



The Univoice

Worship, programming to follow monthly theme model

From August 2008 to May 2009, First UU Berks has a theme each month for worship. Some programming, such as lunch bunch and circle group topics, will also draw from these themes. The theme is a guiding tool only, and will be used for at least one service each month, and may inform other readings and musical selections throughout the month.

Each theme will make use of stories drawn from our living tradition and from the various sources of our UU faith, including Biblical texts. This approach is intended to help create greater theological and spiritual depth by deepening our understanding of

liberal theology and Unitarian Universalism.

This model has been used by All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa, for the past three years, and variations are being used by other UU congregations as well.

- August, God
- September, Unity
- October, Spirit
- November, Remembrance
- December, Possibility
- January, Integrity
- February, Love
- March, Justice
- April, Transformation
- May, Truth

The church office is

open from 12-5pm, Tuesday through Friday, but please call ahead to ensure access. If you need to get in at other times, contact the office manager to arrange for a temporary key.

Rev. Fees will be on vacation and study leave through August 10.

Board of Directors

Norman Block, president
Joe Plageman, vice president
Doug Mealing, secretary
Jeanne Hey, treasurer
Members at large,
Richard Bromley, Mike Mannix, Diane VanBodegraven, Doug Wray, Tracy Brant, Miryha Thibalt, Jeff Woodward, Cindy Mock

Celebrating Joanna, August 24

On August 24, immediately following the service, the church will host a celebratory tea party in honor of Joanna Groebel and her magnificent work as Director of Religious Education. Please join in celebrating, thanking, and saying goodbye to Joanna as she steps away from that role to pursue other interests.



From Sandra's Study

Rev. Sandra Fees

When Joanna told me she was resigning as our Director of Religious Education, I told her I wasn't sure I knew how to do "this" without her. By "this," I meant being the minister of this church. The words kind of slipped out of my mouth before I could stop myself. I wasn't trying to flatter her or make her feel bad. I just couldn't imagine it.

You see, Joanna was already here as DRE when I arrived. She had been in the position for a year. She was a longtime member of the church who knew the congregation in ways I simply couldn't when I first arrived. She welcomed me with warmth and openness. At our first meeting, she gave me the gift of a volume of chalice lighting readings. Inside she wrote: "To Sandra at the beginning of your ministry. With best wishes." Doesn't that sound just like Joanna?

Over the past few years, my respect and admiration for Joanna have grown. Her leadership has been instrumental in the growth of our RE program. Her commitment to the children, youth, and families of the congregation is unmistakable. While that may have been Joanna's focus and priority, her work extended well beyond that and has contributed to the spiritual lives of the entire

community and to our UU faith more broadly. Her work has been remarkable. She deserves and I believe has our gratitude for the amazing work she has done.

But there's something else. Joanna leaving is the loss not only of our beloved DRE but for me also the loss of a valued colleague. At the end of this month, when Joanna completes her time as our DRE, she will continue to be a member of the congregation. I look forward to working with her in the future on all kinds of church-related projects.

But I will nevertheless miss her as a colleague. She has been a trusted advisor and a confidante. She and I have laughed and cried together. We have created wonderful services and rituals together. We have shared failures as well as successes. We have been disappointed and surprised. And yes, we have disagreed too. She has been willing to humor, indulge, and trust me even at times when I honestly think she thought my ideas were just a little unlikely. I sometimes felt she was more gracious and more generous of spirit with me than I was with her. It has been in that full range of our experience together that I came fully to trust and depend on and know Joanna as a colleague in the work of



ministry. I will miss that relationship especially, and in ways that I am only beginning to fully realize.

We will each in our own way bid farewell to Joanna as our DRE over this next month. Be sure to be at the reception after church on August 24 when we will do that as a community. Even as we say goodbye to her as Director of Religious Education, we do so with a spirit of hope for what Joanna is being called to do with her gifts and talents in other areas of her life. May we do so also with the knowledge that our spiritual community is well-positioned, thanks to her loving care all these years, to move forward building the future.

