

Prior to posting on the web, this newsletter was re-edited according to the UUA guidelines at: <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/55398.shtml>.

"WE SEEK SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN A WELCOMING AND CARING COMMUNITY"

KALEIDOSCOPE

February 28–March 13, 2009

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

Editor: Jared Dawson

Why Prom Is Important

On April 24 Parish Hall Ballroom will host the 1st Annual Spring Formal Dance for our congregation AND FRIENDS. This is an event to dress up for (if it's not your cup of tea, vamp it) and be formal for no other reason than the occasion. It is also a chance to mix together in a new way and "Shake Your Booty" in a non-threatening and cathartic fashion, and perhaps redo some of those misconceptions you might have had about how it was "supposed to be" back then. And oh, yeah, we want to see a Full House of people to raise the roof with our new sound system playing tunes from generations back. It is an intergenerational chance to have fun. Be it the waltz, hustle or twist: music and silliness for all. Prizes for best prom or grad pictures so bring them. Sign up in the Garden!

That Buzz You Hear

In the last few months many have heard a steady background buzzing and couldn't quite figure what it was or where it was coming from. Well, it could very well be the work of two task forces that have been very busy working the past few months on our behalf. Back in the fall the congregation held a two-day ministerial startup retreat that many of us participated in. At the retreat we heard loud and clear the desire of the congregation to become younger and more vibrant, welcoming and open to all that wish to join us on our communal journey. The Board of Trustees set up two task forces to provide guidance in support of these goals: Governance and Religious Education. Their charters are to collect information, analyze it against current practice, review best practices in other congregations, and develop a set of recommendations for Board action in the upcoming months.

The Governance task force was set up to look at how we govern our society and to determine if our current Bylaws are appropriate to supporting a vibrant and growing programs

church. The task force will prepare a report for the Board to review and if changes to the Bylaws are approved by the Board, to set in motion the mechanisms to place them in front of the congregation to approve at our annual meeting in June.

The Religious Education task force was set up to review the current direction and strategy of our program to ensure its proper position as a core program of the Society.

As with Governance, so too will the Religious Education Task Force collect information and review other congregations' practices. The task force will prepare a report for the Board to review and suggest recommendations that will be taken into account in the planning for next year and years to come.

Each task force is a small core group of members that represent as many different parts of our congregation as possible. To complete their work they will be reaching out to many of you to participate in idea sharing and focus groups. Please be generous with your time if you are asked to participate.

Continued next page

Plan on Joining Us in Celebration on Sunday Morning March 15 For Our Building Project Dedication!

Sunday Morning Services

9:30 and 11:30 AM

March 1
Inside the Biosphere I

March 8
Inside the Biosphere II

The Reverend Aaron McEmrys

In 1991, four men and four women entered 'Biosphere 2', an entirely self-enclosed and supposedly self-sufficient ecosystem hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world by impermeable walls of glass and steel. Two years and twenty minutes later, they came out again. In this service we will begin to examine their experience to see what we can learn about our connection to the earth and to one another.

When those eight men and women finally emerged from their biosphere in the desert, they were starving, exhausted and hopelessly divided into two opposing camps, each of which blamed and despised the other for everything that had gone wrong—whether real or imagined. In this service we will continue to discover what lessons their experience has for us, especially where human relationships are concerned.

That Buzz. . .

(continued from previous page)

When the reports are completed we will be sharing the results with you in a series of meetings and panel discussions. Please make the effort to attend these gatherings to assist your Board to do our work for you and put into place the things that will help us meet those expectations we heard last fall.

GARY WELTERLEN, BOARD PRESIDENT

What is Kiva Lending?

Many of us know and love the classic Italian film, *The Bicycle Thief*. It's a story of a poor man on the brink of ruin who finally finds a job, but needs a bicycle in order to do the job. He sells his bed linens for a bicycle, and I will never forget the glow of hope and returning dignity on his face as he sets off for a hard day at a new job. It is a beautiful illustration of the insignificant sums that can be a turning point for a family living in poverty.

