

# Good Gnus

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Jonesboro, AR



Betty Stafford, editor

870-935-0007

[nestafford@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nestafford@sbcglobal.net)

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“Stand and silently watch the world go by— and it will.”

—Anonymous

## Service Calendar

The Fellowship meets at Temple Israel, 203 W. Oak Ave., Jonesboro. Services 10:00 a.m. Social time 10:45 a.m. Children's Religious Education & Adult Forum 11:00 a.m.

### January 3

No service as such, but we'll enjoy the start of 2010 by visiting over **BRUUNCH**. Orange/apple juice, coffee, and other edibles will be provided. If you care to bring a brunch dish, please do so. BrUUnch begins at 10 a.m.

### January 10

**Norman Stafford** will conduct the annual **IIIUuminations** service.

The Adult Forum will be our annual “Looking Back/Looking Forward.” What have we done well in the past year?? What do we need to do better?? What suggestions do you have for expansions, contractions, changes?? Let's listen to each other as we seek to provide and participate in a caring community.

This is **Peanut Butter Sunday**; please remember your neighbors in need with a non-perishable food item.

**Guest At Your Table** is due this day. Please be generous in your support of the work of the UU Service Committee.

### January 17

This Sunday will feature a service on **Civil Rights** in remembrance of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### January 24

A presentation on **Hinduism** is scheduled.

Third Sunday **Pot Luck** will shared today. Bring your tasty mid-winter dish to enjoy.

### January 31

**Lora Nix** will coordinate this year's **Fire Communion**, rescheduled from December 27<sup>th</sup>. This UU ritual permits us to “let go” of the past and start fresh for the new year. If you'd like to participate, you will be asked to write down on a slip of paper something you want to be rid of, and you will toss that slip into the fire and watch it go up in smoke.

And it's **Dessert Night** for Salvation Army residents. Please remember to bring a dessert and/or soda to be served at the Shelter.

## In the District

“In the Name of Love” is the theme of the SouthWest UU Women's Conference, February 26-28, 2010, in Dallas, TX. Keynote speaker will be Gini Courter, Moderator of the UUA. Hotel arrangements can be made at the Holiday Inn Select North, 800-972-2516. Give the 3-letter group code: SU1, or reserve online! The room rate is \$79.

The registration fee before 1/24/10 is \$165; afterward it's \$180. The fee includes 3 meals and unlimited non-alcoholic beverage service on Saturday, and breakfast on Sunday. Contact co-conveners Mary Overton and Kathy Calhoun at [conference@swuuw.org](mailto:conference@swuuw.org).



**The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Jonesboro, AR**, is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations and of the Southwest Unitarian Universalist Conference. The Fellowship is a Fair-Share contributor to both associations. The Fellowship covenants to affirm and promote the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## The Search for Truth and Meaning

As human beings, we are in dynamic tension between separateness and connection, between individualism and community, between autonomy and interdependence. The poles of this tension are represented by Principles 1 and 7. What is not generally recognized is that, as we move from the ends toward the center, paired Principles balance one another, expressing related concepts but reflecting a different point on the continuum from separateness to connection, a different resolution of the tension between the two poles. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Principles address the issue of justice; on the one hand a more individualistic perspective of justice, equity and compassion for each person, and on the other community, affirming peace, liberty, and justice for all. A similar, though less obvious, balance exists between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Principles, where acceptance of one another as individuals corresponds to the right of each person to speak and act publicly, in the context of community, according to one's conscience. The encouragement to individual spiritual growth corresponds to the affirmation of the democratic process as the means by

which the community itself can grow toward its greatest potential.

In the center, at the point where individualism and interdependence meet, is the "free and responsible search for truth and meaning." The structure of the Principles not only affirms the search for meaning as central to the human enterprise, but also suggests that the meaning we search for, the meaning of human existence itself, is to be found in the fact that we are at once separate individuals of worth and dignity and interdependent parts of an indivisible whole. A "free and responsible" search for truth and meaning does not mean a purely individual search because none of us is a purely individual being, but something we carry out both in the privacy of our own souls and in community with others.

Perhaps the most important word in this principle is *responsible*. Without it, we would be free to believe whatever we want to believe. Instead, we are required to believe what a free and responsible search leads us to believe, a much higher standard to attain.

As you think about your own lifelong search for truth and meaning, I invite you to contemplate some of the following questions:

1. What beliefs from your past have you given up? Were they damaging or comforting? Were they easy or hard to give up? What led you to give them up?
2. Can you name any beliefs you wish you had, but cannot bring yourself to? Why would you like to believe them? What prevents you?
3. The search for truth and meaning may be carried out in a number of ways—a study of scripture, scientific inquiry, an academic study of the words of prophetic women and men, discussion with others, experiences with nature, experiences in worship, meditation or other ways of seeking transcendent experiences. Which of these avenues have you included in your own search? Which would you like to pursue but have not? What is holding you back?
4. What makes truth and meaning ultimately significant? Why do we bother to search?
5. What role do the Principles and Purposes play in your search?

