



FELLOWGRAM

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston

Volume 52, Issue 25

December 20, 2010

SUNDAY PROGRAMS

DECEMBER 24 — Christmas Eve Program, 7 PM. Katy Haberman

DECEMBER 26 — The Church of Pinball. David Garver

Spirituality happens where you find it. In a lighthearted tour through the lyrics from The Who's late 1960's rock opera "Tommy" we'll discover how playing pinball can help you find out some new truths about yourself and maybe the universe. Fringed jackets and beaded headbands not required.

JANUARY 2 — A New Year is a New Start -- what pieces of 2010 do you need to leave behind? What gifts would you like to send out into the world? Our first service of 2011 will incorporate both a burning bowl ritual -- and we will thank our outgoing board for their service while welcoming in the new officers and trustees!

JANUARY 9 — Beauty of the Buffet. Elizabeth Christian

When was the last time you were at a restaurant and ordered straight from the menu with no modifications or substitutions? And do you restrict your dining to *only* Mexican cuisine or *only* Italian cuisine? In all likelihood, no. However, if dining out were treated as mainstream religion is, one established menu card is all any of us would have. As Unitarian Universalists, we are free to explore various religious "menus" and find that which holds truth and wisdom for us rather than being restricted to a single line of thought and tradition. Join us for an exploration of the beauty of the religious buffet.

JANUARY 16 — The Spiritual Disciplines. Rev. John Pepper

If you want to learn to play the piano, you have to be disciplined with your practice. Similarly, down through the centuries religious practitioners have devised many creative ways to help in the attempt to connect with the divine, whatever they believe that to be. Please join me as I share a little about the different spiritual disciplines available to you. One might be just right for you. Namaste!

Come "Early" for Our 10 am-10:50 am offerings!

Children's Religious Education *RE wing. Details on page 2.*

ADULT FORUM *Analyzing Our Times—Workroom. Details on page 3.*

FOCUS GROUP *Book discussion group—Library. Details on page 5.*



Happy Holidays!

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FAITH DEVELOPEMENT



Most babies scream when they first visit Santa, that big guy with the beard and the big laugh and the fuzzy pants.

But not my niece. See, my father has been playing Father Christmas for the past fifteen years – he shares gifts, hearty laughs and hugs at a Milwaukee community center. (In the beginning he sprayed his beard white – that’s no longer necessary.)

After Thanksgiving dinner he smiled at my sister, a twinkle in his eye. Did she think her baby daughter would like her picture taken with Santa? He dashed upstairs and came back minutes later in full costume.

Little Miss Belle happily went to him – after all, this was the guy who sits on the floor and plays with her, who lets her eat entire bananas! No fear there.

Part of beloved community lies in creating these safe places and occasions – where all of us can learn about the world, ask our big questions, and offer up our rawest answers. This is true from our smallest babies to our brawniest helpers to our most genteel elders. Lifelong faith development has long been cherished in our tradition.

Our children have been using the thoughts of revolutionary religious educator Sophia Fahs through the start of the holiday season, incorporating nature and simple joys in our lessons. We have taken nature walks, collected fallen treasures, and had some surprising talks about how the universe works. We have also had sweet surprises – Miss Val brought us jelly donuts to celebrate Hanukkah’s miracle of the oil and we have been joined by several new friends!

In the upcoming weeks, plans for our children and youth look like this:

December 19th – Making holiday gifts and Christmas Eve cookies with Miss Patricia

December 24th – Multigenerational Christmas Eve service (7pm) with songs and joy!

December 26th - Making Gwiazdy (Polish snowflakes) and wiggling our waggles away

January 2nd - A time for thinking over the past year and making goals for 2011.

The Religious Education Committee meets next on Thursday, January 6th at 7pm in the workroom. We always welcome new input and energy!

And my holiday blessing for you-

May you have a sweet moment where you feel that someone is truly, wholly listening.

May your only tummyaches be from laughing too hard and too long (it builds abs!)

May you be surprised by moments of silent peace.

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education
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UU QUIZ

What Universalist was a signer of the Declaration of Independence?

Answer on page 7



THE BOOK CLUB

January 4, 2011, "Dreamers of the Day" by Maria Doria Russell.

