



The Monthly Newsletter for
The First Unitarian Church of Providence
Corner of Benefit and Benevolent Streets
Providence, Rhode Island

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 9

Installation of Rev. James Ishmael Ford
Sunday, February 8

All-Parish Supper
Friday, February 13, 2009

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S T A F F

- Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
- Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
- Frederick Jodry, Music Director
- Rev. Christana Wille McKnight,
Community Minister
- Posey Kooris, Administrator
- Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant
- Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator
- Jaime Durango, Building Manager
- Paul Webber, Evening Security
- Tadesse Tsega, Sunday Building Manager

N E W S L E T T E R

- Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
- Susan Fisher, Editor
- Nancy Green, Contributing Editor
- Carol Pentleton, Designer

Services in February

February 1

The Wholly Family – An Intergenerational Service

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Cathy Seggel, DRE, and families

The family is acknowledged to be the central social organization within our society. By sharing our diverse family stories we get to know one another and our differences become opening doors to friendship and respect. Come celebrate some of the “wholly” families in this congregation.

Today’s special collection will be donated to Crossroads RI.

Nursery and Toddler rooms are open.

February 8

I and Thou

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Today is Martin Buber’s birthday. James thinks his little book *I and Thou* contains some of the most important lessons we can learn as religious liberals. And he feels it an appropriate subject to consider on the morning before he is installed as the church’s seventeenth minister.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

Installation of James Ishmael Ford as our Seventeenth Minister

3:00p

Come to this historic event in the life of our congregation. The Reverend Dr. Laurel Hallman, senior minister of the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, and candidate for the presidency of the Unitarian Universalist Association, will preach. Many special guests, amazing music, and good fellowship will mark this time. Please plan on staying for the reception that follows.

Child care available for 3rd grade and younger. Advance sign-up preferred through the church office.

February 15

Valentine’s Arrows

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

We will consider the nature of relationship and particularly how we bring ourselves to each other to create communities of meaning and purpose.

We will also formally induct our new Lay Ministry team.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

February 22

Churning the Ocean

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

James will reflect on what Hinduism and particularly the Hindu Shivaite tradition might have to say to contemporary Unitarian Universalists.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.



DEACONS' COPNER

Deacons Calling!

The Deacons will be phoning during their annual Congregational Calling in January and February. This is a simple check-in to see how you and your family are doing and to give you an opportunity to raise questions or make comments about our church community.

The Dining with the Deacons fundraiser auctioned off last fall has been postponed from January to March. There are still some seats available at \$50 each, so if you would like to join our convivial gang, speak to Janet Downing Taylor.

- Paul Brule and Mary Kollar, *Senior Deacons*
- Richard Boober, Nancy Weiss Fried,
- Robert O. Jones, Janet Downing Taylor,
- Mary El Finger, Judy Bowden,
- David Bridgehouse, Russell Gifford

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Monday, February 2

11:00a Program: Self Publishing and Independent Presses

A round table discussion by four church members on the changing world of book publishing, including authors Doris Bridgehouse and Barbara Slater, and editor/publisher Martha Manno.

12:00p Catered luncheon (cost: \$9 or bring a sandwich)

WHEEL OF LIFE

Deepest condolences to Bob Cox and his family on the death of Bob's wife Chris on December 21, 2008.

Healing thoughts to Larry Bush for a continued recovery after a hip replacement.

Congratulations to Marida Hollos and Jim Anderson on their marriage on December 22, 2008.

UU Trivia: Kings
To date, there has been only one Unitarian King, Sigismund of Transylvania.



MONKEY MIND

There is a large tablet of green slate with a white border of Vermont marble placed at the north column of our church's vestibule. Perhaps you've stopped and looked at it once or twice. It includes the names of all the senior ministers called to service among this congregation, save my immediate predecessor Don Cameron and myself. I look forward to the day when I see those names carved there, as well.

It is quite a list, including some really amazing people as well as a rogue or two. I think of them and I am humbled to find I am about to be formally and officially enrolled among their number. Now you have already charged a committee to present a candidate for this job, which I'm so delighted was me. And you have looked at me and decided to endorse that recommendation by my election last spring. Now, hopefully without too much buyer's remorse, we move to that final event – the installation.

Which, I hope you've noted in your calendar, is set for three o'clock in the afternoon on February the 8th.

Our congregation was gathered in 1720, but it was eight years later that we called the Reverend Josiah Cotton to toil among us. He was a graduate of Harvard College, and his ordination was the first of our congregational order to be performed in this state. From the beginning of his tenure, our church's propensity toward the liberal, if not radical, end of the theological spectrum was apparent. Critics moved quickly from noticing he was "not... Evangelic enough" to the assertion that he in fact preached "damnable good works." The third minister of our church was the Reverend Doctor Enos Hitchcock, who had served as a chaplain in the Revolutionary army and was a close associate of General Washington. Our fourth minister the Reverend Henry Edes and our deacons attended the ordination of Henry Ware in Baltimore, which is considered one of the signal moments in the establishment of the emergent Unitarian movement. The list continues. In this century the Reverend Robert Schacht and his successor the Reverend Thomas Ahlburn were ornaments not only in this community but also within the city and within our association.

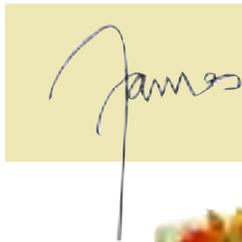
Big shoes to fit.

And, I know I can only succeed in my desire to live up to the ministries of these amazing people through a heartfelt collaboration with all of you.

Fortunately, I feel that sense of collaboration every day. On my side, I'm so pleased, informed, sometimes challenged, and always fulfilled by my encounters with our leaders and with our members.

This is an amazing community. Thank you for making me a part of it.

I look forward to seeing you at many different times, although I hope particularly for this installation service.



Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday,
9:00a-12:00p Appointments are recommended.
min@firstunitarianprov.org



SPIRITUAL
PATHWAYS

We Are The Water

My work with the Religious Education Committee for Children and Youth has reached a place in the yearly cycle where we envision our hopes and dreams for the Spiritual Pathways program. It is also the time in our seasonal rotation where the cold and dark bring a primal call to go within. I have been advised that now is a fine time to take a deep breath and take stock. One family in our congregation actually declines all invitations during one winter month per year, Turtle Month. Many of us resist the pause, rushing to the next place.

For one brief RE meeting, we remembered to look at the “bigger picture.” First, we named what we hold meaningful in our own spirituality. Next, members discerned what they wanted to share with our children and youth. Then, and only after tapping into our own soul-work, did we think very carefully about how those priorities might become real in a comprehensive congregational curriculum for UU faith development. This awesome and potentially overwhelming responsibility becomes inspirational and nurturing when we embrace it, each in our own way, together.

A little story that was read at the aforementioned committee session:

Once there were a big wave and a little wave in the middle of the ocean. The big wave was crying and the little wave asked why. “If you could see what I can see, you’d know that ahead of us are rocks. We’re going to crash on the rocks and die.”

The little wave offered to teach the big wave something that would remove his fear. First, the big wave asked if it would cost anything, or if he would be required to chant a bunch of mantras or stand on his head, but the little wave said, no, and that in fact it was only six words.

So, the big wave said, “Sure, teach me.”

And the little wave said, “You’re not a wave, you’re water.”

Take good care,

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
401.421.7970
dre@firstunitarianprov.org
Office Hours: Monday–Friday and Sunday

UU Trivia: Presidents

According to the Harry S Truman Library, there have been four Unitarian Presidents of the United States, making our denomination the most over-represented group among U.S. Presidents, about 9% of that group, while the combined proportion of Unitarian Universalists in the United States is about 0.2%.

Who were they?

- ❖ John Adams
- ❖ John Quincy Adams
- ❖ Millard Fillmore
- ❖ William Howard Taft

If Thomas Jefferson, who expressed Unitarian leanings although he never belonged to a Unitarian church, were counted, the proportion of Unitarian Presidents would rise to 11%.

NEWS AND NOTES

Crossroads RI Sandwich Brigade at First U

Each year, our Sunday school participates in the Crossroads RI Sandwich Brigade by preparing 200 sandwiches every Sunday in February. Crossroads RI assists homeless and disconnected people on their journey toward a better quality of life through the provision of essential life services, advocacy, and referral.

Our junior and senior high youth groups, and other youth and young adults will be making the sandwiches this year. Parents help purchase the supplies, which are paid for by our social justice ministry. A leader from Crossroads will speak with the 7th and 8th grade class on February 8.

Youth Caucus at GA

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Its programming includes open business meetings, workshops, worship services, a large exhibit hall with displays from congregations, departments of the UUA, and other Unitarian Universalist (UU) or UU-related organizations, and tons of other great events, meetings and fun programs! Thousands of UU children, youth and adults, will gather at GA in Salt Lake City, Utah, this year.

Youth Caucus is the umbrella term for all youth programming at General Assembly for UUs ages 14 to 20. The group participates in regular General Assembly programming and holds programming specifically for youth, including daily meetings to discuss and take part in GA business.

All youth are welcome to participate in Youth Caucus. Anyone aged 14 to 17 who wants to register for General Assembly must register for Youth Caucus, are invited to attend all General Assembly programming and are required to attend Youth Caucus Orientation.

The Office of Youth Ministries has scholarships available for those 14 to 20, who are planning to attend GA, as well a guide for youth who are planning to attend, which includes tips on raising money.

Information about each year’s General Assembly location as well as registration, housing, and programming details are available online at www.uua.org.

— From the UUA website

MONEY MATTERS

A Thriving Congregation

What matters most to you about First Unitarian? This year's annual budget drive will be an opportunity to share the things about our faith community that ground us, uplift us, and broaden us.

We are planning a large number of face-to-face conversations in late February and early March: 100 or so families will be invited to meet with a church member to reflect on the value of the belonging to this congregation and how we might continue to thrive and grow. All 300-plus families in the church will be involved in these ongoing conversations over the next two to three years.

— *The Budget Drive Committee:*
Neil Bartholomew, Carol Drewes,
Susan Fisher, Rev. James Ford, Herb Fried,
Jack Irwin, Heidi and Steve Koeltz,
Graham Nye, Rick Richards, John Simmonds

Treasurer's Report

Income from pledges, donations and fund raising for the first six months of this fiscal year is up 14%. This is wonderful news, particularly for difficult economic times. Also, some people already have paid their pledges in full for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The result is that even though we are only 50% through the fiscal year, we have received 59% of anticipated pledges from the congregation.

As long as we are talking about generosity, let's note the amount of money now being donated once a month from the Sunday collection plate. In December, over \$2,000 was collected for the RI Community Food Bank. In November, a similar amount went to the Village Bank. For January, the recipient of the collection was the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). In spite of the snowstorm on Sunday, January 11, the collection brought in \$1,027.

We are now half way through the fiscal year. The various operating accounts all stand at less than 50% of the amount allocated to each for the fiscal year. Salaries are running a bit over budget due to additional events at the church on Friday nights, Saturdays, Saturday nights, and Sundays.

— *Tony Allen, Treasurer*



I find it illustrative of my life and the situation for many like me, that for the first time since the publication of the Unitarian Universalist hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition* in 1993 I found myself looking in it for "patriotic hymns" ahead of our worship service on Tuesday evening the 20th of January. And, equally illustrative that I found none that fit the bill. No America the Beautiful, no Star Spangled Banner.

