

commUNITY

Vol. 32, No. 9

UNITY CHURCH—UNITARIAN

May 2009

Blessing

Each month worship, religious education, community outreach ministry, covenant groups and Wellspring Wednesday programs will offer opportunities to contemplate, consider, contend with and discuss an intergenerational curriculum based on monthly themes. Our hope is that this approach will bind us more closely together and inform our lives in effective and positive ways. May's theme is...Blessing.

We could all use a little blessing right about now.

With unemployment rates rising and markets falling, we watch anxiously for assurances that all will be well. With the earth suffering so many maladies, we strain our ears for sounds of healing – for waters running clear and trees filled with birdsong. With the war raging on, we hunger for signs of peace – for the outstretched hand, for weapons laid down, for hearts turned in repentance.

Who wouldn't welcome such blessings if they would but come our way? Who would turn away from them? The truth is, though, we all do. As much as we long for its promises of bounty and beauty and wellness, we all turn our backs on *blessing* more often than we know.

What is it that we mean when we talk about *blessing*? Whether it's something we count or something we do, *blessing* refers to the abundance and wholeness of life. It acknowledges the holiness shining throughout this world, nestled within each of us and all around us. The act of blessing peers beneath the surface of the ordinary, removes "the dust of custom," cracks open the brown husk of our lives to reveal the bright and extraordinary seeds of love and wisdom nested in each day.

As others have written, a blessing awakens our unborn goodness. It draws a protective circle of light around us. It offers safe passage from here to there, bridges all distance, opens all time, uncloaks our hidden wholeness.

But blessing is not a one-way street.

Blessing rises from the two-way traffic of right relationship, from the caring heart and the trust we invest in one another. It abounds in beloved community. The power to bless cannot be claimed but rather is granted when we meet one another with integrity and love.

We grant one another the power to bless whenever we open our hearts to each other and when we bring our whole selves into our shared community. When we bring our wounds as well as our gifts, when we reveal our brokenness as well as our strength, when we speak our doubts and fears as well as our convictions, we are making room for blessing to occur.

The Hebrew word for blessing and benediction is rooted in the word for knee, suggesting that we receive blessing by kneeling down, by making ourselves small, humble, receptive. But our own proud cultural preference is for standing tall. We are a self-reliant bunch and our pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality can make it difficult for us to receive the very blessings for which we long. In the blessed circle of *this* community of faith, then, one of our tasks may just be to learn and practice a greater openness to blessing, with *all* that it offers and *all* that it demands.

May we then, together, receive and generously share the blessings that await us. May we kneel down with one another and together rise up blessed. May we find, in the losses and vulnerabilities of our time, a tenaciously woven web of relationship that will catch our every fall. May the earth's suffering cries guide us toward more gentle living; may we tread more lightly, use more wisely, replant more quickly. And may the unborn peace within us all begin to stir and turn

us from our ways of war.

So may we be blessed. And so may we bless the world around us.

— Karen Hering,
Assistant Literary Minister

Worship Theme Resources

BOOKS

Gilead by Marilynne Robinson

Plain and Simple: A Woman's Journey to the Amish by Sue Bender

The Soul is Here for Its Own Joy: Sacred Poems from Many Cultures, Robert Bly, editor

Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner

Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience by James Carse

FILMS

Fiddler on the Roof

Tevye the Milkman is a Jewish peasant in pre-Revolutionary Russia, coping with the day-to-day problems of 'shtetl' life, his Jewish traditions, his family (wife and daughters), and state-sanctioned pogroms.

The Color Purple

Celie (Whoopie Goldberg) and Nettie (Akosua Busia) sing to one another—you and me must never part—but time and tide will not allow. Their lives lead them along an arduous path.

The Wrestler

Randy "The Ram" Robinson is hanging up his spurs. He is leaving the life of professional wrestling but it is not as easy as he had imagined. Along the way, he finds hardship and blessing.

Families!
Read about summer
blessings on page 13.

JUST WORDS / WHEEL OF LIFE

Just Words

It was George H.W. Bush who admitted in a moment of refreshing candor that he didn't get "the vision thing." I think I do. Vision has to do with telling a story about the future, a story which draws us forward, a story which helps to create a framework within which we can build a better tomorrow. There are many who claim that "the more things change the more they stay the same. But I've lived long enough to know it isn't true. A simple song we often sing with the children of the church goes;

*It's a blessing we were born and it matters what we do.
What we know about God is a piece of the truth.
Let the beauty we love be what we do,
And we don't have to do it alone.*

These words, adapted from the great Sufi poet, Rumi, point to the ingredients of vision. It begins with a sense that life itself is a blessing. Given that fact we embrace the notion that what we do matters. Hopefulness is not romantic, it's essential. The German idealists whose thought is at the root of American Transcendentalism taught that the energizing impulse for living a loving, satisfying life is enthusiasm. Far more than rosy optimism, enthusiasm is a force, which moves us forward toward our vision.

"What we know about God is a piece of the truth." For the past few months a team of Unity Church members has been meeting to determine what role our church might play in Saint Paul's Central Corridor. A light rail transit system is planned for University Avenue. It will run through the most diverse communities in Minnesota. It could spell disaster for poor neighborhoods and small business along the route. Or it could be a catalyst for the most exciting, vibrant, integrated neighborhoods we've ever known. Many of us have come to believe that vision is what will make the difference.

Both theology and medicine have begun to embrace the notion of narrative authority. In theology, narrative authority refers to a story which helps to guide and to sustain our lives. In medicine, the term is used to describe the power of a positive attitude as an aid to health and healing. I suggest we can expand the concept narrative authority to community organizing. My hope is that we can help to form a partnership of organizations who want to see the Central Corridor become a model "Beloved Community." Then we can find ways to listen carefully enough to all those with a stake in Saint Paul's future so that together we can tell a story that will provide a vision against which development ideas can be judged.

