



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

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Minister:

Rev. John Biedler
Office: (217) 875-5442
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jsbiedler@aol.com

Office Hours:

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

President:

Heather Stoa

Past President:

Julie Pajer

Vice President:

Tim Rooney

Treasurer:

Mark Sorensen

Secretary:

Mary Lovell

RE Director:

Available

Board Members at Large:

Jeanne Robertson
Rita Schwake
Judy Thistlethwaite

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 6 - "Parliament of World Religions" and New Member Welcome Ceremony - Reverend John Biedler

In 1893, the city of [Chicago](#) hosted the first World's Parliament of Religions during the [great Columbian Exposition](#) of that year. This event is recognized as the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide. In 2009, the Parliament will be held in [Melbourne, Australia](#), and will host a number of our own Unitarian Universalists from our sister congregation in nearby Peoria, IL. The question is, can religions effectively work together for global peace and justice? Today I will explore what may be one of the only hopes the world has, the cooperation among Pagan, Jewish, Christian, Bahai, Jain, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu communities through this international organization.

December 13 - "Wind Energy and its Impacts on Wildlife" - David Horn, Ph.D.

There are still concerns about wind farms coming to Central Illinois that may never be alleviated such as an "unknown change to country life." It certainly will result in changes, but whether those are changes that will negatively impact one's daily quality of life I think that's a question that's being asked as we think about renewable energy.

December 20 - "Hanukkah to Christmas" - Reverend John Biedler

We celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas in the winter as have generations before us knowing that it is at the darkest time of year that we need to recognize the light of hope. Because it is a season of darkness and endings, we need to celebrate birth and beginnings. That is the natural way of things. When the world is so bleak around us, we are called to look toward the light, to balance the pain with joy, the loss with hope. Can we live our lives with joy in the midst of the disappointment and suffering that is the common denominator of all human existence? This season is a good time to ask ourselves that question and to look for some answers.

December 24 - "Christmas Eve Candlelight Service" - 7 p.m., Reverend John Biedler

With traditional readings from the Gospels amidst olde tyme Christmas carols and yuletide greetings, come this evening for a delightful musical and candlelight experience the whole family will enjoy. We invite you to bring your favorite snacks, cookies and delights to share with others as we provide hot cider, tea and coffee for everyone.

HOT PADS!

Former members Gin and Chet Strohecker have donated several very pretty, handmade hot pads for us to sell as a project to raise money for a few more light weight folding tables for our fellowship. They will be available in the foyer on Sundays.

“The How of Happiness” Workshop series with Rev. John Biedler

“The How of Happiness” Workshop with Rev. John Biedler has its sixth and final session scheduled for Sunday, December 6th, from 2 – 4 p.m. at the Fellowship. If you missed any or all of the previous sessions, you will still find this last class useful since each is a stand-alone class. We have been covering twelve ideas for living a healthy and contented life as based on a book by psychologist researcher Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky. This is an activity-based class with the purpose of living a satisfying and happier life. Guests are welcome to drop in.



Medical Updates About UUFD Members

Two particular UUFD members have been undergoing medical treatment recently. This is a brief update on their respective conditions.

June Alison is undergoing therapy in Kansas. She has made several trips there, and she is seeing some promising results. Previously she was restricted to bed, but she has made progress and can now stand up!

Ron Shafer has also seen some difficulty with his condition. It seems that the original surgery had to be done again--harvest vein from right leg and use it for bypass in left leg. It appears unlikely that Ron will be able to avoid recovery time in a nursing home. Perhaps a laptop with a Verizon AirCard for internet access will aid in his time at the facility.

Humanism Meeting in December Celebrates Poetry

Everyone is welcome to the December Humanism meeting! Our topic this month is simply favorite poetry from Humanist authors or over Humanist themes. Bring along your favorite Humanist poem to read and discuss. Just come to listen to some beautiful poetry! Maybe you’d also like to read some of that poetry to free your inner dramatic nature that’s been cooped up all these years?!!

But with all the holiday shopping and busy activities, how will I ever have time to research all those humanist poets and authors? Thanks to Wikipedia and Google, most of that has been done by someone else!! Here’s a list to get you started! Isaac Asimov, Salman Rushdie, Carl Sagan, Jean-Paul Sartre, Rod Serling, Marc Sinden, Kurt Vonnegut, Joss Whedon, W. Scott Blanchard, A.E. Housman, E. E. Cummings, Thomas Hardy, Wallace Stevens, Jill McCorkle, Raymond Carver, Julius Nyerere, Walt Whitman, Petrarch

Rev. Biedler’s Hours

Regular office hours for Reverend Biedler are at the Fellowship every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. John is available at other times by appointment and certainly welcomes your calls. You may reach him either by calling his cell phone at (217) 972-2184 or by leaving a message at the church office at (217) 875-5442.

