

June 2008



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Decatur, IL 62526
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Minister:

Rev. John Biedler
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Office Hours:

Tuesday evenings
5 – 7 p.m.
Wednesday & 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.

June 1- "Can We Transform Our Lives?" by Rev. John Biedler

In the 1970's, as a fundamentalist minister and preacher, I decided I needed to transform my life...to expand my horizons. How did I do it and more specifically what is known about the process of self-transformation? What have psychologists and philosophers to say about it? I'll share my own experiences as well as the insights of some of the "life coaches" I've come across.

June 8 - "Buddhism in America." with John Wylder

John will discuss the history of Buddhism in America and some of the traditions that may or may not be coming together to form a distinctive American Buddhism.

June 15 - "A Father's Day Tribute" with Rev. John Biedler

Often fathers are a mixed bag; they can have a heart of gold and a temper of fire. Mine was that way, and I find I can be the same way. Conclusion...it's a lot easier to become a father than to be one. Most of us have the examples of either own fathers or possibly the men who played the role of a father in our lives. In some cases this is good and in others it's a lesson in what not to do. But where do we learn to be good fathers in today's society? In today's sermon I hope to provide some possible answers. After the sermon I'd like to hear from you, especially fathers.

June 22 - Summer Solstice Celebration.

Celebrate the longest day of the year and the abundance that the Earth provides for us in this season of the sun's greatest power. On this Sunday we will celebrate with chant, singing bowls, drums, and a spiral dance (non-dancers included).

June 29 - No service.

This is a clean-up day after the rummage sale on Saturday, June 28. Please join us for a "spring house cleaning."

Religious Education Classes

June 1 - Native American Appreciation Day, Iroquois Strawberry Ceremony- in thanksgiving for the strawberry harvest - June Allison & Denise Renfro

June 8 - Race Unity Day - Jennifer Raleigh

June 15 - Father's Day - give love and thanks to all fathers - Elizabeth Richards

June 22 - Summer Solstice- Marks the beginning of Summer and the longest day and shortest night of the year - Cassandra Meyen

June 29 - Garage Sale Clean-up Day (No RE)

Integration of Science and Religion Class

In this series of lectures and discussions, Rev. John Biedler will explore the distinctions between science and religion, and the results of the long "philosophical Cold War" that has been going on for centuries. He will review previous intellectual attempts to integrate these two epistemologies, and will demonstrate how science is compatible with those deep features common to all of the world's major wisdom traditions. In pointing the way to a union between truth and meaning, Rev. Biedler's aim is to guide the audience to what he contends is a mutual accord between the spiritual, subjective world of religion and the objective, empirical world of modern science. You are invited to sign up on the form on the foyer table at the Fellowship. Lecture 6 is the final lecture and will be held on the **Sunday afternoon June 1st, from 2 to 4 p.m.** You need not to have attended previous sessions to participate.

Next Newsletter deadline: June 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 Re-Defined
 May -- Truth , Is it Relative?

June -- The Power of Transformation

Blood Drive

On June 18, 2008 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and Holy Cross Lutheran Church will jointly sponsor a blood drive to take place in the Fellowship Hall at Holy Cross located at 3778 North Water Street. There is a tremendous need for blood during the summer months. It is a life saving gift. We are being asked to solicit donors and volunteers to assist with the donations. A sign up sheet will be in the foyer and more information will be in bulletin inserts. Please call Linda Shroyer at 429-7776 if you have any questions.



Rev. Biedler's Hours

Office hours for Rev. Biedler in June are each Tuesday evening from 5 – 7 p.m.; the Wednesday mornings of June 11 and 25 from 10 a.m. – noon; and each Thursday morning of from 10 a.m. – noon,. You may reach John at the church office by calling (217) 875-5442; or cell phone at (217) 972-2184. Rev. Biedler is also available at other times by appointment.

"Would you like paper or plastic?"

The answer to the "paper or plastic"? dilemma is: "Neither." Because they're roughly equal in pros and cons since both gobble up natural resources and cause significant pollution.

Issue 1: Energy and natural resources

It takes more than four times as much energy to manufacture a paper bag as it does to manufacture a plastic bag.