Narrative authority has its applications in church life as well. In revisiting the key governing documents the Unity Church Board found that the "vision statement," a picture of what the church will be like once the stated goals or ends have been accomplished, is outdated. It's time to write a new one which reflects the better balance between spiritual development and community outreach the church has achieved in recent years. What story will we tell about our future as a congregation? What framework will we build to help guide our progress? I think you get "the vision thing" and I look forward eagerly to listening to what you have to say about how you want our beloved church to help to bless the world.

— Rob Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Jocelyn Audrey Claire Barnes
born March 20, 2009
daughter of Karin and Jeff Barnes
granddaughter of Clarice Swisher

In Memoriam

Walter William "Bill" Hodgson
December 12, 1924 –
March 25, 2009

In Remembrance

James Turner Greenman
July 19, 1949 – April 4, 2009

Memorial Day Weekend

The Church Office will be closed Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day.

Beginning Sunday, May 24, and continuing throughout the summer, Sunday services will be held each week at 10:00 a.m.

commUNITY is the newsletter of Unity Church–Unitarian. It is published monthly, except the month of July. Deadlines are the 14th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30 per year.

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MAY SUNDAY WORSHIP INFORMATION

Beginning Sunday, May 24, and continuing throughout the summer, Sunday services will be held each week at 10:00 a.m. Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. except where noted. Sermon podcasts and archives are available on line at www.unityunitarian.org.

May Worship Calendar

May 3

Arthur Foote Music Sunday

9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Services: *Beauty in Every Voice* featuring the voices of Unity Children's Choir, Mila, Youth Music Ensemble, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, One Voice Mixed Chorus. 4:30 p.m. Service: *Lullabies Live* featuring the Unity Singers

May 10

What Unexpected Blessings — Janne Eller-Isaacs

This Sunday we will celebrate the challenges and blessings of mothering and mothers. Janne and Worship Associate Amy Stenson Kujawski will address the history of Mother's Day, explore the relationship between our very real mothers and the archetype of the great mother and acknowledge those women in our lives who have been informal but none the less formative mothers.

May 17

The Blessing of the Flowers

The whole church family gathers to celebrate the uniquely Unitarian Universalist ritual of flower communion. Be sure to bring a flower to place into the arch. This year the ministers will be joined by Justin Schroeder who has recently been named the candidate to become Senior Minister at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. Justin will be preaching.

May 24 • 10:00 a.m. Only

I Will Not Let You Go — Rob Eller-Isaacs

Jacob wrestled all night with an angel. As the sun rose the angel tried to end the struggle. And Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." This Memorial Day Rob will ask us to consider how we have been blessed by those who have fought for our country. There will be an opportunity to light memorial candles to honor those who served.

May 31 • 10:00 a.m. Only

100 Ways to Pause — Janne Eller-Isaacs

At Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh's center in France, a bell is rung at random times so that people there will stop what they are doing and breathe three times. Janne and Worship Associate Hal Freshley will kick off the Sabbath series with a look at those brief moments of sabbath, moments of breath, prayer and meditation that help bring stability and balance to our busy lives.

For information about the weekly offering recipients, please see page 11.

A Celebration to Honor Justin Schroeder

Sunday, May 17
10:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.



Justin Schroeder will be leaving his position as the Director of Congregational Development at the end of May. Please join us as we celebrate Justin and the many gifts he has shared with Unity Church and wish him well on the next chapter of his ministry.

All are welcome.
Refreshments will be served.
We hope you will join us!



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Letter from the Board of Trustees

from Barbara Ford, Trustee

A blessing is the infusion of something with holiness, divine will, or one's hopes.

— Wikipedia

The on-line encyclopedia *Wikipedia* is written collaboratively by volunteers from all around the world. In a sense, the story of our own Unity Church-Unitarian is written collaboratively by all of us who yearn for the *beloved community*.

The blessings that flow from this collaboration are keenly felt by your Board of Trustees as we grapple with budgets, evaluate and upgrade policies, and watch over the realization of the *Ends Statements* created by you, members of the congregation, one year ago. Generous with your many gifts, you spread blessings far beyond our sturdy walls. For this, we are humbled and grateful.

You are encouraged to bless the church in two ways this month:

1. Our congregational survey is ready, waiting for your input and wisdom. Paper copies are available at the church; call (651-228-1456) to have one sent to your home. The survey can also be filled out online by visiting the church website at www.unityunitarian.org. Responses are studied carefully by the Board of Trustees to inform our planning for the future. We need to hear from each of you, so take a few minutes to fill out your survey today!
2. The process of choosing nominees for next year's Board of Trustees has started. The board benefits from the richness of a diverse group of trustees representing many ages and life experiences. Serving on the board is a deeply meaningful experience – and we also laugh often! Consider offering your skills and spirit to benefit the entire church community. Applications are available now at the church.

As we give and receive the blessings of each day, we open ourselves to the holiness that resides within and among all of us.

Employment Opportunity

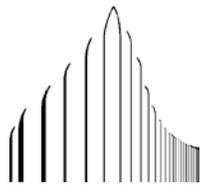
Director of Congregational Development

Unity Church-Unitarian, a vibrant religious community in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is seeking a Director of Congregational Development. Primary duties include: coordinating hospitality, orientation, and membership programs; small group ministries and mid-week programming.

The successful candidate will have a passion for liberal religion, a working knowledge of Unitarian Universalism, and strong administrative skills. The Director of Congregational Development serves as a member of the four-member executive team which directs church operations. Salary and generous benefits commensurate with experience. Opportunities for spiritual growth.

Unity Church-Unitarian is an anti-racist, anti-oppression institution and welcomes applications from candidates from historically marginalized communities.

Send letter of interest and resume by May 15, 2009 to Unity Church-Unitarian at e-mail address: unity@unityunitarian.org. A confirmation of receipt will be sent.



Going to General Assembly?