February 1, 2011, "Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea" by Barbara Demick

A fascinating and deeply personal look at the lives of six defectors from the repressive totalitarian regime of the Republic of North Korea, in which Demick, an *L.A. Times* staffer and former Seoul bureau chief, draws out details of daily life that would not otherwise be known to Western eyes because of the near-complete media censorship north of the arbitrary border drawn after Japan's surrender ending WWII. As she reveals, ordinary life in North Korea by the 1990s became a parade of horrors, where famine killed millions, manufacturing and trade virtually ceased, salaries went unpaid, medical care failed, and people became accustomed to stepping over dead bodies lying in the streets. Her terrifying depiction of North Korea from the night sky, where the entire area is blacked out from failure of the electrical grid, contrasts vividly with the propaganda on the ground below urging the country's worker-citizens to believe that they are the envy of the world. Thorough interviews recall the tremendous difficulty of daily life under the regime, as these six characters reveal the emotional and cultural turmoil that finally caused each to make the dangerous

choice to leave. As Demick weaves their stories together with the hidden history of the country's descent into chaos, she skillfully re-creates these captivating and moving personal journeys.

March 1, 2011, "Remarkable Creatures" by Tracy Chevalier (320 pp). On the windswept, fossil-strewn beaches of the English coast, poor and uneducated Mary Anning learns that she has a unique gift: "the eye" to spot fossils no one else can see. When she uncovers an unusual fossilized skeleton in the cliffs near her home, she sets the religious community on edge, the townspeople to gossip, and the scientific world alight. After enduring bitter cold, thunderstorms, and landslips, her challenges only grow when she falls in love with an impossible man. Mary soon finds an unlikely champion in prickly Elizabeth Philpot, a middle-class spinster who shares her passion for scouring the beaches. Their relationship strikes a delicate balance between fierce loyalty, mutual appreciation, and barely suppressed envy, but ultimately turns out to be their greatest asset.

The Fellowship Book Club meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm 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 5th: Ø Extending the Bush Tax Cuts. Which we all agreed should only be done for those people making \$120K or less. No one wanted the tax cuts extended for the wealthy. Also discussed, the Capital Gains tax, which some folks wanted raised but others not. Presenter: Judy Emerson; 14 present

December 12th: Ø Social Security and Medicare. We reviewed how Roosevelt originally intended Social Security to be designed versus how it operates today. We discussed the accounting and funding for the trust funds, and "sort of" came to the conclusion the trust funds were no more funded than battleships are. We took a vote on who was more trusted - the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government or God. It was a tie! Presenter: Don Levit; 8 present

December 19th: Ø Don't Ask, Don't Tell vote. Great discussion! Most were happy that this is a giant step for Gay Rights and Human Rights. Presenter: Jimmy Dunne; 10 present

All are Welcome!



January 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Board Mem- bers, 11am	3	4 Book Club, 7:30pm Fellowgram Deadline	5	6	7 Blue Notes, 7pm	8 Reception, 6- 9pm
9 Elizabeth Christian, 11am	10 Circle of Friends, 7-9pm	11	12	13	14 Blue Notes, 7pm	15 Girls Rock Concert, 5-10pm
16 John Pep- per, 11am Board Meeting	17	18 Fellowgram Deadline	19	20	21 Blue Notes, 7pm	22
23 Katy Carp- man, 11am	24	25	26	27 Blue Notes, 7pm	28 Price Recital, 6-8pm	29
30 Laura Em- erson, 11am	31 Circle of Friends, 7-9pm		Recital: Jan. 9th 1-4pm Recital, Jan. 16th 2-5pm		Recital, Jan. 23rd 1:45-4:45pm	

CHRISTMAS EVE PROGRAM— DECEMBER 24TH, 7 PM. On Christmas Eve we gather to celebrate a uniquely Unitarian Christmas at the Fellowship. People of all faiths, adults and children gather to sing and share the warm feelings of the season. Part of the program this year will be a celebration of families, and for this we will need photos of as many of the Fellowship families--old and new; mother and child, mother and dog or cat, Mom, Dad and kids or whatever. Please scan in the photos that you would like to share and email them to the Fellowship at ufhouston@comcast.net, or bring them in to the Fellowship next Sunday and we will scan them in and return the photos to you. Thank you so much for your participation. *Please bring some cookies to share. If you cannot bring cookies, come anyway; there will be plenty for all, and there'll even be some punch to wash them down.*



FOCUS GROUP

We meet each Sunday at 10:00 am in the Library. We will focus on Sam Harris new book The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Help Determine Human Values starting on Sunday 5th. It is available via the 'internet, local book stores, and libraries. You are invited to join us--even if you have not had a chance to read/obtain the book. Our discussions are open and lively.