ENERGY TO PRODUCE BAG ORIGINALLY (BTUs)

Safeway Plastic Bags: 594 BTUs —Safeway Paper Bags: 2511 BTUs —(Source: 1989 Plastic Recycling Directory, Society of Plastics Industry.) Of course, most paper comes from tree pulp, so the impact of paper bag production on forests is enormous. In 1999, 14 million trees were cut to produce the 10 billion paper grocery bags used by Americans that year alone. Paper bag production delivers a global warming double-whammy; forests (major absorbers of greenhouse gases) have to be cut down, and then the subsequent manufacturing of bags produces greenhouse gases.

Issue 2: Pollution

The majority of kraft paper is made by heating wood chips under pressure at high temperatures in a chemical solution. As evidenced by the unmistakable stench commonly associated with paper mills, the use of these toxic chemicals contributes to both air pollution, such as acid rain, and water pollution. Millions of gallons of these chemicals pour into our waterways each year; the toxicity of the chemicals is long-term and settles into the sediments, working its way through the food chain. Further toxicity is generated as both plastic and paper bags degrade.

Paper bags generate 70% more air and 50 times more water pollutants than plastic bags.

Source: "Comparison of the Effects on the Environment of Polyethylene and Paper Carrier Bags," Federal Office of the Environment, August 1988

Issue 3: Recycling

It takes 91% less energy to recycle a pound of plastic than it takes to recycle a pound of paper. But recycling rates of either type



Continued on Page 5...

June 2008 Calendar of Events

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

Sunday, June 1st

- Noon — Drumming Circle



Monday, June 2nd

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

Tuesday, June 3rd

- 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.—Christian Practices Covenant Group

Wednesday, June 4th

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

Thursday, June 5th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, June 6th

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

Sunday, June 8th

- Food Pantry Donations Accepted

Tuesday, June 10th

- 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. — decREADgrp

Friday, June 13th

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

Monday, June 16th

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

Tuesday, June 17th

- 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.—Christian Practices Covenant Group

Wednesday, June 18th

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

Thursday, June 19th

- 7:00 p.m.—UUFD Buddhists Group

Friday, June 20th

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

Tuesday, June 24th

- 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. — decREADgrp
- 6:30 p.m.— Outreach Committee Meeting at the UUFD



WORLDSTOCK FAIR

The UUFD will be hosting a Worldstock Fair July 25th and 26th at the Fellowship. The Fair will include: Speakers from various community organizations, live and recorded music, drumming circle, various booths to include: Living Green, benefits of vegetarian/vegan diet, concessions, produce, children's events, etc.

We have invited Al Gore to speak at our event. There IS a possibility that he could attend, and if he is unable, it is possible that one of his associates could speak in his stead.

If you would like to assist with the fair, or if you have comments, ideas, or concerns, please contact Tammy Bledsaw at 855-0736 or t.bledsaw@hotmail.com

Group discussion topics:

Christian Practices Covenant Group—Please join us for discussions on the life and teachings of Jesus and the possibilities of the Christian faith for everyday living. Guests always welcome.

decREADgrp—Our readings and discussions are centered around religion, science, and philosophy. Information sheets are available on the literature table at the Fellowship. Open to the public.

Drumming Circle—at Noon after the morning service at UUFD. If the weather is good we'll again take our drums outside to help energize the Earth for Spring! This is an event for all ages!! Questions: June Allison #423-1813

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. Open to the public. Contact Mel Weinstein (763-0509) for additional information.

Social Action Covenant Group— We lead the congregation in social and political issues important to the citizens of Decatur, the state of Illinois and the nation. Some of the ideas this Covenant Group is working towards are 1.) helping adults improve their reading skills through *Project READ*; 2.) *Share a Magazine Sunday* where we all bring our past magazines to church, place them on long tables to sell for 50 cents each, and support worthy organizations in our community; 3.) *Canned Food Sunday* for organizations such as the N.E. Community Fund, the Good Samaritan Inn, etc. that feed the hungry in our community.

Wednesday Morning Covenant Group— Please join us as we discuss the book *Constructing a Life Philosophy* by David L. Bender. Guests welcome.

