



Unitarian Fellowship of Houston
A Welcoming Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Celebrating 50 Years

Fellowgram

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SUNDAY PROGRAMS

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION meets from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

10:00 a.m.— 10:50 a.m.: **Build Your Own Theology (BYOT)**. A discussion group to help participants search for and develop a personal theology.

10:00 a.m. —10:50 a.m.: **FOCUS GROUP**. More details on page five.

10:00 a.m.—10:50 a.m.: **ADULT FORUM**. Each Sunday we discuss a topic chosen by that week's leader. See page three for more details. Coordinator: Bert Golding

11 a.m. SERVICE

Child Care Provided

DECEMBER 24 — Christmas Eve 2008 at 7:00PM. On Christmas Eve, Unitarians gather to celebrate those same feelings of friendship, love for family, hopes for peace and celebration of life that bring people of faith together all over the world on this special night. We welcome people of all persuasions and faiths to come on Christmas Eve for a service of carols and stories and fellowship followed by the traditional cookies and punch. Coordinator: Katy Haberman

DECEMBER 28— The Burning Bowl. The end of the year is a traditional time to reflect, identify, and release the beliefs, resentments, and behaviors that are the roadblocks to our being able to have authentic, positive lives. The things we choose to put behind us will be written out and released symbolically as they are dropped into our burning bowl. We will then write a personal affirmation with our hopes, desires, and wishes for the coming year. We will take this affirmation with us to remind us of these promises to ourselves. Coordinator: Val Harrop

JANUARY 4— You Can't Roller Skate in a Buffalo Herd. Speaker: Katy Carpmán. In 1966, Roger Miller explained that "Ya can't roller skate in a buffalo herd, but you can be happy if you've a mind to" --How can we choose happiness? Is it really as simple as "Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it"? Let's start this New Year off on the right skate!

JANUARY 11— Ways to a Wonderful Marriage. About 50% of all marriages end up in divorce, many other couples stay together in unhappy marriages. We will explore what couples can do to "keep the love, excitement and romance" in their marriages. Coordinator: Jimmy Dunne

CHILDREN'S RE

If ever there were a doubt that Unitarian Universalism comes from a Christian tradition, a person would only have to consider the importance of Christmas, and the influence Unitarians and Universalists have played in making it the holiday we recognize today. In the first days of America, our Puritan traditions meant that Christmas was no big deal—the Bible gave no date for such an occasion and earlier traditions had led to too much revelry and sinning.



But we have been rebels a long time...

- In 1789, the Boston Universalists openly celebrated Christmas, even before their church officially opened!
- In 1823, Unitarian Clement Clarke Moore published *An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas*, better known as *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*.
- Charles Follen, a Unitarian minister, put up a Christmas tree in his 1832 Boston home, sharing his German traditions with his children and visitors.
- In 1843, British Unitarian Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, the story of Scrooge rediscovering joy and generosity.
- Unitarian Thomas Nast, a political cartoonist, published his first Santa Claus in the pages of Harper's Magazine in 1862, continuing the tradition for another twenty-four years, with seventy-six engravings.

- Nathaniel Currier, with his partner Ives, produced even more iconic pictures of Christmas in the nineteenth century
And the songs! Unitarian minister Edmund Hamilton Sears published *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* in 1849, Unitarian James Lord Pierpont wrote *Jingle Bells* in 1857, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reflected the difficulties of the Civil War in his 1864 poem *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, later set to music.

As I write this, our administrator Dorene is finishing the layout of the program for Christmas Eve. It will be a multigenerational time of songs and stories, joy and light.

Thanks to all who contributed to our holiday social action project—we reached our goal of 150 toothbrushes and 150 lip balms for The Turning Point Center. These offerings will go toward the annual hygiene bags the center makes for the homeless.

The Religious Education Committee meets the second Thursday of each month at 7pm—our next meeting will be January 8th! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to bring them to me or to Bob Wiener, RE Chair.

May your days be merry and bright,
Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education
ufhdre@comcast.net


Conscious Acts of Grace January 4th Workshop at Thoreau UU Congregation

It takes courage to enter into stories about dying. On **Sunday, January 4th**, Thoreau will host a workshop by **Liza Ely** on the subject of her recent book *Conscious Acts of Grace - A Collection of End-of-Life Stories*.