JOYS & CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Joys and Concerns: 12/05 – Tim McGregor and Eiko had the thrill of going to hear Salman Rushdie when he was in town. Harley hopes that his dad will soon get a job and is glad that his mom has one. Jan LaRocque's daughter is having a rough time. Her daughter, Carol, was managing a horticultural therapy program in Denver that has been cut, and when the Louisville Orchestra recently declared bankruptcy, it affected her sister's job. John Lewis's father-in-law remarried and the new family has 13 children. One of them is a son who recently adopted 4 kids and came to the celebration with his partner. John was very happy that everyone was accepting and welcoming. Judy Emerson's son called from Oahu where he is enjoying dry land. Her daughter with her 4 children is going to visit him after Christmas. This will be a welcome break since she will be taking the 6 courses she needs to graduate in June along with coaching volleyball! Bob Wiener and his wife, Janet, will be journeying to Georgia next weekend to celebrate the graduation of their oldest son, Jen Run. Katy Haberman's art class had a wonderful party last night. She had a blast but was saddened to learn that one of her friends is battling stage 3 sarcoma. Jimmy Dunne and wife, Karen, visited the South Texas Nuclear Project which provides clean fuel and will be undergoing an expansion which will create some new jobs.

Joys and Concerns: 12/12 – Joey Carpmann lit a candle of joy that they will be leaving for their grandparents in Wisconsin next week. Gloria (GG) Gunn has only one semester left before graduation and she is celebrating being the first in her family to graduate from college. Guest, Anissa, let us know that next week is the week of Yule for pagans, and she hopes to be at the celebration in Alvin. Sue Needle is concerned for her native country, South Korea, and she hopes that the leadership will be looking for ways of conciliation to achieve peace.

(Continued on page 9)

MONTHLY SCHEDULED EVENTS

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

Every First Thursday: Ladies Luncheon, 1 pm at Olive Garden on I-10

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

Every Second Sunday: Offertory goes to benefit lunch for Turning Point

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

Every Second Saturday: Bible Book Study, 12:30-2:00 pm (Library)

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

Every Third Thursday: Men's Luncheon, 1:00 pm (Yao's)

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



OUR PROGRAMS

December 5th – Nourishing the Soul – Patti Henry

According to Joseph Campbell, “People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life...I think that what we’re really seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experience on the purely physical plane will resonate within our innermost being and reality, so that we can actually feel the rapture of being alive.” Maybe we don’t even recognize our spiritual hunger pains anymore, but I believe it’s possible to get back in tune with those signals again. We have a plan about getting our bodies fed since our bodies clearly tell us when they need nourishment. But we have signals for when we need spiritual nourishment. I’m not happy, I’m lonely, I’m sad, I’m discouraged, I’m depressed, I’m isolated, I’m broke, I’m broken, I need a hug, I feel empty. We need to deliberately decide to nourish our souls. Everyday!

We need to work on **connecting** seven days a week.

We need to use **introspection** to examine our lives and know our own values and beliefs.

And we need to **care**.

For spiritual nourishment we can connect to a higher power. This is simply the realization that we are not in charge of the world. There are things that are bigger than us, and we don’t have to get everything right. We just have to make decisions based on our values and beliefs. Life gets much simpler. We can connect to the interdependent web of life and walk with Albert Einstein in awe of this amazing universe.

December 12th — The Battle for Christmas. Joanna Fontaine Crawford

Christmas is a holiday that celebrates our Unitarian Universalist images, our UU theology, and our UU values. Make no mistake. Christmas is our holiday, and we should feel free to revel in it.

