

OCTAGRAM

Happy New Year!



Rev. Abhi Janamanchi

On January 2, I travel to India on a three week trip. I will be in the Khasi Hills in northeastern India leading a 'Spiritual Practices and Leadership Development' Training for 30 Unitarian lay leaders. The Khasis, an indigenous group in northeastern India, have their own language and culture, unlike anything in the rest of India. There are nine thousand Khasi Unitarians spread out amongst 35 congregations in the state of Meghalaya. This concentration of Unitarians makes up about 98% of the Unitarians in India.

The five-day workshop is designed to impart creative and sustaining approaches to spiritual practice and leadership. It will use mini-lecture, exercises, cases, and storytelling to help participants gain a deeper understanding of their history and tradition, to develop liturgical/spiritual forms, such as prayer, sermon, guided meditation, and to articulate positive understandings of Khasi Unitarianism. I will be joined in this endeavor by another UU colleague, Rev. Richard Kellaway, a British Unitarian lay leader, David Shaw, and a couple of Khasi leaders.

After the training, I will be spending time with the Unitarian school in

Shillong which UUC sponsors. I hope to meet with the students and teachers and learn more about their plans and activities for the upcoming year.

I will also be visiting one of our Holdeen India Partners near Mumbai in western India. The Unitarian Universalist Holdeen India Program (UUHIP) works with organizations of India's most excluded and oppressed peoples: women; dalits, so-called "untouchables" who fall outside the caste system; and, migrant, bonded, and landless agricultural laborers. UUHIP supports their efforts to participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of India.

The group I will be visiting is led by a husband-wife team, Vivek and Vidyullata Pandit. The Pandits have devoted their lives to the realization of human rights in the subcontinent and have, after decades of work, succeeded in changing the perceptions and practices of many in the state of Maharashtra. More than 1,500 bonded laborers in the state have been freed and none has returned to the bonded labor system.

The Pandits' philosophy is based on self-worth. They teach bonded laborers that they have the same value as any other member of society, that no

Continued...

human being deserves to be exploited and oppressed. By providing these structures, the Pandits have enabled former bonded laborers to break free from the cycle of bonded labor.

The purpose of my visit is to explore partnership opportunities between UUC and their organization. It is also to explore new ways of being in relationship with others and to live out our faith in more meaningful ways. Religion, after all, calls us to connection and renewal. It seeks us out in our despairing moments and offers us the hope of a better tomorrow. It reminds us always that we are not alone. It calls us to be better than we are. And it is available to us in the middle of our lives, where we need it the most. Religion is also about our efforts to make sense of the insensible, and to imagine the unimaginable. A new day is dawning, a day of our lives. What shall we do with it? And what shall we do with our lives? What shall we do?

May the New Year bring blessing, meaning, and fulfillment in your lives.

Go shining.

– Abhi Janamanchi

President's Report



Bill Norsworthy

Dear Friends, My year as president is now more than half way through, and what a great experience it has been. I have greatly enjoyed working with my UU friends to further the vision we all share for this very caring community of religious sojourners. We have so much to offer for the betterment of the world and we do put our ideas, energy, time and money to that effort. It's what we're all about.

As we move into 2006, we can certainly anticipate that many of this year's travails will carry over. Hurricane Katrina has left a huge rebuilding project that will likely take a long time, perhaps decades, to complete. The tsunami, earthquakes in various parts of the world and, of course, the threat of future hurricanes heading our way; all continue and call out for our attention. This is a good time of the year to reflect on these issues. We have much work to do.

This year we lost some dear members of our community who have passed away from this mortal realm: Stewart Johnson, Kay Smith, Rick Carter, Ernie Dibble, Sue Merriam, and Norm Peterson. They all helped this congregation in numerous ways over the many years that they were with us. We will miss their presence and their dedication to our cause. At this time of the year, it's good to remember these and other loved ones who have meant so much to our lives, to our families and to our spiritual community.

And I would also like to wish all of you a very happy new year. May the time ahead be joyful in your life and may the whole world be peaceful and calm...for a change.

With love for you all, Bill

Inward Springs



Rev. Millie Rochester

The year just past was one for the record books, as tsunami, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods took the lives of thousands.

By the end of the year, the entire world seemed buffeted, by both nature and human-made violence. As the year ended, I was reminded of the need, as someone said, to "believe in the sun, even when it is not shining."

