



# UU Update

Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa

• May 2010 • Volume 54 • Issue 5 •

## Sunday Services are at 9:00 and 11:00am

### May 2nd

#### "The Universe As Jokester"

Service Leader: Bruce Taylor

Worship Associate: Erin Howseman

Ever get the feeling life's a big joke? Herman Melville, famous for a brooding 19th century novel about a sea captain making war against a white whale, and perhaps God itself, once mused: "There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and [he] more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own." This morning's talk was inspired by this quote. So come, ship-mates, let us go a-sailing into the depths of our existence--and see what's so humorous. Your captain, Bruce "Ahab" Taylor, has been a member of UUCSR for 17 years, but has been taking on water for much, much longer.

### May 9th

#### "The Voices of Our Youth"

##### Intergenerational Service

Service Leaders: The Youth Group

Worship Associates: Rev. Chris Bell & Deborah Mason

Every generation of mothers mourns the imperfect world that it leaves to its children. The world now seems particularly fraught with risk and crisis, but it also is rich with possibilities and potential. Our youth will share what they have learned from us that will help them face the challenges of the future, and help us envision the better world that they will need to build. **We'll also recognize new members.**

### 9:00 AM SERVICE

It is a smaller gathering, we have the same readings and message that are given at the 11:00AM service, plus we have time for a discussion of the sermon topic. What UU doesn't like a discussion? There is childcare available. Any questions, contact Andy Levine at 887-9810

### May 16th

#### "Waiting"

Service Leader: Rev. Jane Ramsey

Worship Associate: Andy Levine

"What are you waiting for? School to end? A new baby?, A new job? Retirement?"

Rev. Jane Ramsey is a hospice chaplain and community minister who specializes in areas of aging and dying. Through her work she has met those who wait and asks: When do we live?"

### May 23rd

#### "Choosing Forgiveness"

Service Leader: Rev. Chris Bell

Worship Associate: Michael Walsh

It's one of the most basic spiritual acts: seeking forgiveness for our trespasses, and forgiving those who trespass against us. But it's not always easy to choose to forgive. Some people may have done really terrible things to us, and sometimes we've done terrible things to others. This can be true of groups of people, too. Today we'll consider why forgiveness is essential to moving on and making things right, for individuals, religions, and even nations.

### May 30th

#### "The Groaning Creation"

##### And a Bridging Ceremony

Service Leader: Rev. Chris Bell

Worship Associate: Andy Levine

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time," said the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. He wrongly thought the delivery of a whole new world was right around the corner. It turns out that the labor of evolution and growth is endless. It's worth it, but it still hurts. Today we'll seek ways to embrace and overcome pain in our bodies and minds as we forge our souls. We'll also bless our graduating seniors on their journey forward.

## The Heart of Unitarian Universalism



From my earliest encounters with our faith, I have been consumed with naming the spiritual heart of Unitarian Universalism. It's a kind of curse, really. Other, better and smarter, minds have struggled to name it for 150 years, only to be derailed by our dogged adherence to creedlessness as the foremost quality identity, as though freedom were the stopping point rather than the beginning of the religious life.

I say we do and should have a creed, and it is love. I'll take me a couple of years of preaching to explain that completely, but here's a start...

Like many others, when I first stumbled across a UU community I was astonished to discover an association (aka church/fellowship/society/congregation/movement) that was organized around a set of values - our Principles - that I had already come to hold deeply. My first reading of the Principles dropped my jaw to the floor. I continue to center my self by trying to live them to fullest, but I am often challenged. How am I supposed to get better at practicing these Principles? What spiritual resources (prayer, meditation, study, ritual, stories, worship, work) does Unitarian Universalism particularly employ to get me closer to fulfilling its vision? The unwillingness of Unitarian Universalists to put a transforming commanding power at the center has prevented us from developing these techniques for, and from, our own tradition.

I've grown tired of all the uncertainty. It makes preaching too hard! Every religion worth its salt has to say something about how people should live ethically and peacefully. Every religion has to offer a doorway into a relationship with life that transforms and opens us. It needs to say something about what human beings are, and what their purpose is. It has to offer a vision of what the ideal world would be.

I also think every religion has to name the Divine. It has to name and understand what God is, even if it doesn't use that word. It has to proclaim that which we put above all other things. It has to say what the deep fabric of reality is, and how we should relate to it. One's religion should identify the source of what is good, the origin of our longing for justice, and the reason for courage in the face of terrible adversity and darkness. Why is worth fighting for a better world? Why should we strive to be more compassionate, just and equitable people? What do we get from giving devoting our lives to a spiritual path, and where does that reward come from? Why is there hope?

With the profound exception of the Seventh Principle, where we assert that we live in "an interconnected web of all existence of which we are a part," our UU Principles don't answer these questions well. But our Sources give a glimpse. We say our Principles come from the Sources, because (allegedly) UUs have collectively considered our direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder, the various prophets of justice, the wisdom of the world's religions, our own Jewish and Christian heritage, the power of reason and the tool of science, and the Earth itself, and have determined that the Principles are the way to live. There is something true and binding in the Sources, some thing or verb or power or force that compels us to live a certain principled way. Whatever it is, it is the source of our faith and practice. It is, in function, if not name, our God.