This year, half of USSB's Christmas Eve offering has been given to Kiva, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty. Individuals and groups of people in the developing world apply for small loans for specific projects, which range from purchasing a sewing machine to stocking a store or installing solar panels somewhere far off the grid. Local micro-lending nonprofits evaluate the projects, and help write up each applicant's profile. Photos and profiles of each entrepreneur are posted on the Kiva website, so people like me and you who want to lend money can evaluate what specific project, individual or group they'd like to support.

Loans are made in \$25 increments, and because it is a loan, once the money has been paid back, you can be reimbursed, you can donate the money to Kiva for their operating expenses, or you can find another project you would like to support. Of the \$18,458,835 in loans Kiva has provided whose terms have ended, the default rate is 2.9%.

When I first explored Kiva's website, I was curious about what might be special and particularly "UU appropriate" about this nonprofit. It didn't take long for me to see the answer. As I searched their site, I was particularly drawn to certain projects. I wanted to support a female entrepreneur, and I wanted to find a vegetarian venture. I ended up lending \$25 to Risolat Muhammadova, a farmer and mother of three from Tajikistan. Her profile on Kiva also shows the 36 of us who pooled our resources to lend her the \$1125 she needed: people from Sweden to Germany, and a number of folks who choose to remain anonymous now share a common interest in this farm woman in Tajikistan.

I've never had such a fulfilling experience giving to a nonprofit. I feel like this small contribution does make a difference in this one specific life. I love that the borrowers are not charity cases, they are entrepreneurs. And seeing the network of people who came together to make it happen is a beautiful illustration of the interconnected web of life, of which we all are a part.

Visit the web site right away (www.kiva.org), and explore for yourself—I'm sure you'll be able to find a venture that resonates with your individual values and just feels right. Join the USSB Kiva lending team if you like what you see (http://www.kiva.org/community/viewTeam?team_id=3778), and we'll all get to see what an incredible difference to so many lives our involvement can make.

ELIZA McEMRYS

Social Justice Matters

Even with an administration sympathetic to our concerns, these are difficult times. By the time you read this column we'll know the fate of the financial stimulus plan, but even as it's being written most of the social-justice-related parts have been jettisoned to secure Republican votes. Such a sacrifice may be necessary if the prime concern is to slow and reverse the downward spiral of the world's financial system, but we must keep reminding Obama of the need for health care reform and help to education (to name just two) as soon as possible. Remember that money may be only valuable as an enabler of good things, but there it's vital.

Start at <http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/index.shtml>, the Unitarian Universalist Social Justice page, to get and share "keep the pressure on" ideas.

On the state level we see today (2/11) proposals to—temporarily perhaps—raise state sales and gas taxes. This seems in this retired teacher's opinion like a good idea if it results in the saving of state services and support of local governments.

Meanwhile on the "here" level, Wayne Mellinger has announced the Second Annual Santa Barbara Homeless Foot Washing Event to be held Thursday, April 9, between 10 and 1 PM, at the Veterans Memorial Building. Last year this was a great success, with very real service that benefited givers as well as receivers; 269 people got a pair of shoes, but this year Wayne hopes to involve 35 churches and serve as many as 700.

Churchill wasn't speaking to a financial crisis, but his words can apply here: "Do your worst—and we shall do our best".

PAUL NAY, CHAIR, SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Sketches . . . by Aaron

Dreaming Big

Late last night my plane landed at our lovely little airport, bringing me home safe and sound once again. This time I had been in St. Paul, Minnesota, visiting our sister church there, Unity Unitarian, one of the most remarkable congregations in our movement.

I was visiting as part of the UUA's "Dreaming Big" program. The program is made up of 20 ministers from all over the country who are studying the things that make large churches successful. Over a two-year period, we will visit six different large congregations, all of which are remarkable in their own unique ways.

Each of us is matched up with a "mentor", a senior minister from a highly successful congregation who offers us valuable insights and ongoing advice that can only spring from the wisdom of a long and fruitful life in ministry. My mentor is the Rev. Jim Nelson, from Neighborhood Church, down in Pasadena. He's great.

But I digress.

