

May 2009



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Office Hours:

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

President:

Heather Stoa

Past President:

Julie Pajer

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UUFd Trust Board:

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Upcoming Services

All Sunday services begin at 10:15 AM.

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

May 3, 2009 "Pandemic Prevention" by Carrie Moon

Leading public health authorities now predict as inevitable a pandemic of influenza, triggered by bird flu and expected to lead to millions of deaths around the globe. The influenza virus has existed for millions of years as an innocuous intestinal virus of wild ducks. What turned a harmless waterborne duck virus into a killer? In an engaging presentation, Carrie Moon, certified member of The American Society of Clinical Pathologists, traces the human role in the evolution of this virus and suggests what society can do to reduce potential catastrophes in the future.

May 10, 2009 "Saving Our Democracy" by William Faber, attorney at law

"All aspects of our lives are touched by politics," says Bill Faber, "the price of gas, the cost of milk, the condition of schools, and the safety of our town. Yet many able citizens remain aloof from politics because they feel that politics is ugly business or that their involvement would make no difference. But Aristotle wrote that if the good people do not govern, then the evil people will, and it all begins in your home town." Today are ideas of what any one of us can do to make a difference. Join us.

May 17, 2009 "Grace vs. Mercy" by Rev. John Biedler

Grace can appear as an unearned gift bestowed on you. It can be in words, in a simple smile or lucky breaks. Such unexpected gifts come without charge and, like rain, fall upon the just and the unjust alike. Mercy on the other hand must come from someone with power. If I am to show you mercy, then I clearly have something to offer you that I can either chose to give or to withhold. Love is a power. How willingly do you give it? Receive it? Answers may be key to your happiness.

May 24, 2009 "Building the Multiracial Ark" by Rev. Finley Campbell

As a nationally known African-American Baptist minister and an active UU, Rev. Campbell plans to make this sermon a major policy speech around the importance of multiracial unity in the struggle against racism in all its forms. He will lay out the importance of having an organized resistance to neo-racism, especially in our own denomination. You won't want to miss this service.

May 31, 2009 "Mercy vs. Justice" by Rev. John Biedler

Mercy, by definition, has to do with offering compassion to someone whether they deserve it or not. In this sense it runs counter to justice. The impoverished worker who steals from his boss to feed his hungry children could rightly be put in jail. However, being merciful might include dropping the charges and giving the worker a raise in their hourly wages. In this sermon I will discuss how justice requires making things fair and giving people their due, while mercy involves offering forgiveness even when a person may deserve, in all fairness, to be punished or shunned. How can they be reconciled?

Next Newsletter deadline: May 15, 2009

OASIS DAY CENTER

OASIS DAY CENTER celebrated 10 years in Decatur last month. The community attended an open house on Apr. 21. Oasis, located on West Cerro Gordo St. just east of the Greek Orthodox Church, provides shelter and basic needs to homeless people (both men and women) from 7 A.M. until 5 P.M daily. Showers, laundry, messaging and linkage to many other services are provided. Oasis patrons need these and many other items: reader spectacles, nonalcoholic mouthwash, new toothbrushes, small toothpastes, sealed small aspirin and tylenol, laundry detergents and fabric softener, hair combs and picks, socks, towels and washcloths, motel samples of conditioners and shampoos and lotions, underwear, raingear, sleeping bags and much more. Monetary donations are welcomed as well. You may drop items by the OASIS DAY CENTER or place them in a plastic bag and give them to Vern Thistlethwaite for delivery.

“The Enneagram, the Way to Gnosis” classes led by Rev. Biedler are for everyone in the community. They will be held on the Sunday afternoons of May 17th; May 31st; and June 7th from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at the Fellowship.

The Enneagram reaches deep into the human psyche and its motivations. If you are seeking a better understanding of your self and those in you life, whether partners, parents or children, you will enjoy the Enneagram. Even if you’ve not been to a previous class, feel free to join.

Congratulations to UUFD member Mark Sorensen

Congratulations to UUFD member Mark Sorensen for being elected April 25 to a two-year term as President of the Illinois State Historical Society.

Thanks to UUFD Members!

Thanks to several UUFD members for collecting for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee “Guests at Your Table” program this year. The Fellowship turned in another \$170 in April to UUSC.

Rev. Biedler’s Hours

Office hours for Rev. John Biedler are Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. You may reach John at (217) 972-2184 or by leaving a message at the church office at (217) 875-5442. John makes himself available at other times by appointment and welcomes your calls.

Religious Education Classes

Sunday the 5th
 Sunday the 12th
 Sunday the 19th
 Sunday the 26th

Please return your pledge cards to Treasurer Mark Sorensen right away so a budget can be set for 2009-2010. Thank you to everyone!

May 2009 Calendar of Events

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

Visitors are always welcome!