Religious Education Classes

- Sunday the 6th
- Sunday the 13th
- Sunday the 20th
- Sunday the 27th

December 2009 Calendar of Events

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

Visitors are always welcome!

Tuesday, December 1st

- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group

Wednesday, December 2nd

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

Tuesday, December 8th

- 7:00 p.m. — decREAD Group

Wednesday, December 9th

- 6:00 p.m. — Women's book club
- 7:00 p.m. — The Spiritual Journey Covenant Group

Tuesday, December 15th

- 7:00 p.m. — Eckhart Tolle Discussion Group

Wednesday, December 16th

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

Tuesday, December 22nd

- 7:00 p.m. — decREAD Group

Wednesday, December 23rd

- 7:00 p.m. — The Spiritual Journey Covenant Group
- 6:30 p.m. — Attachment Parenting Group

Group discussion topics:

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. 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 decREAD Group—The decREAD Group will meet on Tuesdays, December 08 and December 22 at 7:00 p.m. at UUFD. All are welcome. We are reading "The Varieties of Religious Experience" by William James.

The Christian Practices Covenant Group—The Christian Practices Covenant Group will be reading "Jesus for the Non Religious" by Episcopal Bishop John Spong. Contact Joan Brown or Reverend Biedler if interested – guests are always welcome.

The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group—The Wednesday Morning Covenant Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month, which will be December 2nd and 16th, from 10 a.m. to noon. Come discover the magic and power of these small gatherings of members and friends of UUFD. This group is about to finish discussing the book "Living Buddha, Living Christ" by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh and launch into another. Please join us...guests are always welcome.

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.

Women's Book Club—The Women's Book Club will meet Wednesday, December 9th at 6 pm at the home of Eileen Ruski, 2431 W. Forest St. Decatur. Please bring a poem to share with the group and a dish for dinner. Call Eileen at 428-4204 or email tilopal@comcast.net to RSVP.

Spiritual Journey Covenant Group—The Spiritual Journey Covenant Group meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at UUFD from 7:00-8:30. For further information contact Ron Shafer at ronaldshafer52@yahoo.com or 865-2527.

Letters from John...

Many of you have long wanted to find a way the Fellowship might reach out to the students of Millikin University to let them know of Unitarian Universalism and, of course, us. I believe we've found that way.

Recently I joined with ministers from around Decatur to help develop a program of Spiritual Wellness and services for the Millikin University community. The gathering was initiated by The Center for Multicultural Student Affairs (CMSA) at Millikin to acknowledge the important roles religion and spiritual values play in students' lives. CMSA serves as a resource for students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community of various religious and spiritual backgrounds. The program will create opportunities for dialogue and learning around issues of spiritual, ethical and moral concerns, and promote development of a personal life of meaning and value for individuals.

Here are some of the goals of The Center in the area of Spiritual Wellness:

- To provide spiritual support, resources, and pastoral counseling in a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff.
- To provide opportunities and a welcoming space for worship, community, and hospitality for the campus and surrounding community.
- To foster an inclusive campus by stimulating dialogue, thought, growth and exploration of ethical and social issues.
- To promote interfaith understanding and mutual respect.

As part of this outreach, I gave a 30 minute lecture at Millikin on Unitarian Universalism before 25 students in the religion class of Professor Rev. Mary Jessup and showed a 10 minute DVD of UU's from around the country sharing what they most liked about being part of UU congregation.

Following my talk, we had a Q&A session that was lively and I think helpful. I gave out our brochures and extended an invitation for the students to visit both the UUA and UUFD websites, and of course to visit us on Sunday morning.

It turned out that one of the students in the class was UU, a young man who had grown up in the Naperville UU Church outside Chicago. He said he was busy right at the time, but later would be looking for someone to give him a ride to our services on Sunday. If you live near Millikin and would like to give him a call to provide a ride, please let me know right away.

Some of what we as a congregation can do is co-sponsor events services with Millikin's faith-based student organizations or, as in the case of the student I met, provide transportation to any who are interested in attending our services. What I will be doing is providing pastoral and spiritual guidance and counseling via periodic office-hours in Pilling Chapel. Times have yet to be decided, but I will let you know after further meetings with the other ministers.

It's a wonderful opportunity for us to become better known not only at Millikin but in the larger community. I hope you will call me to find out how you can participate. This is all part of the very important shared ministry of our Fellowship. I look forward to hearing from you.

In faithful service,

John

Cell: (217) 972-2184

From the President...

Merry Christmas,

When Charles Dickens' wrote A Christmas Carol in 1843, Christmas celebrations in England were waning. During the Protestant Reformation, the party in power in Parliament found Christmas too materialistic and banned celebrations from 1647 to 1660. When the holiday was reinstated, there was little interest, and it had almost died out by the early 1800s. In our own country, many of our citizens saw Christmas as a British holiday and were not eager to celebrate the Christmas traditions of their recent enemy in our struggle for independence.