So what is it? As we currently stand, I think the God of Unitarian Universalism is LOVE. Freedom, reason and tolerance are the tools we use to discern and relate to each other and the Divine, but not the thing itself. Love - conscious, healing, creating, beautifying, demanding - is, for us, the Thing Itself. When every theological difference is removed, and we're still trying to agree on what is true and lasting, what is left? Simple human love. What else can inspire us to celebrate life, to care for one another, to empower each other, and to build a better world in a world of profound diversity and difference? Love, for self, other, and the world (writ largest) is a common thread that unites all the Principles and Sources.

The challenge is to see if Love is a truly worthy God, as it were. If love is what is most holy for us, then our work is to really grow in love, to make love the center of our whole lives together, to trust in love, to share it, to sing songs to it, and to write stories about it. We have to love Love with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul. We have to worship love, praise it, depend upon it, and let it work on and in us.

We should constantly be asking these sorts of questions: "Where is the love in this thing or that? Where is love in the relationship of the bees to the flowers? What do rocks and trees have to do with love? Where is love in the death of a parent or child? Where is love in the middle of a war, in the mind of a zealot? What does love demand of me? What economic or social order does love suggest? How is love my true nature? Since human love fails, is there a love that doesn't? Can we say that Love created the universe? If not, what did?"

*Cont. on page 12*

## Musings on Music

*"Without music, life would be an error."*

—Friedrich Nietzsche

One of the many pleasures of being a canvasser is getting to talk in depth with members about their experience of UUCSR. As you would suspect, those experiences are as varied as the people who comprise the tapestry of our religious community. But on two matters there is just about universal agreement, near as I can tell. They sound almost identical notes that go pretty much along these lines:

I/We just love:

- Rev. Chris
- Our music program

We've known that Chris is central to making UUCSR an attractive and welcoming place since we first entertained him at his debut sermon in 2006. ("Nah, I don't think we'll be throwing this fish back in the water," I remember thinking in the wake of that sermon.) But the love for our music program—and what it represents of our community—goes back quite a bit further. In truth, its roots are in the very dawn of humanity, rather long before there was any UUCSR at all, humankind's love of music being as old as humankind itself. It is not for nothing that most all religious denominations throughout history, as wildly varied as they are, have made music central to worship and other sacred observances. Everyone from Trappist monks to snake handlers seems to agree that this God thing goes better with a beat.

These musings come after the privilege of working closely with our musicians and worship associate Lucia Milburn to adorn the April 18 service (at which I presided) with music apropos to the occasion. My first email exchange with Lucia regarding collaboration on the service came on January 9, and the first one with "April 18 Music" as the subject line followed just four days later. This was after exchanges a week earlier to begin music discussion with Robert Howesman, guitarist extraordinaire and putative leader/organizer of the UUCSR house band, *The UUsual Suspects*.

All of which is to say two things: 1) No, the services you behold every Sunday are not slapped together on Monday through Saturday of the previous week, and 2) Virtually no thinking gets done on any service topic without simultaneous thinking/linking of the music to accompany and elaborate upon it.

Truly, we can almost not speak the term "worship service" without bundling the word "music" inside it. It's not even a matter of music being *central* to worship so much as music *is* worship, in a universal guise. "When you

sing, it makes the world a better place, it brings us to a state of grace," writes songwriter John Gorka in the first of the songs the *UUsual Suspects* performed at the service. And what is religion, after all, but a desire to make the world a better place, to bring us to a state of grace?

"Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent," wrote Victor Hugo, himself a pretty good word man. Hugo's is an apt description of the wonders of classical orchestral music, but writing when he did, he was perhaps not anticipating the dramatic evolution of songwriting, and its uncanny ability to combine words with the supercharged emotive aspects of melody, rhythm and harmony to achieve a transcendent, soul-stirring vision equal to the wordless music of the standard classical repertoire.

The great songwriters of the modern era—George Gershwin, Kern-Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Bob Dylan, Lennon-McCartney, Leonard Cohen, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Bruce Springsteen, Holland-Dozier-Holland, my own current favorites John Gorka, Loudon Wainwright and Laura Smith (feel free to email me your own list), all share the hard-won ability of sketching stories that span the remarkable depth and breadth of the human condition just as observantly, powerfully and poignantly as the greatest novelists. But they do it in three or four minutes and a few hundred words—most always wrapped in a toe-tapping, hummable tune you find yourself falling prey to while packing away the groceries or waiting in line at the bank. There is utter genius in that, it seems to me, surpassing even the most sublime poetry, which, though musical at its core, isn't burdened with having to append its alluring sentiments to a wonderful tune.

All of this makes music, in my humble opinion, the highest of the art forms and the closest thing we have to heaven on earth. (Well, maybe sex gives music a run for its money on the latter, though we may then ask whether sex accompanied by music is perhaps the absolute apotheosis of all creation, the discussion of which will promptly end now...)

"Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without," said Confucius. Indeed, a world (and a worship service) without music would seem to be no world at all—or at least not a world or worship service worth spending time in. We are fortunate within our congregation to have not only music, but musical genres and musicians by the bushel, all of the players talented and committed to producing tunes and rhythms that help make our own lives sing.

—Andrew Hidas  
President, Board of Trustees

## Treasurer's Report

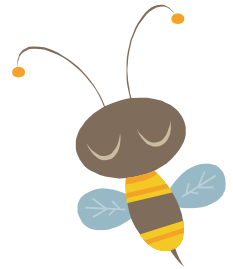
Seems like everything these days is all about the ABCs... Annual Pledge Drive; Budget; Canvassing. You can bet that a good percentage of your fellow congregants have been diligently working on these tasks for the last several months, as we continue planning our new (fiscal) year's budget. The Annual Pledge Drive Committee recruited and trained around 45 canvassers, and by the time you read this article, hopefully most all UUCSR members will have been canvassed and have completed their 2010-11 pledge cards.

Once the canvassing is complete, we can finish the budget, and see where we stand with income vs. expenses. We are anticipating another tricky budget year, where we will need to cut some expenses and tighten our belts. However, rest assured that your Accounting Committee, Financial Stewardship Council, and Board of Trustees are all determined to bring a balanced budget to the June meeting for review and congregational approval.

In looking at the March financial statements, the numbers continue to look ok for the moment. However, as we approach the final months of the fiscal year, the expenses will continue in full force, while the income, (as usual), will drop. We were fortunate to have had the needed funds on hand when our plumbing problem arose last fall, but that effect on our operating cash is very evident.

Thanks to everyone who has completed their pledge card for the new year, and to everyone helping with the canvass. There is still much work to do to reach our new year's balanced budget, and you can bet that all the money folks will be busy as bees over the next month or two. Please plan on attending the June congregational meeting, to support and approve this hard work.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Denese Pender



## All Congregation Retreat!!



It's time to register for the All-Congregation Retreat! It will take place at beautiful Valley of the Moon in Glen Ellen from July 16-18. See the full-page registration form in this Newsletter - and note that there are TWO forms: one for a regular (weekend) registration, and one to register for DAY USE ONLY. On the Sundays from June 13<sup>th</sup> through July 4<sup>th</sup>, a table will be set up in the social hall for sign-ups. You may fill out this form and bring it to any of these services, or else mail it to Pat Wilson at 465 Boas Dr, Santa Rosa, 95409-3616. Or visit the Retreat table on any of these Sundays, where

forms will be available. If you have any questions about DAY USE - please stop by the table and we'll be more than happy to answer your questions.

**Sunday, July 4<sup>th</sup>** is the registration deadline. If you have any questions about our new site - Valley of the Moon - please stop by the table, or ask any of your Retreat committee members: Barrie Noe, Pat Wilson, Denese Pender, Dorris Lee, or Anna Lisa Wiley. We've been busy planning for many months, and are sure to have another rousing, adventurous weekend of fun, frolicking, and good times!!

Thank you,  
Denese Pender

## Children's and Youth Religious Education (RE)

Social justice work is a core to UUCSR life. It is a priority for many of our members because it is an important way that we "affirm and promote" our seven principles. I believe that one is never too young to begin justice work. From the time my children were in elementary school they accompanied me to peace marches, pro-choice rallies, candle light vigils, and organizing meetings. In doing so, they learned that there was a way for the individual to work for change and to promote peace and justice. It is a lesson both of them have taken into adulthood.

I believe there is a fine line between teaching a positive message about engagement in issues that face society and giving children more information than they are ready to handle. I sometimes worry that UU kids get so much information about the problems of the world (like global warming, and the horrors of our two wars, etc.) that we run the risk of scaring them more that empowering them. In my planning of monthly Justice Sunday sessions I pay close attention not only to sharing the issues, but providing hope.

There is great hope in activism. It is said that the most hopeful people are those who actively engage

in working for the common good. Whether it is through political action or social service, engaging directly in the service of positive change gives one hope. I have found that activism as a spiritual practice integral to my faith has provided me with even more hope and inspiration than the work I did in purely secular settings. Because justice is at the core of my deepest beliefs I feel a profound sense that my social activism *is* Unitarian Universalism. The two are not separate. This is what I want our children and youth to experience.

On May 25<sup>th</sup> our congregation will play a key role in the first Public Assembly of the North Bay Sponsoring Committee (our Community Organizing Group). I will be on stage along with Rev. Chris playing a significant role in the program. I encourage parents to come and bring their kids. I encourage our youth to join our delegation at this important event as well. This is one of many ways that we can show our children the connection between faith and justice work.

In Faith,  
Deborah

What's Happening In RE This Month:

Youth Group meets the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month 4-6pm.