In a sense that makes sense. Ours is a critical tradition, and we've long noticed religious support for the state, whatever state, has almost always proven a mistake. But... When 9/11 happened and I put together a worship service on the fly, I did not include any music that might be construed as traditionally "patriotic." And while on balance I believe it was a good service and met most needs - it later became apparent to me the lack of patriotic themed songs meant some significant number of us felt a need that was not addressed.

So, this is the problem. I have deeply conflicted feelings which include a sense that nationalism is indeed a disease, a cancer on the human heart. But it needs nuance. It also seems to me there is some other impulse that can be called patriotism, which is something different from nationalism. There is a deep human need to belong.

I'm sure it has a lot to do, maybe in the last analysis everything to do with the fact we're mammals and specifically herding mammals. Now, lovely and powerful things have evolved out of this fact. And I have no doubt it has something to do, maybe everything to do with that most amazing thing, language. As we began to sing to each other, deep truths revealed themselves. Not only are we connected to our little bands, but to larger groups, to communities, to nations, and increasingly we realize, to the world itself.

Now, I think the nation state is a problematic thing. Nation states have created many good things. I am most taken with the various republican experiments in modern times. But nation states have also created myopic identities that have indeed led to terrible things. Too often greed, and hatred and ignorance are justified, wrapped in the smothering blanket of nationalism.

But, what seems to be emerging as, maybe the next step of cultural evolution, are multinational corporations. And, you know, they do not seem to be about furthering human good. The more I watch them, the more I fear for the future.

And the more I look at what is good in nations. And, in particular, what has been good about our American nation. Now, this is a mixed bag, no doubt. The litany of ills perpetrated by our country is long, too long. And we forget at our peril, and at the peril of the world...

And, and, and there is a dream that has run a current through our American hearts from the beginning. Observed too often in the breach, but never killed. And, the dream continues. And I think the same currents that created our nation, also were the foundations of our liberal faith, rational, critical, and endlessly optimistic about human possibility. The old creed of Unitarianism was salvation by character.

So, now with our new president in place, I feel something powerful stirring. Perhaps you do as well.

The thing I believe for us in this is that we allow our hearts to swell with the possibilities, with the dreams. It was absolutely right that we sang patriotic songs, with, of course, a dash of contextualization both from words and in the choice of one or two other hymns we also sang. And I thought it very right for us to speak prayers, even our tentative uncertain and weak prayers count here.

We should pause and give voice to our hopes. We do that every Sunday.

And now, and every day that follows it will be our responsibility to hold our new president to the terms of the deal. When, not if, he falls short, I and I hope the rest of us, need hold him to account. That is the difference, I think, or a big one, between nationalism and patriotism. And a signal mark of our liberal faith when it is fully engaged.

May the dream continue.

— *Rev. James Ishmael Ford*



TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP

First "Round The Table" Dinners Successful Despite Storm Warnings



Here are just a few of many scenes of connection and good will that happened January 10 at our first Round The Table dinners. Despite the snow and dire warnings for several days, ten dinners took place. (And the Sunday morning buzz we jokingly predicted actually happened.) Newcomers got to know more people and many longer-term members expressed delight at getting to know people with whom they have had only a passing acquaintanceship. We'll do it again in May.

A special note about our Thanksgiving dinner: Those who worked on this year's Thanksgiving dinner expressed deepened appreciation for Rebecca Alberg and Jim Estey for having made this dinner happen for several years. For many of us, these events get put together outside our awareness; we are grateful to those who have loved and nurtured our church family in so many different ways.

Please contact any of us with your ideas and suggestions. We all wear orange name tags and our phone numbers are in the church directory.

— *The Fellowship Committee: Carol Adams, Jim Estey, Mary Frappier, Kate Menard, Janet Noble, Dave Spremulli, Gerry Spremulli*

The February All Parish Supper - Friday, February 13, 2009

5:45p Social Hour: Bring hors d'oeuvres to share and wine for your own party if you wish.

6:15p Potluck Dinner: Please bring a main dish, a vegetable, a salad, or a dessert serving at least 8.

7:45p Program in the Meeting House: *Inflections of Love*, a Valentine's Day celebration

The Aurea Ensemble returns to entertain us with an uncommon concoction of romantic songs, poetry, stories, and chamber music celebrating the many facets of love. Poets Galway Kinnell and W. H. Auden, composers Faure and Chopin and others will be represented. Performers include Chris Turner and Nigel Gore, a string quartet including Charles and Consuelo Sherba, pianist George Lopez, and vocalist Gigi Mitchell-Velasco.

Heavily discounted tickets for the performance will be available for sale in the Parish House on the evening of February 13 for those who attend the supper.

Childcare for infants and young children will be available for those who sign up in advance. Call Jim Estey at 401.351.1748.

Reservations for the Parish Supper are strongly requested. Fill out the sign-up form in the *Meeting House Times*, see Jim Estey at coffee hour, or call the church office at 401.421.7970.

The March All Parish Supper – Friday, March 13, 2009

Program: Marriage Equality

Presenter: Rev. Gene Dyszlewski, Chair, Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality Rhode Island
Marriage equality is one of the most divisive issues confronting our nation today. Why is this such an important issue for gay and lesbian couples? Our speaker will discuss the arguments, both pro and con, and will provide information and insight into the social and political history of this controversy. Several gay/lesbian couples will be with us to share their feelings and experiences.

This is a vital issue for us as a congregation to learn about as we prepare to participate in the UUA's Welcoming Congregation program. Please plan to join us.

SATURDAY SOCIALS

These Saturday evening potluck suppers are for adults, except where noted. Newcomers, old-timers and in-betweeners who would like to meet new friends in the congregation are all encouraged to attend.

Reservations: Space is limited and reservations are required. To reserve space and select a menu item to bring for either dinner, please call Kate Menard at 401.437.6322.