This will be an opportunity to share with others and to experience peace and support, the following topics are explored: Listening, Support, Dignity, Faith, Letting Go, Forgiveness, and then some. The workshop will be **from 1-4 PM** following the 11:15 AM Sunday worship service, at which Liza will offer a sermon on this topic. For further information and to sign-up for the workshop contact Joe Sullivan @ 281-342-8133 or jesull96@aol.com, and find directions to Thoreau at <http://www.tuuc.org>.

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•  **UU QUIZ** •

• What Unitarian minister edited the works of •

• Emily Dickinson? •

•

• *Answer on page 7.* •

• • • • •

Tuesday Book Club

Here are our upcoming books:

January 6, 2009 *THE PATRON SAINT OF LIARS* by Ann Patchett

February 3, 2009 *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* By Barbara Kingsolver. Novelist Barbara Kingsolver once wrote, "If we can't, as artists, improve on real life, we should put down our pencils and go bake bread." In *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, she manages to do both, applying her literary skills to a new food environment. In her seamless diary narrative, Kingsolver tells how she and her family relocated to southern Appalachia after suffering through years of drought in Arizona. The purpose of the move was simple: The Kingsolver's sought to "live in a place that could feed us" by growing their own food and living among a community of local organic growers.

March 3, 2009 *THE ALCHEMIST* by Paulo Coelho. This inspirational fable by Brazilian author and translator Coelho has been a runaway bestseller throughout Latin America and seems poised to

achieve the same prominence here. The charming tale of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who dreams of seeing the world, is compelling in its own right, but gains resonance through the many lessons Santiago learns during his adventures. He journeys from Spain to Morocco in search of worldly success, and eventually to Egypt, where a fateful encounter with an alchemist brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment. The story has the comic charm, dramatic tension and psychological intensity of a fairy tale, but it's full of specific wisdom as well, about becoming self-empowered, overcoming depression, and believing in dreams. The cumulative effect is like hearing a wonderful bedtime story from an inspirational psychiatrist. Comparisons to *The Little Prince* are appropriate; this is a sweetly exotic tale for young and old alike.

Our books should all be available at the library and in paperback at your favorite bookstore. You can reach me at ufhlibrary@comcast.net. Jan

The Fellowship Book Club meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Fellowship Library of the Unitarian Fellowship of Houston, 1504 Wirt Road and is open to all book lovers.



ADULT FORUM



We meet Sunday Mornings at 10 AM. Our topics are unannounced. Our discussions are often lively and intense, but remain polite and friendly.

December 7th Ø : US Health Care — A vigorous discussion about US health care as compared to that of other countries. Some, but not all, are ready for national health care.

◆◆ (Topic Presenter: Wayne Derrick; Number Present: 12)

December 14th Ø : Bias in the Media — There was a general discussion noting that there is often a bias in the point of view of the publisher. However, the worst offense is when factual data are ignored or deliberately distorted, which happens entirely too frequently. ◆◆ (Topic Presenter: John Haberman; Number Present: 12)

All are welcome.

December 2008

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Herb Rothschild, 11 am	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 JOY! June Godwin, 11 am	15	16	17	18	19	20
				OFFICE CLOSED		
21 HOPE! Peggy Tennyson, 11 am	22	23	24	25	26	27
	OFFICE CLOSED ALL WEEK					
28 Burning Bowl, 11 am	29	30	31			

Schedule of Events

Christmas Eve Program, Dec. 24th - 7-9 PM

Turning Point Luncheon, Sat. Dec. 20th, 10 am

Dorene is having minor surgery *ouch* on Dec. 18th - Office will be closed Dec. 18 through the 26th.

