

September 2011

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship



Rev. Larry Hutchison
Consulting Minister

3773 N. MacArthur Rd.
Decatur, IL 62526
Phone: (217) 875-5442
www.uufd.org

President:
Judy Thistlethwaite

Vice President:
Marge Evans

Treasurer:
Mark Sorensen

Secretary:
Mary Lovell

Board Members at
Large:
Carolyn Devore
Mel Weinstein
Joyce Throneburg

UUFD Trust Board:
Ken Robertson
Vern Thistlethwaite
Dave Snoeyenbos



Upcoming Services

All Sunday services begin at 10:15 AM.

We offer religious education for children and child care for babies.

September 4: No Service

September 11: "Here We Have Gathered" - Mark Sorensen

Long-time UUFD member Mark Sorensen will remind us why, although from different backgrounds, we come together in this place for our annual In-Gathering service. As part of the service, members and friends can briefly tell about their journeys the past three months, especially - What Surprised You? What Made you Happy? What Gave you Hope? You may bring water as a symbol of your individual journey, to be mixed with others.

Following the service, the Green Sanctuary Committee will inform members about our new composting project.
Board Meeting at 12 noon.

September 18: "Keep Your Top Eye Open, But You Can Keep Your Hat On" - Rev. Larry Hutchison

On this day we are celebrating 50 years of the Unitarian Universalist Association and my first Sunday with you at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur.

Keep your top eye open was printed on a poster written and circulated by Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, as part of the Abolitionist movement in Boston in 1851. Later liberal reformers and progressives used it to refer to cultivating a new and higher angle of vision (Emerson) of the world.

On this anniversary and our beginning, we will address the launching, the trajectory, and the present location of our movement.

September 25: "Somewhat of a Stranger to Myself" - Rev. Larry Hutchison

To paraphrase Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer": In this breathless pause we seem to be measuring our fitness for our UU journey. By using the Cain/Abel myth as a launching pad into John Steinbeck's "East of Eden", we come close to the center of our whereabouts in 2011.

Next newsletter deadline: Sept. 15 to newsletter@uufd.org

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

Calendar of Events

Friday, September 2
1:00 p.m.— Men's Luncheon at Tuscany

Wednesday, September 7
7:00 p.m. — Humanist Discussion Group

Thursday, September 8
7:00 p.m.— CUUPS Group

Friday, September 9
1:00 p.m.— Men's Luncheon at Tuscany

Tuesday, September 13
7:00 p.m. — decREAD Group

Wednesday, September 14
7:00 p.m. — Spiritual Journey Covenant Group

Wednesday, September 14
6:30 p.m.—Women's Book Group

Friday, September 16
1:00 p.m. — Men's Luncheon at Tuscany

Wednesday, September 21
6:30 p.m. — Decatur Vegetarian Society

Friday, September 23
1:00 p.m. — Men's Luncheon at Tuscany

Tuesday, September 27
7:00 p.m. — decREAD Group

Wednesday, September 28
7:00 p.m. — Spiritual Journey Covenant Group

Friday, September 30
1:00 p.m. — Men's Luncheon at Tuscany

Group discussion topics:

The decREAD Group—The decREAD Group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. at UUFD. All are welcome. Discussion of "The Case for God" by Karen Armstrong.

Humanist Group—Humanist Discussion Group meets 7:00 pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Contact Dave Snoeyenbos at 865-2409

Women's Book Group—This month the group will meet at the home of Sally Vannatta for potluck and discussion of "My Stroke of Insight" by Jill Taylor.

CUUPS Group— Sacred Pathways CUUPS meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 for study of earth-centered spirituality, and seasonal celebration planning.

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 ron.shafer52@gmail.com or 865-2527.

Decatur Vegetarian Society (DVS) --- The DVS group meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. for a vegetarian potluck dinner, followed by a live or video presentation at 8:00 pm. The meetings are open to the public. If you interested in participating in a potluck, please either (1) bring a vegetarian or vegan dish with a list of ingredients or (2) donate \$5. Also, you should bring your own eating utensils. Contact Mel Weinstein (763-0509) for additional information.

UUFD Men's Group- This group meets every Friday at Tuscany at 1:00 for lunch and conversation.

Community Food Bank: Please bring a donation of nonperishable food items for our local food banks to Sunday services.

Welcome Rev. Larry Hutchison and Nancy

Rev. Hutchison starts his duties at UUFD on September 15. He may be reached starting then at nanjhutch@aol.com or at the church phone #875-5442.

Rev. Larry Hutchison retired Minister Emeritus in 2004 from First UU Church of Detroit where he served for 9 years. His ministry included 27 community groups with over 600 people participating. Prior to that, he served the Unitarian Universalist Church of Indianapolis (UUI) for 8 years. The congregation grew from 94 members to over 260 and he co-started a Midnight Basketball Program for the surrounding community. In 1994, Larry and Nancy took a five month sabbatical to study multi-culturalism in Malaysia. Upon leaving in 1995, Larry received the Sagamore of the Wabash, the highest honor in Indiana. Before those two settled ministries, Larry served two historical UU Churches for 6 years in East Liberty, MI and Lyons, OH while milking 200 cows. Larry and Nancy organized two 200th Universalist Anniversary Celebrations in Lyons, OH and Oaklandon, IN. During Larry's ministry, he served on many National Committees including: Black Concerns Working Group, (BCWG), UU Urban Disciples, and UU's for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC), Ohio Meadville District Board, and served as President of the Heartland Ministers Association.

