

December 2008



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Decatur, IL 62526  
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www.uufd.org  
www.myspace.com/uufd\_il



**Minister:**

Rev. John Biedler  
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jbiedler@uufd.org

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday, Wednesday and  
Thursday evenings 4:30 to  
6:30 p.m. at the Fellowship

**President:**

Julie Pajer

**Past President:**

Linda Shroyer

**President Elect:**

Heather Stoa

**Vice President:**

Available

**Treasurer:**

Mark Sorensen

**Secretary:**

Mary Lovell

**RE Director:**

Cassandra Meyen

**Board Members at Large:**

Ron Shafer  
Dave Snoeyenbos  
Rita Schwake

**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.

### December 7th—"People Make Music" by Rachel Weiss

Music is a fundamental part of the world we live in, and it is a common thread by which we connect as people. We often forget that beyond the music there are people with stories. In recent years scholars have realized the importance of studying musical culture, and this field has been termed "ethnomusicology." Today I will give a brief overview of ethnomusicology and discuss its application using a musical example entitled "Different Trains" by Steve Reich.

### December 14th—"And What About God?" by Rev. John Biedler

The New York Times ran an article entitled "Darwin's God," by Robin Marantz Henig who asks: "Which is the better biological explanation for a belief in God -- evolutionary adaptation or neurological accident? Is there something about the cognitive functioning of humans that makes us receptive to belief in a supernatural deity? And if scientists are able to explain God, what then? Is explaining religion the same thing as explaining it away? Are the nonbelievers right, and is religion at its core an empty undertaking, a misdirection, a vestigial artifact of a primitive mind? Or are the believers right, and does the fact that we have the mental capacities for discerning God suggest that it was God who put them there?" Yes, that's what I'm going to tackle in today's sermon. Me oh my!!

### December 21st—"Winter Solstice Multi-generational Celebration" by June Allison, Kathy Kline and Cassandra Meyen

This day marks the longest night of the year and the return of the new shining sun. North America will now start tilting towards the sun creating longer days of sunlight. Come honor this sacred time when we stop to contemplate what we would like to bring into our lives in the coming year. With June Allison, Kathy Kline, and Cassandra Meyen.

### December 24th—2008 Candlelight Christmas Eve Service by Rev. John Biedler

Amidst candles and good cheer, we will sing beloved Christmas hymns, enjoy one another's cookies, treats and hot apple cider as we conduct our annual classic Christmas Eve service with the reading of the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, a story that has been told continuously in East and the West for some 2,000 years. At 7 p.m. come join us, bring your family, and share the treats we hope you will bring with everyone this evening.

### December 28th—"Looking Back, Looking Forward" by Dan and Jo Caulkins

They will co-lead this service, talking about the power of goal setting and identifying your strengths to be effectively involved in making change in our community.

**Next Newsletter deadline:** December 15, 2008

## It is Time for a Larger, Friendlier Space

After many meetings throughout the past year with architect Jim Alpi and the friends and members of UUFD to address the current and future needs and wants for our congregation, the Property Committee recommended to the board that the central closet be torn out and the space remodeled to create a larger more welcoming foyer. The Property Committee also recommended the purchase of a storage shed to replace the lost closet space. The Board of Directors approved the projects at the November board meeting. The expected cost for both projects is \$12,000, and it is anticipated that work will begin early next year.

It is now time to turn talk into reality. Friends and members are being asked to support the projects with monetary donations. Please send your checks designating that the funds are to be used for the capital campaign to Treasurer Mark Sorensen at: 2980 S. Amelia Ave., Decatur, IL 62521 or to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur at: 3773 N. MacArthur Rd, Decatur, IL 62526. Your contributions will provide a more open space for visiting before and after UUFD services and functions, for sharing information among ourselves and with others, and for safely storing items that are not used on a frequent basis. Our much discussed and long awaited projects are on their way to fruition! Thank you for helping to make the Fellowship more welcoming.

## A Winter Reminder

If you are the last person to leave the building following an event, please take an extra few minutes to make sure that lights are off and that the thermostat has been turned down with the fan off. Help conserve resources and save on the costs of utilities. Many thanks for your efforts.

## Come Sing with Us

Come Sing with Us – the UUFD Choir is practicing for our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service and we would LOVE for you to join in. Deonne Orvis is leading the group and welcomes anyone who, even though you may not read music, enjoys singing. They are doing songs from the hymnal, so it won't be too demanding. Come sing with us after services at noon on Dec, 7, 14 the 21st.