NEXT FELLOWGRAM DEADLINE — Tuesday, January 6, 2009

MONTHLY SCHEDULED EVENTS

Every First Tuesday: The Book Club, 7:30 pm (Library)

Every First Thursday: Ladies Luncheon, 1 pm (Hunan Chef on I-10, near Home Depot)

Every Second Thursday: RE Committee Meeting, 7:00 pm (Workroom)

Every Third Saturday: Volunteer to help serve lunch at Turning Point (sign-up sheet is located at the front desk or just ask Dodie)

Every Saturday: Church of God, 12 to 4:30 pm (extended hours on calendar)

Every Third Thursday: Men's Luncheon, 12:20 pm at Nam's

Every Wednesday, the SSSC (RS) Society, 6:15 pm (Sanctuary)

BIRTHDAY LIST

Mary Clark, Dec. 5th
John Lewis, Dec. 6th
Rory Jagdeo, Dec. 10th
Eiko McGregor, Dec. 12th
Jeanie Guido, Dec. 29th
Bill Walker, Dec. 31st

If your BD is not listed, please call the office and let Dorene know.



THE FOCUS GROUP

THE FOCUS GROUP MEETS AT 10 AM ON SUNDAYS.

Everyone is welcome. We discuss books chapter by chapter and preparation is not required. We are having lively and interesting discussions about Samuel Huntington's book The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order. On December 21st we will be discussing chapter 3, with chapters 4 and 5 following on the next two Sundays.

We meet in the library, and we hope to see you there!

Joys and Concerns Announcements

Joys and Concerns 12/07 – xxxx XXXXXXXXXXXX
lit a candle for the life of his mother's brother, Uncle **XXXXX**, who died last week. He is now aware that they are the oldest generation - a sobering thought. **XXXX XXXXXXXX** lit a candle of hope that her daughter, **XXXX** will get her new job in London. **XXX XxXXXXXX** rejoiced in having such a wonderful mother who just recently celebrated her 90th birthday! **XXX XXXXXXXXX** and spouse heard the fine Welch musical program at Emerson and encouraged the congregation to frequent their monthly programs. **XXXX XXXXXX** is proud that his daughter at 39 and widowed is raising five children on her own. He also marked the 100th birthday of Elliot Carter, the composer, who still maintains his wit and wits! **XXXXX XXXXXX** reports that his mother-in-law is now in a nursing home since her dementia has advanced. His mother is now leaving the hospital after recovering from a fall.

Joys and Concerns: 12/14 – XXXX XXXXXX was happy to report that she had a fine chat with her daughters and that she has bought a Honda Fit. She is sad to report that her brother is hospitalized with prostate cancer.

XXX XXXXXXXXX had two joys--seeing her grandson play in the band and her husband's 70th birthday.

XXX XXXXXXXX lit a candle of commiseration for all the ice storm sufferers.

XXXXX XXXXX lit candles for his granddaughter's 16th birthday and his own 81st!



Make "Herstory" with International Convocation of UU Women

Information Meeting for Local UU Volunteers

Imagine over 400 UU women lay leaders, clergy, and others from around the world (17 countries so far, including Romania, Kenya, Uganda, the Philippines, Japan, India) all gathering in Houston February 26 - March 1!

Representatives and volunteers are needed from all Houston area UU congregations to help with plans. Volunteers are needed to help with publicity, home hospitality, musical entertainment, exhibitor registration promotion, 'citizen photographers and journalists,' and more. Call 713-524-5608 for more information, and consider attending the November 23 meeting at Emerson UU, 1:30-3:30 in Room 206, or December 14 at First UU, 1:30-3:30 in Room 302. Check out the website at www.icuuw.com.

Zsófia Sztranyiczki from Romania writes, "What I would like women from other countries to know about my country is our way of life, our own mentality, things we are proud of, and the problems that we are facing as women, as citizens of Romania and as part of the EU." Keynote speaker Rev. Rebecca Sienes from the Philippines states, "Gathered together, women can improve lives. Educated together, women can produce important changes in society."

OUR PROGRAMS

December 7th – *Beginning Again (and again and again)*– Herb Rothschild

Herb Rothschild suggests that there are two categories of

commemoration and that people remember these categories differently. The first is the historical perspective: those events happening uniquely at a specific time and place. The second is the biological perspective and concentrates on those events which occur naturally such as the Solstice. Hebrews concentrated on the Exodus as the single defining event in their lives. Their identity was formed by it and it represents the beginning of their calendar whose ritual is Passover. Likewise, Christians with the birth of Jesus and Moslems with the Hajira or flight to Mecca in 622 A.D.

