

February 2009



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Minister:

Rev. John Biedler
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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

UUF 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.

February 1—"Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin" by Dr. Neil Baird

Dr. Neil Baird is back in the pulpit comparing two of the world's most influential men who both celebrate their 200th birthdays on February 12th. Come hear how two great men were both similar and different. Neil Baird is a former professor of biology at Millikin University and a believer of evolution.

February 8—"Authority in Religion" by Rev. John Biedler

The question of who has authority in religion is something over which many people have been killed, imprisoned, excommunicated and sent off to many a war to kill and to die in. In many parts of the world the way a person answers this question of who possesses the religious authority continues to be a source of persecution. Even today, in certain communities in the United States the wrong answer leads to shaming or exclusion, but more often it leads to tension around the family dinner table. This is not an esoteric question nor is it an academic one since it affects all of us in some way. Vital to our country and community, you are invited to attend, listen and discuss this question today.

February 15—"The End of Growth" by Dave Snoeyenbos

Can we as a developed country continue to expand our economy, develop more industrialized farming of cattle and grains, and continue to encourage nations of the world to grow, grow, grow without dire consequences on our environment? Where is the balance? Where is the tipping point where the earth's resources will simply not be able to sustain this growth? Dave has been a long time student of population and environmental impact and will share his discoveries and insights.

February 22—"What's Your Life Authority?" by Rev. John Biedler

A person may wonder how it is in western Christian history that the final authority on matters of faith went from the Pope to individuals like you and me. From about the 4th century of the Common Era (CE) until the 16th century, the Bible was an obscure book written in Latin and Greek and only priests had access to it and the ability to read it. Then in the 16th century came Gutenberg and the invention of the printing press. Everything changed and so the proposition that the individual is the final authority on matters of faith is thought to be only natural. It hasn't always been. Discussion will follow the sermon.

Next Newsletter deadline: February 15, 2009

Visit the Peoria Unitarian Universalists for Open Discussion

Members of our congregation are invited to a free catered luncheon at the Peoria UU Church on Saturday, February 7, from noon to 1:30 pm. This luncheon is hosted by the leaders of the Central Midwest District of the UUA of which our Fellowship is a member. This is an opportunity to meet informally with the CMwD executives, board members and our neighboring church leaders. The purpose of the gathering is for open discussion on matters of congregational life and to get to know members of other UU congregations in our district.

If you would like to attend, please contact Rev. John Biedler right away (since he is going). We need to let them know how many are coming by Feb. 4. You may email John at jsbiedler@aol.com or call him at 972-2184. Car pooling will be available to save money.

Enneagram classes coming to UUFDF Sunday, March 8th, 1:30 - 3:30 PM, led by Rev. John Biedler

In a sermon recently, Rev. Biedler challenged us with the question: what is the core concern at the center of your life and how aware of it are you? Historically many psychological and spiritual systems have attempted to address this. A lesser known and more spiritually insightful self-study is the Enneagram (pronounced "ANY-a-gram"). Rev. Biedler has been a student of the Enneagram insights for over 18 years and is a gifted teacher and developer of human possibility. Through the Enneagram you can know what matters most to you in life and why, helping you understand the choices you've make and how to make more fulfilling ones. These insights help you understand family members, people in your church and those you work with more clearly and certainly with more compassion. This series at the Fellowship will be open to the public. A sign up list is on the foyer table.

Thanks and Benefits to The Fellowship

First, we would like to thank the anonymous donor who has been bringing boxes of food to the fellowship recently. It goes to the Northeast Community Fund and is greatly appreciated. They are serving people who really need it and without donations those people would be hungry. Second, Darwin takes the books (51 boxes last time) unsold at BB&B to the Book Barn and the Fellowship gets credit for those they take. All members are encouraged to take advantage of the discount. All you need to do is to tell the clerk you are from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Friends of the Decatur Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Construction has begun on our new inside entrance at the Fellowship. Volunteers have helped empty the attic, cleaned out the closet and erected a storage shed outside. Cabinets and flooring have been ordered for the new foyer.

As of this writing 12 member units have donated \$5700 towards the \$12,000 building fund goal. I hope that at least 10 more members and friends will give a special donation for this cause before the end of January 2009. Whether you donate \$25 or \$1000, your contribution is needed. Here is one project where you should see results in a few weeks. Please make checks out to UUFDF, memo line Building Fund, and send to UUFDF or directly to Mark Sorensen at 2980 South Amelia, Decatur, 62521. Thanks for considering a gift to UUFDF at this time.

Rev. Biedler's Hours

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

Religious Education Classes

Sunday the 1st - Animal Messengers/Omens - Cassandra and Thomas Meyen

Sunday the 8th - Lincoln's Birthday - Liz and Derek Richards

Sunday the 15th - Valentine's Day - Jennifer Sekosky and co-instructor

Sunday the 22nd - No RE / Childcare only

February 2009 Calendar of Events

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

Visitors are always welcome!