Each year in early summer, Unitarian Universalists from around the country (and around the world) gather in a city in the U.S. for the purpose of conducting the business of the Association. Each of these meetings is called a **General Assembly** (or GA). At these annual meetings, powerful decisions are made that direct and control its affairs of our denomination.

If you are going to the UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City (or are thinking about it) please contact Leon Dunkley at the Church Office. We will organize a Unity Church dinner and other gatherings during General Assembly.

For more information about General Assembly visit www.unityunitarian.org and click on 2009 UUA General Assembly under "Quick Links."

INTERWEAVE / HALLMAN MINISTERIAL INTERN

Write and Share Your Coming Out Story

From Ann Hite

Anthropologist Dorothy Holland says, “Identities are the stories we tell ourselves and the world about who we are, and our attempts to live in accordance with these stories.”

Who are we as a community at Unity Church? How are our personal stories woven together to tell the wider story of our community? In what ways do Unitarian Universalists come together most easily? How are we most challenged? Does holding a part of ourselves in hiding affect the spiritual journey we are on together?

Mark Morrison-Reed talks about the power of stories and the UU fear of the spirit in favor of getting lost in our heads. “If God gets his hands on us...we might do something crazy. We are scared to death of that and are dying to have that experience at the same time.”

Those of us who identify as LGBTQ are continually faced with the question of revealing identity as a necessary component of every action we take or event we plan. Revealing our truest selves, or coming out, is a daily question that, as Morrison-Reed says, contains both fear and longing. Living in accordance with who I am is only possible when I decide to come out. It seems counterintuitive to be a part of a spiritual community in which I am not living in accordance with who I am. Coming out then becomes an essential part of my journey.

The mission of the Interweave Ministry Team at Unity Church is to integrate and give voice to the inherent worth of the LGBTQ community. Interweave team members believe that we all – gay and straight – have something to tell about our truest selves, which, when revealed, will contribute to our larger community and in turn, nurture our own spirituality. Some of these truths are rooted in LGBTQ identity, our own or that of people we know and love; some reveal other shining facets of identity that we have kept concealed for one reason or another.

The Interweave Team hopes to weave more of these stories into the larger fabric of our church’s narrative. As members of the LGBTQ community, our familiarity with the daily challenge of self-revelation has led us to create an opportunity for anyone interested in writing, exploring and sharing their stories of identity.

All are invited to participate in a writing session on this topic, facilitated by Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering. The session will be held twice, once on Wednesday, June 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m., and again next fall on Tuesday, September 15, 6:30-8:30pm. In each session, a guided process of questions and prompts will open gateways into our personal stories and truths, recorded in our own handwriting on our own pages. This telling of our stories first for our own eyes on the empty page can help us find our voice for other times when we wish and choose to share our stories out loud with others. (Sharing in the writing sessions is always optional.) Child care requests can be made to Christy Randall by May 27th.

An Intern’s Public Journal

Entry Eight • From Leon Dunkley

Nina’s Coffee Shop — 10:46 a.m., Monday (my day off... sometimes)

The gentleman next to me sneezes and spills his coffee on the paper that he is working on.

“Bless you,” I say. I am aware that I am learning how to do this more formally. We laughed but our eyes didn’t meet. I was working on something that was supposed to change the world and so was he. Neither one of us had the time to actually look at one another upon exchange of sacred words. We blessed and were blessed reflexively, almost as a way of remaining polite. The woman in between us was silent.

Several minutes went by and then the gentleman spoke again. “You know, you could cough up a lung and no one says anything.” I found it difficult not to look to find out who was talking. It was as if we were in conversation for some time and he was “chiming in again” the way you talk in a waiting room or on a road trip. But we were not in a waiting room. We were not on a road trip. We were saving the world by typing, by drinking coffee and by manifestly not speaking with one another.

“That’s strange,” the woman said. I looked at this point, half of a smile on my face. It was hilarious that she had chosen this point to enter the conversation.

“You could have the plague and no one says anything but if you season your eggs too much or look at a light funny, they want to bless you,” he continued. Maybe we actually were on a road trip. I looked out of the window—not at Selby Avenue but at the plains and mountains rolling by. I didn’t have the slightest idea where we were going. I had one foot out of the imaginary, conversational door. I sipped my coffee. Too cold. Oils and lipids gathered on the steamless surface of my mug. The conversation was more interesting and I was distracted from saving the world.

“Why say bless you?” the woman said.

“I think it’s German.” I felt compelled to speak but the gentleman continued. “I think they believed that sneezes were the expulsion of evil spirits and if you say bless you immediately after you sneeze, the evil spirits don’t have time to get back in.” That was the ridiculous thing that I was gearing up to say. I pretended to be smarter than I was (am).

Time went by and we fell into conversations. He left before it got particularly deep, the evil spirits gone from his body and now, presumably, flying around Nina’s Coffee Shop. She and I talked about philosophy and logical positivism and Portugal and dreams and family. I sipped my coffee. It seemed warm again. We laughed. It was a blessing.

— ld

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAYS / PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Wellspring Wednesdays



WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

Welcome to Unity

If you've worshipped with us a few times and are interested in learning more about who we are and what we believe as a faith community, you're invited to take our **Welcome to Unity** class.

Worm Composting Demonstration Session

Learn how to make your own worm composting bin. We'll walk through the steps and provide detailed instructions so that you can confidently make your own bin(s) afterward at home. A worm bin is an excellent option for year-round composting of food waste. Please contact Terri Burnor at 651-324-2343 or tburnor@comcast.net with questions.

Open Page: Reflecting with Pens In Hand

These writing sessions are open to all as opportunities to correspond with "the still, small voice within." No writing experience required; only an empty page and an open heart and mind.

Reflection Topic: *Blessing*

A blessing, according to John O'Donohue, "is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal, and strengthen. . . . A blessing awakens future wholeness." In this shortened version of the Open Page guided writing sessions led by our assistant literary minister, we'll be exploring – and writing – blessings. What's the purpose of a blessing? How do we bless the world we live in? How do we claim and name our blessings?