## Introducing Dan and Jo Caulkins

Dan is well known in our community not only as a member of our city council, but involved with such organization as United Cerebral Palsy, Decatur Area Arts Council, Illinois Raptor Center and many others. Dan is a 1973 graduate of Eastern Illinois University and been a business owner for over 20 years.

Jo is Director of the Macon County Community Health Foundation and Pitch In! Keep Macon County Beautiful. She is a lifelong educator, from kindergarten to college, and former owner of Just a Couple of Cards and The Glass Moon.

## Religious Education Classes

December 7 - Christmas/Festival of Evergreen Trees - Celebrated by planting trees and hanging wreaths (symbols of eternal life). - Cassandra and Thomas Meyen

December 14 - Hanukkah/Festival of Lights - Jewish festival commemorating a victory in their struggle for religious freedom. - Liz and Derek Richards

December 21 - Winter Solstice multi-generational service. No RE.

December 28 - Childcare only. No RE.

## Rev. Biedler's Hours

Office hours for Rev. Biedler in December are Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. You may reach Rev. Biedler by calling (217) 972-2184, who is available at other times by appointment and he welcomes your calls.

# December 2008 Calendar of Events

All activities take place at the Fellowship, unless otherwise noted.

Visitors are always welcome!

## Tuesday, December 2nd

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Science Group
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 7:00 p.m. —Christian Practices Covenant Group

## Wednesday, December 3rd

- 10:00 a.m.—Wednesday Morn Covenant Group

## Friday, December 5th

- 6:00 p.m.—Family-A-Fair at UUFD

## Sunday, December 7th

- 12:00 p.m.—Rhythmic Earth Drum Circle

## Tuesday, December 9th

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m.—decREADgrp

## Friday, December 12th

- 6:00 p.m.—Rhythmic Earth Drum Circle

## Wednesday, December 17th

- 10:00 a.m.—Wednesday Morn Covenant Group

## Tuesday, December 16th

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Science Group
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 7:00 p.m. —Christian Practices Covenant Group

## Friday, December 19th

- 6:00 p.m.—Rhythmic Earth Drum Circle

## Tuesday, December 23rd

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Community Group
- 7:00 p.m.—decREADgrp

## Friday, December 26th

- 6:00 p.m.—Rhythmic Earth Drum Circle

## Tuesday, December 30th

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Science Group

## Group discussion topics:

**Buddhist Group**—The UUFD Buddhist Group will be meeting at Terry Ankrom's house, 2480 West Main Street, Decatur, Illinois, 62522. Further information? Call 217-428-1807 E-mail terryankrom@gmail.com.

**Youth Group**—Youth Group meetings are every Tuesday from 5-6 pm at the UUFD. The 1st and 3rd Tuesdays are Science Group, and the 2nd and 4th are Community Group. All ages are welcome. For more information email Cassandra at meyen@peoplepc.com

**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. This month we will meet November 4th and 18th. 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 Copenhagen, Denmark in 2004 and entitled "The Art of Presence." All are welcome and no prior knowledge of Tolle's teachings is required. Contact Mel Weinstein (763-0509) for additional information.

**The Christian Practices Covenant Group**—The Christian Practices Covenant Group meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month. Dec. 2nd and 16th from 7:00 and to 8:30 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome to join for discussions on the life and teachings of Jesus as the group reads "The Heart of Christianity" by Rev. Marcus Borg.

**The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group**—The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month, Dec. 3rd and 17th, from 10 a.m. to 12. Please join us as we discuss the book by Eckhart Tolle "A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose" by Eckhart Tolle. Guests welcome—we always leave an empty chair in our circle for any guests.

## Letters from John...

This religious community at the southwest corner of Mound and MacArthur is a place where big questions can be spoken about out loud. It is a place where people can search for and create meaning for themselves – both individually, and collectively. Here, just as you would find all over Decatur, people believe a great variety of things, especially when it comes to the idea of God, or not-God.

Because we are a religion that espouses no single creed, here you are free to believe what seems to you to be most true, real, honest and/or meaningful. For some of us, that means believing in God in our own individual way. Perhaps we view "God" as a creative process, as life force, as the organizing principle of the universe, or as the ideal of love and justice, or of the highest and greatest good. We might think of God as the ground of our being, or that spark “present in all, yet greater than each.”

Some of us believe that the word God can only be used to mean a supernatural power. Some of us believe in more than one god, or the Goddess. Some of us refer to God as “Spirit.” As in, when I listen to “Spirit,” I know I will do the right thing... or I am seeking to connect with “Spirit.”