May 8: Youth Group will walk the Human Race

Date	Theme	Teachers
5/2	Children's Chapel	TBA
5/9	Intergenerational Worship Youth Led Service	Rev. Chris Youth Group
5/16	Children's Chapel Play Rehearsal	Kitty Wells Deborah Mason
5/23	Children's Chapel Play Rehearsal	Kitty Wells Deborah Mason
5/30		

## Musical Notes for May

### Musical Notes

The choir will be singing shorter works during May, as they prepare to showcase a choral masterpiece in June. Each year, our choir takes on at least one larger work. This year we'll enjoy their voices and hearts pouring out in the music Johannes Brahms, a 19th-century German composer who (it has been said) never wrote a bad note. Aside from being gorgeous music, the choral work features a very independent part for our awesome pianist, Nancy Hayashibara. In the majority of choral music the piano part is largely backup for the voices, but Brahms is well-known to singers and pianists for having each part play off and against each other. The resulting musical texture is intricately beautiful for the listener...and honestly, rather challenging for the musicians...but it will be well worth it!

### Join the UUCSR Choir!

Our choir is now learning new music of all sorts for upcoming services. The choir is a fun bunch of people and an uplifting way to start a Sunday morning! If you would

like to join us for some fun and singing, please talk to me (phone, email, after services) or just drop in at a rehearsal to try it out! It's a low-commitment way to get involved in church life, and it's fun! We cover a variety of musical styles!

Regular rehearsals: Sundays, 9am, in the Boardroom

### Join the Band!

We routinely welcome new folk into our UUCSR band. The band is a splendid blend of unique characters, each with special and various talents. The line-up of musicians is different each time, making it a great way to know new folks in new ways. The music is easy to learn and rehearsed in a friendly atmosphere. We're always looking for new instruments, too! If you would like to be a part of our UU band, please talk to me or to Susan Panttaja. Rehearsals are scheduled based on musicians' availability.

Musically yours,  
Ben Taylor, Music Director

## All Congregational Celebration to toast our successful Canvass!

Saturday, May 8 at UUCSR

4:45 to 5:30 pm    Special Champagne Reception for Canvass Captains and Canvassers

5:30 to 6:45 pm    All Congregational Celebration!

Let's all join together for drinks, hors d'oeuvres, fellowship, and fun  
as we look forward to a vibrant church year!



Please let the office know if you need childcare.



## Evening Book Group



The Evening Book Group will meet on Thursday, May 13 at 7:00 pm at 547 Mendocino. Our selection this month is *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson. Our June 10 meeting will be our annual finger

food potluck. Everyone brings a snack or drink to share with the group and we select books to read for next year, so bring your suggestions. Newcomers and visitors are always welcome.

Judy Taylor

## Summer Tie Groups

This summer there will be a TIE group (Together In Exploration) formed which will meet once a week for 4 weeks. This is the perfect chance to try out being in a group while discussing interesting topics. It is also a time of deep listening and getting to know others in a

wonderful way. If you are interested look for TIE sign ups in the social hall after the Sunday service. We will be there at least 2 Sundays in May. You can also call Mary Wagner at 523-1366 to sign up or to learn more about TIE Groups.

## WANTED: Board Recording Secretary

The UUCSR Board of Trustees is in need of a recording secretary. The position requires the ability to attend to the conversation at monthly Board meetings and tri-annual Congregational meetings, and distill the material into official minutes in a word processing program. This

is a wonderful way to be drawn closer into the life of your congregation and make a significant contribution to its historical record. Interested? Open to being drafted? Contact either Rev. Chris or Board President Andrew Hidas for more information.

## 2nd UUCSR Men's Retreat Weekend

**Mark your calendars for the weekend of August 27, 28 & 29,  
The 2nd UUCSR Men's retreat will be convening  
at the incredible St. Dorothy's Rest.**

**Look for the Men's Retreat table  
late in the month of May  
in the social hall.**

**Any questions please call Andy Levine @ 887-9810**

**Hope to see you there, Andy**



Submitted by Andy Levine

[bartlev@sonic.net](mailto:bartlev@sonic.net) or [andy@nfdlumber.com](mailto:andy@nfdlumber.com).

## Committee on Shared Ministry

The Committee on Shared Ministry is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. It oversees the general health of the congregation, supports the minister and provides conflict resolution. We meet once a month.

Recent topics have included the Memorial Garden, expanded worship services, the ministerial and congregational evaluation, and the sabbatical for Reverend Chris Bell, (which is available to him after 7 years of service in our congregation).

This month we will be reviewing the comments

made by all congregation members during the recent annual pledge drive. We will compile these and work with Rev. Chris to address issues or concerns that have been raised. As always, you are welcome to bring issues to our attention at any time. You can spot us at Sunday services by our pink badges that say Committee on Shared Ministry. Any concerns you raise with us will be kept confidential to our committee and Rev. Chris.