Tuesday, February 3rd

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Science Group: Life Science
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 4:30 p.m. —Christian Practices Covenant Group

Wednesday, February 4th

- 10:00 a.m.—Wednesday Morn Covenant Group
- 7:00 p.m.—Humanism

Friday, February 6th

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

Tuesday, February 10th

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

Wednesday, February 11th

- 6:00 p.m.—Women's Book Group

Friday, February 13th

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

Sunday, February 15th

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

Tuesday, February 17th

- 5:00 p.m. — Youth Science Group: CHERT
- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group
- 4:30 p.m. —Christian Practices Covenant Group

Wednesday, February 18th

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

Friday, February 20th

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

Tuesday, February 24th

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

Friday, February 27th

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

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 February 3rd and 17th. 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. Feb. 3rd and 17th from 4:30 to 7:00 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, February 4th and 18th, from 10 a.m. to noon. Join us as we discuss [A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose](#) by Eckhart Tolle. Guests are welcome—we always leave an empty chair in our circle just for guests.

Women's Book Group—Women's Book Group will meet Wed. February 11 at 6 p.m. for potluck and discussion of [The Emancipator's Wife](#) by Barbara Hambly, at Kathy Kline's home 2480 W. Main St. RSVP at kkline923@aol.com or 428-1807

Letters from John...

I'm so pleased to see our new entrance to the Fellowship take shape as we open up the area just inside our doors. I hope you are as impressed as I am with the changes being made to our foyer area. What this opening up says to me is that we as a congregation are also changing, that we are able to see that how things have been doesn't mean they have to remain that way nor that they have always really worked as the tried and true "old way" we were used to.

It says to me that this congregation is becoming more welcoming, more approachable, more open. It says we really do want new people to join us, to feel comfortable here, to feel like they belong...and we're getting ready for you.

So for me it's no small thing that we've taken out the closet, stored the things in it somewhere else, and made the foyer entrance a place more user-friendly. To me a more welcoming entrée into our building reflects something about who we are as a community, it is an ontological shift, a change in who we're being. It is a spiritual thing.

It says that you and I, the members and friends of this congregation, are ready, willing and able to change. We're willing to examine ourselves, identify our strengths and weaknesses, and then set about to do something about what we've found.

Albeit this taking down a wall is purely physical, but I think it is far more significant than that. It speaks to the change required within us, the shift from being somewhat welcoming to fully wanting and expecting new faces, new voices, new sojourners. I say we've seen that our old ways were too restrictive, that we too often crowded people out, left them feeling they couldn't freely move within our space, that they couldn't just be themselves, where they were, and how they were.

But you and I know that people are free to be themselves here, that you can "have your own space," feeling comfortable in your own beliefs and ideas.

And, yes, it may have taken us as a congregation a long time to get to this change in something seemingly as insignificant as the foyer entrance. It may not have happened as quickly as some would have liked, but, as President Obama has often said, "we will get there, yes, we can!"

So the task before us is to bring friends, guests and new members through these welcoming doors of ours. We have the space now, we've opened ourselves up physically, and it is now time to share who we are, what we believe and why we are here with scores more people here in Decatur. Let's do it. Let' all say "yes we can!"

In faith,

John

Rev. Biedler will be collecting the "Guest at Your Table" boxes for support of the UU Service Committee on February 22. Please make checks out to UUSC. Thank you.

About Greenwashing... (according to Wikipedia and [SourceWatch](#))

Everyone's heard the expression "whitewashing" — defined, it's "a coordinated attempt to hide unpleasant facts, especially in a political context." Well, "greenwashing" is the same premise, but there is an environmental impact to it.

It's greenwashing when a company spends more time and money claiming to be "green" through advertising than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact. It's whitewashing, but with a green brush. Corporations are falling all over themselves to demonstrate that they are environmentally conscious. The average citizen is finding it more and more difficult to tell the difference between those companies genuinely dedicated to making a difference and those that are using a green curtain to conceal dark motives.

A typical case in point might be an energy company that runs an advertising campaign touting a "green" technology they're working on — but that "green" technology represents only a fraction of the company's otherwise not-so-green business, or may be marketed on the heels of an oil spill or plant explosion. It's like a bank that's suddenly gone "green" because you can conduct your finances online, or a grocery store that's "green" because they'll take back your plastic grocery bags, or ...well, ...you get the picture.

Greenwashing is the unjustified appropriation of environmental virtue by a company, an industry, a government, a politician or even a non-government organization to create a pro-environmental image, sell a product or a policy, or to try and rehabilitate their standing with the public and decision makers after being embroiled in controversy.