For some of us, the truth is God is an absurdity. Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett – the first an evolutionary biologist, the second a neuroscientist, and the last a philosopher -- have all written books in past years that essentially name religion and religious behavior as useless and misguided. In Dawkins’ book “The God Delusion” he systematically and very rationally takes apart various religions’ ideas about God. Much of it you may agree with, as I did in a rational sort of way. But it also struck me as borderline arrogant – seemingly based on the assumption that people who believe in God in any way simply haven’t studied their history or “thought things through” well enough, or, how else could they possibly believe in such an idea?

I like how Rev. Forrest Church put it: “God is not God's name. God is our name for the highest power we can imagine. For some the highest imaginable power will be a petty and angry tribal baron ensconced high above the clouds on a golden throne, visiting punishment on all who don't believe in him. But for others, the highest power is love, goodness, justice, or the spirit of life itself. Each of us projects our limited experience on a cosmic screen in letters as big as our minds can fashion.”

What you and I end up believing about god is usually the result of a lifelong process – we take what we were taught in childhood and apply to it our adult rational thinking, reflection, and study. But even more so, we pass our beliefs through the fire of our personal experiences – both joyful and anguished. And we find that as they change with our changing lives, our beliefs are rarely a matter of simple personal choice, as though we took our seats at the God café and decided which dishes on the menu of ideologies, theologies and creeds looked the most appetizing. Instead, we believe – whether we articulate it or not – what, you could say, we must. We believe what our lives show us to be true.

So where does belief come from? I’ll explore that further in my sermon on December 14th. Hope to see you there...that is, “God willing and the creek don’t rise.”

In faithful service, John

## When it comes to your car, think Green

(<http://www.seventhgeneration.com/learn/news/easing-your-car-s-gas-pains>)

The Holiday season is fast approaching and as we might have plans to visit the family, we'll most likely drive—not fly. So, it's good that gas prices are dropping. Still, we wonder just how long this trend might continue. According to the Department of Transportation, the total miles driven by Americans fell by 400 million from March to April of 2008, and we drove 1.4 billion less miles this April than last. Keeping your car cooped up in the garage isn't really the only option--there's plenty you can do to squeeze more miles out of every gallon, year round. Here's our list of tips to save money and reduce your carbon footprint, too:

- Slow down. Gas mileage declines rapidly above 60 mph. Each 5 mph increase above 60 is equal to paying an additional 20-25 cents per gallon.
- Keep your tires properly inflated, and you'll improve your gas mileage by more than 3%.
- Consult your car's manual and use its recommended grade of motor oil to improve your gas mileage by 1%–2%. Use brands with "Energy Conserving" on the API performance symbol; they contain friction-reducing additives that further enhance engine performance.
- Keep your engine properly tuned up to maximize your mileage. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, replacing a faulty oxygen sensor can improve gas mileage up to 40%.
- Check and replace air filters regularly. Replacing a dirty air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10%. Replacing a dirty fuel filter can also have a positive effect.
- When running errands, plan the shortest, most gas-saving itinerary. Avoid retracing your steps and combine multiple errands into a single trip. Several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as a longer multi-stop trip of the same distance with a warm engine.
- Mellow out. Aggressive driving wastes gas and can lower your mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds and by 5 percent in town. Replace jack-rabbit starts from a dead stop with slow and steady acceleration.
- If you have an RPM gauge on your dashboard, watch your RPMs as well as your speedometer as you drive. Find your car's steady RPM "sweet spot" (generally the RPM level it achieves at cruising speed on a flat straightaway) and keep it there. Stop fighting gravity and let your car naturally slow somewhat going up hills and speed up on the downhill.
- Avoid excessive idling. The average car uses less gas to start up than it does to idle for 30 seconds. So don't turn off the car unless you expect to be stopped for more than 30 seconds.
- Similarly, skip the drive-thru, where you'll idle and waste gas. Park and go inside.
- If you have it, use cruise control on the highway to maintain a constant speed and save gas. But don't use cruise control on hilly secondary roads. The constant ups and downs will cause your engine to work harder to maintain a constant speed.
- If possible, stagger your commuting and/or errand schedule to avoid peak rush hours.
- Avoid carrying items on your vehicle's roof. A loaded roof rack or carrier increases aerodynamic drag, which can cut mileage by up to 5 percent. Place items inside the trunk instead.
- Travel light. Avoid carrying unnecessary items, especially heavy ones. An extra 100 pounds in the trunk cuts a typical car's fuel economy 1-2 percent.
- Keep it clean! The reduction in aerodynamic drag created by a clean and waxed auto can boost mileage significantly, according to one cross country experiment by as much as 7%!
- In summer, use your air conditioner on the open road! On today's aerodynamically designed vehicles, the drag created by open windows generally uses more gas than A/C. Be aware, however, that in stop-and-go conditions the situation is reversed and A/C will cause your engine to work harder.
- Buy a fuel-efficient car. Visit [fuelconomy.gov](http://fuelconomy.gov) and [greencars.com](http://greencars.com) for information on buying fuel-efficient vehicles.