Teens Serve It Up! Serve It Up with Action

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

dinner: *bratwurst or veggie dogs, coleslaw, baked beans, ice cream sandwiches*

Animals as Spiritual Partners

Linda Anderson draws upon over a decade of co-authoring with her husband Allen Anderson, the popular Angel Animals series of best-selling books about the benefits of human-animal companionship (www.angelanimals.net). She'll introduce the couple's work which has been featured on the Today Show, national wire service articles, and local TV and newspapers. In this interactive presentation and discussion Linda tells miraculous true stories of animals serving as vehicles for unconditional love and she invites everyone to bring photos of special pets and share stories. You can learn more at www.angelanimals.net.

Teens Serve It Up! Bakin' in the Kitchen

Unity Church Mano a Mano Outreach Ministry Team

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 • Last WW until September!

dinner: *pizza, salad, dessert*

Unity Church Talent Show!

Join us for the return of the all-church talent show hosted by our very own 7th and 8th grade youth. Adults and children and those in between are all welcome in the show as are funny talents, serious talents, musical talents, dancing talents...whatever the talent is, we want to see it! Contact Kerri Meyer at the Church Office to sign up.

Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, May 9 • 8:30–10:00 a.m.

You'll enjoy local sausage, OJ, all you can eat pancakes, and lots of lingering and good conversation. Cost: \$3 per person or \$10 per family.



Bring a friend!

Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Putting the Job Search Odds in your Favor

with Jennifer Rogers

Saturday, May 9 • 10:15 a.m.

There have always been proven job search methods purported and supported by statistics. The question is whether these will hold up in this "Great Recession." Job seekers will need to dig deep and employ a variety of personal resources to move ahead in challenging economic conditions. In addition to reviewing job search methods, this session will offer and will ask, "what resources are within?"

Jennifer Rogers has 18 years experience as a professional career counselor, working primarily in higher education settings. Adding a private practice to her repertoire in 2003, her career clients have ranged from 18 years to 50+ years of age. She received an MA in Education, with dual emphases in Educational Psychology and Higher Education Student Affairs from the University of Connecticut. Her bachelor's degree is in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University.

2009-2010

Religious Education



Orientation and Registration

All are welcome! See page 12 for more information.

LIBRARIES / BOOK CLUB / WRITING AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



What's New at Unity Libraries?

Geneste M. Anderson Adult Library Bookstall • Elizabeth M. Whitman Children's Library • Bookmobile

The sun has reappeared after a long hiatus, and the little green buds we celebrated last month are exploding into lilacs, tulips, azaleas. May is a month of blessings, and while there are many more than we can possibly count, we have an abundance to bestow, as well. These books in your Unity Libraries are examples of both:

May you spend... All your days singing praise... From **600 Blessings and Prayers from Around the World**, edited by Geoffrey Duncan, 291.4 D in the Anderson Library.

Why! who makes much of a miracle? As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles... From **Nothing but Miracles** by Walt Whitman ("Miracles" in *Leaves of Grass*), illustrated by Susan L. Roth. In the Whitman Children's Library.

Speaking of poetry, we are honored to present a very special event:

Café Unity Poetry and Music Salon
Friday, May 15, 2009 • 7:00 p.m.

Please join us in the Parish Hall coffeehouse for an evening of original and favorite works. See page 9 for more details.

Find more books, CDs, and DVDs in your Unity Libraries through the online catalog: www.librarything.com/catalog/UnityChurch.

Book Club Update

This Book Clubs is open to all!

THE SECOND TUESDAY BOOK CLUB will meet from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12. The book they will be discussing is *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks. Each book has a "sponsor" who begins the meeting by presenting a bit about the author and the book.

Writing and Reading as Spiritual Practice

Open Page: reflecting with pens in hand

These guided writing sessions, led by Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering, are invitations to the creative spirit, opportunities to correspond with "the still, small voice within." No writing experience is required; only an empty page and an open heart and mind. Registration is not necessary, but if you plan to attend your e-mail or phone RSVP will assist in determining handout quantities. Contact karen@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456, ext. 128.

Sunday, May 3 • 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Open Page Reflection Topic: Sabbath

A day of rest can be hard to find in our world of 24/7 opportunities. But an empty day, like an empty page, carries its own possibilities. "All creation springs from emptiness," says writer Wayne Muller. Bring pen and paper together in a guided writing session exploring the rich possibilities of rest and emptiness as we reflect on the topic of *sabbath* (the church's monthly theme for June).

Wednesday, May 6 • A Wellspring Wednesday Program • 7:10 – 8:30 p.m.

Open Page Reflection Topic: Blessing

A blessing, according to John O'Donohue, "is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal, and strengthen. . . A blessing awakens future wholeness." Join in an evening of writing and reflection exploring this month's theme of blessing.

Lectio Divina: a practice of spiritual reading

It is difficult to get the news from poems yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there. — William Carlos Williams

Sunday, May 17 • 11:00 a.m. – noon

All are invited to listen for "what is found there" in a reflective session led by Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering using the Benedictine practice of "*lectio divina*" or holy reading. Together we'll meditate on poems and readings related to May's theme of *blessing*.

Call For Written Blessings

You're invited to write and share your own blessing – for a difficult time of change or challenge, for one of life's thresholds or rites of passage, for the everyday need and desire we all have to be blessed and to bless. Blessings will be posted on-line throughout the month. Visit www.unityunitarian.org for details or to read the blessings shared by others.

Writing Programs in Early June

Wednesday, June 3 • 6:30 – 8:30

Open Page Reflection Topic: Coming Out Stories

"Whatever coaxes us out of hiding," says the writer Sark, "to write, record, and express is a revolutionary act (that) says our lives count." We'll explore on our own pages the personal truths and stories that we often keep hidden. (See page 5 for a related article from *Interweave*.)

