



THE OPEN DOOR

**NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
(UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST) AUBURN, MAINE
159 PLEASANT STREET (SIDE DOOR) AUBURN, ME 04210
(207) 783-0461 - UUAUBURN@MYFAIRPOINT.NET
WEBSITE: WWW.AUBURNUU.ORG
SUNDAY WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION AT 10 AM**

***AN OFFICIAL UUA WELCOMING CONGREGATION:
ALL ARE WORTHY, ALL ARE WELCOME!***

We need not think alike to love alike- - Francis David

JANUARY, 2010

Jodi's Corner - Words from our Minister

Many of you have probably noticed the new banner hanging on the exterior of our building- thank you to the many of you who made its purchase possible and to Anne Perron for hanging it! The banner reads, "Standing On The Side Of Love." In the most immediate sense, it is an affirmation of our continued commitment to full equality for members of the lgbtq community. Though the vote to overturn equal marriage rights in November was devastating, it was also only a setback on the sure road to justice. The banner is a constant and public reminder of where we stand.

But it is also something more. As the UUA explains, "This is a time of great hope and possibility, yet our communities are threatened by the increased prevalence of acts motivated by fear and hate. No one should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence because of their identities. In public debates over immigration, LGBT rights, and more, religious people stand on the side of love and call for respect, inclusion, and compassion."

While the phrase "Standing on the Side of Love" speaks to our stance on marriage equality, it is also a larger public advocacy campaign that seeks to harness love's power to stop oppression. It reminds us that our faith calls us to stand with all of those who are being dehumanized because of who they are and stand with them. It does not dictate a specific position on any given issue. It does ask us, as we reflect on the issues that face us, to place love at the foundation of our response.

The Standing on the Side of Love campaign is new to the UUA, new to the larger faith community (it was introduced by the UUA but is open to all who are interested- and many other faith groups have enthusiastically responded), and new to us. Hanging the banner does

not commit us to anything. But it does reaffirm what this church has publicly and passionately advocated for years- that we will work to see the day that hatred has no place in our homes or communities, and love will guide us on our way.

And may your days and nights be blessed, *Jodi*

Sermon Excerpts:

From “Yearning after the Sacred,” preached by Jodi December 13th:

On Hunger:

A story from the Jewish Tradition: “A student and his master were speaking one day about faith and the student said, “Every day I say my prayers. I listen deep within. I hunger after God. Why then have I not met him?”

But his master did not answer. A few days later they were doing laundry together in the river near by.

Suddenly, the master grabbed the student and plunged his head under the water. The student thrashed and flailed, struggling to bring his head above water. He became increasingly frantic as he grew more and more desperate for air. Finally, the master released him. The student flung himself onto the river bank, gasping for breath. When he had gathered himself, the master looked at him calmly and said, “When you hunger after God the way you just now hungered after air, you will find him. “

On Language:

“Theology is like describing the chemistry of a banana or the physics of riding a bike. It has some value, but what is essential is eating the banana and riding the bike.”

Forrest Gilmore

On Authenticity:

From *A Theology Adequate for the Night* by Nancy Shaffer

“...Night is the test, when grief lies uncovered,
And longing shows clear, when nothing we do
Can hasten earth’s turning or delay it...”

THANK YOU to everyone who donated gifts and food this holiday season. Because of your generosity, we were able to give every gift requested of us by the youth of the Genesis and Renaissance houses. And we were able to provide many families with holiday meals. Because we have all undoubtedly experienced times of struggle, and can remember what pulled us through, I'm sure you know that an act of kindness, even a small one, can mean a huge amount. I'm grateful to everyone who took time out of their busy lives this holiday season to offer some care to those who need it most right now. Special thanks to Ari Rosenberg for letting us know about the need at the Genesis and Renaissance Houses, Sara Karem for letting us know about the basket program at the school, and for bringing the baskets to the school, and to Mary Kay Weisenberger and Claire Hebert for their overall organization and work.

--*Jodi*

Adult Religious Education

FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON: After many years, our small group facilitators and I have decided that it is time to bring our Small Group Ministry program as we know it to an end. Our small groups have provided a wonderful opportunity for a small group of members and friends over the years. But for whatever reason, the program has not successfully taken root in this church. We have poured much energy and love into making it the best program it could be, but it seems to us that, at this point, it is wiser to pour that energy and love into a program that will be accessible to a larger group of people. It is hard to let the program go, but we strongly believe that this will be a healthy and life-giving shift.