## Themes for the Coming Calendar Year

During the church year from September through June, Rev. Biedler will speak on each of the specific themes listed below. Each theme is supported by a newsletter article, suggested readings and at-home spiritual practices. After his talks, we hope you will stay for a discussion centered on the sermon's theme. It is our hope that these topics will inspire us to continue to live lives of purpose, worth and dignity, as we shape our community's culture. With these ten themes we will explore the language and knowledge needed to dialogue with people of varying perspectives on issues of faith, values, ethics and religion. Please join us in the journey.

September -- Vision

February -- Evil

October -- Creation

March -- Redemption

November-- Democracy

April -- Freedom

**December -- God**

May -- Mercy

January -- Authority

June -- Transformation

## Refreshments and Buy Green, Inc.

Please sign up to provide refreshments during the upcoming holiday season. It is a busy time, but one in which we need to continue our welcoming hospitality to members and to guests!

Also, please consider joining the Buy Green, Inc. Coop (only \$20.00 per year) and be a friend to our environment during the next year. Of course, gift memberships are also welcome.

## Enneagram workshops series coming in 2009 and led by Rev. John Biedler

How aware are you of the different kinds of personalities you have encountered in your life? Historically many psychological and spiritual systems have attempted to address personality descriptions: astrology, numerology, the four classic temperaments (phlegmatic, choleric, melancholic, and sanguine), Jung's system of psychological types (extrovert and introvert orientations times sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking functions), and many others. You may have read of studies in infant development and in brain science that have indicated how fundamental differences in temperament between different types of people have a biological basis.

I believe that awareness of personality types is needed in many areas--in education, the sciences, in business and personal relationships, in the humanities, and in therapy -- and, above all, in spirituality and transformational work. As a student and teacher of the Enneagram Personality typologies, Rev. Biedler will share his own "filter" and the filter with which we as human beings approach all of life, no matter our ethnicity, religious beliefs, cultural background or education. Through the insights of the Pentagrams, you will see the main filter that you use to understand yourself and the world around you, to express yourself and to defend yourself. In understanding ourselves, our relationships, our spiritual growth, and many other important is-sues, he hopes you will see that type -- not gender, not culture, and not generational differences -- is the crucial factor in abundant living. These workshops are open to the public. More coming in the January newsletter.



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur  
2008

**Friday, December 5, 2008  
6 to 8 P.M.**

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur  
at the corner of MacArthur and Mound Roads**

"Family-a-Fair" is a free, non-profit fair offered as a service to the community of Decatur and surrounding areas. Representatives from area services and businesses will present informative displays. People of all ages are welcome. Children and young adults are encouraged to attend with their caregivers. There will be fun activities for the kids, complementary refreshments and baked goodies for everyone, and winners of door prizes will be chosen!

The growing list of exhibitors includes:

- Central Illinois Gem & Mineral Club of Decatur
- Cloth Diapering Information and Display
- Decatur Park District
- Decatur Public Schools
- Decatur Vegetarian Society
- Emily Dobson, SAIL Program Manager (IEPs, autism)
- Free Blood Pressure Screenings
- William "Bill" Gillen, Ph.D., L.C.P.C. (LD/ADHD, PPD)
- The Healing Place Within: Holistic Resources by Carol Joy Bennett
- Homeward Bound Pet Shelter
- La Leche League of Decatur
- [Millikin University](http://www.millikin.edu) School of Music Preparatory Department
- Planned Parenthood of Decatur
- Derek Richards: Internet safety for families
- The Sling Connection (baby wearing)
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur and Youth Group

Please see our website for updates and further information:  
<http://Family-A-Fair.hopto.org/>



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

December 2008 Issue

“Promoting freedom, reason,  
And tolerance in religion”

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## 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.



### December Birthdays

Bruce Bledsaw	December 02	
Judy Thistlethwaite	December 04	
Dick Zaker	December 04	
Sara (and Alex) Lovell-Troy	December 13	
Anton Meyen	December 13	
Lorelei Zaker	December 30	
Tammy Bledsaw	December 30	
Derek Richards	December 30	

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