Conversion to a new religion is facilitated if it is built upon what

is already there--like the vital forces in the natural world. So

Jesus's birth and Solstice (celebrated by the pagans) both aim to suggest a possible re-beginning or renewal.

How can we, in these times, begin again when we cannot erase the past? The worst way is to try to forget it. Formerly, Americans were able to reinvent themselves by moving west when it seemed there was limitless opportunity. But in so doing they continued to recreate some of the horrors of the past such as participating in interfering wars. (Even currently we seem to have forgotten that no one gets out of Afghanistan a victor.)

There have been triumphs, of course, such as the unification of Europe and Americans' role in its beginning. Americans as a people have a certain dynamism that enables them to change direction. We don't have to remain stuck in our behaviors even if our biological selves seek stability and homeostasis. While we remain captive to our history this season asks us to transcend ourselves, change, begin again, and grow into our humanity.

October 19th – *Why We All Need a Theology of Joy*

(Lone Jensen) – June Godwin, Pulpiteer

This week we celebrated joy during the third Sunday of Advent with June Godwin pulpitering this sermon.

Lone Jensen asks: "Will there ever be, I wonder, a December when we do not need to sing hard and loud about peace and joy to the world in defiance of that same world embattled, embroiled and critically wounded in war after war. Truth is it is my soul that needs a theology of joy. The battle of this season is within me. With the war still going on in Iraq, with Bethlehem embattled, with poverty and injustice and more and more evidence of global warming, how can I, in good conscience, be joyful? Without becoming a hermit and moving to the state of denial where there is nothing but good news and no heart rendering images to be found anywhere. Sharon Welch's has an answer to my dilemma when she writes: "*The wellspring of decency is loving this life in which people die, people suffer, there are limits, and we make mistakes. The wellspring of moral action is not utopia, not a counterfactual vision, not a declaration that the world could and should be otherwise. Rather, it is a deep affirmation of the joy, richness, and blessing that the world is. The ground of challenging exploitation, injustice, and oppression is not a vision of how the world could be or will be in the future in the reign of God, or after the revolution. The ground of challenging injustice is gratitude, the heartfelt desire to honor the wonder of that which is; to cherish, to celebrate, to delight in the many gifts and joys of life.*" Welch's answer is a powerful message for any season. The answer is not to harden our hearts or allow them to become cold and frozen. Nor is the answer to focus upon all that is wrong with this world for there will always be plenty to rage righteously about. No by focusing upon the delights and the joys we get the spiritual and emotional energy we need to make that little corner of the world in which we live better."

In RE today we read "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Jensen calls Dickens our own UU theologian of joy. "This beloved story has become so very and overly familiar in endless variations and yet it endures. Maybe our inner battle these days are really between our inner Scrooges or Grinches and the call to joy. You or rather the possibility of joy, the promise or hope for it can be really scary. In *The Other Letter*

to Virginia, Richard M. Woodman tells us that the other name for Santa is love and that we must all beware of Scrooge who wears many masks. “His is the mask of cynicism. Dreams and expectations of better things, or a better you are foolish fancy. Reality is hard and unrelenting. Scrooge also wears the mask called despair. This mask mocks you with certainty that everything good will be worse. Its motto is the portals to Dante’s Inferno: “All hope abandon, ye who enter here.” Scrooge also wears a mirror. This mirror is a mask that tells you that you alone are of value. The whole world is your own reflection. The selfish solitary concern of your whole life is your own well-being. These words about Scrooge are a warning. Keep your eyes open. Polish up your stars and visions, but please keep a sharp eye open for Scrooge, that he you not become.-“

Jensen calls the “Good advice! May each of you find the surprise of you hidden behind the masks of these holy days! And for good measure: God bless us every one!”

Lone Jensen is the minister at Valley UU in Chandler, AZ.

Hope to see you on Christmas Eve!!!

Come one, Come all—and enjoy the spirit of fellowshiping, singing, and more singing!



On Wednesday, December 24th, 7 pm is our annual Christmas Eve Program - after the service there will be cookies and wassail.

♥♥♥ CARING ♥♥♥

The Caring Committee is an ad hoc group that gathers as needed to care for whomever, however. We hope you stay well with no serious upsets, but if you need a listener, or a friend, please call us... The Caring Committee: Katy Haberman, 713.462.0650. UFH Cares.