Elizabeth Marrs (chair), Rev. Chris Bell, Roger Corman, Nancy Hargis, Andy Levine, Cathy Read and Mary Wagner

## UUCSR Writers

**UUCSR Writers** will meet from **4 - 6 pm** in the "Green Room" on **Monday, May 3, 2010** at UUCSR, 547 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, Ca 95401, 707-568-5381, Can't attend monthly meetings? Live in another City, State or Country? Request an Invitation to join our Online Writer's Blog. Information: UUCSR Writers, Georgette G. deBlois, GGdeB@aol.com, <http://uucsrwriters.blogspot.com>.

### "TaP" Thursdays at Peet's

The UUCSR Writers meet once a week for Peet's coffee and conversation in Copperfield's located in Montgomery

Village at the corner of Montgomery Drive and Farmers Lane, Santa Rosa. Parking is Free.

Come, join us on Thursday mornings at 10 am. Buy a cup of coffee or hot chocolate, add a Danish pastry and enjoy the pleasure of chatting with writers about writing. We have no set agenda. Also, be sure to save some time to browse the books at Copperfield's.



Georgette G. deBlois  
GGdeB@aol.com

## Advocates for Social Justice

### ARE YOU, THE MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT OF SERVICE TO HOMELESS FAMILIES?

The Advocates for Social Justice are pleased to announce the opportunity to collaborate with our neighbor, the Family Support Center on A Street. Operated by Catholic Charities, it is the only shelter for families in Santa Rosa. The Advocates have been exploring 'hands-on' projects for people who don't

like to get up at crack of dawn on Saturdays and the FSC offers us many ways to assist its client families. We've come up with a beginning list of projects, with more to come as interest allows. These projects are:

Friday Family Fun Night ~ 6:15-8PM  
Friday nights,  
bingo, board games

Meal service ~ Help with various meals throughout the week

Tutoring

Childcare for parents attending required meetings

If you are interested in participating, please sign up at the Advocates table or call or email Jeanie Bates (824-0530, [jeaniebmft@yahoo.com](mailto:jeaniebmft@yahoo.com)). Not sure? Have questions? Call Jeanie. We look forward to hearing from you.





## What on Earth is the 7th Principle Working Group?

There are seven principles that we adopt as Unitarian Universalists to guide our lives as individuals and as a congregation. The first six concern our relationships within the community of humankind. The seventh principle concerns our relationships within the Earth community; to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we all are a part.

The 7th Principle Working Group will explore solutions and provide positive support for our congregation in these times of seemingly overwhelming negative news of what is happening to our planet. We have set some goals which we feel will help us embody our Seventh Principle in our daily lives at church, home, work, school and in the broader community. These goals are simple:

\* A deeper understanding of, and connection within, the interdependent web of life.

- \* An understanding of this interconnection into all aspects of our lives, our congregation and our society.
- \* Establishing for ourselves a network of friendship and support that will help us live more sustainably.
- \* To have fun and enjoy ourselves while doing good work to insure a life-sustaining future for all inhabitants of our planet.

The 7thPWG is working on both long and short term projects. Along with the Advocates for Social Justice, we are currently sponsoring an educational series presented by the Climate Protection Campaign. Over the coming months we will be screening some eco-films for possible fall programs and planning an eco-assessment of current UUCSR practices. Please join us! Call or EMail Susan Bartholome 887-9810, [bartlev@sonic.net](mailto:bartlev@sonic.net), or Diane Depuydt 318-5905, [dhdepuysdt@gmail.com](mailto:dhdepuysdt@gmail.com).

## Share the Basket / Hot Topics

### Share the Basket

On Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, one half of the offertory collection will go to our neighbor, The Living Room. It is the only facility for homeless and at risk women and their children in Sonoma County. Monday through Friday they serve nutritious breakfasts and lunches to an average of 50 to 80 people per day. They also offer the Mothers and Children program and the Pathways Case Management Program which works with clients to solve the problems and develop the skills to get and keep jobs and homes. Volunteers give 6 thousand hours per year to keep this multifaceted program going. When the basket comes your way, please be as generous as you can!

### Hot Topics

I hope everyone has a **Hot Topics** card stuck to their refrigerator. But if not, please stop by the Advocates for Social Justice table and pick one up! We regret to say that there is a change in the schedule. Due to the Congregational Meeting on June 6<sup>th</sup>, the presentation on Micro-lending has to be postponed to a still undecided date.



**NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

**SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2010**

**[Newsletter@uusantarosa.org](mailto:Newsletter@uusantarosa.org)**

**E-mail submissions**

**Greatly Appreciated!**

## Nothing Important from David Templeton

This space is usually where I impart some important, official bits-of-business. In this monthly "Letter From David," you are regularly reminded of important upcoming events, or informed of important changes in room-use policies. Sometimes I report on the various cool people who share our facility, as renters or community members, because of course, it's important to know who our neighbors are. On occasion, I even use this space to praise all of the many UUCSR members who assist me in numerous important and much-appreciated ways (Thanks again, by the way!).

Today, however, I cannot think of anything important to say.

