

March 2008



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

3773 N. MacArthur Rd.
Decatur, IL 62526
Phone: (217) 875-5442



Website:
www.uufd.org
Webmaster@uufd.org

Minister:
Rev. John Biedler
Church Office:
(217) 875-5442
Other Phone:
(217) 423-7349
Cell:
(217) 972-2184
jbiedler@uufd.org
Office Hours:
Tuesday evenings
5 – 7 p.m.
Wednesday & Thursday
mornings
10 a.m. – noon

President:
Linda Shroyer

Past President:
Eric Devore

President Elect:
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Heather Stoa

Treasurer:
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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.

March 2 — “A Time to Let Go” by Rev. John Biedler

What do you worry about most? Is it your children? Or maybe your parents, suddenly like children in their dependency on you? Is it your finances, wondering what will come? Is it your health—a disease or condition that you have now or fear contracting? Or the health of a loved one? How about death—or does the pain and possible bondage associated with dying worry you more? Holding on to things we cannot keep may well avail us nothing. Here wisdom teaches us to let go for dear life, in order to move on. In this sermon I will draw from the words of Forrest Church to test those Lifelines in our lives.

March 9 — "Awakening to the Art Around Us – the oft ignored impact of art in our lives"

Bert Gray, Executive Director of the Decatur Area Arts Council, will discuss this subject and bring us up-to-date on the arts scene in Decatur.

March 16 — Revenue Review Brunch

Join us for a different kind of Sunday morning! Please come hungry as we will have brunch at 10:15 followed by a review of the UUFd finances and a discussion. We need your priorities and ideas before finalizing next year's budget and asking for your pledges. This will be an interactive meeting complete with small group discussions. So, join us and bring your appetite and ideas. Children are encouraged to eat with us and there will be RE and babysitting also.

March 23 — “The Truth About Easter” by Rev. John Biedler

Some say it's too commercialized. Others ask what do bunny rabbits and chicken eggs have to do with one another anyway? Some say it's about the Resurrection; some say it's about Spring; others about Hope. Some say the day is meaningless. For others it's about chocolate, and marshmallows, and hunting for hidden eggs with the kids. For some it's about a new dress, or new shoes and a spring bonnet. But one thing it seems we can all agree upon, it's always about great food -- what would Easter be without a brunch, whether with family or favorite restaurant? So what is the truth about Easter?

March 30: — The popular Rev. Miley Palmer will return to UU this morning with a unique message.

Board Meetings will be held on March 9th

Next Newsletter deadline: March 15, 2008

Monthly Themes

Each month we explore a new theological theme at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur. The purpose of these themes in sermons, newsletters and the discussions after church services is to inspire us all to live lives of greater meaning, skill and purpose. Each theme plays a part in the development of what we hope will be a well-rounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings each month are by no means limited to the themes, since we have guest speakers often. However, these topics provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Our ultimate goal is to contribute to the shaping of our country's culture and future by becoming the change we would like to see in the world.

Through the ten themes listed below we will explore the language and knowledge needed to dialogue with people of different perspectives on issues of faith, values, ethics and religion. But be warned: seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

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

Calendar Items

Group discussion topics:

Social Action Covenant Group— We lead the congregation in social and political issues important to and in coalition with the citizens of Decatur, the state and the nation. Please join us and make a difference.

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— Bring a dish to share. The book is *A 1000 Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.

Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group—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 (763-0509) for additional information.

Christian Practices Covenant Group—Come explore the possibilities of the Christian faith. Guests are always welcome.

Good Samaritan Inn

Good Samaritan Inn needs you. Would you consider helping us feed the homeless and disadvantaged here in Decatur? Members and Friends of the UU Fellowship will be preparing, serving meals and cleaning up at the Good Samaritan Inn on Saturday, March 15, 2008, and we would love your help. Please sign the list on the foyer table if you can volunteer that day. You'll be needed from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. If you can only help with a portion of that day, please team up with someone who will fill in during the time you cannot. *Thank you* on behalf of the many we will be serving that day. It fills a very real need – a hungry stomach.