Sometimes, just the right words can serve to remind us of a joy and goodness that transcends whatever pain, sorrow and hopelessness we may be experiencing. Consider this passage from J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy "The Lord of the Rings." Near the end of the epic, when the hobbits Sam and Frodo are deep within the evil realm of Mordor, and there is no rational cause for any hope whatsoever, Sam looks up and sees a single star shining in the heavens.

Tolkien writes: "The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing; there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach. Now, for a moment, his own fate, and even his master's, ceased to trouble him."

Social Justice Committee

January 16 is the celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Again this year we will be participating in the march in Clearwater. We had a wonderful turnout last year and we hope for even more people to participate this year. Children are welcome; however, young children should be in a stroller since the march is over a mile long. Join us at 10:00 a.m. at the Martin Luther King Center in Clearwater. For more information visit the Social Action table in the Social Hall after the service.

Have you returned your "Guest at Your Table" box? If not, please bring in your box to the Social Justice table

or send a check to the UUC office with "Guest at Your Table" in the memo line. You are encouraged to take this opportunity to become a member of the UUSC. Membership information can be found on the bottom of the box.

On February 12, the Social Justice Committee is sponsoring a workshop on prison reform featuring Si Kahn. Mark this date on your calendar now and watch for more information on this exciting event!

Our next meeting will be January 8 at 9:30 a.m. in the Westwood Room. Join us!

Split the Plate Sunday January 8, 2006

UUC will start 2006 by sharing our Sunday plate collection with a longtime favorite and most important charity –



RCS (Religious Community Services, Inc.). RCS is a coalition of more than 80 congregations working together since 1967 to feed the hungry, help the homeless to return to self-sufficiency, and guide the survivors of domestic violence in their recovery.

Over the years UUC has donated to specific projects of RCS such as the Food Bank, Grace House, the Stepping Stone, the Haven, and the Thrift Store. This month RCS will decide where our donation can help most. Plan to bring your checkbook to support this most important part of the Clearwater community.

Second Service Approved

By a vote of more than 90% in favor, the congregation approved the idea of adding a second service. At the congregational meeting held on Sunday, December 11, with over 115 members in attendance, the following motion, made by Dorothy Wylie, was approved:

"Whereas we are a religious congregation committed to growth of our membership, the option of a second service is a crucial part of realizing

that goal. Therefore, I move that the congregation hereby authorizes a pilot project of two services to begin in the fall of 2006. This project will be reviewed at the Annual Meeting in May, 2007."

Many thanks to the Second Service Task Force chaired by Paul Wilson and to the committee chairs who worked so diligently in developing the plan.

There is still a lot of work to do as we prepare for the second service. Additional volunteers will be needed in several areas, including the children's program, sound booth, ushers, and hospitality. You can expect to hear much more about this in the months ahead

UUA Trustee Tidbits

This is the time when we voice our resolutions for the New Year. Personally I am not much good at resolutions...perhaps it's the "old dog, new tricks" syndrome. However I do resolve to continue to do my best as your UUA Trustee. Last month I indicated this month's column would be a continuation of the UUA Comprehensive Capital Campaign, focusing on the Campaign's strategic plan. At the October 2005 Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting, the BOT's Finance Committee was presented with the Campaign's draft strategic plan and its overarching goals. The BOT, at their January meeting, will formally discuss and consider the Campaign's purpose and vote on its financial goals. According to Rev. Terry Sweetser and the Stewardship and Development Managers the plan is to run the Campaign's "silent phase" from February 2006 to June 2007. The public phase is planned to begin in June 2007, ending when the goal is completed, hopefully by June 2009.

Rev. Sweetser indicated several understandings under gird this Campaign: the UUA is supported primarily by contributions from individuals and congregations; UUA fund raising is built on strong, trusting relationships with, and accountability to, our donors; our responsibility to our donors is giving them opportunities to voice and realize their dreams for our faith, in the institution they love; and there is a spirit of abundance within Unitarian Universalism that has yet to be fully recognized and used.

