

Good Gnus

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Jonesboro, AR



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“Well-apparel’d April on the heel/Of limping Winter treads.”

— William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

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.

April 4

The Fellowship’s Annual **Flower Communion** will be celebrated. Bring a flower or plant to share with others.

April 11

Lora Nix will present an Intergenerational Program.

This is **Peanut Butter Sunday**, when we collect non-perishable items for Helping Neighbors Food Pantry.

April 18

Dr. Jennifer Bouldin, Assistant Research Professor and Director of ASU’s Ecotoxicology Research Facility, will address concerns surrounding Earth Day.

Our **Third Sunday Pot Luck** will be shared. Enjoy this time of companionship and good eating.

April 25

Professor Robert Schichler, of ASU’s Department of English & Philosophy, will present “Damnation or Purgation: Grendel or the Grinch?”

This is **Dessert Night** for residents of the Salvation Army. Please bring your sweets to the Fellowship for Rick Bowen to take.



In Our Neighborhood

The ASU Gay Straight Alliance will present its annual **AIDS Benefit Drag Show** on Wednesday, April 7th, 7-10 pm, at the ASU Pavilion. The Drag Show will feature Keligh Klarke, Nadya Symone, Sydney Allure, Demonica Santangilo, Beverly Hills, and Nick the Magician.

Fellowship members will recall that Kalup Phillips, the president of the GSA, was our guest at a Sunday service and was warmly received. Kalup is also looking for organizations/ businesses/people in the area willing to work with the GSA. Kalup can be reached at kalup.phillips@smail.astate.edu.

To prepare for the Fellowship’s **Annual Meeting** on May 16th, the Nominating Committee’s report and the proposed budget 2010-2011 will be mailed to Fellowship members by April 16th. Watch for this important information in your mail.

Our Democratic Process

Arkansas’ Primary Election will be held Tuesday, May 18th. **April 18th** is the deadline for registering to vote and to inform the County Clerk’s office of a change in address. For more information, call the Clerk’s office at 933-4520.

Parenting Blog



Through April, *uuworld.org* is hosting a weekly conversation blog by Michelle Richards about **raising UU children**.

Michelle, a religious educator and mother of two, is author of *Tending the Flame: The Art of Raising UU Children*, from Skinner House Books. Each week, she will initiate a conversation about some of the unique challenges and joys of raising UU children. You are invited to join in.

The parenting blog is a first in several ways for the magazine. It is “comments enabled”; your comments on this blog are encouraged. To leave a comment, you’ll need to sign in — through Facebook, Twitter, OpenID, or by setting up your own profile on Disqus, an easy-to-use service that allows you to link your comments on many blogs and social-networking services. This blog also represents a new form of collaboration with Skinner House Books, the UUA imprint. The blog may be found at <http://blogs.uuworld.org/parenting>.

UUSC

Former Chair of the UUSC Board of Trustees, **Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz**, began duties on March 15th as interim president and CEO of the Service Committee while it conducts a search process to replace outgoing president Charlie Clements. Schulz is a prominent human-rights activist, who recently served as executive director of Amnesty International USA and is a former president of the UUA. Constance Kane, the Service Committee’s vice president and COO, will conduct day-to-day operations, while Schulz will focus primarily on providing public representation of UUSC.

The Search for Meaning

As we celebrate the arrival of spring, we are tempted to ask: Why winter? Why this prolonged period of Code Gray? Weren’t our eyes made for color, our skin for warmth? Why this cold, dreary season when birds abandon us and gardens stop producing their fruits and flowers? Why this time of high

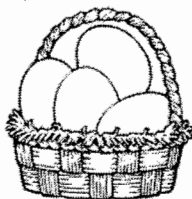
heating bills and sentence of home detention, with us getting fuzzy-brained before the tv? What have we done to deserve this? Surely someone has offended the gods.

Scientists propose some lame theory about the Earth going around the sun. But that can’t really be it. What’s the point of misery if there’s no one to blame? The Greek poet Homer offers a more appealing explanation. In the time of perpetual spring, Demeter, mother goddess of agriculture and fertility, loses her daughter Persephone when Hades, ruler of the Underworld, abducts her. After a wide search for her lost daughter, Demeter withdraws from Olympus in grief, thus causing universal famine. Faced with a catastrophe, Zeus intervenes. Daughter is released to mother, whose joy again releases earth’s fertility. But because Persephone has tasted the pomegranate of Hades, she must return to the underworld for part of each year. In her absence, her mourning mother weeps the world into winter.

Like all causation myths, this one explains why something came about. Variations on this origin of the changing seasons appear in other myths. Aphrodite retrieves her lover, the vegetation god Adonis, from the underworld, where he must spend one third of the year. In ancient Sumer, goddess Inanna descends into the underworld to meet with her sister. In Egypt, goddess Isis searches for her murdered-and-dismembered brother/husband Osiris. Her tears of mourning make the Nile rise, and thus the vegetation god Osiris comes alive again. It is not coincidental that Jews celebrate Passover —and emergence into a new life of freedom —and Christians the resurrection of their God in the spring.