Instead, I'd like to share a thought I had this morning about my favorite novel of all time: John Steinbeck's 'Cannery Row' and 'Sweet Thursday.' Technically, I've just named two books, but in my mind they are two-pieces of the one same story, a story I view as the most important story Steinbeck ever wrote. I became a fan of Steinbeck—I should first mention—when I was a 19-year-old Southern California kid facing serious questions about the faith I'd held for the last several years. Gradually recognizing that my fundamentalist church was no longer a safe place for me, but terrified of what awaited me out in "the World" (There was a always a big, scary, capital W on that word whenever someone at my church uttered it!). One of the things I'd been told repeatedly was that Love and Compassion only belonged to those inside the flock of Jesus. I had been trained to believe that all non-Christians (a phrase that for us included Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, etc.) were cold-hearted, cruel, and devoid of goodness.

I had come to realize that this was not true, that some non-Christians were actually "okay people." But I still held that lingering distrust of non-believers and anyone else who was detectably different from myself.

Then I picked up 'Cannery Row.'

Here are the opening words.

"Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood,

chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honky-tonks, restaurants and whore-houses, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flophouses. Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, 'Whores, pimps, gamblers and sons of bitches,' by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, 'Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men,' and he would have meant the same thing."

Those words changed my life. They allowed me to redefine what I'd seen as "goodness."

The "hero" of 'Cannery Row' and 'Sweet Thursday' is "Doc." An agnostic Marine Biologist, Doc was also foul-mouthed, sexually promiscuous, and a very hard drinker, everything I had come to believe was bad and immoral. What really got me though, was that Doc was also an incredibly good person. He wasn't struggling to be good in spite of himself—he was, in every cell of his body and mind, a man dedicated to doing good in the world (the "World"), not because he needed to do so in order to please some over-arching code or religious edict, but because he didn't know how to do otherwise.

In the 'Cannery Row' books, Doc is a counselor to drunks, bums, prostitutes, and artists. Without a speck of judgment, he befriends the neighborhoods various petty criminals and is always delighted by their constant attempts to con him. He looks with respect on the highly moral madam who runs the brothel across the street, and sees her as pinnacle of virtue and public service. He is opinionated, yet open-minded, fierce but forgiving.

In short, he sees the beauty, the goodness, in everyone, and puts no demands on anyone to be anything other than what they are. What shocked me so much was how much this character—based, I soon learned, on the very real Dr. Ed Ricketts—reminded me of someone I'd looked up to for years: Jesus.

In their complete openness to the humanity of other people, Jesus and Doc Ricketts were incredibly similar. And whereas I'd repeatedly failed in my attempts to be "like Jesus," I could totally believe that I might be able to become "like Doc."

*Cont. on page 11*

## Nothing Important Cont.

*Cont. from page 10*

In order to wrap my head around this, I had to finally let go of the notion that any one faith OWNED the practice of goodness. These ideas, further propelled by discoveries I was making through additional reading, through listening to music, through the viewing of movies, etc., all began with a simple, beautifully written opening paragraph.

So back to that thought I had this morning.

Art is at its most powerful when it appears to be the least important, or deals with "unimportant" things.

That is a lot of what drives the Arts & Culture Ministry

here (okay, I guess I found a way to tie this into my work at the Glaser Center), a ministry devoted to using art as a way to open people up to new ideas.

To this end, I encourage you all to look closely at the events we've planned for the upcoming months. I encourage you to be like Doc, in opening up to the possibilities. Even if something doesn't sound like your cup of tea, even if it doesn't sound like an important use of your time, consider stopping by anyway.

You just might be surprised.

Something along the way might even change your life.

David Templeton

## A Taste of Oakmont

Hello UUCSR and FRIENDS,  
I wanted to let you know of a wonderful fun opportunity...A not to be missed event! UUCSR's first annual

### A TASTE OF OAKMONT

**May 23rd, Sunday from 4-7or 7:30 pm.**

This event, hosted by families of the UUCSR Oakmonters, will be a fun, social, culinary, and a roving experience for all. Here is how it works. Five of the homes will serve a small plate of their favorite culinary experience and a glass of local wine or other drinkable concoction. After a bit of socializing each participant then moves to new host (ess) home for a new culinary experience. At each new home you will try something different, while also mixing with the random social characters of UUCSR and friends. At the end, all participants and the hosts (esses) will meet at the Oakmont Berger Center for dessert, coffee, and other libations to top off a wonderful experience. All homes are located within a few miles of each other.

Don't miss the fun. The first annual Taste of Oakmont was presented at our Annual Auction Extravaganza.

The hosts of this event have agreed to allow a few more guests to participate, for those who missed signing up at the auction. Donations to the UUCSR fund raising service auction of \$30 and be willing to have a good time are all you need for a reservation. Tickets will be out soon! So please sign up by emailing or calling Kirsten Olney 542-4694 or [olney@computer.org](mailto:olney@computer.org). Please leave a message. (If you already signed up at the service auction you are still IN).

This event was recommended by our sister and brother Congregation in Walnut Creek and has been a big hit there for many years. Don't miss the fun and help us start OUR annual tradition.