Along those lines, I am very pleased to say that we are re-creating and re-invigorating our Adult Religious Education program.

We are hoping to develop a comprehensive program that will eventually include several different programs running at all times. For now, we have two wonderful new co-chairs- Emily Wright Timko and Casey Knight, and an initial list of classes we are considering offering through the end of the year. What we are hoping to hear from you is a) are you interested in facilitating one of the following classes, b) are you interested in facilitating a class not on the list, c) is there a class not on this list that you are interesting in taking? We are at the very beginning stages of development and any and all feedback is welcome! For now, we are considering offering the following classes at some point before the end of the church year: Parents as Resident Theologians, Building Your Own Theology, Evensong, and a Bible Study or World Religions class.

--Jodi

President's Message:

With the Holiday Season over for most, it is a time when we begin to refocus on the future. In the coming year, we will be focusing on growing our Community. It is important, as we go forward, to remember that new faces within our space need to be recognized and welcomed.

Along with welcoming, comes communication. We need to be sure that the new people who are joining us are spoken to, and feel welcomed. In communicating, we need to remember that direct communication is the best route. If you introduce yourself to someone new, and welcome them, be sure to stay around and encourage others to also speak with them. Be a listener and a historian. Listen to what newcomers have to say and why they are here. Answer their questions directly.

Remember that direct communication is always best. When communicating about other people, remember that perceptions may often get in the way. If there are concerns that you bring to others for clarification, be sure that you are communicating directly with those who have created the concern. Not doing so can make it awkward and very difficult for all of those who may be involved, and lead to great discord.

This is extremely important when we are dealing with new people who enter our space, as well as with each other. Remember that new people are going to be watching our interactions with each other. They are going to be looking and listening to us, and it is important that we remember our own agreement regarding communication; Go Direct and Presume Good Intentions. This lessens confusion and shows that we are abiding by our First Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person. What better way to welcome new people into our space and into our community?

AOYSA

Donald C. Johnson, Board President

December Board Briefs

Gratitude- We thanked Mary Lou Hoffman and Deni Ballard for their work at the Gingerbread Fair, Beth Ayotte for her continued work redesigning the new membership process, and Gerry Fox for hours spent snow shoveling!

Denominational Affairs-

The Portland Allen Ave. church has invited our church and the Yarmouth church to join their Ferry Beach retreat April 16th-April 18th! More information to come!

Action Items and Cultural Conversations:

The rest of our meeting was spent on both the profound...

We discussed how we communicate with each other as a board, an issue and practice important in the rest of the congregation as well. After identifying those inclinations within us that hinder direct, honest, and compassionate communication, we discussed ways to overcome them.

and the mundane...

We decided whether to 1) continue using our aging copier without a service contract or 2) enter a service contract or 3) lease a new machine with a service contract. We settled on option one, maintaining a line item in the budget to lease a new copier when the current one dies.

If you have any questions regarding the content of the report, feel free to contact a Board member. Please note that all Board meetings are open to all, and are held on the third Monday of each month unless it's a holiday. Our next meeting will be Monday, Jan. 25th at 6:30 p.m.

-- *Emily Wright-Timko, Clerk*

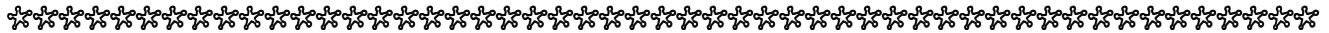
FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

The remains of a Christmas wrapping paper blizzard have settled all around me in my living room, where I sit with my laptop and (now cold) coffee. I still have more packing to do before we can leave town - we're going up to Sugarloaf for a week, and will be staying at Marc and Beth Ayotte's condo, which Nate and I were the successful bidders on at last spring's Service Auction. (If you haven't been to the auction, you should definitely plan on attending this year - it's a blast, and a great way to get to know your fellow church members.) As a non-skier, I plan on taking along plenty of knitting to keep me occupied - though I just might convince myself to give snowboarding a try.