Saturday, May 2

- 7:30 p.m. — "The Bird Flu and Other Infectious Diseases" movie featuring Dr. Michael Greger

Tuesday, May 5th

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

Wednesday, May 6th

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

Thursday, May 7th

- 7:00 p.m. — Buddhist Group

Tuesday, May 12th

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

Thursday, May 14th

- 7:00 p.m. — Buddhist Group

Tuesday, May 19th

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

Wednesday, May 20th

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

Tuesday, May 26th

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

Thursday, May 28th

- 7:00 p.m. — Buddhist 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 on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. 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 May 5th and 19th. 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 May 5th and 19th from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Fellowship. Discussions center on the life and teachings of Jesus, with the current reading "Jesus for the Non Religious" by Episcopal Bishop John Spong. Please join us.

The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group—The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month, May 6th and 20th, from 10 a.m. to noon. The group is reading and discussing the very interesting book "Living Buddha, Living Christ" by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh. We welcome guests, setting out an empty chair each time.

Humanist Group—The Humanist group meets the first Wednesday of each month. All meetings begin at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur at 7:00 p.m.

Letters from John...

Early in his ministry, John Wolf, long time minister of the 1,500 member All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, OK, was being interviewed by the church's ministerial search committee as they looked for a new minister. After awhile they said, "We like you very much. We'd like you to be our minister. But there's just one thing we don't understand. Unitarian Universalist ministers are generally thought to come in two varieties: humanist and theist. Which are you?"

"That depends," said Wolf.

Shocked by such blatant opportunism, one of the committee members asked, "What on earth do you mean?"

"That depends on you," John replied. "If you folks are theists, then I'm a humanist. But if you're humanists, then I'm a theist."

Like so many ministers serving our congregations, I found in coming to Decatur a widely diverse theological community of people here. I have observed that the humanist perspective was by far the most influential in the Fellowship's past, and that humanism appeared still dominant when I arrived. There was a decidedly intellectual focus to UUFD's services and a much less significant presence of spirituality. Words like "God" or readings from the Bible were not the norm. I understood from some members at the time that theistic and especially Christian comments were not always greeted with warmth, and sometimes not even with respect.

In the tradition of John Wolf, I decided that in this mostly humanist congregation I would attempt to unveil the theistic and spiritual side of my beliefs. Why? Because I wanted to see the Fellowship's philosophical diversity widen. I wanted to see it become decidedly more welcoming to those with distinctly different viewpoints from humanism, a place that felt welcoming to liberal Christians in particular. And especially I wanted to expose the hypocrisy of welcoming with an open mind and heart every religious viewpoint except Christianity.

I think many members, including the humanists in the congregation, wanted to see these same changes take place at UUFD. They wanted to see growth--not only in numbers but growth in the variety of perspectives embraced here. Such growth in variety would only make our discussions about life's meaning more interesting and truly inclusive.

I believe we have realized some of this hoped for growth. If the responses to the congregational surveys over the years are any indication, there is a remarkable variety of theological and philosophical orientations present among us. Many of you in these surveys checked numerous "theological" categories -- all at the same time. You indicated you were a mix of humanism, ethical Christianity, theological Christianity, skepticism, ethical religion, naturalistic theism, mysticism, Buddhism and earth centered spirituality -- truly an eclectic ensemble of peoples.

I've also observed that over the years, many people with a more spiritual orientation have joined our Fellowship. Even the long-standing Wednesday morning Covenant Group is reading an expansively spiritual book entitled *Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Thich Nhat Hahn. So I think it is fair to say that among Unitarian Universalists across the United States and Canada there is a far greater interest in spirituality today than there ever was thirty to fifty years ago. This reflects a seismic change that has been happening throughout our denomination.

As this pendulum swings, I find myself thinking of John Wolf and his answer to the search committee who wondered if he was a humanist or a theist. I find myself wanting to focus a little more on the humanist side of my beliefs. This pendulum swing away from humanism can continue only at great peril--especially in congregations such as ours where humanism is so much a part of our heritage.

Letters from John... (Continued)

So while I will continue to critique the weaknesses I see in humanism and the hypocrisy of humanists who defend only their freedom of conscience and not the freedom of conscience of Christians and theists, I will also lift up humanism's strengths and the undeniable centrality of humanism to the heritage of this Fellowship. I will recognize that I owe a great deal to the radicals of the nineteenth century and the humanists of this century for the freedom of conscience that is so central to my vision of Unitarian Universalism. I welcome your feedback and comments.