Dickens' work highlighted many of the economic and cultural issues of his time. There was a huge divide between the "haves" and the "have nots". Among the poor, those who were fortunate enough to have work were paid minimal wages by wealthy employers. Those who were worse off lived in workhouses and performed long hours of manual labor for a place to sleep and a small amount of food. The owners of the workhouses received government payments to care for the workers, but most kept the majority of the funds for themselves. Prisons were filled with individuals whose only crime was that they could not pay their debts. The Industrial Revolution created horrible situations for children. Life expectancy among the poor was 22 years of age, and, in London, half of all funerals were for children. The lack of access to education perpetuated the inability of the poor to improve themselves and secure better employment. When A Christmas Carol was published, it called attention to the inequities between classes and gave impetus to social reform.

A contemporary U.S. Christmas Carol would likely yield a similar tale of "haves" and "have nots" with many unable to find work or able to afford advanced education or training. While debtors' prisons no longer exist, there are still too many people, especially minorities, behind bars in our country. As Unitarian Universalists, we can encourage the message of hope in our modern day Christmas Carol by sharing our time, talents and treasure with others in Decatur and around the world. Our actions can be as simple as donating food, clothing or personal items to a food pantry or homeless shelter, serving meals at the Good Samaritan Inn or writing a check for those in need. We can take a more active role in helping the young people of our community stay in school and prepare for the workforce by serving as mentors, tutors or big brothers or big sisters. We can offer encouragement and support to those who are looking for work or who are underemployed. We can contact our legislators when we see inequities; we can demand better healthcare, affordable housing and education, gender equity, increased care for the youngest and oldest members of our society, and a world where our young men and women no longer leave home to fight wars. We can stand on the side of love by respecting the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

May the joy of the season inspire each of us to work together for a better world.

In Service,

Heather Stoa

Fall Clean-Up November 8th

Special thanks to the hardy souls who stayed after the service on November 8th to rake leaves, spread mulch, wash windows, battle lady bugs, clean the kitchen, and dust and vacuum the RE room and the sanctuary. We had a beautiful Sunday afternoon to spiff up the building and grounds. The workers deserving a round of applause are: Larry Atkinson, Marge Evans, Ken and Jeanne Robertson, Tim Rooney, Heather Stoa, Vern and Judy Thistlethwaite, and Sharon Zimmerman! The clean up crew also enjoyed tasty snacks donated by the Veechs.

December 6th Potluck

Join us after the service on December 6th for a potluck lunch. This will be a great opportunity to welcome the newest members to the Fellowship and to meet the participants in the How of Happiness class. Please bring a dish to share.

Get Well Wishes

Please keep June Allison and Ron Shafer in your thoughts as both recover from illnesses and hospitalizations.

With the Holidays coming fast upon us, why not shop Fair Trade?

Submitted by the UUFD Green Sanctuary Committee

The Overview & Impact of Fair Trade

Fair Trade is helping farm families across Asia, Africa and Latin America to improve the quality of their lives because each time a farmer receives Fair Trade certification, it helps to lift them out of poverty. Therefore, by investing in their products, we help their farming communities to develop, we protect our precious environment, and we enable them to develop the business skills necessary to able to compete in the global marketplace.

- **Fair Price:** Farmer groups that are democratically organized receive a guaranteed minimum “floor price” and an added premium for certified organic products. They are also eligible for “pre-harvest credit.”
- **Fair Labor Conditions:** Workers on these farms enjoy good living wages, freedom of association, and safe working conditions. Forced child labor is simply not allowed.
- **Direct Trade:** Fair Trade producer groups sell to importers as directly as possible, eliminating unnecessary middlemen and empowering their farmers to develop the business capacity necessary to compete in the global marketplace.
- **Democratic and transparent organizations:** Fair Trade farmers and their workers democratically decide on how to invest in Fair Trade revenues.
- **Community development:** Fair Trade farmers and farm workers invest Fair Trade premiums in business/social development projects like organic certification scholarship programs, and quality improvement training programs.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Environmentally sustainable farming methods are preferred that protect farmers’ health and preserve valuable ecosystems for future generations over using harmful GMO’s and agrochemicals.

Here is a partial list of stores that sell Fair Trade products. There are many more found online!

<http://transfairusa.org/content/WhereToBuy/>

<http://www.globalgoodspartners.org/template/partners.cfm>

http://www.globalgoodspartners.org/cart/category_index.cfm?gclid=CI68ibuCjp4CFQ4hDQodUDx6pw

And...

http://www.drbronner.com/fair_trade.html

Shopping Fair Trade is naturally a Win/Win situation for one and for all, both at this time of year, and all year long! Happy Shopping!



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December 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.



December Birthdays

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



For

Contact

At:

Name Tags	Kathy Kline
Address Changes	Tim Rooney
Newsletter submissions	Tim Rooney
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