Yours in faith and love,

Sandra

The Sixth Annual Service Auction is coming!

Where can you find...in one place...babysitting and homework help for your children, top quality dining, gift certificates, someone to mow your lawn, and so much more? At the UU Service Auction!

Our last auction was held in Spring 2007. Due to the capital campaign and pledge drive this spring, we moved this year's auction to FALL.

The auction is scheduled for **November 15**. Please mark your calendars! Reserve that night if you can! We will have a wonderful evening of desserts and champagne at the church...

This fall we will be give out forms at coffee hour for you to fill out with your donation ideas, or you can simply email your ideas to this year's Auction

Committee chair, Mary Jane Vance. Please plan to help us out and join us for the auction! This is a vital way to support the church...and a lot of fun too!



Splinters from the Board

The Board's agenda was light in July. The Board voted to approve SJT/UUJEC's letter of support to the Community First Fund supporting block grants in the city. For more information, contact Kimberly McGarvey or Chris Fegley.

The search for a new DRE is underway. The search committee is being led by Mike Mannix. Board members will attend an annual retreat in early August. Larry Schwab will lead Board members in discussions revolving around leadership and goal-setting.

The Board encourages members to join the UU listserv to keep abreast of the many opportunities available to FUUBC members. This is a great way to trade information and know what's of interest in the community. A link to the listserv can now be found on the FUUBC website compliments of Erika Bricker. Thank you, Erika!

The Board would like to remind members that July 2008 started the new fiscal year. Please begin sending in your pledges towards the new budget year. If you have questions regarding your pledge, you may contact Jeanne Hey or Lois Moll for more information. The church cannot run without your generous support!

The next Board meeting will be held in the Gerber Room on Tuesday, August 12th at 7pm. Everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Norman Block or Joe Plageman.

Book Discussion Group, August 10

The Book Discussion Group will be meeting August 10th at 9:15 in the Chalice House to discuss **The Dive from Clausen's Pier**, by Ann Packer.

NOTE: This is a change from the original schedule. September's book will be **Riding the Bus with My Sister**, by Rachael Simon.

Everyone is welcome. Please contact Cindy Mock for more information.

Dear UU Parents and Friends,

Over the summer, I have had the opportunity to explore the wisdom of Buddhism and its contemplative practices. It has been very helpful in processing the transition in RE leadership. Buddhism addresses impermanence, change (and the ways in which we respond to it), altruism, our profound dependence on each other and on nature, and how every thought and action has an effect. These are universal but also particularly heightened issues for me and for the community right now. As a UU, I am grateful that we are empowered to reach out to the wisdom of other traditions as we are called. Do you know how rare that is? It is just one of the gifts this community offers to our children.

I will be using this transition as a spiritual practice, and have the sense that the community will as well. Already, people have stepped up to offer their wisdom on the Search Committee and the RE Committee, and their intentions are so pure. So, once again, thank you so much for every kind thought and action you have offered to our children and families and community over the past five years. I am excited about what the coming year will bring!

With Gratitude and Warmest Regards,

Joanna

Joanna Groebel, Director of Religious Education

RE Committee: Jason Bricker, Chair, Susan Stewart, Elizabeth Kaufmann, and Emily McNulty

Spirit in Action: A Summer Series for Children and Youth

This series is about movement—the natural language of children! It is intended to give children experiences of honoring their bodies as creative resource, sensitive guidance system, and a medium through which the soul is enacted. We have a slate of passionate teachers from our community who are looking forward to offering their practice to the children. The following sessions are intended for interested children and youth of all ages, and will begin in the Gerber Room after the Time for All Ages in the sanctuary. Please make sure your child wears loose comfortable clothing (pants or shorts).

August 17 Yoga with Jason Bricker and Elizabeth Kaufmann

The children will learn simple, enjoyable poses and breathing techniques to help them center and strengthen themselves. Jason has been a serious practitioner of yoga for 5 years and currently teaches at the Shri Yoga Wellness Center in Wyomissing. Elizabeth has practiced yoga since 2003 and has taught children in her home school group, and will be working with the very young children in attendance. Please send your child in with a yoga mat if available.