February Saturday Socials

Saturday, February 7

Hosts: Cy O'Neil and Wendy Oliver
130 Woodbury Street
Providence, Rhode Island

Time: 6:00p to 9:00p

Host: Lach Franquemont
28 Pitman Street, #3
Providence, Rhode Island

Time: 5:00p to 8:00p

Lach Franquemont extends a special invitation to those on the younger side, single, coupled, and/or with young children. All others who would like to attend are very welcome as well.

March Saturday Socials

Saturday, March 7

Hosts: Shirley DiMatteo and Mel Shelley
198 University Avenue
Providence, Rhode Island

Time: 6:00p to 9:00p

Hosts: Ariadne and Ben Greenberg
77 Governor Bradford Road
Barrington, Rhode Island

Time: 5:00p to 8:00p

The Greenbergs also invite young people, ages 9 – 14, who are accompanied by parents. As space permits, others who like spending time with this group are welcome. For specific questions, please call Ariadne at 401.247.7557.

If you would like to host a future Saturday Social, please contact Carol Adams at 401.433.4365 or carol.adams6@cox.net



NEWS AND NOTES

Why Wasn't Your Name Listed in the Church Picture Directory?

If your name is not listed in the directory, it may be because you are new to the church since September 2008, or we do not have you listed in our church database, or the information listed is not complete.

Please contact Posey in the church office at 401.421.7970 or admin@firstunitarianprov.org

Winter Storms and Church Activities

In case of extreme weather, the minister and staff decide if church services will be cancelled. A cancellation decision will be made by 7:00a on Sunday and conveyed to TV channels 10 and 12 and radio stations WJAR, WHJJ, WPRI, WWBB, WHJY and WSNE.

If church is open during a storm, no one should make heroic efforts to get to church. Use your own best judgment about whether it is safe to drive or come to church on foot during any stormy weather. If the City of Providence announces a ban on street parking, remember that space is limited.

Handicap Parking Alert

Please be mindful that the designated handicap spaces in our parking lot are to be used for handicap parking *only*. Please display your official handicap certificate in an obvious location (your rearview mirror or dashboard). You can also find marked spaces on Benevolent Street for Sunday use. There is additional parking, on Sunday mornings only, at the Hope Club (across Benevolent Street). The City of Providence will ticket cars that are parked next to the church on Benevolent Street.

Atrium Bookstore Open Every Sunday

The Atrium Bookstore offers books on a variety of topics including daily meditations, Buddhism, Bible studies, inspiration, environmental concerns, poetry, global values, family life and rituals, and stories for children. Suggestions are welcome for specific titles, authors, or general topics. All profits go to First Unitarian.

Further information: Irene Allen at iallen112@aol.com



CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Trans-Atlantic Efforts By The Transylvania Partner Church Committee

The January meeting of the Transylvania Partner Church Committee brought news of progress on the group's Pen Pal Project. Reverend Kellerman, pastor of our partner church in Sventegyhaza, received our list of interested students and will match them with children from his church. Soon the letters will be crossing the Atlantic! The committee is asking the students and their families to keep the envelopes from their Transylvanian correspondence so that a collage of the stamps can be created.

The group has received three wooden plaques from our partner church, which will be presented to the past, present and future presidents of our church.

The committee is also planning several benefit events:

- ❖ We will celebrate Transylvania Sunday on March 8, when our congregation will donate the morning offering to the work of helping our partner church.
- ❖ A Transylvanian/Hungarian dinner will be held on May 1 to raise money to expand our partner church's building, and, in particular, build a bell tower. The dinner will feature great food, music, and entertainment. A cookbook with Transylvanian recipes from our partner church congregation will be given to all who purchase a ticket to the dinner. Everyone is invited to share in what promises to be a most enjoyable evening.
- ❖ The Woman's Alliance will donating some of their unique embroidered cloths which will be sold to benefit the Sventegyhaza church addition.

The Transylvania Partner Church Committee meets the second Sunday of each month in the Paneled Parlor at noon. Everyone is invited to participate, even if only to learn more about being part of another pilgrimage to Transylvania.

Small Group Ministry Encourages Deep Listening

Small Group Ministry is practiced in Unitarian congregations nationwide and has been practiced in our congregation since 2003. More structured than a social evening, but more open-ended than a Sunday service, a small group allows its members to work through their spiritual concerns in an atmosphere of support and respect.

Meetings are usually scheduled twice a month, in the church or member's homes. The meeting begins with opening words and a chalice lighting, then a check-in, and a reading and a sharing of response to the reading. Silent reflection may be included, and then checkout and closing words.

The structure allows for hearing from those members who are not the most talkative. All are encouraged to speak and listen respectfully. Each group makes a covenant, a set of guidelines for how they will be together, and a facilitator helps keep the group focused.

First Unitarian's website explains, "The heart of this practice is found within a covenant among eight or nine or ten people to gather together regularly for a structured conversation on spiritual matters. The way the conversation is structured means that each individual speaks only one-eighth or one-ninth or one-tenth of the time. As such, the practice becomes one of deep listening. Many people have found this a transformative experience. We encourage everyone, and particularly those new among us, to give this practice a try."

A small group can be a wonderful place to find fellowship and make friends in our church.

For more information about groups at First U, contact the church office or ask at Coffee Hour.





CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

OUR LARGER FAITH

A New Lay Ministry Program Has Begun Its Work

With our minister's guidance, the Care Committee has transitioned to a Lay Ministry Team. Lay ministers are appointed by the minister in consultation with the Prudential Committee. They will oversee the program, maintain volunteer lists, and, upon request, provide pastoral counseling. The Lay Ministry team, with the assistance of the Care Crew volunteers, will also assume the duties of the Emergency Meals and Transport program run by the Deacons. Our minister will meet with the Lay Ministry team every month.

Mary Frey will serve as senior lay minister, joined by lay ministers Mary Frappier, Janet Noble, Kate Menard, Stewart Armstrong, and Martha Manno. The Care Crew consists of members and friends who volunteer to provide services, including phone calls, note writing, meals, or rides, to members of the church community in need.