Women's Book Group— Sally Van Natta's home at 2 Lake Grove Club Road. Bring a dish to share and consider car-pooling due to limited parking space. The book is *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll.

Letters from John...

I've got the same challenge you have – I too have to practice what I preach. Truth is -- we all preach. It may not be from a pulpit. We may call it “advice,” we may pose it as “have you considered trying this?” But the question always remains...do we ourselves practice what we preach?

You may be asking why I give a sermon on a particular theme each month and then recommend an in-home spiritual practice centered around it? The purpose of these practices is to help all of us, including myself, bring our more public religious life into the privacy of our individual daily lives.

I realize that many people in our congregation already have a daily spiritual practice through which they connect with what is most important to them, be that prayer, meditation, a walk in nature, music, reading, exercise, gardening, etc. So the practices I suggest below I learned from others and have tried myself; I share them in the spirit of the transforming power of love:

Practice #1. Think of someone who has positively influenced your life and continues to shape who you are to this day. What is it that they did or said that remains and affects you? How did that get communicated to you? Are you offering something like that to others in your life that will last long after you?

2. Meditation: Sit comfortably with your back straight. Take a few deep breaths to relax your body and relieve tension. Concentrate on your breath moving in and out. As you notice your mind wandering, bring your consciousness back to your breathing. Do not criticize yourself for losing your concentration on your breath; when you notice you have wandered, return your attention to your breath.

After a few minutes, begin to imagine a bright ball of light floating above your head. Conceive it as the light of love, warmth, kindness, and compassion. Now, as you breathe in image that you are breathing in that light. As you exhale imagine that you are breathing out smoke that represents all of your tensions, worries, and anything else that you want to get rid of (including illness).

Continue to do this, imagining that your body is slowly becoming filled with the light, and eventually imagine that your entire body has become the light of love, warmth, kindness, and compassion. Your body should feel very light and clear -- like a balloon radiating light.

Now, imagine that when you exhale, the light is flowing out with your breath and filling other people whom you know need it with this light of love, warmth, kindness and compassion. Eventually you can imagine that light is flowing from you and filling your entire community, your state, the country and the world. When you are finished, go back to imagining the ball of light above your head. See the ball becoming smaller and smaller until it is the size of a ping-pong ball. Then imagine a clear box in your heart and place the ball in the box. Know that whenever you want it, the light of love, warmth, kindness, and compassion is right there in your heart. You can take it out anytime, do this meditation and fill your world with its presence.

Some people do this meditation and image the light represents the power of health and healing. You can use the meditation and visualization to promote recovery from specific illnesses and disease. Another variation of this mediation involves taking in other people's stress and pains and concerns as smoke, transforming it into light and sending it back to them. To do this meditation you first imagine your body being filled with light and then you begin to imagine yourself taking in the smoke and seeing it being transformed in you into light and sent back out as a healing glow.

3. Take some time to work in your garden, or just notice the trees and plants around you transforming each day. Take time to watch the sunrise or sunset. Feel the power of that which turns acorns into oak trees and miniscule cells into human beings. Transformation is happening all around you and within you every moment of every day. Tune in to it and allow yourself to be aligned with it.

4. Do something to help others or the environment and know that you are participating in transforming the world in positive ways. All of existence is interconnected, so actions we take have a ripple effect well beyond what we can see.

I hope you enjoy these journeys,
John

Paper or plastic cont...

of disposable bag are extremely low, with only 10 to 15% of paper bags and 1 to 3% of plastic bags being recycled, according to the Wall Street Journal.

ENERGY TO RECYCLE PACKAGE ONCE (BTUs)

Safeway Plastic Bags: 17 BTUs — Safeway Paper Bags: 1444 BTUs —Source: 1989 Plastic Recycling Directory, Society of Plastics Industry. Although paper bags have a higher recycling rate than plastic, each new paper grocery bag you use is made from mostly virgin pulp for better strength and durability.