August 23 The RE committee will be holding a retreat to bond, vision, and set intentions and goals for the coming year.

The committee includes Jason Bricker, Elizabeth Kaufmann, Emily McNulty, Susan Stewart, Janette Fertig, and Lisa Wilder.

August 24 Aikido with Pete Ostregen

Pete teaches Aikido at Berks Aikido, and with his compadres will be doing a demonstration of aikido and leading our young people in some beginning moves.

August 31 Creative Movement with Janette Fertig and Elizabeth Kaufmann

Janette is a gifted movement teacher with a delightful sense of fun. She is an ariel dancer trained in Philadelphia, and the owner of St. Lawrence Art Space. She and Elizabeth will lead the children through creative movement warm-ups and improvisations with a worshipful theme.



Gift of school supplies is “Louder than Words”

While you are doing your back-to-school shopping with your child, please consider helping your child choose some school supplies for Emma’s Place, BWIC’s nationally recognized child development center in South Reading. Crayons, notebooks, pens, backpacks: whatever your child needs, these children need—and don’t usually get. There will be a basket in the vestibule throughout August for your donations.



Emma’s Place kids and staff

Henriette Alban’s seminar continues with “Experience Presence”

Henriette Alban’s monthly class at the Unitarian Universalist Church continues on Tuesday, August 5 from Noon to 1:30pm.

The focus for this seminar will be, “How to be in the moment and experience Presence within as an ongoing practice and avoid stress from our unchecked thoughts.” Participation is a good way to jumpstart your daily practice for present moment awareness.

The class is free and contributions are welcome

Using Eckhart Tolle’s work and Henriette’s professional and personal experience, the group will focus on reaching within for the always awakened awareness of True Self.

“When practiced continuously, our own awakened awareness makes itself known, and life as it lives itself through us becomes a dance where we invent steps as we move forward,” says Henriette. “We have all had experiences of this. Life is so much richer when we are connected at our core. This awareness has been called many things. I liken it to Who I Really Am.

“You must know that nothing is written in stone, that life is fluid and evolving moment to moment.”

Henriette Alban is a Doctor of Naturopathy.

Spiritual Practices Covenant Group to begin in September

A Spiritual Practices Covenant Group will begin in September. It will meet at the Chalice House once a month on Monday evenings from 7 to 8:30 PM. The dates will be as follows: Sept. 29, Nov. 3, Dec. 1, Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 2, March 30, and May 4.

The group will explore various spiritual practices--ways we can try to be more open to the mystery that is God (whatever your concept of God may be). The emphasis will be on silence, prayer and meditation rather than philosophical discussion. Also included will be some time spent with Small Group Spiritual Direction, which mostly consists of loving, attentive listening.

Due to the nature of this group, it will be limited to 6-8 participants. If you have questions or you would like to join this group, please contact Jane Rohrbach.



WANTED: a few good voices

Summer's almost over and our UU Choir is open for those of you who love to sing and are willing to make a commitment to practice one evening a week.

We'll be meeting for our first practice Wednesday, August 20th at 7:30 pm. We are usually finished practiced by 8:45. We are particularly in need of male voices!

So, if you love singing in the shower, bring your voice to choir. If you have any interest in sharing any hidden musical talent, we are always looking for occasional solo work.

Please call or email Tracy Blunt or Cheryl Gallo.

News from the Pantry

Our pantry served 100 families on July 3 with a total of 293 people. Our next pantry will be held on Thursday, August 7.

New volunteers are always welcome, anytime between 8:30 and noon on the first Thursday of every month. Duties include unloading the Greater Berks Food Bank truck, stocking the shelves, distributing the food, cleaning up and recycling the cardboard. For more information please contact Liz Eshelman.

First UU to host PUC October Meeting

The annual fall meeting of the Trustees of the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention will be held at our church, October 3-5.

Registration commences at the Hampton Inn on Friday, October 3, followed by a wine and cheese reception. Registration will continue on Saturday morning at the church.