Unity Unitarian is a fabulous church, a congregation that is truly living out their highest values with one another and in the wider world. Their vibrant programs are supported by top-notch staff and deeply committed lay leaders, their worship is honest, inspiring and full of music—and as a stranger I felt truly welcomed by the whole community.

It was a joy (and an invaluable learning experience) for me to spend a few days with so many great ministers, like so many mechanics poking around under the hood of Unity Unitarian as if it were a great purring race car. But as I looked out the window of my plane as it coasted over our little city, I was not thinking about all of our potential here at USSB. I wasn't thinking about all the great

things before us, or what it will take for us to turn into the church of my dreams. I wasn't thinking any of those things.

I just looked down and felt proud. Proud and happy to be your Minister, just as we are.

Sure, there are plenty of things we can (and will) do to help our church become ever more its fullest, best, most joyful and transformative self—but poking around under the hood of a wonderful church I was reminded, vividly, that we are doing great! From our own top-notch staff to our open-hearted volunteers and visionary leaders; from our rockin' choir to the way the very walls of the sanctuary sometimes literally shake with our spirit-filled hymns.

I was reminded of how frequently newcomers tell me that they felt immediately and warmly welcomed on a Sunday morning when that kind of welcome was exactly what they needed. I was reminded of the curious, playful and intent faces of our children as I share a new story with them and of the large flock of us that marched with our church banner down to the courthouse to stand up for marriage equality.

We are never done growing. We are never "done"—not as individuals and not as a community. But we can't forget to stop now and celebrate who we are and who we are becoming—because we are wonderful, and worth celebrating!

So today I am celebrating the great good fortune that led me to this congregation, and I am full of love and pride for the community we are—and for the community we will keep becoming and becoming and becoming.

REV. AARON McEMRYS

Alliance Meeting, March 6

Everyone is invited to the Alliance meeting, which will take place on Friday, March 6 at 2:00 PM in Parish Hall.

The program will present Roger Horton, a member of the Santa Barbara City Council, who is completing eight years of service. He will share his insight into the activities of our city government: projects, income, expenditures, taxes, etc. Our questions will be answered frankly, he promised.

Refreshments will be provided by Alliance members (I thru Z). Everyone is welcome.

Program Faire On March 8

The annual Program Faire will be held between services on Sunday, March 8 in the courtyard. Tables will be set up by congregational programs and committees to showcase their activities. Look forward to lots of information about all the exciting things happening here at USSB.

Healthy Snacks After Service?

Do you find yourself wishing we had some healthy snacks after service? Do you want to work to do something about it? Do you want to see veggies on the table next to our classic donuts? Would something other than tea or coffee be more to your taste? If you are interested in working towards some healthy alternatives, please contact Yannick Rendu.

Melitta's Musings

*Relationships
are all there is.
Everything in the universe
only exists because it is in relationship
to everything else.
Nothing exists in isolation.
We have to stop pretending
we are individuals
that can go it alone.*

MARGARET WHEATLEY

I fractured my pelvis when I was 13 in gymnastics while succeeding at my first-and-only splits. I heard a loud internal crack and knew it was not good news. I learned how to use crutches, healed quickly and went on to run varsity cross country in high school. During my second year at divinity school, I re-fractured the very same place while running on the first day of spring in New England. I hobbled on crutches and was a far more cantankerous patient than the first time around. I lived on the third story of a Victorian house with a narrow staircase in Cambridge, a place where winter and spring seem to squabble over when spring is supposed to begin. Repeatedly, my roommates scolded me for not asking for help when I clearly needed it. The worst of it came when I had made a meal and was caught carrying my ceramic plate and meal in my teeth down the hall!

That spring, I learned that the world continued on without my overly ambitious agenda. At first, I was bed-ridden and watched puffy white clouds ease their way across the brilliant blue sky. In school, I was given a couch on which to perch. I learned how to ask for help when I needed it, though sometimes, it is still difficult for me. I found that relationships were made stronger as friends and strangers offered assistance. I felt ever more humble and comfortably less in “control” of my life—and more able to accept that my body needed time for healing; life didn’t always go as planned.