The strategic plan for the Campaign involves multiple layers of, and opportunities for, participation of UUs. There will be major cash gifts

(over \$100,000), mid-range cash gifts (\$5,000 -100,000), planned gifts, congregational giving opportunities for specific projects, a planned increase in the Friends program, other gifts (up to \$5,000), and a planned increase in "Umbrella Gifts" (contributions and commitments in which the donor provides support for more than one UU institution). There are plans to employ the services of professional consultants in developing some of the campaign tactics.

The financial goals for the Campaign are designed to create a healthy balance between cash/pledges and planned/bequest gifts, congregational involvement, and gifts joined in with pledge commitments to other UU institutions. The goals will be divided into two categories: cash (outright gifts and multiyear pledges) and deferred (planned and estate gifts).

As always I encourage you to become familiar with www.uua.org, where there is a wealth of information about everything UU, and current news about our Association. I also encourage you to contact me for whatever UU matters or questions are of concern to you: jlund@uua.org or 813-931-9727. Happy New Year to one and all

—Joan Lund

UUA Commission on Appraisal

You are invited to participate in a hearing with the UUA Commission on Appraisal

Saturday, January 21

1:00 -3:00 p.m.

**First Unitarian Church
of Orlando
1901 E. Robinson St.**

Agenda for the Hearing: The focus of the hearing will be the direction of the Commission's future work, the functioning of the UUA, and the health of Unitarian Universalism. Following the formal hearing, light refreshments and an opportunity for informal discussion will be provided. Please note that this hearing does not concern the Commission's last report, "Engaging Our Theological Diversity," though you are welcome to bring it up during the discussion time. For more information, log on to www.uua.org/coa.

Purpose of the Commission: The Commission is charged to "review any function or activity of the Association which in its judgment will benefit from an independent review and report its conclusions to a regular General Assembly." The Commission meets four times a year—once at General Assembly, and three working meetings held in Boston and other locations throughout the continent. During most of our meetings, we hold open hearings to which we invite local UUs so we can hear as many of the different voices of our movement as possible.

Grounded in the living tradition of our free and responsible faith, yet charged with acting independently, the Commission's mission is to provoke deep reflection and to evoke timely, creative transformation of Unitarian Universalism, our congregations, and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Nine New Members Welcomed

On December 18, we welcomed nine new members into our community. As usual, this is a very diverse, unique group of people that will bring with them new ideas and fresh outlooks and will be “just plain fun to be with!” Let's make them feel welcome so they will feel good about their decision to become members of the UUC community. (One way we can do that is by wearing our name tags, so they will know to whom they are talking. Some of us who have been around for a while tend to think that everyone knows who we are. Not so for the newcomers and visitors. Several members of the group brought it to my attention that they would like to see the name tags worn because it's so much easier to remember people if they can put a name to a face.)

Those joining us are:

Dennis Bohner
11543 Oval Drive E.
Largo, FL. 33774
584-4634
bohnerdennis@msn.com

Beverly & Warren Carter
215 Dogwood Circle
Seminole, FL 33777
397-6434
wwcarter@verizon.net
bevcarter@verizon.net

Florence Cohan-Austin
5725 80th St. N #415
St. Petersburg, FL 3309
547-6819
cohan867@aol.com

Lisa Hartley
2065 N. Highland Ave. #233F
Clearwater, FL 33755
519-8283
LHartley4@tampabay.rr.com

Scott Milinder & Jeanie McKnight
2720 Windsong Circle
Palm Harbor, FL 34684
smili@tampabay.rr.com

Bill & Allison Snell
492 Harbor Drive. N
Indian Rocks Beach, FL. 33785
596-7123
wsnell1@tampabay.rr.com

Please save this page of your Octagram to refer to until we get a directory that includes these people. The picture directory should be ready sometime in February or early March, so that will be a very welcome resource for us all.

We hope your holidays were what you wanted them to be--and as we look toward 2006, let's be hopeful that we will find a world that is ready for peace, and leadership that is ready to make that a reality.

– Lucille Odeneal
and Marie Chapman,
Membership co-chairs

Stewardship Committee: UUC Alive and Well

At this time of year, our UUC Stewardship Committee begins preparations for our annual canvas of members and friends to generate the support necessary to sustain and strengthen our church community and reap the rewards of growth and maintenance which are the result of sound Stewardship.

Our UUC stewardship is multi-faceted: We must be good stewards of the gifts of time, talent and capabilities of our UUC members and friends that form the culture of our congregation. All are invited to discover, develop and use their gifts, talents and skills for self-improvement and to benefit the church family as a whole. This is spiritual stewardship.