Organizations are attracted to engage in greenwashing for a wide range of reasons including:

- attempting to divert the attention of regulators and deflating pressure for regulatory change;
- seeking to persuade critics, such as non-government organizations, that they are both well-intentioned and have changed their ways;
- seeking to expand market share at the expense of those rivals not involved in greenwashing; this is especially attractive if little or no additional expenditure is required to change *performance*; alternatively, a company can engage in greenwashing in an attempt to narrow the perceived 'green' advantage of a rival;
- making the company seem attractive for potential investors, especially those interested in ethical investment or socially responsive investment.

So, what can we do about all this?

- **Be suspicious** of all environmental claims. Don't trust claims unless you have verified them yourself.
- If a company, in particular, takes out a large **advertisement** in a newspaper, or runs a TV advertisement saying how great their green credentials are — then they are hiding something, guaranteed. If someone is trying to sell their "green" credentials then ask yourself, "why?"
- If a company has a **bad history** it is highly unlikely to have changed overnight. Use web sites like [SourceWatch](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=SourceWatch) (<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=SourceWatch>) and [Corporate Watch](http://www.corpwatch.org/) (<http://www.corpwatch.org/>), to find out the truth behind the mask.
- Look out for **poor use of scientific facts**, especially when listening to politicians: "Reducing carbon emissions will protect the ozone layer", "this technology is sustainable", "emissions can be offset", "the greenhouse effect is not certain" etc. All examples of rubbish that has no basis in fact, even the last one.
- Look out for **buzzwords** that put a gloss on reality: "carbon intensity", "sustainable development", "carbon offsets", "clean technology" etc. Another clear sign that something is being covered up.
- Use your common sense and your instincts. **If it doesn't feel right then it probably isn't.**

Provided by the UUFD Green Sanctuary Committee.

Themes for the Coming Calendar Year

During the church year (September-June), Rev. Biedler fashions his sermons around ten theological themes. Each theme plays a part in what he feels will contribute to a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The themes provide an axis around which elements of church life gain more meaning and depth. They provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Rev. Biedler supports each theme with a newsletter article, suggested readings and at-home spiritual practices. Because we also have guest speakers each month, you will find these are not the only topics covered in any given month. Each Sunday you are invited to a discussion after the service centered on that day's topic. Please join us on this journey of discovery... Themes for 2008-2009:

September -- Vision

February -- Authority

October -- Creation

March -- Redemption

November-- Democracy

April -- Freedom

December -- God

May -- Mercy

January -- Evil

June -- Transformation

Practicing the Power of Now: Self-Empowerment

A new class is being offered at UUFD based on the teachings of Eckhart Tolle, who has become a spiritual phenomenon in the last 10 years, particularly since the airing of an on-line, live video series by Oprah Winfrey last spring. The 6-week class is scheduled to start Thursday, February 12th at 7:00pm in the Fellowship and is open to the public. A minimum of 5 participants is required.

The class will be based on Tolle's first book, *The Power of Now*. The class is not intended to be a philosophical, or spiritual, or metaphysical presentation, but its main focus will be to explore the teachings of Tolle in a practical manner. Tolle's message of spiritual growth and evolution is not simply an intellectual exercise, but it's intended to provide people with practical everyday tools to expand awareness, to live in the moment, to improve the waking and sleeping states, to foster better relationships, and to enjoy a more peaceful, calm, and rewarding life.

Marcello Lepeley and Mel Weinstein, both long-term students of Tolle's teachings, will present the class. Marcello has organized *The Power of Now* into a series of practical, everyday exercises that students can begin to apply immediately to affect positive changes in their lives.

The class is free, but participants will be asked for donations to help defray building expenses. If you would like to participate in this class, please contact Mel Weinstein at mel.weinstein.domehome@gmail.com or 763-0509 no later than Monday, February 9th.

Dr. Neil Baird Compares Lincoln and Darwin

Former Millikin Biology professor, Dr. Neil Baird will present "Rebel Giants: The Revolutionary Lives of Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin" at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur at 10:15 a.m. on Sunday, February 1. Baird will compare and contrast how Lincoln and Darwin changed their religious beliefs as they matured. This program is free and open to the public and discussion will follow the presentation.

Children Exploring Rocks Together! **CHERT**

Beginning January 20, 2009 and every third Tuesday of the month from then on, the UUFD's Youth Science Group and the CIGMC (Central Illinois Gem and Mineral Club) are co-sponsoring a junior meeting for the exploration of rocks, and fun with the earth sciences.

Meetings will be held from 5-6 pm at the UUFD. Come Join Us! There will be activities, games, projects and free enrollment in the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) Future Rockhounds of America (FRA) where participants can earn badges, the first of which is just for joining.

Juniors can be any age to join up to 18. You do not have to be a member of the Central Illinois Gem and Mineral Club to join.

For more information please contact Cassandra Meyen at meyen@peoplepc.com



ROCKHOUND BADGE



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

February 2009 Issue

“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.



February Birthdays



Athena Pajer February 05

Sue Donovan February 10

For

Contact

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