Calendar of Events

March 2008

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

Monday, March 3rd

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

Tuesday, March 4th

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

Wednesday, March 5th

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

Friday, March 7th

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

Sunday, March 9th

- Board meetings
- Food Pantry Donations Accepted

Tuesday, March 11th

- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. — Spiritual Book Club & Discussion

Wednesday, March 12th

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

Thursday, March 13th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, March 14th

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

Monday, March 17th

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

Tuesday, March 18th

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

Wednesday, March 19th

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

Friday, March 21st

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

Tuesday, March 25th

- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. — Spiritual Book Club & Discussion
- 6:00 p.m. — Outreach Committee Meeting—Perkins Restaurant

Thursday, March 27th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, March 28th

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

Letters from John...

Every once in a while the opportunity to be in the public eye on behalf of UUFDF comes my way – this time it will be in the public ear. On Wednesday, March 26th, I invite you to tune your radios to 1340 on the AM dial, WSOY, from 5 to 6 p.m. You're likely to hear me on Wayne Kent's live radio show *Direct Line*. I've been on it a couple of times before and some of you have even called in during the show, which I hope many of you will do again on March 26th. I encourage you to voice your opinions by calling in and let yourself be heard in the city of Decatur. It's a rare opportunity to be on a radio show that (Wayne himself tells me) has the highest rating for that time slot in the city of Decatur. Tune in and let people know what you think.

You may remember Rev. Wayne Kent is the senior minister of the First Christian Church just down the road from UUFDF on MacArthur Road. Though he and I may be far from each other theologically and philosophically, Wayne has always been respectful and open to hear what I have to say. When I asked him what would be the theme for this upcoming program he responded with, "Hey, whatever is current in the news at the time...probably some election things I would imagine." It should be a lively show and your calls would be welcomed.

Whenever I speak publicly, whether in print or through electronic media, I'm careful to state that the opinions I express are mine, and that I do not speak on behalf of either the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur nor on behalf of the larger UU Association of Congregations. But this gives me the opportunity to address the fact that we are a religious movement that encourages individual thought; that there actually could be no one person speaking for the whole denomination because we are composed of such a wide array of beliefs and ideas.

I stress that we believe in the freedom of religious expression; that all individuals are encouraged to develop their own personal theologies, and that they may present them openly, without fear of censure or reprisal; that we hold that all religions, in every age and culture, possess not only intrinsic merit but potential value for those who have learned the art of listening.

If this sounds familiar, I'm paraphrasing from a small red, business-card-sized foldout that you can find on the foyer table at the Fellowship. It is by David Rankin and makes a great handout for people to know who we are and what we believe.

It goes on to say, and as I hope to say on the air, that we believe in the authority of reason and of conscience; that the ultimate arbiter in religion is not a church, nor a document, nor official but the personal choice and decision of the individual; that if the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations that appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful, and wondrously exciting. I hope to be able to say on the air that we hold there is no fundamental conflict between faith and knowledge, religion and the world, the sacred and the secular...that they all have their source in the same reality. That if all people on earth have an equal claim to life, liberty, and justice— then no idea, ideal, or philosophy is superior to a single human life. That we believe in the ethical application of religion; that good works are the natural product of a good faith, and are evidence of an inner grace that finds completion in social and community involvement.

That when all is said and done, it is the motive force of love that needs to be the governing principle in human relationships, which if it is, will always seek the welfare of others and never seek to hurt or destroy. In other words, we believe in the worth and dignity of each human being.

These are splendid words I hope we will all strive to embrace. Be sure to call in.

In Faith,
John

Bowling for Kids Sake

ARE U UU's READY FOR THE 2008 BOWL FOR KIDS SAKE?