Sunday, June 7 • noon – 2:00 p.m. (NOTE new time due to summer scheduling)

Open Page Reflection Topic: Vocation

Unity's literary ministry provides meditations on each month's worship theme, shared in worship and in this newsletter; these are available on-line at www.unityunitarian.org/MonthlyThemeResources. Member writings on upcoming themes are also invited. If you would like to receive periodic e-mail notifications of upcoming literary programs and invitations for member writings, please contact Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org. These programs are supported by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



From left to right: Amie Miller, Cicely Laing, Roger Geisert, Leslie Oliver, Rich Daddi



From left to right: Cari Michaels, Lois Harrison, Phyllis Schuster, Mary Lynn Kittelson, Johanna Stammeier-Toole, Byron Toole

Cari Michaels

I live with my partner, Lois Harrison, and our two sons Simon and Bennett. I grew up in Minneapolis, and have lived in North Carolina and rural Eastern Kentucky. I have worked in several public health settings and have a background and strong commitment to child abuse prevention and family support work. My spirituality is enhanced through my lifelong interest in vocal and piano music. In a future life, I could envision providing post-partum services to new mothers and families.

Phyllis Schuster

I retired two years ago from the Pioneer Press where I was a news editor. I still like to edit and write. I have four sons and five grandchildren. My interests include literature, gardening, traveling and environmental causes. I have also been a teacher, bookseller and book editor. I grew up in Galesburg, Illinois.

Lois Harrison

Lois Harrison is a native of Gilroy, California. She and her partner Cari have two sons, Simon and Bennett. She has worked in public health for the past twenty years. Lois came to Unity Church a few years ago, after attending a moving memorial service for a next-door neighbor. In a life when her children are older, Lois would love to become a National Parks Service interpreter, revive an interest in hand bell choirs, and adopt a Bernese mountain dog.

Amie Klempnauer Miller

I'm a writer and the author of *She Looks Just Like You*, a memoir of non-biological lesbian motherhood, forthcoming from the UUA's own Beacon Press in Spring 2010. I also write grants and consult on fundraising, mostly for public media. I live in Mac-Groveland with my partner, Jane Miller, and our 6-year-old daughter, Hannah. I love to bake, dig in the dirt, eat and be outside with my family.

Pathway to Membership at Unity Church

***Welcome to Unity:* Our Class for Newcomers**

This class is geared to newcomers, visitors, and those seeking to learn more about Unitarian Universalists and Unity Church.

Welcome to Unity covers the mission and vision of the church as well as the basics of historical and contemporary Unitarian Universalism. *Welcome to Unity* is the first step for all those seeking to learn more about our faith.

Welcome to Unity Schedule:

Wednesday, May 6
7:10 – 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 14
after the 10:00 a.m. service

Byron and Johanna Stammeier-Toole

We have lived in Minnesota three years and here in this neighborhood for almost two years. We started coming to Unity last fall and have already attended all kinds of different functions. We are looking forward to helping out in the library and with Project Home.

Nels Otto

I'm a retired vocational rehabilitation counselor/career counselor/bank business analyst. My roots are in northeastern Iowa. I like the deeper thinking aspects of UUism. One of my passions is personal growth for men—helping them catch up to women in identifying and expressing their feelings and issues. Others are travel, biking, cross country skiing and occasionally Contra dancing. I'm finding at Unity a place to grow spiritually, to develop friendships and express my primary passion.

The Unity Library Team Presents

Café Unity Poetry and Music Salon

Friday, May 15 • 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a very special evening of original and much-loved poetry and song featuring...

Leon Dunkley

Karen Hering

Janne Eller-Isaacs

Rob Eller-Isaacs

Justin Schroeder

...and more Unity talent in Café Unity,
the Parish Hall coffee house.

This event is free of charge and everyone
is welcome.

Bring a friend!



Unity Canners, Convene!



Last summer, a group of intrepid Unity locavores met throughout the summer to put up the harvest from our own backyards and from the miraculously abundant St. Paul Farmer's market. We sure learned a lot about freezing and canning together!

Several people have expressed interest in participating in this cooperative effort again this summer. We'll have an initial interest meeting on Tuesday, May 19, at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall. We'll talk about summer schedules, upcoming MN Extension trainings, dreams and schemes. Contact Kerri in the Church Office for more information.

The Unity Men's Group continues to thrive...

Join us every third Monday at 7:00 p.m. in the Center Room for lively and interesting conversations about the challenges and the opportunities facing men at this moment of the world.

Upcoming dates include:

Monday, May 18

Monday, June 15

PICTURES FROM THE NEW ORLEANS PILGRIMAGE



Raising walls...



Ted Lentz and Rev. Carl Walker saw wood to begin framing.



Photos courtesy of Ellen Wold.

Mary Barrett and Henry Brown break for lunch.

Quilters Reach Out in the Spirit of Support



Linda Aaker with the quilt in Minnesota.

Over the years Unity's Evergreen Quilters have done much to extend the caring reach of our church. Now they have extended this reach to a New Orleans musician who lost both his home and almost all of his possessions in Hurricane Katrina. Michael "Lucky" Harris, the bass guitar player for the Shades of Praise gospel choir, has become the recipient of a dazzling quilt made by Linda Aaker of the Evergreen Quilters.

Last April when the Shades visited St. Paul, Michael was touched by the quilts on display in the Parish Hall, for they reminded him of his grandmother's quilt he had lost in Katrina. Hearing this story, the Evergreen Quilters took it upon themselves to make a quilt for Michael. The finished product was delivered to Michael at his home on March 3, the week of the most recent Unity Church pilgrimage to New Orleans.

A brief ceremony was held at Michael's home during which the quilt was blessed by Rev. Carl Walker of St. Paul's Morning Star Baptist – a pilgrim on the trip - and the quilt was presented to Michael. In an emotional statement, Michael thanked Linda and the members of Unity Church for this thoughtful gift, saying that he would carry this act of generosity and thoughtfulness with him for the rest of his life.