Hosted by:

Tom Bond and Laura Jean Hageman  
Sally Fife and John Dumbrill  
Art Rosenblum and Maureen Rumford  
Pat Warner  
Bonnie Daines and Bob Boone  
Marge Ottman at the Berger Center



## The Heart of Unitarian Universalism Cont.

*Cont. from page 2*

We're going to need the Spirit of Love over the next couple of months. We need to root ourselves as deeply as we can in what matters most to us as we face some hard decisions about our goals and priorities for the next year. The good news is that we have surpassed last year's pledges, which is virtually unheard of in other religious communities in this economic climate. Clearly, you love UUCSR. But unless there are unexpected pledges of extraordinary generosity out there still, we will likely be about \$75,000 short of the funds needed to keep the status quo, and because we can no longer afford a deficit we will be forced to decide which staff to let go, which programs to cancel, and which organizations to renounce our membership in (including possibly the UUA and PCD). This will feel like a real step back unless we keep our eyes on the prize and root ourselves in our mission and vision. I have great faith that we will navigate these difficult waters with joy and hope.

Furthermore, we need keep love in mind and heart as we consider how to expand our worship services. As a minister, I am sworn to love you all equally, but I'll confess I have a particular concern with people who are lost, broken, depressed, and unsure. More than any other thing we

do together here, I want to ensure that every person who comes here on a Sunday seeking answers, solace, communion or joy, finds it in and from us because we ourselves are receiving love, in the largest and most complete sense, and growing it, and being drawn to share it. I want you to imagine a Sunday service where we treat Love with as much devotion, conviction and honor as other faiths do God, Allah or Buddha. What rituals would we conduct? How can we craft worship that inspires those thoughts, feelings and commitments? Love demands that we always be willing to invite more people into our way of life. What's the best way to do that? I believe we can unfold that wisdom together.

My ongoing goal is to test and see if Love is sufficient to explain and inspire and give shape to our whole lives. Is Love God? If it isn't, we need to find something else, something bigger. Some would argue such a thing cannot be found, but I say that to live a faithful life is to say it can. To live a faithful life in community is to agree on what the Ultimate is and explore it and unfold it together. So I ask, O Buddhists, Humanists, Christians, Agnostics, Pagans, Jews, and everyone, will we let love guide us through the hard night?

May it be so!

### THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

The goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

### THE SOURCES OF OUR LIVING TRADITION

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life

Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit

Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

## Summary of March Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2010—Meeting was called to order at 6:05 by Andrew Hidas.

Members Present: Andrew Hidas, Ann Chambers, Denese Pender, Karen Lillard, Bonnie Daines, Phyllis Heagney, Mary Louise Jaffray, Craig Work. Robert Barrows

Chalice lighting and opening words: Chris Bell

90-second check-in: "What, if any, meaning does the Christian resurrection story hold for you?"

Minutes of February 18, 2010 Board Meeting were reviewed and approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Denese Pender/Bonnie Daines

As of January, finances were relatively good. Due to unexpected expenditures for building maintenance, only \$1,000. of the \$3,000 UU dues had been paid. These dues are due quarterly. Income projection for summer is, as usual, rather low.

Rental income at \$10,000—better than last year at this time.

MORTGAGE NOTES, TERMS AND CONDITIONS: The Board reviewed the final proposal as submitted by Rose St. John of the Financial Stewardship Council at the previous Board meeting. The Council has devised a simple formula for payment of mortgage with Member Notes. Congregation can pay down on the mortgage quarterly.

MOTION: To approve Mortgage Note Terms and Conditions document.

VOTE: Approved unanimously

EMERGENCY RESERVE FUND: There was general feeling that the purpose and implementation of the fund was not yet fully understood by the congregation. Discussion centered around clarity of terms, i.e. how fund will be restricted, who will define the emergency and how funds will be used. It was noted that the bylaws currently restrict the Board's ability to enter into unbudgeted notes, contracts, and commitments above \$10,000. Therefore, that bylaw would need to be changed in order to accommodate an emergency fund disbursement that could not wait for a congregational meeting. A proposal on this matter will be brought before the June Congregational meeting.

MOTION: The Emergency Reserve Fund will be used for an unplanned, non-budgeted expense immediately vital for ongoing congregational operations as determined by a 2/3 majority vote of the Board. The Fund cannot be used to make up for a lack of cash flow for regular budget items.

VOTE: Approved unanimously

BYLAWS REVIEW & DISCUSSION: Craig Work again submitted the UUCSR Bylaw Revision Proposal to general approval by Board members.

MINISTER'S SABBATICAL PLANNING: Minister earns one month toward sabbatical for each year's service. Therefore, Chris will be eligible for a full six-month sabbatical in two years. It was noted that normally a congregation budgets approximately 2/3 of the present minister's salary to cover the cost of securing a replacement, and it is necessary for us to start a sabbatical fund. Plans and update will be revisited in future Board meetings.