On Sunday, February 15, we will honor members who served on the Caring Committee Planning Group over the last year, members of the interim Caring Committee, Care Crew volunteers, and the Deacons. The Lay Ministry team will be officially installed at this celebration of love and caring. The service will be followed by a reception during the coffee hour.

The Lay Ministry looks forward to beginning its work and supporting our Minister in his care of the congregation. Our mission is to reach out to care for one other and we hope that everyone will find a way to help. The present First U Care Crew, and *all* members and friends of the congregation, are urged to sign on to assist members in our congregation.

If you have news of someone in the congregation who may need assistance, a call, or a note, please tell one of the lay ministers, or call the office and leave word with Posey Kooris. Pew cards may also be placed in the collection basket or in the Lay Ministry box during coffee hour.

— *Mary Frey, Senior Lay Minister, Stewart Armstrong, Mary Frappier, Martha Manno, Kate Menard, and Janet Noble*

General Assembly, A Meeting of Congregations, This Year in Salt Lake City June 24-28, 2009

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. General Assemblies make overall policy for carrying out the purposes of the Association and direct and control its affairs. Voting at each regular and special General Assembly is by accredited delegates from certified member congregations, certified associate member organizations, and trustees.

A wealth of great programming is being sponsored by the General Assembly Planning Committee, and UU University has been incorporated into the GA schedule. In addition, 2009 is a UUA presidential election year.

This year's Assembly will vote to adopt a new Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking.

We also welcome Melissa Harris-Lacewell as the 2009 Ware Lecturer.

Registration and housing reservations open on March 2. More information is available on the UUA website, www.uua.org.

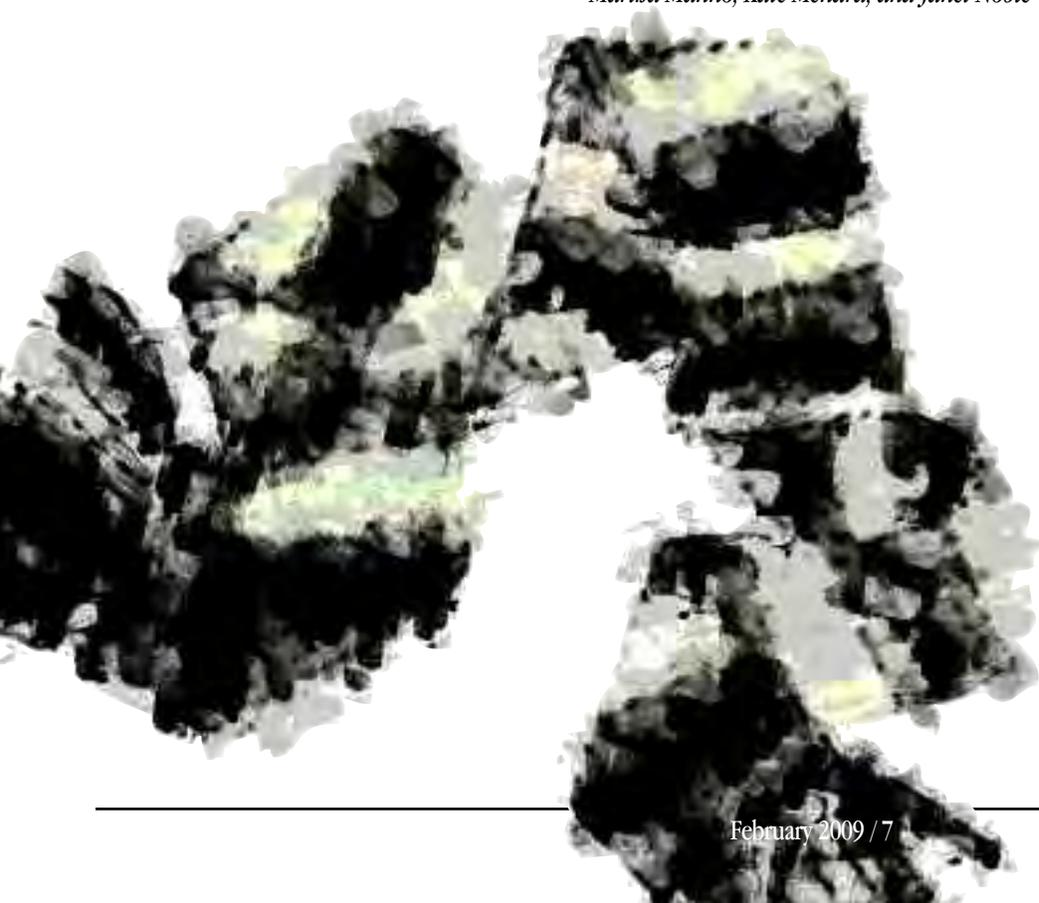
The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County Has a New Home

Congratulations to our sister congregation, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County, which will be moving into its new home in February.

The UUCSC has been selected by the Unitarian Universalist Association as one of the four Breakthrough Congregations for 2009. This honor is awarded to congregations who show growth in numbers, in deepening faith development, in the building of the church community, and in their work in justice and involvement in the world. UUCSC will be honored at General Assembly in June where they will be presenting a workshop to share their outstanding efforts and accomplishments. The Ballou Channing District and the other Rhode Island congregations can be very proud of this dynamic and inspiring congregation.

UU Trivia: Our First Meeting House...

...was at the corner of the present College and Benefit streets, where the Providence County Court House now stands.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Community Food Share Food Pantry

The Community Food Share committee thanks the congregation for their generous donation of approximately \$1,862.36 from the offering of December 14, 2008. This money has been given to the Rhode Island Food Bank, where the Community Food Share Pantry purchases most of the food for its monthly distribution.