Why winter? Because the growing season requires the fallow season. Because without gray, there is no joy in color. Because it is loss that makes us appreciate love. Because it is death that makes us value life. The wheel of the seasons turns. Life cycles into death, which cycles into life. Let us bless the journey.

—from Patricia Montley, *In Nature’s Honor: Myths and Rituals Celebrating the Earth* (Skinner House, 2005)



SWUUSI

The **Southwest UU Summer Institute**, a multi-generational family camp, will be held August 1-6, 2010, at the Western Hills Guest Ranch, Sequoyah State Park, OK (near Tahlequah). The Rev. Susan Smith, SWUUC District Executive, and Connie Goodbread, a Certified Religious Educator, will speak on the theme "Swimming in the Deep End." Sunset talks will be presented by the Rev. Aaron White of First Unitarian Church, Dallas. Artist-in-Residence Nick Page will offer workshops and performances for all. Brochures on SWUUSI are available at the Temple. Registration information will be available soon at www.swuuc.org/swuusi.



Guest At Your Table

Congratulations! Our Fellowship was able to raise **\$450** through the 2009-2010 Guest at Your Table program. Gifts of \$100 or more are matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, in Manhasset, NY. Gifts to GAYT are unrestricted, meaning that UUSC uses it where the need is greatest, for example:

- Purchase of chemicals and testing strips to monitor water quality in rivers in Guatemala by members of indigenous communities
- Materials for a Ugandan woman to make a homemade groundnut sheller to generate needed income for her family
- Publishing a manual for lobbying and grassroots campaigning for efficient public water service with UUSC's partner [Asia Pacific Research Network](#).

Our contributions to the work of the Service Committee promote human rights and social justice, making a real difference in the lives of people in the U.S. and around the world.

In the Denomination

First Parish in Cambridge (MA), a UU church near Harvard Square, has hired its first Latina minister in its nearly 400-year history. The congregation voted on March 28th, 135-3, to welcome the **Rev. Lilia Cuervo** as associate minister, a move church leaders see as a step toward meeting the congregation's goal of becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Of the church's 250 members, 95% are white. Cuervo, 72, is a native of Colombia, who in college aspired to be an astronomer and spent years working as a demographer in South America and the U.S. before entering the ministry. She speaks English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

First Parish was organized by Puritans in 1636. For years it was home to Harvard University's commencement exercises. Ralph Waldo Emerson gave his oration "The American Scholar" there in 1837. The congregation has intensified its efforts recently to be more welcoming to a variety of groups—the church has built an elevator to accommodate people with disabilities, supported gay marriage rights, and partnered with organizations serving the Haitian and Latino immigrant communities.

Cuervo is the daughter of a single mother. When Cuervo's own marriage ended, she found herself as a struggling single mother in Wisconsin. A UU friend invited Cuervo to her church, and Cuervo was thrilled. She believes her experience as an immigrant and an outsider to UUism informs her approach to her new job, including helping parishioners get to know each other better and supporting the church's community activism.

Haiti Update

As of March 19th, donations to the **UUSC/ UUA Haiti Relief Appeal** have risen to \$1,728,344.68. And on March 31st, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the United Nations' donor conference resulted in 100 countries pledging \$15 billion over the short and long term. It is seen as a test of whether such massive rebuilding programs can work.

Our Interdependent Web

What food choices can UUs make to build a planet that is both sustainable and just? The average supermarket these days presents thousands of choices. Some items are grown or produced in low-impact ways at a nearby farm, but chances are that many items contain ingredients whose production has negatively impacted the Earth and her people. As UUs we are committed to living in ways that respect the inherent worth and dignity of all people as well as the interdependent web of life. With so many choices, how can we find **ways to eat ethically**?

Several best-selling books are available about what to eat, and many UU congregations have been engaging in the current Congregational Study/Action issue "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice." For the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, this year on April 22nd, the UU Ministry for Earth is asking UUs to think about what they eat and the food choices available in their communities and find ways to celebrate the abundance of our planet in a just way.

Such a journey is inherently difficult because the factors that influence our relationship with food —culture, family, values, religion, resources, health —are personal and complicated. I know I could do many things to be a more responsible, ethical consumer, and yet I don't do them. That's primarily out of laziness; it's just too darn hard to be perfect.

But it's not about absolutes. It's about doing the best you're willing and able to do, and nurturing a will to keep doing better. I hope we can all, without engaging in too many guilt trips, encourage each other to do the best we can and to keep on doing better.

The following are goals toward attaining a sustainable food system:

1. Eat lower on the food chain (a positive impact on health, land use, water quality, and soil conservation).
2. Eat and act to promote good farming & fishing practices (i.e., reward those who do right).
3. Reduce food processing and packaging energy (by eating foods as close to their original fresh state as possible).
4. Reduce transportation energy (by eating locally produced meats, milk, grains, fruits, and vegetables whenever possible).
5. Reduce food waste (by buying sparingly and using leftovers).
6. Eat for social justice (by supporting fair trade initiatives that promote fair prices and sustainable production practices).

The way we eat also intersects with issues of trade, labor, neo-colonialism, and environmental justice. Let's work to eliminate the 3,044 pounds of food per second wasted in the U.S.

—Rev. Mark Hayes, UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College, PA

Non Sequitur