One thing I'm **not** taking along is worry about the church finances. Don't get me wrong, we aren't swimming in excess cash by any means - but with our successful Gingerbread Fair and the regular pledge payments of our members and friends, we are finishing the calendar year with enough money to pay our bills without having to wait until the Very. Last. Minute (as we sometimes have to do during the year). It's a nice change to finish writing checks and still see money remaining in the account.

Speaking of money (and then I promise I'll shut up about it!), board member Peggy Cox and I spent some time together last night after the lovely Christmas Eve service counting the offering. (Note to self: next year, be sure to stop by the vestry for cookies **before** counting!) Together, you donated over \$250 to the Barton Center for Diabetes Education; the money will go towards scholarships for their summer camp programs. Donations were made in memory of Lee Richards and Peter Lacasse, Martha Kier Hutchins and Susan Lacasse, Donald Hinckley, Frank Coffin, and Carroll and Myrtle Parker. Thank you all for your continuing generosity, and I wish you a healthy, happy and peaceful new year.

-- *Christine Babb, Treasurer*



News From Religious Exploration

Secret Pen Pals 2010

Beginning the first week in January, RE will run its annual "Secret Pen Pal" program. This intergenerational activity is intended to foster and deepen connections within the congregation, especially between people who might not usually meet.

It's NOT too late to sign up for the secret pen-pal program! Just email Clara at DREuuAuburn@myfairpoint.net.

January 10th SOUP Luncheon

Mark your calendars! On Sunday, January 10th after the service we'll be hosting a soup luncheon fundraiser. Proceeds will go towards the all-church Contra Dance scheduled for the afternoon Sunday, February 7th.

Guest at Your Table Update!

We will close the Guest at Your Table program on Sunday, January 10, 2010, on which day donations will be collected here at the church. We ask that donating parties convert the cash donations into check form, made out to the UUSC, as this will aid in tracking donations. Cash donations will also gladly be accepted.

I can be reached at DREuuAuburn@myfairpoint.net.

-- *Clara Bolduc, Director of Religious Exploration*

Seeking Night Owls

As some of you may be aware, our church is hosting a youth conference for 6-8 graders on May 1-2, 2010. Due to new safety policies set forth by the District, we are requiring that two adults be present and awake during the nights of youth conferences. This is an easy task, which is just making sure that nobody is up and about in the church when they shouldn't be. In this case, this would be Saturday night only. Therefore, we are seeking the following:

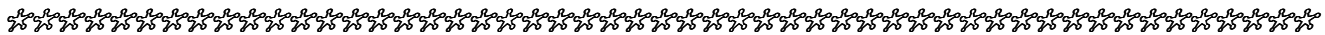
12:00 midnight - 3:00 AM: two adults of different genders. 3:00 AM - 6:00 AM: a different pair of adults of different genders

In other words, we are looking for four adults total.

If you can take on this task, first of all - THANK YOU! Second, please let us know by January 15th, as the volunteers we get up front will dictate how - and ultimately, if - we operate the conference.

Thanks in advance for all of your help!

--*Jeremiah Bartlett*



Membership Committee News

We are pleased to announce that **Candy Alves, Diane Chasse, Grayling Cunningham, Kim Foskett, Nicole Rush, Ari Rosenberg, and Craig Saddlemire** have joined the congregation. As is our custom, we welcomed them in a special ceremony during the church service held on Sunday, December 13th. We look forward to supporting them in their individual searches for truth and meaning. Join us in providing all of our newcomers with an enriching environment where they can nurture their spirits.

For me this past holiday season was a time to reflect on the religions, symbols, and various aspects of other cultures that go beyond the surface of foods, dances, and clothing. I move into the New Year with continued faith in the interdependent web of all existence and deeper appreciation for the sacred enduring elements.

...We are re-introducing the VISITOR CARD. Look for these small green visitor cards upstairs in the hymnal racks of the sanctuary along with pencils to fill them out. Encourage any newcomer who wishes to learn more about our church to complete one and place it in the collection basket.

-*Beth Ayotte*, Membership Chair

Council of Committees (CofC)

The Council is beginning a visioning process led by VP Anne Perron. All chairs are encouraged to be part of this process to determine what we want from the Council..

The next CofC meeting is January 13, the second Wednesday of the month, at 6:30 pm. Chairs meet in the church office conference room. See you there.

NOTE: Chairs who don't attend CofC are asked to submit an update to be read at the meeting.