The quilt is a stunning, two-sided piece of work in which Linda captures the themes of Mardi Gras, New Orleans music, the culture of Louisiana, and even the relationship of St. Paul to New Orleans, as well as our relationship to the Shades of Praise. Linda wove together a tapestry of the Louisiana state flower – the magnolia, clefs of music and Mardi Gras beads. To this she inserted representations of Minnesota and Louisiana joined by the Mississippi River. Both sides were embroidered with the name of the Shades of Praise and Michael Lucky Harris. This wall-size quilt, Michael said, will find a permanent home on his bed or a prominent wall.

Many thanks to Linda and all the member of the Evergreen Quilters who contributed to this project. Reaching out in this spirit of support sends an important signal to the victims of Katrina as they struggle to recover.



Michael Lucky Harris wrapped in the quilt in Louisiana.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

FROM THE GREEN SANCTUARY/
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY TEAM

Whole Farm

Buy meat, cheese, produce and much more from local, sustainable farms and pick it up right at Unity Church from Whole Farm Cooperative.



For May pickup, place an order at wholefarmcoop.com or 320-732-3023 by Wednesday, May 13.

Orders will be delivered to Unity Church on Wednesday, May 20. Pay by sending a check, with the invoice enclosed with your order, to Whole Farm.

Evergreen Foodshelf

The third Sunday of every month is Evergreen Food Drive Sunday. May 17 suggested items are diapers and baby food! All non-perishable food and household items are welcome and needed!

Donations can be brought anytime and should be placed in the barrels located at both the Holly and Portland Avenue entrances. All food is taken to Sharing Korner Food Shelf.



May Sunday Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, seventy percent of the offering collection is given to non-profit agencies within the larger community. The remaining thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church.

May 3—Foote Music Fund

Arthur Foote was minister at Unity Church from 1945-1970. Upon his death in 1999 the Arthur Foote Music Fund was created as a permanent endowment to provide an annual music Sunday in his memory. Currently the endowment supports a portion of Foote Music Sunday expenses. Your gifts to grow this endowment are gratefully accepted!

May 10—Mission Haiti, Inc.

Mission Haiti is a non-profit organization founded in 2006 and run by volunteers who are dedicated to making a difference in the most impoverished country in the western hemisphere. Due to lack of public schools and extreme poverty, many Haitian children do not attend school. Mission Haiti built an elementary school in the village of Leogane that provides a daily meal, books, and school supplies for 165 students. Since 2007, at the same facility, Mission Haiti has provided daily meals and a home for the many elderly women who have been abandoned and are forced to survive on the streets. Unity Church members Shelley and John Butler have been supporters of Mission Haiti, Inc. for many years.

May 17—Holdeen Trust

The Unitarian Universalist Association Holdeen India Program has helped fund more than 90 groups in India since 1984. One of the Holdeen Trust partners is Shramajeevi Sanghatana, founded by Vivak and Vidyullata Pandit. This organization is a training and support project that has built a model school for girls in the Maharashtra region of India. As one of the school's partners, Unity Church recruits teachers. This summer, church member Wendy Harris will travel to India to teach English. This Sunday's offering will go to this Holdeen partnership to support this and future teachers work at the girls school.

May 24—Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN)

Since 1980, the mission of MARN has been to assure the right of every child to a permanent, nurturing family, especially those sometimes called "un-adoptable" due to the behavioral effects of abuse and neglect. As part of MARN, Our Voices Matter is a youth driven advocacy and leadership program for teens and young adults whose lives have been affected by adoption or foster care. This offering will go toward sending 10 youth to participate in a June Youth Empowerment Retreat for purposes of helping these youth articulate their stories and empowering them to become agents of change within the child welfare system. Julie Shortridge from Unity Church serves on MARN's board of directors.

May 31—Peaceful Summer on Rice Street Project

For the past two summers, a coalition of groups in the North End neighborhood of St. Paul has conducted a campaign to increase healthy youth development opportunities on Rice Street, the community's "main street." Their goal is to address individual and systems-level racism, to prevent violence and to build intergenerational relationships and community. The campaign is based on the Wakanheza (Dakota word for child that translates as "sacred being") Project, a program of the St. Paul-Ramsey County Dept. of Public Health with the District 6 Planning Council serving as the fiscal agent. The project offers a wide range of fun, safe, pro-social, summer-time activities chosen by and for young people. Unity Church member and Ward 5 City Councilmember Lee Helgen initiated and continues to provide leadership to the project and Unity Church member Grit Youngquist convenes the Rice Street Leadership group.



Saturday, May 9 • After the Pancake Breakfast! Last R.E. Orientation This Spring! Enroll Your Child for Sunday School 2009-2010!

If you have not yet attended a Religious Education Orientation for the 2009-10 program year, the May 9 session is your family's last opportunity to enroll this spring. The next orientation will happen in late summer. Classes are filling steadily; enrollment is ONLY happening at orientation sessions. Our Saturday, May 9 session takes place at 10:00 a.m., immediately after the Pancake Breakfast. Childcare is provided. Feedback from families participating in the orientation and enrollment process has been consistently positive. Don't find yourself frustrated and without a spot in the R.E. ministry this fall: join us for this last orientation and enrollment session.

Teacher Appreciation: Sunday, May 10

Our Religious Education teachers will be honored during worship and feted with a reception following worship on Sunday, May 10. All Sunday School teachers are warmly invited to attend worship and to be celebrated for their ministry. Parents, please consider helping your child write a thank you note to their Spirit Play teachers, Journey Guides, Workshop Teachers and Junior High teachers – Kerri is happy to remind you who your child's teachers have been this past year. May 10 is the last day of R.E. of the 2008-09 program year.