I have talked with some of you about having a UU Bowl For Kids Sake team and have selected a date for us—**Sunday, March 9 at 3:00 p.m. at Pla-Mor Lanes**. My first thought was to have the team be just for the kids...but we're all just BIG kids anyway, aren't we? Let's have some fun and do something good for to benefit all kids in our community!

Bowl For Kids Sake is the main fundraising event that benefits Big Brothers Big Sisters. All individuals who raise at least \$100 (or \$500 as a team) will receive a free t-shirt, two free games of bowling and shoe rental, free fresh pizza from Pizza Hut and a chance to win door prizes from area merchants. All participants also may enter to win a handmade quilt from the Decatur Quilters Guild.

The fundraising can be done with pledge sheets, or on the web. I have created us a website and a team name. We are called the UU Krazy Kids. You can join the team online at: <http://bbbs.kintera.org/2008/>

To Join the Team:

Click on Register Here

Click "I Agree" on the event Waiver/Agreement

Select the "Join a Team" link:

Type in UU Krazy Kids or search the alphabetical list

Once you are registered, you can e-mail all your friends and family to donate to the cause online

If you do not prefer to join this way...I can give you a pledge sheet at church. We can all go, regardless of whether you would like to bowl or not, and plus, now the bowling alleys are all smoke free! Let me know if you have questions!

Thanks,

Kate Shields

kjs@uiuc.edu

217.877.6042

The Integration of Science and Religion

Session One of the lecture/discussion series: *The Integration of Science and Religion* Sunday, March 9, 2-4 p.m., at UUFD entitled: *Galileo, Still on Trial* – Galileo wrote: "I do not feel obliged to believe that the same god who has endowed us with sense, reason and intellect has intended us to forgo their use." In the 1633 trial of Galileo Galilei, two worlds come into cosmic conflict. Galileo's world of science collides with the world of absolutism that held power in the West, the Catholic Church. This trial marks the beginning of a continuous contest between an existing, intransigent authority, the dominant religion of Europe, and the new discoveries of an emerging authority, the science method. This will set the stage for this upcoming series by Rev. John Biedler.

Rev. Biedler's Hours

Office hours for Rev. Biedler in March are Tuesday evenings from 5 – 7 p.m.; Wednesday mornings and 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 to set an appointment. He is also available at other times, so please call.



Environmental & Nature Film Series

The Green Sanctuary Committee is sponsoring an environmental and nature film series at the Fellowship in March and April. The purpose of the film series is to (1) help us achieve accreditation as a Green Sanctuary, (2) bring awareness to environmental issues, (3) bring attention to the upcoming Earth Day Celebration (April 22, 2008), (4) to generate interest in the special program scheduled for the weekend of April 26th, when we welcome the environmental activist Howard Lyman to Decatur, and (5) as a fundraiser for the Green Sanctuary Committee.

The schedule of films is listed below. These documentary films will be shown in the Sanctuary on the movie screen with stereo sound. All but one of the film showings is free, but we hope people will contribute donations and purchase food items to help us cover expenses and to raise money for the Green Sanctuary Committee. We are charging a fee for the first film because it requires a screening license. Note that there will be both a matinee and evening showing of this film.

Please mark your calendars for the dates below. I'm sure that you'll enjoy these documentaries, all of which have not been shown in a theatre setting in Decatur. For those interested, we will also have a discussion session after each showing.

Mel Weinstein

February 10, 2008

FILM	DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
<i>The Future of Food</i>	Saturday, March 8 2pm and 7pm	\$4 Admission This film offers an in-depth investigation into the disturbing truth behind the unlabeled, patented, genetically engineered foods that have quietly filled U.S. grocery store shelves for the past decade. From the prairies of Saskatchewan, Canada to the fields of Oaxaca, Mexico, this film gives a voice to farmers whose lives and livelihoods have been negatively impacted by this new technology. The health implications, government policies and push towards globalization are all part of the reason why many people are alarmed by the introduction of genetically altered crops into our food supply. This film is very professionally produced with a positive, upbeat message at the end. If you don't know much about genetically-modified foods, you'll want to see this film
<i>The Sangamon River: A Sense of Place</i>	Saturday, March 29 7pm	Free Directed by UIS Professor Charles Schweighauser and produced by the UIS Office of Electronic Media, this hour-long film is a profile and a celebration of the people, ecology, history, and economy of the Sangamon River Valley. Nearly nine years in the making, the documentary "captures the charm and beauty of the river and both its calm and raucous nature," said Schweighauser, who has canoed most of the river's 215 miles.