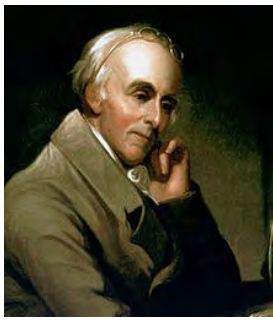
Such popular hymns as "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear", "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" and "Do You Hear What I Hear?" were all Unitarian reactions to war, and stories of choosing hope over despair. And even Jingle Bells was written by James Pierpont, a Unitarian church music director who may have been something of a rogue.



Unitarians and Universalists framed the values of family, love, and charity and made them a part of Christmas, from Thomas Nast's illustrations of Santa Claus, Clement Moore's The Night Before Christmas, and the Dickens classic "The Christmas Carol." Even the popularization of Christmas trees in America was the work of Unitarians!

Christmas is what it is ... because of Unitarian Universalist images, theology, and values. War on Christmas? Pah. It was fought centuries ago. p.s. We won. Let’s celebrate!

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UU Quiz Answer: Benjamin Rush (December 24, 1745 – April 19, 1813) “was born near Philadelphia. He was appointed physician general of the middle department of the army during the Revolutionary War but resigned shortly thereafter over policy and personal differences with George Washington. A signer of the Declaration of Independence, Rush was tireless in his patriotism. In 1784 he became one of the founders of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery. He was greatly admired for his work in medical reform, education, and humanitarian services, especially during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, and he held advanced views on mental disorders. Rush also served as treasurer of the U.S. Mint. A devout Universalist, he attended the Universalist Convention in 1790, where he supported progressive reforms such as opposition to capital punishment...” (*This Day in Unitarian Universalist History*, Frank Schul-

man).

More Rush can be found at:

<http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/benjaminrush.html>

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

http://etcweb.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/rush_benjamin.html

Other December birthdays:

Mary Ashton Rice Livermore

12/19 Abolitionist, suffragist, social activist

Isaac Newton

12/25 Mathematician and Physicist, inventor of calculus

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Who are the Guests at Our Table?

Maral is a teacher in Afghanistan. When she participated in the Teacher Training for Human Rights, she learned how to incorporate human rights into her lessons, focusing especially on the rights of women and girls. Like a growing number of teachers across the country, Maral helps her students better understand their individual human rights. She also trains other teachers to include those rights in their curriculum, further helping girls overcome challenges to complete their educations.



Learn more about how the Teacher Training for Human Rights is benefiting teachers and children in Afghanistan in [Stories of Hope](#).

Go deeper and read more about UUSC's work with program partners in [Afghanistan and around the world](#) through our Civil Liberties program.

Again, this year, the congregation at Shelter Rock will match all donations of \$100 or more!



REGISTER NOW!

March 4 thru 6, 2011
Southwest UU Women's Conference
Holiday Inn Select 2645 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX
(same location as 2010)

" Generation NEXXT "

Keynote Speaker
Rev. Tamara Lebak
Associate Minister

[All Souls Unitarian Church](#), Tulsa, OK



For more information please contact co-conveners
Carol Currie & Joy Hayes conference@swuuw.org



Rev. Tamara Lebak is an independent consultant, executive coach and ordained Unitarian Universalist Minister with change management experience that focuses on maneuvering between multiple levels of system from the personal to the global. In her ministry, coaching, as well as her consulting, Tamara integrates her training in Gestalt Organization and Systems Development, conflict management, appreciative inquiry, and community organizing in diverse racial and economic settings. Tamara has worked with numerous educational, religious, community and non-profit institutions including the National Park Service and the World Bank. In 2008 Tamara co-authored *Reverend X: How Generation X Ministers are Shaping Unitarian Universalism* with

Rev. Bret Lortie. Tamara currently serves as Associate Minister at All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

*You also won't want to miss musical guests **BIG BAD GINA!***

With their unique blend of harmony, and their eclectic musical selections, Big Bad Gina has hit the music scene with a bang, often bringing down the house with their laid-back, yet powerfully energetic performances. Big Bad Gina gives audiences what they want – jazz, folk, hard rock with a soft twist, reggae, bluegrass and funk. Their performances are toe-tapping and inspiring, leaving audiences dancing in the aisles and asking for more.





NEW YEAR'S EVE

The New Year couldn't come without a New Year's Eve party at the Habermans.