The opening worship service, at 9am, will be led by The Rev. Ralph Christiansen. The meeting begins at 9:30am. Rev Richard Trudeau will give the keynote address, on "Universalist Spirituality." Afternoon activities include tours, free time and talkbacks, followed by dinner at the Wyndham Hotel. The meeting will conclude on Sunday, with the Trustees joining our congregation for worship, coffee and conversation.

14th Annual B&B Weekend in Rutland, VT

September 26-28 marks the fourteenth Annual B&B Weekend offered by the UU Church of Rutland, VT. Enjoy the beauty of Vermont, UU hospitality, and a choice of guided activities: hiking, kayaking, bicycling, antiques/arts, cider making historic tour, soaring tour, touring historic sites and quaint towns, and much more.

Registration by August 1, \$250 (single) and \$450 (double). After August 1, \$300 (single) and \$500 (double). For more information contact uufoliagevermont@yahoo.com or (802) 353-7969. www.rutlanduu.org



Coffee Corps

August 3	Freida and Walter Axsmith
August 10	Mary Jo and John Weishampel
August 17	Sam Tyson
August 24	Rick Bromley
August 31	The Orts/Simonsons

Ushers

August 3	Walter Axsmith, Sam Tyson
August 10	Nelson Simonson, Laurie Gerson
August 17	Mike Szajna, Steve DeBroux
August 24	Joe Plageman, Fay Oxenrider
August 31	Keith Orts, Joe Showalter

August		
Aug 3, 2008	Building Work Day	12-2pm
Aug 5, 2008	Women's Health Henriette's Seminar	9am-12:30pm 12-1:30pm
Aug 12, 2008	Women's Health Board Meeting New Earth Workshop	9am-12:30pm 7pm 7pm
Aug 13, 2008	UUJEC	5:30 PM
Aug 17, 2008	Auction Committee Meeting	9:45 AM
Aug 19, 2008	Women's Health	9am-12:30pm
Aug 20, 2008	SJT	7:30 PM
Aug 26, 2008	Women's Health New Earth Workshop	9am-12:30pm 7pm
Aug 27, 2008	UUJEC	5:30 PM

Univoice Submission Guidelines

Email submissions by attaching a Word or Pages file, or including your material in the body of an email message, to univoice@uuberks.org. You may also put typewritten submissions in our mailbox in the deBenneville Room. The deadline is the 15th of each month. Please include the date, time and location of events, and the full name and phone number or email of contacts.

--Jane Palmer and Erika Bricker,
co-editors

Worship Services in August

August 3 The Nature of Nature

Ruth Epler, Lay Leader

This service will explore the “nature of nature” in words and music, inviting us to truly perceive the natural world and accept being a part of it.

August 10 True Humor: The life and teachings of Avatar Adi Da Samraj.

Judd Bortz, Lay Leader

Adi Da was born in Queens NY 1939, raised Lutheran, attended Columbia and Stanford Universities. The sermon will be an audio presentation given by Adi Da in 1988 entitled, “The Great Tradition.” Judd has been a devotee of Adi Da since 2000.

This service will begin early with a special musical prelude entitled “Beauty, Love and The Divine.” Prelude begins at 10am.

Nursery childcare will be provided for Sunday services throughout the summer.

August 17 Wrestling with God

Rev. Sandra Fees

Unitarian Universalists are known to be spiritually ambidextrous. We live in a tension of belief, denial, and doubt when it comes to the Holy. How can this seemingly paradoxical approach to religion lead to spiritual maturity?

August 24 Bring Many Names

Rev. Sandra Fees

Different religions and cultures use different names for God. The many names remind us that God is always larger, more mysterious, and more elusive than we can imagine.

August 31 Lurking Places

Rev. Sandra Fees

Most of us have come to expect to experience the sacred in particular places. We tend to return to those spots over and over again. This morning we will consider some of our favorites and also explore others where we might be surprised to encounter the divine.

First Unitarian Universalist Church
of Berks County

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