It is challenging for many of us to admit that we need help. Feeling vulnerable is never easy. A member recently remarked that she could write a book called *The Hundred Ways to Avoid Asking for Help—When you Need it the Most!*

Our normative culture is imbued with messages of stoic cowboys (cow-gals) going it alone, toughing it out the American way. We often measure our success by our economic independence and insulate ourselves from needing to ask for help. We can hire someone for that. We can purchase what we need. But many people in our country are finding that myth is no longer operative as we slide into economic turmoil. And, perhaps, one of

the most difficult aspects is that we find ourselves feeling more isolated as we try to cover up our need to at least talk about our concerns.

The economic crisis is not easy, nor will we solve it quickly, unfortunately. What we can do is see this as an enormous opportunity on a collective, interdependent level. Professor Mair suggests that the word “crisis” in Chinese means “danger” (wēi) “crucial point” (jī.) At various times in our lives, we are faced with crisis and can, with support, approach it as a crucial point of change. It can be a time of untangling stifling personal or global patterns and assumptions. As a global community, this crisis could help us make fundamental and systemic changes in the way we approach the use of earth’s resources, address global warming, and manage to more justly share the wealth of this world. It is up to us—all of us. Our resilience will be found in our ability to build relationships, to know when we need help and to offer our help graciously.

So may it be, Melitta

REV. MELITTA L. HASLUND

Lifespan Religious Education News

Children’s Religious Education Program

During our Family Fun Night on February 13, we made Valentines Day cards for residents in Sarah House and the Santa Barbara Convalescent Hospital.

In March we will begin our hands-on study of ecology and spirituality by building our new Peas and Justice Garden, restoring an Open Space/Landfill with indigenous plants, and much more!

Many of our children who participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. march in January were loaned small video cameras to document the march from their perspective. The films were edited and made into a single documentary which was shown at the SB Public Library during the African-American Film Festival.

All USSB families are invited to our Family Fun Night on Friday, March 13, from 6–8 pm in Jefferson Hall. Bring a dish to share, your own plates and flatware and enjoy community of fun and family!

Youth Choir

Our Youth Choir will gladly sing at our Valentine’s Day service and for the Installation service. We have 24 children registered, and soon they will have colorful t-shirts to wear for performances!

Lifespan Religious Education News...

(continued from previous page)

Child Care in Starr King

We are in the midst of a search for a new Child Care Coordinator, as our beloved Teriana Casebeer has announced her intention to resign. Instead, she'll join Chris on Sunday mornings for services! We thank Teriana for over two years of service. She will be missed widely by our youngest ones!

Coming of Age Program

Our youth ventured out into the wilderness during their Vision Quest weekend, sitting for hours alone as they contemplated their life transition out of childhood. They were welcomed home in ceremony by their mentors and parents.

We thank you for your generosity with their recent bake sale and musical performance! They raised \$400 for their upcoming social justice work in Mexico.

Young Religious UU—High School Youth Group

Our Youth Group thanks you for coming to their Brunch Break in February! They raised \$200 for their social justice work and are now in the midst of deliberations as to how to put it to the best use.

Adult Religious Education

Our brochure listing our spring and summer classes will be sent in the middle of March. Please be sure to stop by the Adult Religious Education table on Sundays to sign up for classes.

The Adult RE Council is working on exciting new plans for the fall! Stay tuned!

Path to Membership

Wednesday, March 11, 6:30–8:30 PM in Blake Lounge with the Rev. Aaron McEmrys

Newcomers and those interested in joining the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara are invited to attend this class. We will get to know one another, gain knowledge about Unitarian Universalism, learn about our congregation and programs and how to become a member in a meaningful way.

USSB Film Night

Friday, February 27, 7 PM in Parish Hall

The Edge of Heaven

Three families, each internally fractured, intersect in unexpected ways across the cultural and political boundaries between Turkey and Germany in this multi-layered drama by writer Fatih Akin. Featuring legendary German actress, Hanna Schygulla.