Bring food to share and your favorite libation, your musical instrument and your singing talent. Bring your family and your friends, John and Katy will provide the house and a warm welcome, (doors opening at 8:00) and we'll ring in the New Year both when the New York ball drops there, and again when the year ends in Houston.

(Continued from page 5)

Joys and Concerns: 12/19 - Bob Wiener was proud to welcome son Jun Ren after his graduation from Berry College. Cheryl Feuerstein and son, Harley, lit candles for a neighbor's son facing surgery, a family facing Protective Services and her hope that her husband will be home for Christmas. Eric Huckabay was grieved to light a candle for his father who died suddenly, recently. June Godwin remembered her father on his birthday, today. Melissa McEver shared her concern for Eric's family and hopes for their healing. Jimmy Dunne was elated that the Senate repealed "Don't Ask Don't Tell" and restored equality to the armed forces.

(Continued from page 6)

December 19th — The First Christmas. Rev. John Pepper

Of interest is the historical background preceding the first accounts of Jesus' birth in the books of Matthew and Luke. Jews had for 500 years been oppressed by one conqueror or another including Babylonians, Phoenicians and Romans. The time had arrived (after the temple destruction in 70 A.D.) for the Jews to have a new voice. Early Christians had no concept of original sin, there was no trinity (only one God) and no such concept in the "just war". Even Salvation theology didn't exist.

All of that changed in the 4th century A.D. Matthew and Luke were written for specific audiences - Matthew for Jews, and Luke for Gentiles. It was essential that Jesus replace Caesar, (who claimed God-like genealogy) with a leader who was even more exalted. Matthew and Luke provided Jesus with credentials as the son of God. This ancient genealogy was not about fact but about advertising.

Birth stories were lovely tales to introduce the real life of Jesus and his message of peace through justice, not peace through victory of war.

His fame rested on his espousal of the poor and women. While the timing of his birth is unknown its message of hope and bringing light are consistent with a birth in poverty and darkness and bringing enlightenment. The Roman Birthday of the Sun on December 25th became the Birthday of the Son - Emmanuel, the Messiah, the Light of the World.

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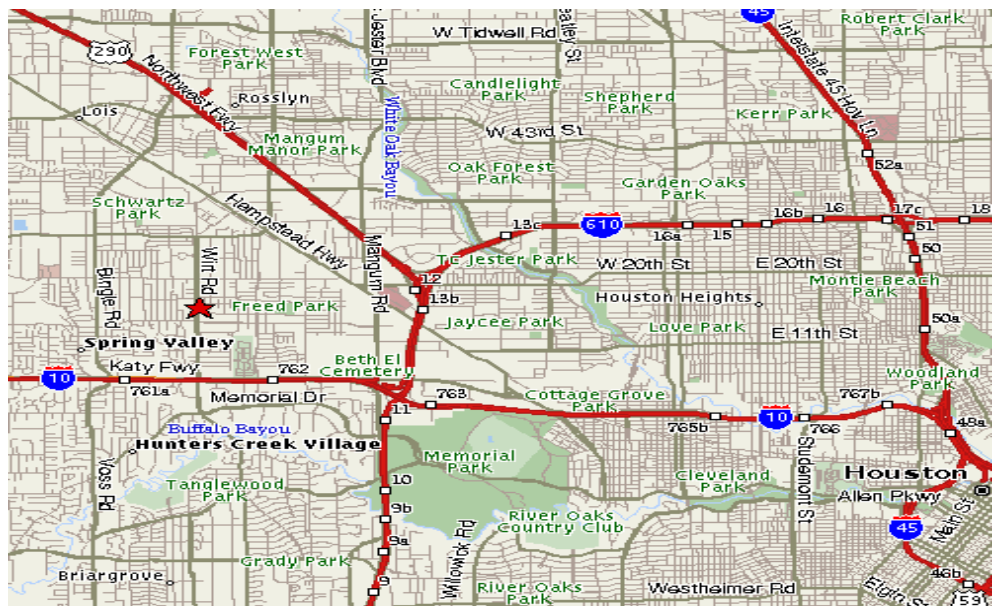
GO GREEN! SAVE A TREE! If you wish to receive the *Fellowgram* by email or do not want to receive it at all, please send us a message or call and let us know.

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Unitarian Fellowship of Houston

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.