GOALS UPDATE & REVIEW: The HR Committee wants a board Liaison. There is question about committee meeting times, and the ability of a Board liaison to meet during a weekday. Andrew will check again with HR.

Membership feels the Board should provide leadership training, because such training will facilitate new member participation. In the form of sending members to UU Leadership school? In-house leadership training? Further discussion on this matter in the future.

It was decided the Board would add a May 6 meeting to its regular May 20 meeting for purposes of budget discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Friday, May 7, 7:30 p.m.**

### **New Horizons Band**

Sonoma County's only all-senior-citizen band with an evening of big band swing music, rousing marches, tunes from the Broadway musicals 'Hair' and 'Les Miserables,' and also music from the 1955 movie 'The Damubuters.'

**FREE admission**, though donations will be accepted, a portion of which will benefit the effort to build a new Senior Center in Santa Rosa

**Sunday, May 16, 7:30 p.m.**

### **Occidental Community Choir Naked with Chocolate:**

#### **Songs of Earthly Delight**

Above all other human emotions and experiences, love has inspired poets and musicians down through the ages. The OCC's new show will provide a bountiful buffet of love songs, from madrigal to modern. The earthy pleasures of good food and drink, comfortable shoes, belly laughs, and other pleasures of the flesh will also be praised in song and story. Combining OCC original lyrics and compositions with selections from the broader choral repertoire, along with poetry, storytelling, unusual instruments and unpredictable shenanigans, it promises to be an OCC concert not to be missed.

**Tickets are \$15 general admission, \$13 for seniors (62 and up), free admission for children 12 years and younger. AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR**

**Saturday, May 22, 7:30 p.m.**

### **Young People's Chamber Orchestra**

The Santa Rosa Symphony's youth ensemble performs Telemann, Vivaldi, Britten and Puccini. \$10 (seniors & students); \$12 (general). Tickets WILL be available at the door.

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDARS NOW!  
GET YOUR TICKETS  
SOON!**

**Friday, July 2  
Encore Presentation**

**'Til My Tale is  
Told & Done**

**Ten Actors perform the  
lyrics of the Grateful Dead  
as spoken-word**

An evening of wild, riveting, bravura performances by some of the Bay Area's best actors, delivering some of the most beautiful lyrics you've ever heard, in ways that will allow you to hear them for the first time, all over again. If you missed this last time, you'll want to see it this time.

**Saturday, July 3  
Another One-of-a-kind  
Spoken Word Event!  
*The Beatles'***

**White Album**

**Performed in its entirety as  
Spoken word poetry and  
performance!**

The North Bay Sponsoring Committee  
invites you to our

# Action Assembly

**Tuesday, May 25, 2010**  
7:00 – 9:00 PM

Be part of your institutional delegation and join with hundreds from other congregations and community institutions, our elected officials, and candidates for state, county and local office as the North Bay Sponsoring Committee presents an agenda for public action and declares its intention to found a political body of institutions committed to acting together on critical issues for the public good in Sonoma and Napa Counties.

**Friedman Center  
Congregation Beth Ami  
4676 Mayette Ave.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**

Directions: Hwy. 101 towards Santa Rosa Exit Hwy. 12 Eastbound (towards Sonoma) When Freeway ends at Farmers Lane stop light (2.5 miles), continue straight onto Hoen Ave. for 1.5 miles. At second stop light, turn left onto Yulupa Ave. Drive one long block to Mayette Ave. and turn right. Drive 1/2 mile on Mayette to reach Friedman Center on right hand side.

The North Bay Sponsoring Committee (NBSC) is a broad-based organization of congregations and non-profit institutions working to create relational power that can build and strengthen member institutions as well as shape Sonoma and Napa Counties' public policy for the common good. NBSC is part of the Bay Area Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The IAF is the oldest and largest organizing and leadership development network in the county. For more information, contact [info@bayareaiaf.org](mailto:info@bayareaiaf.org)



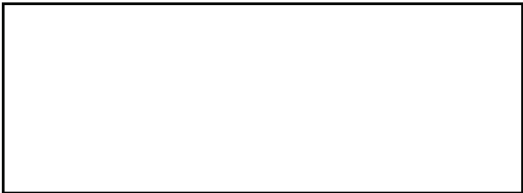
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May 2010

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**Order of Service Announcements:**

Send submissions to [Orderofservice@uusantarosa.org](mailto:Orderofservice@uusantarosa.org)  
**Editor:** Janis Brewster  
**Deadline:** Wednesday, Noon, prior to Sunday Service

**UU Update Newsletter:**

Send submissions to [Newsletter@uusantarosa.org](mailto:Newsletter@uusantarosa.org)  
Newsletter by E-mail is available. To sign up, send an e-mail to [Administrator@uusantarosa.org](mailto:Administrator@uusantarosa.org) with your name and e-mail address

**Editor:** Janis Brewster

**Newsletter deadline follows the 3rd Sunday. All electronic deadlines are noon Monday.**

Please place any hard copy submissions in the Newsletter mail slot in the office by noon Sunday.

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