregational Survey UU Fellowship of Decatur

From a membership of around 50, responses were received from 23 members and 2 friends. The respondents included 17 females, 7 males and 1 unmarked. 18 have not been members of any other UU congregation. The majority were over the age of 50, had been attending UUFD for over 10 years, and attended 3 or more times a month.

A wide diversity of religious or theological preferences was indicated, with the most number marking "eclectic".

The activities that respondents would like to participate in the coming years are; social action projects undertaken by the congregation, social activities (potlucks, etc.), fundraising, and discussion groups.

By far, the majority are enthusiastic in their attitude toward future growth of UUFD.

The highest ratings for the purpose of the Sunday morning services were: to show paths for individual growth and change, to provide intellectual challenges, to spur individuals to act on their convictions and to help us better understand ourselves.

The highest ratings for ministerial priorities were for: the intellectual development of members, being a spiritual leader and an example for spiritual growth, to promote growth of the congregation and liberal religious tradition in the community, and to create opportunities for the spiritual growth of members.

Kathy Kline,
Chair Committee on Ministry

If you would like a copy of the complete summary of the survey, e-mail kkline@insightbb.com or call (217) 428-1807



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur
 3773 North MacArthur Road, Decatur, IL 62526
 January 2008 Issue

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“Promoting freedom, reason,
 And tolerance in religion”

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Fellowship mission statement:

In a nurturing environment of openness, mutual respect, and friendship, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur is a welcoming, diverse congregation. We share values and seek to celebrate life and support one another in our inward and outward searches for spiritual meaning, provide a liberal religious presence, and strive for compassion and justice in our community and our world.

January Birthdays

Denise Lohrenz-Renfro	January 06
Laura Vaught	January 06
Mark Sorensen	January 20
Caius Pajer	January 21
Hadrian Pajer	January 21
Amy Stockwell	January 22



For	Contact	At:
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