Issue 4: Degradability

Current research demonstrates that paper in today's landfills does not degrade or break down at a substantially faster rate than plastic does. In fact, nothing completely degrades in modern landfills because of the lack of water, light, oxygen and other important elements that are necessary for the degradation process to be completed. A paper bags takes up more space than a plastic bag in a landfill, but because paper is recycled at a higher rate, saving space in landfills is less of an issue.

At the end of the day using reusable cloth shopping bags is the only real answer!

So, the next time you are asked, "Would you like paper or plastic?" You might just whip out your reusable cloth bags* and answer, "Neither, BECAUSE... 1. Both use up valuable natural resources for a single-use, disposable product.

2. Both have negative impacts on wildlife and pollute our environment. 3. Both create significant toxic by-products during their lifecycles. 4. Neither is effectively recycled." *Reusable Cloth bags may be purchased at UUFd as a fund-raiser or at Target, Kroger, and Wal-Mart.

[From the UUFd Green Sanctuary Committee]

News from the Green Sanctuary Committee

We are down to the very last activity for completion of our application to become a Green Sanctuary. Rev Jesch, Director of the UU Ministry for the Earth and the Green Sanctuary Program assured me today that we had some great programs, and they would like to recognize us with certification at GA in June! In case you have missed something, here the activities:

ACTION PLAN—GREEN SANCTUARY PROGRAM of the UUFd

Two activities involving worship, spiritual practice and/or community celebration:

- (1) 1. A service on Thoreau (John Biedler, Minister) May, 2008
- (2) 2. Water Celebration (John Biedler, Minister) September, 2007

Two religious education programs, one for children and one for adults:

- (3) 1. *Keepers of the Earth Native American stories & environmental activities* Joseph Bruchac & Michael Caduto (Denise Renfro & June Allison) fall 2007-spring 2008
- (4) 2. Northwest Earth Institute program: *Voluntary Simplicity* (Rita Schwake & Jeanne Robertson) January, 2008

Two activities addressing environmental justice issues, at least one of which is a year-long project involving the entire congregation and collaborating with one or more groups in the broader community:

- (5) 1. Team up with Macon Co Solid Waste Mgt in a *year-long* 3R (Reduce-Reuse-Recycle) project which would involve being a receiver for recyclables, encouraging the congregation to conceive of ways to use less and recycle more (Marge Evans)
- (6) 2. Sponsor an informational program "Where Does It Go?" toxic waste disposal, recycled material destination (Gwen Biedler & Marge Evans) Fall, 2007

Four activities covering elements of sustainable living, including at least one energy conservation action:

- (7) 1. Present Green Sanctuary Action Plan to UU Congregation together with a panel-type program on ways to promote sustainable living "It's Not Lonely Being Green" (Green Sanctuary Committee) July 22, 2007
- (8) 2. Engage Bob Croteau for an energy audit of our building, and sponsor a program on how to improve our energy efficiency (Deonne Orvis) (April, 2008)
- (9) 3. Sponsor a program by Howard F. Lyman, LL.D. President of Voice for a Viable Future; Livestock production: its effects on the environment (Mel Weinstein) April 27, 2008
- (10) 4. Initiate a *Buy Green Coop* through outreach with other churches and organizations in our community (Mark Smith, Rita Schwake, Marge Evans)

Two additional activities relating to the elements of our choice:

- (11) 1. Spring Equinox program (Kathy Kline) March, 2008
- (12) 2. Incorporate native plants in our landscape to attract birds and butterflies (Jean Robertson, Marge Evans, Deonne Orvis) spring 2008
- (13) 3. Initiate an Environmental Education Film Series (Mel Weinstein)

One final requirement remains: YOU, our congregation, need to vote to seek Green Sanctuary Certification. So the Board has given approval to call a special meeting of the membership. This will take place Sunday, June 22nd, after the service. Please plan to stay a few minutes and VOTE!



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JUNE 2008 Issue

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“Promoting freedom, reason,
And tolerance in religion”

Return Service Requested

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.



June Birthdays

Adam Vaught—June 20
June Allison—June 29th
Joan Broan—June 30th



Joys & Concerns

The Oasis Day Center and the homeless



For

Contact

At:

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(217) 875-5442

Address Changes

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Newsletter submissions

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Website suggestions

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