Keeping the faith, John

Themes for the Coming Calendar Year

During the church year (September-June), Rev. Biedler fashions his sermons around special themes. This provides a set of common stories and ideas for an ongoing community conversation among members and friends of the Fellowship. Rev. Biedler supports these themes with newsletter articles, handouts of suggested reading on the themes and spiritual practices. With guest speakers each month as well, there are many different topics covered in any given month. Each Sunday you are invited to a discussion after the service on that day's topic. Please join us. The themes of Rev. Biedler's sermons for 2008-2009 are:

September -- Vision	February -- Authority
October -- Creation	March -- Redemption
November -- Democracy	April -- Freedom
December -- God	May -- Mercy
January -- Evil	June -- Transformation

You too can attend the General Assembly (GA) of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

You too can attend the General Assembly (GA) of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, which will be June 24-28, 2009 in Salt Lake City. In these four days of GA, you can select from hundreds of fascinating workshop on everything from Humanism to Christianity, from Buddhism and to Earth Centered traditions, with drumming, worship services and lots of time to meet with others from around the world. Also, at these assemblies the overall policies for carrying out the purposes of the Association are determined. Voting on issues before each GA shall be by accredited delegates from certified member congregations. Our delegates this year will be June Allison and Chelso Frescura who have never missed a GA since 1996. Go on line and find out more at:

<http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/>

BOOKS, BITES, BOTANICALS

BOOKS, BITES, BOTANICALS will be our main fundraiser this year since we are not going to sponsor a rummage sale. October 10 is the Saturday for books, home-prepared foods and house plants. As you spring/summer clean and clear out, box your old and newer books that you will donate. Either save them, drop them by the fellowship or call Vern Thistlethwaite to schedule a pickup (429-5923 or vthistle@comcast.net). Books from friends, neighbors and family are appreciated as well.

So, how “Green” are you, really?!

Submitted by the UUFD Green Sanctuary Committee

Did you realize that what we eat has more of an impact on global warming and CO2 emissions than the autos we drive? Every action we take in purchasing our food leaves a lasting ‘ecological CO2 footprint.’ From the transportation of our food to the stores, to the fossil fuels spent in the farming or processing of the ingredients we consume, it all adds up to an “ecological footprint” that’s invisible but very real. The food we eat is the largest carbon footprint of our entire life!

Even if you don’t believe that CO2 emissions can cause global warming, there’s no debate at all that CO2 emissions do cause “ocean acidification.” And that’s a good enough reason to be conscious of your ecological footprint. Of course, CO2 emissions also do affect the climate, so there are two really big reasons right there for us to make an effort to reduce our carbon footprint. This is wonderfully empowering news mainly because we don’t have to spend much. For instance, we don’t have to “go solar” or buy a ‘green’ car in order to save our planet. The most effective way to do that right NOW is to make more informed choices in the foods we purchase.

Here are five ways to help you to make this happen right now--today:

1. Buy your food and drink locally: Food that’s grown locally largely avoids that footprint, regardless of the type it is. For example, local dairy/meat products are better than dairy/meat imported from somewhere else. But using plants as your main food source is the greenest of all.
2. Avoid packaging that is wasteful: A huge amount of energy goes into the manufacturing of packaging. Unfortunately, most of that energy is wasted because the packaging is too quickly thrown out by consumers. Breakfast cereals are a classic case! To avoid this waste, buy in bulk.
3. Buy plants foods, not meats/animal products: This is the most important food purchasing strategy of all and will drastically reduce your carbon footprint. Meats and animal products are extremely resource intensive, requiring enormous amounts of water, food and fossil fuels to produce. In fact, the widespread consumption of meat is simply NOT ecologically sustainable.

This isn’t about vegetarianism/veganism from a health standpoint. This is about reducing or eliminating meat consumption entirely from an ecological perspective. Avoiding the consumption of factory-farmed meat does more to reduce your carbon footprint than driving a ‘Green’ car does!

4. Buy foods that are minimally processed: Highly-processed foods require a lot of energy and resources to produce. They’re also extremely wasteful in terms of nutrients. Anything that isn’t fresh requires energy for processing/cooking. Anything that’s pasteurized requires the foods or beverages to be heated, burning up fossil fuel energy. So, eating raw foods just makes sense!
5. Grow your own: Finally, the best way to reduce the carbon footprint of your food consumption is to grow your own food. That makes your food so local that it’s in your own back yard! Pursuing a backyard garden goes even further. If you’re living in a city with limited space, try container gardening. Supporting a CSA makes perfect sense, otherwise! Buying locally grown is KEY!

Many people only look like they are living “green” just because they recycle all the wasteful plastic packaging from all the toxic products they are buying (milk jugs, diet soda, laundry detergent and lawn chemicals, etc.) Then they go buy a green car to save gas on the way to the local steakhouse where they eat ecologically-disastrous beef dinners! What they fail to realize is the one point I’m hoping YOU get: You’re NOT green unless your FOOD is green.

In summary I leave you with 2 words: Eat Local. This will show just how “green” you really are!



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

May 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.



May Birthdays

Julie Pajer , May 19



Terry Hogg, May 28



For

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MAY 2009 ISSUE