Larry was raised on a large dairy farm in SE Michigan. After graduating from Onsted High School, he furthered his education at Bethel University in St. Paul, MN and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, VA. He was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister and served Calvin Presbyterian Church in Detroit for 3 years. He left the ministry in 1968 to work at the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice in Detroit. He trained in Community Organizing in Chicago and co-started the Michigan Avenue Community Organization (MACO) in Detroit. He worked in the steel mill at Ford Motor Company and studied sculpture at Wayne State University where he later taught Humanities in the College of Life Long Learning. He transitioned to Unitarian Universalist Ministry in 1981 taking his Chaplaincy at the Medical College of Ohio.

Larry and Nancy married in 1984. Nancy, a life long Universalist, attended Siena Heights College in Adrian, MI, worked as Office Administrator at UUI in Indianapolis, was on the UUJEC Committee (above) and served on the UUA Planning Committee for 4 years. She also organized and led 6 different bands in Indianapolis, Detroit, Florida, and Windsor, Ont. Between them, Larry and Nancy have 4 daughters and 2 grandsons. They moved to Florida in 2005 where Larry has continued his ministry as guest speaker in many churches around the country while turning wood art pieces and showing them in Fine Art Shows in several states.

President's Message

Greetings to Members and Friends:

UUFD has hired the Rev. Larry Hutchison to be our three-quarters time minister beginning September 15. There will be a welcoming reception for him and his wife, Nancy, after his first service on September 18. We are looking forward to a great year.

There will be no service Sept. 4 (Labor Day weekend). The Friends of the Decatur Public Library have a huge book sale at the Civic Center on Sunday and Monday of that weekend. Check it out.

We need a pianist. If you know of anyone interested in playing each Sunday for us from 10:00 – 11:30, let me know.

Let's each make an extra effort to "fill the house" this Fall. Call a member or friend who hasn't attended recently. Tell them about our minister and the great programs coming up.

Thanks for all you do.

Judy Thistlethwaite

News from Religious Education



Bring your kids for a journey through World Religions this fall in RE! We'll explore:

September 11 — Christianity

September 18 — Yoga

September 25 — Buddhism

Bill Harbeck will teach the yoga lesson. John Wylder, a friend of UUFD and an ordained Buddhist lay minister, will teach on that religion. Remember, the Judeo-Christian tradition is a key source of our Unitarian Universalism, and Buddhism has informed many great thinkers and is practiced by numerous people today.

More religions will be examined with our kids in coming months.

The Fellowship Greens Up Again

by Mel Weinstein



It may seem that way, but the Green Sanctuary Committee of UUFD hasn't been dead, just a little dormant. Now we're coming at you with some new challenges. In our continuous efforts to "green" up the Fellowship, we are going to introduce food waste recycling and composting. This new program will be launched on Sunday, September 11th during the discussion session after the service. However, this little article will be a teaser.

Food waste includes uneaten portions of meals and trimmings from food preparation activities in kitchens, restaurants and cafeterias. Food waste is the third-largest component of generated waste by weight. Because of its low composting rate, food waste is the largest component of discarded waste by weight. [Waste360.com]

The food that you may throw in the garbage container takes up valuable space in a landfill. But that same food waste can be turned into a useful soil amendment, namely compost. As a Fellowship, we can lead, demonstrate, and educate in this area. Can we do it? Sure, if everyone pitches in. Here's the proposed plan. The exact details will be worked out by the September 11th meeting.

At every Sunday service, and any other event that involves food, we ask people to place their solid food waste in a marked, plastic recycling container located in the kitchen.

Allowable waste includes vegetables, fruits, baked goods, tea bags, and coffee filters plus grounds.

Non-allowable food waste includes meat, bones, dairy (milk, cheese), and pure fats & oils.

Each week, or more often if necessary, a member of the Green Sanctuary Committee will empty the recycling container into a rotatable composter located near the back door and add non-food brown organic matter (leaves, mulch) and water. At that point, nature will take over by providing microorganisms and oxygen to slowly convert the food waste into compost. Periodically rotating the composter will speed up that process.

Eventually, and who knows when, the composter will produce a fine, black, odor-free soil that can be used to provide nutrients and earth material to the UUFD gardens. Frankly, we won't get huge amounts of compost over time, but we will reduce the load on the local landfill and provide an important environmental lesson for the children.

For more information about food waste recycling and composting, please come to the discussion session on September 11 after the service.