Reminder: make sure dates are available and put your events in the office calendar!

Publicity Note: please give Toby 2 weeks' notice (min. 1 week) for events and news. Priority must go to fundraisers and church events.

Candlelight Reflections

It was, indeed, a Holy Night.
I sit here in my special place
to cut and paste the precious moments,
fashioning a tapestry
to have and to hold-----
the organ's thrilled vibrato,
the wonderful blending of voices,
masculine, feminine, intertwined
in reverent harmony
candles of faith flickering in
embracing semidark
and love. Everywhere
love.

-- *Pearl Tibbets Sawyer*

+++++

UU Theater

UU Theater is getting ready for another presentation of "The Vagina Monologues" this spring. If you are interested in being a part of it, whether on stage or behind the scenes, please contact Toby Haber-Giasson.

Social Justice Corner

2nd Collections for local non-profit organizations are taken the first Sunday of each month:

January, Androscoggin County Humane Society; **February**, Advocates for Children; **March**, AWAP; **April**, New Beginnings. If you want your donation to be tax-deductible, please make a check out directly to the beneficiary organization.

T-shirts with the Frances David slogan "We need not think alike to love alike" are available in adult and child sizes for \$15. Ask any Sunday after services. Peace bumper stickers also available.

Winter Warmth

A local family needs blankets. If you can spare any, please leave them in the lobby closet. Thanks.

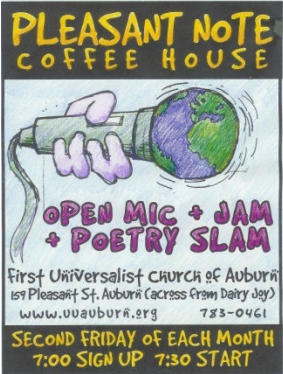
New Life for Old Cell Phones

A local business will repair and distribute discarded cell phones to people with safety concerns. Donate your old phones, chargers and accessories in the vestry, and Social Justice will deliver them for you.

Social Justice meetings- SJ meets at a new time, on the **LAST WEDNESDAY** of each month, at 6:30 pm.

Join us on January 27!

--*Social Justice Committee*



Open Mic

Join us Friday, January 8, at the next Open Mic/Poetry Slam! Share the spirituality of music, spoken word or dance. This free show starts at 7:15 on the 2nd Friday- and we've never missed a month.

Haven't you come down yet to experience it? This free event continues to draw people both new and familiar, who all share the fellowship of music. Bring yourself and a friend or neighbor!

Local Arts Calendar

L/A Arts, a local promoter of culture, has included Auburn UU's Open Mic in its annual publication for 2010. All they ask is that we help distribute it, so won't you please take an arts calendar, to say thank you to L/A Arts? They will be available in the vestry on Sundays.

A Church Retreat at Ferry Beach

Our Auburn U.U. congregation has received a wonderful invitation to join three of our neighboring U.U. churches for a weekend family-oriented retreat at the Ferry Beach UU Camp and Conference Center this spring.

For the past four years the Allen Avenue UU Church in Portland has held a successful all-church retreat at the Ferry Beach seaside retreat center in Saco. Last year they invited First Parish in Portland to join them; and building on the success of that experience, they are extending invitations to First Universalist in Auburn and the Yarmouth UU Church this year.

The retreat will begin Friday evening April 16th and end late Sunday morning, April 18th. There will be a variety of activities and discussion groups offered, as well as time to relax, stroll the beach and get to know one another, A favorite retreat event is the Saturday evening "Talent/No-Talent Show!"

Our friends at the Allen Avenue church will handle the major organizing responsibilities (thank you A2U2!). As plans are finalized they will provide us with registration forms and information about costs per person or per family. The fee will be all-inclusive, covering housing, meals, and programming. Within our congregation, Anne Kinney will take reservations and forward the information to Allen Avenue.

Those who have been to Ferry Beach before can attest to the magic that is created at our conference center there. There we join with other UU's in a sacred space where real transformations happen and where community is built with those who share our values. If you've ever wondered about the many conferences offered at Ferry Beach, this is your chance to sample the experience.

This year bring your spirit to the sea April 16th-18th! (Watch the newsletter and the bulletin board for more details as they are available.)

-*Anne Kinney*, Denominational Affairs Representative

The deadline for the February Open Door will be Tuesday, January 26.