In April:

Saturday, April 12th at 7:00 PM—Mountain Mourning

Saturday, April 26th at 7:00 PM—Mad Cowboy Documentary

Additional details upcoming in our April newsletter.

Letter from Barbara Avni

Shalom (Hello)

Dear UU Friends,

Good news yesterday - my tumor is smaller and the CA 125 blood work is getting lower, lower- in the hundreds (should be in the 10's) I consider that a birthday present from my body.

It's wonderful living only 10 minutes from Tami. She is such a great support with a ready smile. And is constantly arranging and finding out information.

When I'm quiet and meet my inside me, I feel satisfied with life, full, and peaceful.

If course, there's ups and downs - better than all downs.

If anyone has the inclination to write or send a card, I would really appreciate it.

I hope everyone is well and the fellowship is foing fine.

Take care,

Shalom (Goodbye)

Shalom (Peace)

Barbara Avni, 1406 W. Winona Street Apt. 403, Chicago, IL 60640-6832

UUA Assembly of the Central MidWest District

We encourage you to attend!

The UUA Assembly of the Central MidWest District is in St. Louis this year, April 25 through April 27, a Friday through Sunday event. You may come to any portion of this 3-day series of workshops, services and wonderful connections with other UU's in our area.

The keynote speaker will be Diana Butler Bass, author of multiple books and an expert in religious trends in America. Through a grant by the Lilly Endowment, her research has discovered how diverse congregations can embrace their authenticity by drawing upon their traditions. The highlights of this year's assembly will be conversations, speeches and worship services about taking lessons of the past and using them to shape our religious future. Her presentation will be the catalyst for multiple discussions on shaping the religious future of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and what that future might look like.

Plus there will be all the other great features of past District Assemblies – traditions such as the Banner Parade, the Sermon Contest and of course – the opportunity to join other Unitarian Universalists in fellowship from all across the district.

Spring Celebration

Come to UUFD on Friday, March 21st at 7 p.m. to celebrate the first day of spring! All are welcome. The evening's program will include music, ritual, chanting, drumming, feasting and fellowship. Guests are welcome to bring their favorite spring-time finger food. You may also bring drums and rhythm instruments .

This service celebrating the natural world fulfills one of the Green Sanctuary requirements, and is being planned by UUFD's CUUPS group.



Reaching Out

Do you have ideas that would help us draw more people into our church? Share them with us! Feel free to attend our Outreach Committee meeting on Tuesday, March 25th at 6:00 PM at Perkins Restaurant, or simply contact Tammy Bledsaw at t.bledsaw@hotmail.com or phone 217.855.0736.



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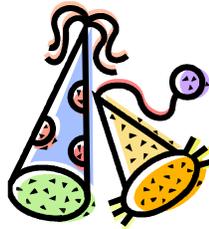
Fellowship mission statement:

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.



March Birthdays

Mel Weinstein	March 07
Jeanne Robertson	March 11
Darwin Shroyer	March 15
Sue Weinstein	March 18
Evan Zaker	March 19
David Kent Coy	March 20
Mary Lovell	March 21



For

Contact

At:

Name Tags

Kathy Kline

(217) 875-5442

Address Changes

Carolynn DeVore

ebdevore@insightbb.com

Newsletter submissions

Tammy Bledsaw

t.bledsaw@hotmail.com or (217) 855-0736

Website suggestions

June Allison

JuneChelso@springnet1.com or (217) 423-1813

MARCH 2008 ISSUE