Our monthly food pantry serves needy people in the Providence area. Each third Monday afternoon, we set up our "grocery store" in the Atrium, help clients select food items, and clean up afterwards. Our next distribution day is Monday, February 16.

Contact Elesa Amand at 401.253.9602 or Sara Slate at 401.435.2039.

Be the Heart of Coffee Hour

Be our Valentine and bring in goodies for February Coffee Hours. Cookies, breads, brownies, fruit, or cheese and crackers will warm our hearts this month.

Coffee hour goodies on Sunday, February 1, will be provided by the RE Committee Sandwich Brigade in appreciation of the donations from that Sunday's collection to the important social action work of Crossroads RI.

On Sunday, February 15, the Lay Ministry will supply treats to spotlight this important ministry in our church and to recruit volunteers to the Caring Crew with Valentines!

Sign up at the Coffee Hour table in the front parlor and go home with a reminder so you won't forget.

Ushers Are Always Needed!

Ushering on a Sunday morning is a wonderful way to get involved, meet people, and be part of our worship service. Ushers greet people as they arrive for the service, help them with questions, and collect the morning offering.

Contact Michael Currier at 617.680.6083 or mpcurrier@gmail.com.

UU Trivia: Congregations Congregating

The top three states, in terms of number of UU congregations, are Massachusetts, California, and New York.



Want to Get Involved?

The Nominating Committee is seeking people who are looking for ways to get more involved in the leadership of our church. If you would like to join a committee, chair a committee, or serve in an elected position (Prudential Committee, Nominating Committee, and Deacons), we would like to hear from you. Openings are available for the church year 2009-2010, beginning in July 2009, for:

- ❖ President Elect
- ❖ Assistant Treasurer
- ❖ 2 Prudential Committee members
- ❖ 2 deacons
- ❖ 3 Nominating Committee members

The election will be held at our annual meeting in April. The slate will be published in the March church newsletter, so the time to act is now.

Thank you for your interest in serving our church.

—*The Nominating Committee*

Ted Martin, Sara Slate, Tom Getz, Dianne Mailloux, Bill Twaddell, Beth Armstrong

Contact: Ted Martin, chair, at 401.333.3076 or tedmartin@cox.net, or any member of the Nominating Committee.

Attitude Questionnaire for the Welcoming Congregation Program

On February 1 and 8, you will find an Attitude Questionnaire inserted into the Sunday bulletin along with the *Meetinghouse Times*. This questionnaire was developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association's Welcoming Congregation Program, and serves as a tool for evaluating our attitudes and feelings about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Understanding our attitudes as a community gives us a starting place for earning our Welcoming Congregation status and becoming more open and welcoming to all.

Please remember that honesty is the first step to inclusion and acceptance, so please respond candidly. The questionnaire is entirely anonymous and confidential. The committee uses the results to assess ourselves and plan our next steps in the process of earning the status of Welcoming Congregation. *Please fill out only one questionnaire.*

There are several ways you can turn in your questionnaire:

1. The Welcoming Congregation Committee will have a table in the Atrium on Sunday, February 1 and Sunday, February 8 where you may return your questionnaire.
2. The committee will also be emailing this questionnaire to First Unitarian members who are signed up for church emails. You can print out the questionnaire and mail it to the church office or bring it to the committee's table in the Atrium.

The Welcoming Congregation Committee thanks you in advance for your time and attention.

If you have questions please contact: Brian Paradis at 617.827.2335 or briananddeacon@comcast.net; Michael Currier at 617.680.6083 or mpcurrier@gmail.com; or Jan Seymour-Ford at 401.305.5361 or seymourford@gmail.com



GETTING INVOLVED

First Unitarian Community Orchestra/Band

March 1 and 8 rehearsals right after coffee hour for about an hour and a half.

It is time to dig out that instrument from your closet that you haven't played in years, and to build up those musical muscles!

The First Unitarian Community Orchestra/Band is making a return appearance!

This is a fun opportunity for those in the congregation who play instruments to get together and make music. It's also a good way to encourage middle or high school aged children who play in school bands to get involved in a church activity.

We will play through some hymns and a few other well-known pieces. The group has been invited to play on Sunday, March 15, during the church service,

Those who have folding metal music stands are asked to bring them along to rehearsals.

This group will be directed by Stew Armstrong, a former band director, school music teacher and brass player.

Contact: Stew Armstrong at 401.253.7987, 401.523.8018, or bestar3@cox.net before March with your name and instrument so we can prepare parts for everyone.

UU Women's Chorus Sings Again!

Six Sundays, from January 4 to February 8, 12:00p-1:30p

UU Women's Chorus will be singing together again for six weeks in January and February. All women of the church are welcome to join in. This is a wonderful opportunity for women who are not involved with the regular (Sunday choir) music program to spread their musical wings, and a great chance for mothers and daughters (especially teenagers) to share a church activity. You do not need to be able to read music to join the Chorus. Come for a week or two or six, you will always be welcome. The Chorus meets in the Choir Room in the basement of the church.

For more information, call Beth Armstrong at 401.253.7987.

Reaching Out to Isolated UUs

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) is a UU church via mail, email, and internet. Its mission is to provide a UU ministry to isolated religious liberals, and has more than 3,000 members worldwide?

The CLF is trying a new experiment with fundraising through Amazon.com. If you're buying merchandise online sold through Amazon.com, please consider going to the CLF homepage, www.clfuu.org, and clicking on the Amazon.com button that you'll find on the right hand side. Whenever you buy a book or snow blower or banjo or *Bon Appetit* subscription or carabiners or marshmallow shooter or gluten free brownie mix or *Alvin and the Chipmunks* video or hoop earrings or microscope or Kindle – or whatever else – please go through the CLF site to Amazon. The CLF will get some money by virtue of your purchase. You'll pay nothing extra, but will help the CLF raise more money for its mission.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Habitat for Humanity Work Group

Our Habitat Work Group volunteers once a month with the Providence Habitat chapter. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome – the only requirements are a willingness and ability to do physical work, and minimum age of 16. Sign-up is required as space on each month's crew is limited.