Spiritual Journey Covenant Group



The Spiritual Journey Covenant Group will meet and re-organize for the coming year on September 14, from 7:00-8:30 at UUFD. We will be discussing possible topics for discussion and activities for the coming months. Some of the topics we will be considering are: Consciousness and Comas, Brain damage, etc.; Drugs and Spirituality; Death and Dying; Transcendence, etc. We invite everyone from UUFD members to friends, to members of the community to join us. For further information, please contact Ron Shafer at ron.shafer52@gmail.com

Humanist Group



Humanist Discussion Group will resume monthly meetings, starting Sept 7 @7:00 p.m. Please come join us!

David Snoeyenbos will lead a discussion on the challenging question:

What might be set as the long-term goal for humanity's future?

CUUPS Group

UUFD's Sacred Pathways CUUPS plans to hold meetings on the second Thursdays of each month beginning Sept. 8 at 7 p.m. Come join us in discovering Earth-centered spirituality, and planning seasonal celebrations.



Earth-centered religions form the sixth source of spirituality recognized by the UUA. These teachings celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of Nature.

A Member's Thoughts

The UUFD Fellowship has always provided people a place to gather to (1) share their personal theologies, (2) learn about world religions, (3) experience tolerance and acceptance, and (4) engage in spiritual practices without the trappings and dogma of conventional religions. All good things. But, and you knew there was a "but" coming, there is something missing at the UUFD. It has been missing for a long time, at least in the 20 years that I have been a member; in fact, it may never have existed. Rev. John Biedler talked about it many times, pointing it out to us in numerous sermons. In her short tenure here, Rev. Linda Berez noticed the missing element and tried to bring it to our attention. Even Miley Palmer, a Protestant minister and guest speaker, saw what was missing and mentioned it in a sermon he gave last spring. This missing aspect of Fellowship life is the invisible elephant in the Sanctuary, quietly waiting for the next cleric to point their finger at it.

What is this missing element? It's the lack of an outward community focus by the Fellowship. While we have many members and friends who put considerable time, money, and effort into community projects, and I admire them for that, the Fellowship itself does not have community involvement or charitable work as part of its core objectives. These common aspects of church life do not appear in our mission statement or on the pages of our website. We do not have a committee devoted to community projects or charitable work. Our budget does not have a line item allocating money to a project or a charity. We are an inward focused Fellowship without obvious connections to the community. Yes, we occasionally participate in community events, such as food drives or soup kitchens, but we don't have an on-going, continuous commitment to any community organization or project. I think this lack of community involvement as a Fellowship keeps us off kilter and a very minor player in the church life of Decatur.

What do other churches do in our neighborhood? Here are a few examples:

- First Christian Church on N. Macarthur has a café, bookstore, free after school program for Parsons 5th graders, a WSOY radio show, a ministry in Kenya, a free community clinic for families with school-age children, an annual Monroe Park summer event, and partnerships with local charities.
- The Temple Baptist Church on E. Mound has, oddly, a martial arts academy.
- Our Lady of Lourdes off W. Mound has a prison ministry, sponsors Girl and Boy Scouts programs, has a program to service homebound people, provides meals to the needy, has a program to visit people in nursing homes, and partners with local charities.
- Grace Baptist Church on North Water has a substance abuse/chemical dependency program.

Yes, these churches are larger than the UUFD and may have more people and money, but at the present time we have nothing that we can point to as an on-going commitment to the Decatur community.

In recent years, our membership numbers have trended downward. We attract fewer and fewer young adults, particularly those with families. Let's face it ... we are an aging congregation. Our Treasurer stridently points out this decline as our coffers fill up less and less each year. He often states that, if just a few, dedicated, older contributors die off, we won't be able to pay our bills. Speaking for myself, I would certainly pledge more money if the Fellowship had a strong and committed relationship with a community project and charity. Maybe others would do the same. Maybe an outward focus balanced with our inward one would attract more members.

In summary, the Fellowship has a lot to offer in terms of religious freedom, spiritual development, and supporting social causes, but we fall woefully short as a community organization. Is that why our membership is in decline? Maybe. But we won't know for sure until we decide to become more outwardly focused. How can this be done? In numerous ways ... big and small. First of all, we have to make community involvement a part of the Fellowship mission. Then we have to financially commit to it (put it in the budget). Next, we have to have a core group of people dedicated to it. Finally, we have to select a worthy project or community partnership that the majority of us can get behind and support with money and labor.

Please let me know if you agree or disagree with these views and maybe a conversation would lead to some new developments at the Fellowship.

Mel Weinstein

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

September 2011

“Promoting freedom, reason, and tolerance in religion”



Fellowship mission

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.

September Birthdays

Kathy Kline September 23

Want to see your name on the birthday list? Send e-mail to newsletter@uufd.org



minister@uufd.org (Rev. Larry Hutchison)
president@uufd.org (Judy Thistlethwaite)
vicepresident@uufd.org (Marge Evans)
treasurer@uufd.org (Mark Sorensen)
secretary@uufd.org (Mary C Lovell)
programs@uufd.org (Mark Sorensen)

newsletter@uufd.org (Kathy Kline and Terry Ankrom)