Dedication of Older Children: Sunday, May 17

On May 17, the annual litany of the Dedication of Older Children will be celebrated at all three services, offering a ritual of welcome and promise to families with children who have become part of our community after their infancy. The celebration involves each child processing up to the chancel on his or her own, speaking a litany aloud, and receiving a certificate and a chalice for the family. Children ages 4 and up will find this meaningful. Contact Kerri by May 10 if you would like your child to participate in this dedication.



**Reminder! Flower Communion is also Sunday, May 17.
Remember to bring flowers from your garden!**

New! New! New! Year-Long Our Whole Lives

Learn more about the new year-long Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education program for 7th, 8th and 9th graders starting this fall! Parent Orientations will be held May 12 and 14 at 7:00 p.m. Participation in one of the orientations is required for enrollment in OWL. Contact Joseph LaFerla in the Church Office with questions.

Senior Bridging Ceremony June 7, 2009

High school seniors are warmly invited to join us at 10:00 a.m. worship on Sunday, June 7, for our annual Bridging ceremony in which their achievements are honored and their plans for the future blessed and celebrated. Participants are also invited to a brunch at the ministers' home following worship. Check your mailbox for an invitation. Parents will also receive an invitation to a gathering for families sending their youth into the world. RSVP for the weekend's events by contacting Kerri at the Church Office.

Pictured below:

Park stewards! Coming of Age 9th graders and their mentors helped Grit Youngquist clean up Lilydale Regional Park for their service project on Saturday, April 18.



BLESSINGS FOR UU FAMILIES / YOUTH NOTES

The Blessing is in the Seed: Summer Sundays with Unity's Children

from Kerri Meyer, Director of Religious Education

Beginning Memorial Day weekend, the children who come to Unity on summer Sundays will work together in our Children's Garden in the greenspace. Conceived last summer and carried out by Anna Newton and Meg Arnosti, with the help of Unity's gardeners and youth, the garden bloomed with friendship and flowers, happiness and herbs. We're looking forward to our second summer in the garden.

A garden may be the very definition of the word "blessing." If a child asks us to define the word, we can take "blessing" in one of several directions. Each of these meanings comes to life in a garden:

1. blessing: (n.) divine or providential aid; good fortune

We tell our children that humans cannot summon the sun or the rain that our garden needs to grow, but these things still come without our asking. They are a blessing, as are the hands that dug the earth and carried the seed. Weeks of clouds and stretches of drought serve to bring our attention to the blessings of sun and rain and to feel deep gratitude when they return.

2. blessing: (n.) a thing one is glad of

There is a joy that even the youngest child recognizes in the springtime warmth of the soil, in the miraculous seed leaves that first reach to the sun, in the ripe sweetness of a just-picked tomato. Children are indeed glad to be out of doors at their church in the sweet summer mornings.

3. blessing: (n.) the conference of favor, protection

When we plant a seed and nourish its beginnings, our relationship to its new life is more personal, more real than our relationship to the thousand seeds that sprout without our help. When we lay hands on another living being, we become part of the love that will protect it and keep it in life's favor. In a congregation rich with children, we

have many opportunities to enter into that special relationship of nurture and care. To

garden together this summer is to lay our blessing on both a child and a patch of earth: we become connected in a new, deep way to the blessings that are at our fingertips.

4. bless: (v) to bestow prosperity, health or happiness on another

This year, the children and adults who tend our garden will share the beans, okra, chives, tomatoes, lettuce, and sunflowers with an elderly neighbor who receives services through the Summit University Living At Home Block Nurse program, whose offices are housed at Unity Church. Each week, we will send a "Garden Box" to our new friend, filled with good food, photos of the garden and notes from the children. We hope in this way to pass on the blessings of sun, rain, real work and friendship, bestowing health and happiness on another.

Join us in the garden this summer! Put your hands in the warm earth. Take a child's hand in your own. Bless and be blessed. May the sun and the rain come to meet you.



Nourish beginnings.

let us nourish beginnings.

*Not all things are blest, but
the seeds of all things are blest.*

The blessing is in the seed.

- Muriel Rukeyser

Summer Sundays in the Garden Begin Memorial Day Weekend!

Religious Education ends on May 10, but starting May 31 and continuing through the summer, children and adult volunteers will be in our Children's Garden with Anna Newton.

This year, we'll be planting more flowers and vegetables and we'll be sharing the fruits of our labor with a neighbor who receives services through the Summit/University Living at Home organization housed here at Unity.

Registration is not necessary, but Safe Church ratios of adult volunteers to children will limit the number of kids we can take with us into the garden.

If you'd like to volunteer to garden with the children or to help tend the garden between Sundays, contact Kerri in the Church Office.

Chalice Camp Registration Deadline: May 17!

Families who would like to sign their first- through sixth-grader up for Chalice Camp should turn in their registration form by May 17. Chalice Camp is a week-long day camp for UU kids who want to build friendships while learning more about our history and values. This year's camp will take place Monday-Friday, August 10-14. Forms can be printed from the church website. Tuition for the week is \$200 per child; financial support is available to all families who need assistance funding their child's participation.

MUSIC MINISTRY / UNITY GARDEN UPDATE

Sharing Unity's Music With Our Community...

"When people sing together there is an indescribable feeling of "connectedness" that nothing can duplicate." — Steven M. Fisher, Educator, director of Keystone State Boychoir

Singers of Unity Church are being given and are taking many opportunities to share our music with our community; to hear other voices in our community; and to meet in song with so many singers. The Unity Singers trip to the National ACDA Convention in Oklahoma seemed to spring open a flood of connections and spotlight on those already made. Below you will see many of these concerts and gatherings that will be happening this spring for our Children's Choir and Unity Choir. Thanks and congratulations to all who are participating in these activities!