Contact Peter Van Erp at 401.351.4881 or petervanerp@cox.net.

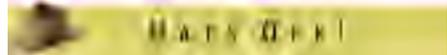
Support Camp Street Ministries

If you shop at Eastside Marketplace, you can donate your receipts to help Camp Street Ministries in Providence. The Women's Alliance provides a box in the Atrium where you can leave your receipts. Camp Street receives, from Eastside Marketplace, 1 percent of the total of the donated receipts to support their programming.

Printer Cartridge Recycling Program

Recycle your printer cartridges – and help out First Unitarian! Just put your empty cartridges in the collection box in the Atrium – the church receives cash for the empty cartridges, which are recycled into new, compatible ones. You can buy these remanufactured cartridges at up to 80% savings at www.inksmile.com.

Contact Posey Kooris at 401.421.7970 or admin@firstunitarianprov.org.



Thanks to Grace Burberry-Martin, Nigel Gore, David House, Charlie Hunt, Marilyn Meardon, Lincoln Oliver-O'Neil, Shannon Oliver-O'Neil, and Joan Richards for speaking at our Christmas Eve services...

...and to our Coffee Hour Providers last month: Kate Menard, Ryk McIntyre, Michael Cappelli, Elizabeth O'Connell, Anne Connor, Lynda Gulley, the UUSC from our church, Kate Johnson, Kate Adams, David House, Beth Armstrong, Susan Davis, Liz Palter, the Youth Group and all of you who brought something in to surprise us.



**Benevolent Street Zendo:
An Ongoing Zen Meditation Group**
Every Monday at 7:00p

Boundless Way is an interfaith Zen community, maintaining close connections with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association. (All three of its senior teachers, including our minister, James Ford, are also Unitarian Universalists.) Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction will be available to those who come at 6:45p.

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford at benevolentstreetzendo@gmail.com
We are a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha. More information: www.boundlesswayzen.org

Knitting Connection
Every Tuesday, 7:00p-9:00p

Join others in the congregation for an evening of knitting/crocheting and conversation. Bring your own project or work on our group project: knitting warm items for immigrant families in Olneyville. Beginners are always welcome!

No registration necessary.
Contact: Julie Meyers at kelmey@cox.net

UU Women
Second Tuesday, February 10, 7:00p

Topic: "Advice we were given as 10 year olds and the advice we should have been given. Is that the same advice we would give a 10 year old today?"

No registration necessary.
Contact: Terri Smith at 401.941.6865
or essceetee123@yahoo.com

Reimagining Religion
*Second and fourth Tuesdays,
February 10 and 24, at 7:00p*

Reimagining Religion is an ongoing attempt to employ the best recent scholarship in coming to grips with issues raised by radically new developments in the study of religion and thereby achieving a fuller appreciation of what religious literacy entails in the twenty-first century.

The group's discussions draw on Lloyd Geering's autobiography, *Wrestling with God*.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Tom Hall at 401.647.2925
or tw2nd@aol.com



**GROWING IN
WISDOM AND SPIRIT**

Green Sanctuary at First Unitarian
Second Sunday, February 8, 9:30a

A Green Sanctuary congregation lives its commitment to the Earth by creating a sustainable lifestyle for its members as individuals and as a faith community. Sustainable living is about more than material comfort; it is about choosing to live in a way that nurtures life, builds relationships, and rejects material consumption as the sole determinant of happiness. Our program goals include building awareness of societal environmental issues and injustices, motivating community action, and fostering a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Bekah Greenwald at bekah@apeiron.org or 401.521.3446

Spiritual Cinema
Third Sunday monthly, February 15, 7:00p

This month's movie will be *Swing*. This fun feature film starring Jacqueline Bisset, Jonathan Winters, Tom Skerritt, and Nel Carter, will get your heart pumping with the music and moves of swing dance. When a man decides that he can't take over the family business and chooses to become a musician instead, only his uncle supports him. A film that travels through time to bring the lessons from the past to the people who need it in the present, *Swing* encourages us to choose a path that follows our passions, knowing that love and success will follow.

Contact: Marilyn Eanet at 401.433.1299 or meanet@cox.net; or Maureen Johanson at 508.557.1173

UUMeN
Second Sunday, February 8, 7:00p-9:00p

Topic: "What About Abortion?"
This month's meeting will explore our diverse opinions – some passionate, some tentative – about abortion. When does life begin? What roles should men play in dealing with unwanted pregnancies? What are our responsibilities to women, other men, children, and to the

unborn? Our goal is to have an informative and respectful discussion of this important issue. All interested men are welcome to join us.

No registration necessary.
Facilitator: Burr Harrison 401.943.1541.

Gaia's Hearth
Gaia's Hearth was formed to create a harmonious spiritual environment for nature-based traditions to worship together. There are a wide variety of paths and traditions within Paganism. We welcome people of all paths to join us.

Cornerstones of Wicca
Thursdays, February 5 and 19, 7:00p-8:30p
February 5 Divination
February 19 Aromatherapy

This ongoing class offers instruction in the basics tenets of Wicca as well as the practical techniques of magical work for an intensive, homework-oriented experience. Our members come from varied magical backgrounds and experiences.

Registration requested.
Leader/contact: Diane Donnelly
at dianednlnly@yahoo.com

Sylvan Circle
Second Sunday, February 8, 12:30p-1:30p
At this family-friendly gathering, we all share, learn, and teach each other as we pass around a talking stick and explore all types of traditions. Each meeting starts with the Celtic Tree of the month and then "branch out" to explore and honor each other's paths. Children are welcome to participate, as sometimes they are the best teachers.