—from "The Principles Behind the Principles," by the Rev. Frances H. Manly, UU Church of Niagara Falls, NY



## The Right of Conscience

Asheville (NC) City Councilman Cecil Bothwell believes in ending the death penalty, conserving water, and reforming government, but he doesn't believe in God. His political opponents say that makes him unworthy to serve in office and say they have the North Carolina Constitution on their side. Bothwell's detractors are threatening to take the city to court for swearing him in, even though the state's antiquated requirement that office holders believe in God is unenforceable because it violates the U.S. constitution.

The question of whether God exists is not particularly interesting to him and is "certainly not relevant to public office," the 59-year-old said. Raised a Presbyterian, Bothwell began questioning Christian beliefs at a young age and considered himself an atheist by the time he was 20. He is a member of the UU Church of Asheville, and he still celebrates Christmas.

Bothwell ran this fall on a platform that included limiting the height of downtown buildings and saving trees in the city's core, views that appealed to voters in his liberal-leaning community. When Bothwell was sworn into office on December 7<sup>th</sup>, he used an alternative oath that does not require officials to swear on a Bible or reference "Almighty God." The provision affirming a belief in God was included when the North Carolina constitution was drafted in 1868 and was not revised when the state amended the document in 1971.

—Alysia Patterson, Associated Press, 12/12/09

*It has come to this...that the lover of art is one, and the lover of nature another, though true art is but the expression of our love of nature. It is monstrous when one cares but little about trees and much about Corinthian columns, and yet this is exceedingly common.*

—Henry David Thoreau, *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*

## Acceptance of One Another

Temple Shalom of Northwest Arkansas (Fayetteville) was dedicated with a blessing ceremony on December 12<sup>th</sup>. The Temple is located at 699 N. Sang Ave. Joel Freund is President.



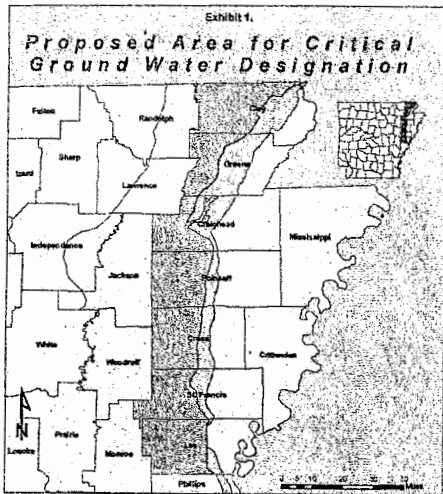
## The Use of the Democratic Process

History was made December 18<sup>th</sup>, when Washington, DC, mayor Adrian Fenty signed a bill in the sanctuary of All Souls Church, Unitarian, legalizing same-sex marriage in the District of Columbia. The law was approved by the DC City Council December 15. The Rev. Robert Hardies, senior minister at All Souls, is co-chair of DC Clergy United for Marriage Equality, one of the groups instrumental in securing the law's passage. When Fenty finished signing the document, a crowd of several hundred erupted in cheers. Around 100 members of All Souls were among the crowd, as well as many supporters of the UUA's Standing on the Side of Love public advocacy campaign. Hardies credited strong multi-faith religious support as a key factor in the law's passage. In an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*, Hardies wrote that "opponents of marriage equality would like us to believe that one cannot be both pro-God and pro-gay. Yet a coalition of nearly 200 DC clergy supported marriage equality precisely because of our commitment to God's inclusive love and justice."

The new law is not yet totally in place. All DC legislation is submitted to a 30-day review period by Congress. Opponents are filing for a referendum.

—from the UUWorld.org

## Our Interdependent Web



Enhanced financial incentives for conserving ground water in portions of six Northeast Arkansas counties will take effect in January, according to Randy Young, Executive Director of the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission. The ANRC, meeting in Eureka Springs on December 8<sup>th</sup>, approved designation of portions of those counties as a critical groundwater area.

The designation is designed to curb the dwindling supply of groundwater west of Crowley's Ridge in Craighead, Clay, Cross, Greene, Poinsett, and St. Francis counties. The designation does not mean a new set of regulations; it enhances incentives for conserving water and promotes information-sharing and education in the area. A com-

mission study indicates that groundwater levels in the Cache River Critical Groundwater Area are declining at a rate of more than one foot per year. Near record rainfall in 2009 has not been enough to eliminate the threat. The increase in water supplies will be noticeable but not significant. Water recovery takes a long time because water moves very slowly underground.

The program encourages farmers and business to rely less on ground water by recovering irrigation and rainfall runoff and using surface water impoundments. Those who implement certain conservation practices could claim a 50% tax credit rather than the normal 10% tax credit.

—Keith Inman, *Jonesboro Sun*, 12/12/09

## CLF

The Church of the Larger Fellowship is a UU church via mail, email, and internet. Its mission is to provide a UU ministry to isolated religious liberals. It has over 3,000 members all over the world.

When you buy merchandise through Amazon, consider going to the CLF homepage, [www.clfuu.org](http://www.clfuu.org), and click on the Amazon.com button on the right side. Whenever you buy merchandise —from books to banjos —going through the CLF site to Amazon raises some money through your purchase.