Calendar

Saturday, February 28, 2009

- Coming of Age Vision Quest, Off Campus
7:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall

Sunday, March 1

- Coming of Age Vision Quest, Off Campus
9:00 AM USSB Childcare, Starr King
9:30 AM Worship Service, Sanctuary
9:30 AM Children's Worship, Jefferson Hall
10:30 AM Brunch Break, Parish Hall
10:45 AM Youth Choir, Jefferson Hall
11:30 AM YRUU, Blake Meeting Room
11:30 AM Worship Service, Sanctuary
11:30 AM UUltimate Frisbee, Off Campus
3:00 PM Ellen Rockne Concert, Sanctuary

Monday, March 2

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
5:30 PM Lark Yoga Class, Jefferson Hall
6:00 PM Women's Writing Group, La Paz Lounge
6:45 PM Classical Piano Appreciation, Off Campus

Tuesday, March 3

- 7:00 AM Toastmasters Club #5, Parish Hall
5:30 PM USSB Executive Committee, Blake Lounge

Wednesday, March 4

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
12:15 PM USSB Long Range Planning, Blake Lounge
5:30 PM Lark Yoga Classes, Jefferson Hall
5:30 PM Committee on Shared Ministry, Classroom 1
6:00 PM USSB Circle of Friends Potluck, La Paz Lounge
6:30 PM Children's RE Teacher Training, Blake Lounge
7:00 PM USSB Circle of Friends, La Paz Lounge
7:00 PM Wednesday Book Discussion, Classroom B
7:00 PM Sabbath Making, Parish Hall

Thursday, March 5

- 6:30 PM Build Your Own Theology, Parish Hall
7:00 PM USSB Choir, Sanctuary

Friday, March 6

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
6:00 PM DanceAway Committee, Parish Hall
7:30 PM DanceAway, Parish Hall

Saturday, March 7, 2009

- 7:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall

Sunday, March 8

- 9:00 AM USSB Childcare, Starr King
9:30 AM Worship Service, Sanctuary
9:30 AM Coming of Age, Blake Lounge
9:30 AM Children's Religious Education, Classrooms
10:30 AM Program Faire, Courtyard
10:45 AM Youth Choir, Jefferson Hall
11:30 AM Worship Service, Sanctuary
11:30 AM YRUU, Blake Meeting Room
11:30 AM Children's RE Council, Blake Lounge
7:00 PM USSB Women's Group, Jefferson Hall

Monday, March 9

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
5:30 PM Lark Yoga Class, Jefferson Hall
6:00 PM Women's Writing Group, La Paz Lounge
7:00 PM USSB Men's Council, Blake Lounge

Tuesday, March 10

- 7:00 AM Toastmasters Club #5, Parish Hall
5:30 PM Empowerment Process Committee, LaPaz Lounge
5:30 PM USSB Program Council, Blake Lounge

Wednesday, March 11

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
4:00 PM USSB Finance Committee, Blake Lounge
5:00 PM USSB Membership Committee, LaPaz Lounge
5:30 PM Lark Yoga Class, Jefferson Hall
6:30 PM Path to Membership Class, Blake Lounge
7:00 PM Wednesday Book Discussion, Classroom B
7:00 PM Sabbath Making, Parish Hall

Thursday, March 12

- 7:00 PM USSB Choir, Sanctuary

Friday, March 13

- 6:00 AM Early Morning Exercise, with Linda, Parish Hall
6:00 PM Family Fun Night, Starr King
7:30 PM DanceAway, Parish Hall

Looking Ahead

- March 14 Benefit Concert for Health Care for All, at 8 PM
March 15 Building Project Dedication and Celebration

The Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

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Aaron McEmrys, Parish Minister
John Alexie Crane, Minister Emeritus
Melitta L. Haslund, Consulting Minister for Religious Education
Nancy Edmundson, Director of Administration

Sunday Worship Services: 9:30 & 11:30 AM; Children's Program: 9:30 AM
Nursery & Children's Care: Sunday, 9:00 AM-12:45 PM, Starr King
Office Hours: Mon-Fri: 9 AM-4 PM; SUN: 10:00 AM-NOON

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

February 25 for material covering
March 14-March 27, 2009

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