No registration necessary.
Leader/contact: Arte Ezikovich nimuix@cox.net

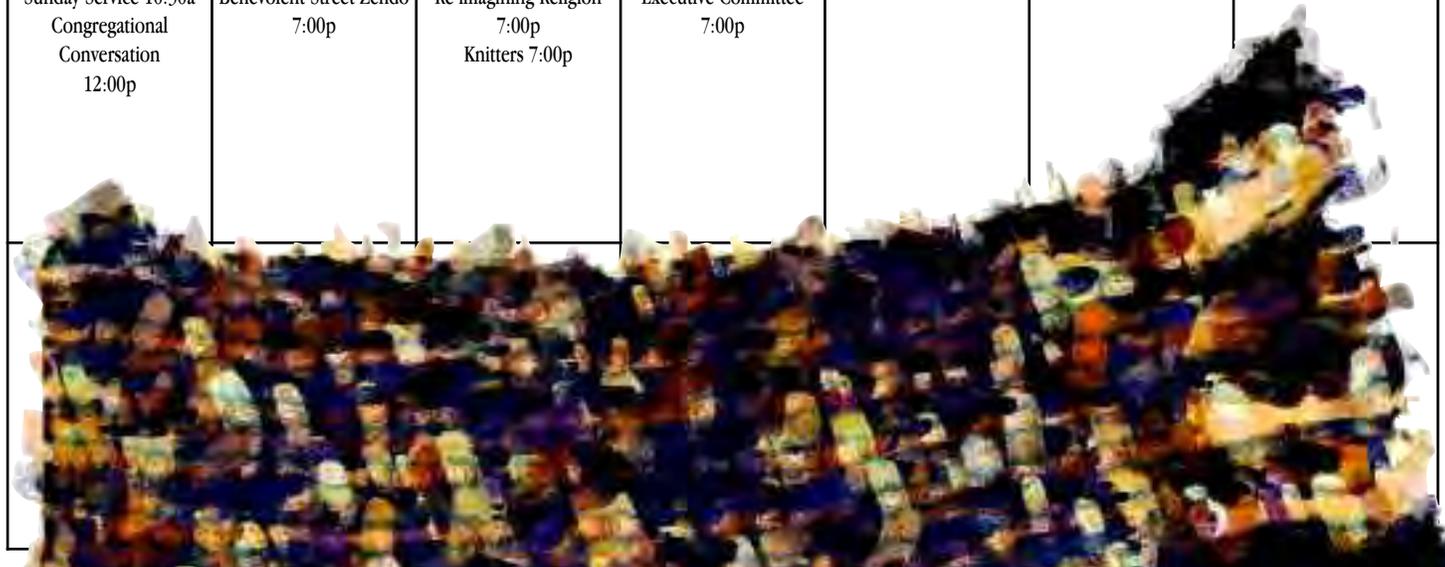


THIS MONTH @ FIRST UNITARIAN

February 2009

"Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to ta talk." — Doug Larsonlk.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><u>1</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Membership Committee 12:00p Womens' Chorus 12:00p Gaia's Hearth 12:15p</p>	<p><u>2</u> Women's Alliance 11:00a Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><u>3</u> Knitters 7:00p</p>	<p><u>4</u> Prudential Committee 6:00p</p>	<p><u>5</u> Deacons 6:00p Wicca 7:00p</p>	<p><u>6</u></p>	<p><u>7</u> Saturday Social Suppers</p>
<p><u>8</u> Green Sanctuary 9:30a Sunday Service 10:30a Transylvania 12:00p Womens Chorus 12:00p Sylvan Circle 12:30p Installation 3:00p UU Men 7:00p</p>	<p><u>9</u> Nominating Committee 7:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><u>10</u> Re-imagining Religion 7:00p UU Women 7:00p Knitters 7:00p</p>	<p><u>11</u> Worship Committee 6:30p</p>	<p><u>12</u> Stewardship Committee 7:00p</p>	<p><u>13</u> Parish Supper 5:45p</p>	<p><u>14</u></p>
<p><u>15</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Spiritual Cinema 7:00p</p>	<p><u>16</u> PRESIDENTS' DAY Church Office Closed Food Pantry 4:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><u>17</u> Knitters 7:00p</p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> Wicca 7:00p</p>	<p><u>20</u></p>	<p><u>21</u></p>
<p><u>22</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Congregational Conversation 12:00p</p>	<p><u>23</u> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p</p>	<p><u>24</u> Re-imagining Religion 7:00p Knitters 7:00p</p>	<p><u>25</u> Executive Committee 7:00p</p>	<p><u>26</u></p>	<p><u>27</u></p>	<p><u>28</u></p>



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We Install the Rev. James Ford on Sunday, February 8

Our long tradition of congregational polity grants to each UU society the sole right to call its own minister and to install him or her as its settled minister. The service of installation reaffirms and formalizes the bond between a minister and a congregation that was implicit in the congregation's vote to call and the minister's acceptance of that call.

On Sunday, February 8, at 3:00p, we, the congregation of First Unitarian, will install the Rev. James Ishmael Ford as our seventeenth minister. The celebration will feature music by Fred Jodry and the choir; an installation message from the Rev. Laurel Hallman, Senior Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, who is a candidate for the presidency of the UUA; and the Act of Installation, the formal covenant between James and the congregation, led by President Cy O'Neil.

Also participating:

- ❖ Rev. Diane Miller, our former interim minister, now serving the UU church in Carlisle, Massachusetts, who will give the Charge to the Congregation
- ❖ Rev. Suzanne Spencer, interim minister with the UU Congregation of Danbury, Connecticut, who spoke from our pulpit in October and will give the Charge to the Minister
- ❖ Rev. Amy Freedman, minister at the Channing Memorial Church in Newport, who will extend the Hand of Fellowship on behalf of her ministerial colleagues