Our immediate need is to reach out to invite new members, activate our congregation to serve where needed in church and community, and demonstrate individually and collectively our support of our dedicated leadership as we move UUC forward into the future.

However, of critical importance is our financial stewardship which provides UUC with needed capital for continued solvency and improvements to our church property, community outreach, educational opportunities, and new and innovative programs and prospects. Our congregational costs and expenses continue, and are expected to rise.

Now it is our turn to be stewards for this coming year. What better time than now to support your UUC leadership and congregation and to put belief into action? In doing so, you will help spread the message that Unitarian Universalism is very much alive and well ... and indeed growing!

–Sally Demarest,
Stewardship Committee

Worship Services

January 1, 2006

BUTTERFLIES IN FORMATION
Millie Rochester

The beginning of the year is associated with starting fresh – but in truth, every day can hold such an invitation. The service will explore the implications of New Year’s resolutions on spiritual discipline and what is divine within us all.

January 8, 2006

TBA
Justin Meyers, Percussionist, Frank Wells, Worship Leader

January 15, 2006

Oh Villain, Where Art Thou
Neal Stannard

It’s been going on for all of human existence, and it’s more popular than ever: the tactic of dealing with one’s opponents by “demonizing” them, or painting them as dastardly villains. This, in fact, defines foreign policy, not only for the United States but most of today’s nation-states. But the example of two men—an American and a Japanese, who had to overcome fifty-plus years of hate and bitterness when their children united in marriage—shows us another way to go, an alternative that we must embrace as Americans, as UU’s, and as individuals, if we are to have any chance of changing this world for the better.

January 22, 2006

What’s the Good News?
Dr. Davidson Loehr

Those unfamiliar with Unitarian Universalism know that many Christian churches talk about the Good News they have for the world, and they want to know what good news we have to offer. What are the purposes, reasons for coming together, that we hold in common with almost all other churches, and do all of them count as good news? Dr. Loehr is the minister at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, TX and is a frequent and popular speaker at SUUSI. His sermon follows his weekend workshop at UUC on 2500 Years of Liberal Religion.

January 29, 2006

An Uncertain Path to Truth & Meaning
Rev. Barbara Pescan & Abhi Janamanchi

The fourth principle of Unitarian Universalism affirms and promotes “a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” It serves as a guidepost for what we are meant to do as inquiring humans. But the search is not an easy one. The service will investigate. I will be joined by my colleague, mentor, and friend, the Rev. Barbara Pescan, who serves the UU congregation in Evanston, IL.

Open Issues Forum

January 1

“Continuing “How to Dialogue with Fundamentalists”
Dorothy Wylie and Mark Brandt

January 8

“The New American Foreign Policy”
Joe Kolb (This will be Joe’s last day with us)

January 15

“The Power of One: Exploring Your Role as a Moral Force in the World”
Nigel Watson

January 22

“Discussion of Peace, Departments of Peace, and Peace “Think Tanks”
Dean Mogelgaard

January 29

“Humanism and the “New Enlightenment”
A report of the October Conference of Humanists in Buffalo
Mark Brandt

Open Issues Forum Committee

Dot and Chuck Sollinger	797-7784	Marion Davis	527-1192
Dorothy Wylie	797-5736	Herb Blume	461-5414
John Chase	784-1234	Joseph Kolb	733-1420
		Charlene Games, Liaison	