Concerts with One Voice Mixed Chorus

As part of its commitment to community outreach, One Voice is partnering with children's choirs from four metro-area communities for their spring concerts: Unity Church—Unitarian, Mayflower UCC, and Shir Tikvah—as well as children from the One Voice community. Nine Unity Church children have chosen to be part of this project. Here are the dates and times of the performances:

QMC Pride Concert – Free Concert!

Monday, June 1 • 7:00 p.m.

Como Park Pavilion • 1360 North Lexington Parkway, Saint Paul

Lavender Green: Thinking Globally, Singing Locally Concert

Saturday, June 13 • 7:30 p.m. — *and* — Sunday, June 14 • 3:30 p.m.

History Theatre • 30 East 10th Street, Saint Paul

Unity Choir Food Shelf Community Concert

This concert is designed for local church choirs and community choruses to share music and collect food for local food shelves. Admission is the gift of non-perishable foods for donation to the area Community Action food shelves. If you would like to send a donation of food please contact Ruth Palmer or any member of the Unity Choir.

ACDA-MN Metro East Food Shelf Community Concert

Saturday, May 9 • 4:00 p.m.

Lutheran Church of the Ascension • 1801 East Cliff Road, Burnsville



On Sunday, April 19, the Unity Children's Choir performed an outreach concert at St. Anthony Park Nursing Home. Here the children are introduced by choir director Kathleen Radspinner at the beginning of the concert.

Unity Garden Update

Garden Work Parties

Join us for a party! A work party, that is: Unity Gardeners will be planting shrubs and bedding plants in May. Watch *This Week At Unity* for dates, or contact Anna (see below).

Plant Donations

We are looking for donations of hostas for the Holly Street entrance, so if you have an overgrown patch, let us know!

Looking toward summer...

- The gardens need volunteers to keep things watered. Volunteers usually take responsibility for a week at a time.
- The children's garden was the highlight of our summer R.E. program, and volunteer teachers are needed throughout the summer. What a great way to be outside sharing nature with children!

Contact Anna Newton at 651-483-2986 or newtona@comcast.net if you can help with any of these garden needs!



Anna Newton and the church youth prepare the Children's Garden.

PARISH HALL ART / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

May Parish Hall Artist

Nathan Eckstein

Creator & Director of *A Fashion Show for Social Change*

My idea for a fashion show that used the power of words and images to create awareness of African American Discrimination and White Privilege was born out of my time spent at Penumbra Theatre Company's Summer Institute Program. In summer 2008, I spent four weeks working with various performing artists from around the metro. At the end of the four weeks we were asked to take what we had learned out into the community and create a project for social change.

The theme of black and white was born when I read the definitions of black and white out of Merriam Webster's dictionary. I was shocked and horrified to learn the blatant racism and terrible stereotypes hidden in the definitions. We also learned about the idea of white supremacy, the sociological concept that a person with white skin automatically experiences advantages due to their skin color. It was at that point I wanted to draw people's attention to the issues of racism that surround us in everyday life. I thought about what medium would allow me to do this in a way that was fresh and new and I arrived at a fashion show.

Tower Club, Unity's youth group, agreed to help with the show. After four education sessions T.C. members designed and created their own T-shirts inspired by our gained knowledge of the issues surrounding racism and white privilege. With all of the support I was able to put on a full-blown fashion show on January 17, 2009. Over 150 people attended. The fashion show consisted of the T-shirts displayed here.

We are honored to have this opportunity to both display our T-Shirts and to continue to open people's eyes, hearts and minds to the racism that exists today in our very own community. African-American discrimination and white privilege are parts of everyday life often unrealized by the average citizen. Fashion is art so please, look, read and learn.

Please join us for a gallery opening on Saturday, May 2, at 6:00 p.m.



May Fellowship Group Meetings

All are invited to attend the following groups. For more information, contact the Church Office or the persons listed with each group.

Men's Retirement Group

Monday, May 4 and 18 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Contact: Phil Morton, 952-934-3578

Unity Divorce/Transitions Group

Meets every Saturday • 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

Unity Singles Group

Watch *This Week at Unity* for scheduled events.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

A New Look at the Bible

First Thursday of the month • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Joan Lovrien, 651-739-6958

Afterthoughts

Every Sunday following the 9:00 a.m. service or 10:00 a.m. service beginning May 24.
Contact: Paul Gade, 651-771-7528

Mother-Daughter Middle School Book Club

Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the Month
Contact: Millie Adelsheim, millie@peapods.com

Unitots!

A group for families with kids through preschool age
Every Friday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Michelle Hill

Grandparent Unitots!

A group for grandparents and their grandkids
Every Monday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Sue Conner, 651-646-6667

Unity Bridge Club

First Friday of each month at members' homes • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Mary Barrett, 651-225-9708

Evergreen Quilt Group

Contact: Michelle Hill at 651-264-0884

Unity Book Club

Second Tuesday of the month • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

Networking Group

Every Monday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Wendy Frieze, wendyfrieze@mac.com

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Unity Church—Unitarian 2009 Annual Congregational Survey!

Fill out the 2009 Annual Survey online at www.unityunitarian.org.

Please let us know what you think about the church, its community, and how we live out our values.

Paper copies of the survey are also available at the Holly Avenue reception desk.

Your response counts!

Please complete the survey by Sunday, May 17. Thank you!

Inside this issue of *commUNITY*:

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Imran Ahmad: Unimagined Tour

Friday, May 1 • 7:30 p.m.

Imran Ahmad – London-based author of the highly acclaimed non-fiction book, *Unimagined: a Muslim boy meets the West*, and Board Member of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, is on a 12,000 mile, 40-city speaking tour of the United States – with re-humanization between America and the Muslim world being his key aim. He will speak at Unity Church on Friday, May 1, at 7:30 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

For more information visit www.unimagined.org.



Summer Worship Schedule Reminder!

Beginning Sunday, May 24, and continuing throughout the summer, Sunday services will be held each week at 10:00 a.m.

Arthur Foote Music Sunday

May 3, 2009 • Please see page 3.