UU Quiz Answer: Thomas Wentworth Higginson (December 22 1823 – May 9, 1911) “...Higginson was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After graduating from Harvard Divinity School, he served as a Unitarian minister in Newburyport, Massachusetts, from 1847 to 1850, before becoming an independent lecturer and political activist. He served the Free Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, from 1852 to 1858, but left there to devote himself full-time to the abolition of slavery. A political and theological radical, Higginson led a raid on the Boston Court House to free fugitive slave Anthony Burns and became a supporter of John Brown. He was appointed commander of a regiment of freed slaves in South Carolina and was wounded in battle. After he was discharged, Higginson became an influential literary critic and popular lecturer. He then took up the cause of women’s rights. Higginson edited the works of Emily Dickinson, and his notes of the songs and stories told by his African-American Civil War troops formed the foundation of African-American studies as a scholarly field.” (*This Day in Unitarian Universalist History*, Frank Schulman)

More on this important Unitarian can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Wentworth_Higginson

Other December birthdays:

Thomas Starr King 12/17 Unitarian and Universalist Minister

Clara Barton 12/25 Founder of the American Red Cross



Spaghetti Luncheon - Fundraiser Sunday, January 11th after the service

This fundraiser is for Jun Ji Wiener’s Eagle Scout Project - He will be building a deck in front of our storage building, making it an easier access in & out of the building.

The lunch, spaghetti (meat balls on the side), salad and dessert, will only cost \$10 per person.

Please mark your calendars!!



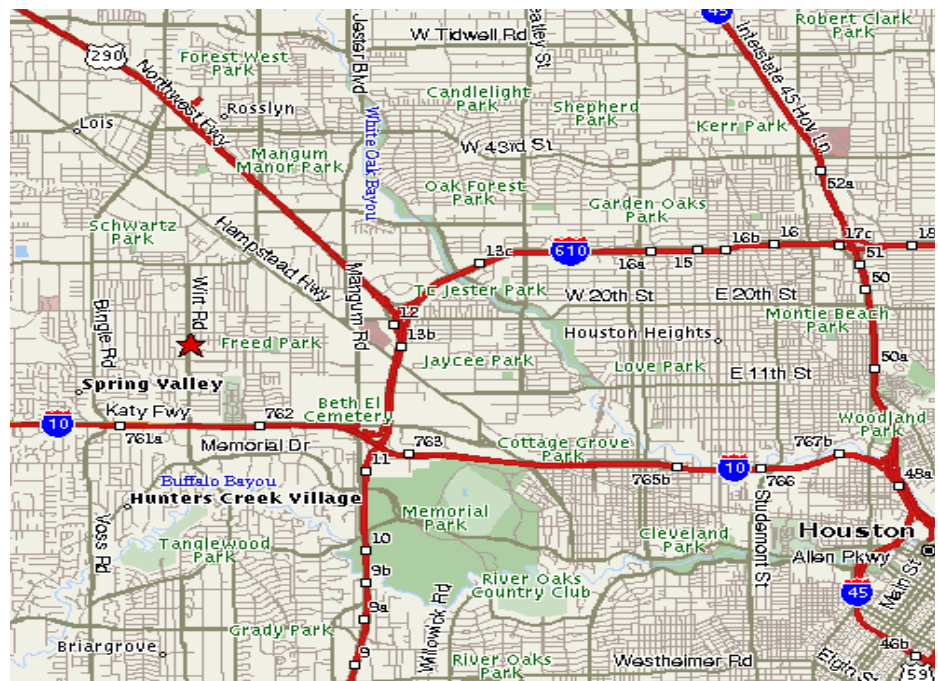
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See us on our Website!
www.ufoh.org

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We seek to provide an atmosphere of warm companionship and respect for free and inquiring minds, searching together for finer religious, ethical, and social truths, and we work to apply the best we know in our lives, in the lives of our children, and in the service of our fellow humans.



A bunch of Agnostics, Atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Humanists, Jews, Muslims, Pagans, Quakers, Skeptics, spiritual non-religious seekers, and other random people all go to church together on Sunday....And you've been missing out.