JANUARY 2006

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Open Issues (F) 10:30 AM Service (O) 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM HIV Testing (E)	2 Office Closed 9:30 AM Duplicate Bridge (F)	3 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM Meditation (O) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bridge (F) 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM AA (W)	4 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM YAC 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Committee on Ministry (Abhi's office) 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Chorale Rehearsal (O/C)	5 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Interweave Planning Committee (W) 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Children/Youth RE Committee (L) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UU101 (F)	6 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch with Ministers (W) 7:30 PM - 10:00 PM Rod McDonald Concert (O)	7 9:30 AM Social Justice Comm (W) 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM Private Event (S) 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM Private Event (S) 8:00 PM AA (F or W)
8	9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Open Issues (F) 10:30 AM Service (O) 12:15 PM - 1:00 PM Visitor Orientation 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM Music Committee (C)	9 9:30 AM Duplicate Bridge (F) 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM Sr. Adults Committee (L) 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM Toastmasters (S) 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM UUWU Games & Card Night (F)	10 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM Meditation (O) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bridge (F) 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM AA (W)	11 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Chorale Rehearsal (O/C)	12 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Hanging new art show (Octagon) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UU101 (F)	13 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Martha Brooks Marshall and Margaret Conte Reception (O, Lobby)	14 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM Congregation Potluck 8:00 PM AA (F or W)
15	9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Open Issues (F) 10:30 AM Service (O)	16 9:30 AM Duplicate Bridge (F)	17 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM Meditation (O) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bridge (F) 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM AA (W)	18 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Chorale Rehearsal (O/C)	19 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Adult RE (L) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UU101 (F)	20 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Davidson Loehr Workshop (S)	21 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM Davidson Loehr workshop (S) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Trivia Tournament (S,F) 8:00 PM AA (F or W)
22	9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Open Issues (F) 10:30 AM Service (O)	23 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Leadership Gifts Canvasser Orientation (W) 9:30 AM Duplicate Bridge (F) 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM Toastmasters (S)	24 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM Meditation (O) 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM Leadership Gifts Canvasser Orientation 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Covenant Group Facilitator's Meeting (F) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bridge (F)	25 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Chorale Rehearsal (O/C) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Ways and Means Committee (at Brandis)	26 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UU101 (F)	27 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Men's Night Out (E) 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM Clark-Richardson Wedding decorating (S)	28 1:00 PM - 10:00 PM Clark-Richardson Wedding (S) 8:00 PM AA (F or W)
29	9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Open Issues (F) 10:30 AM Service (O) 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM PSI Symposium Meeting	30 9:30 AM Duplicate Bridge (F)	31 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM Eurythmy Class (F) 12:30 PM - 12:30 PM Meditation (O) 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bridge (F)	1 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Chorale Rehearsal (O/C) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Committee on Ministry (Abhi's office)	2 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Children/Youth RE Committee (L) 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM New Member Orientation (F)	3 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch with Ministers (W)	4 9:30 AM Social Justice Comm (W) 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM Founders Day Dinner 8:00 PM AA (F or W)

For the most current information please refer to the online calendar at:
<http://www.uuclearwater.org>

A Letter from the Florida District Executive

Dear Florida Unitarian
Universalists,

I write this pastoral letter to you in this season of light and hope in the belief that we need each other now more than ever. I have been struck in the past months at what I am experiencing in our district and in our congregations as we have boarded up our windows for the second year in a row, evacuated or not, cleaned up, and helped others do so. We have all been shocked at the images not only of hurricane Katrina but of the earthquakes in Pakistan and the deaths we know will be the result of cruel winters there. I sense an outrage at the injustice that has been made visible in our dealing with the evacuees of Katrina and pace of rebuilding. There is an unrest that is palpable in our people and in our congregations.

I have had wonderful and meaningful conversations with Rosemary Bray McNatt of the UU Trauma Ministry and one of the things she told me that rings so true is that our spirits and our bodies "get ready" for every hurricane. We pump adrenaline without regard for whether or not the hurricane actually hits us. Our bodies just know we were ready for the flight or the fight and after more than a dozen times in the last sixteen months that we have worried and wondered whether we would be in the crosshairs, we are weary as if we HAD been hit. It is also true that after watching the enormous devastation of Katrina, many people are telling me that

they feel guilty for feeling weary and despairing. After all, they tell me, "I didn't get hurt really badly, not like the Katrina folks."

What we have been through in the past year and a half is not about whether we got hit the worst or not, it is about how we as individuals and communities can find the strength and spirit to pick ourselves up, put the shutters up one more time and hold each other until safety returns to our hearts. After all, the storms do not know whether we are on our fourth evacuation or not! A storm might hit us no matter how many times we have been through the drill when it missed us. This is not a rational process, dear ones, and the emotions that run through us are intense.

I have seen the fatigue, the frustration, the help and the support all happening to each of us in our own homes and congregations. We are both blessed and anxious in our own skins. I believe we look to each other to help calm our fears and remind us that we are not alone; we never were; we never will be. There has been more low level interpersonal tension in the past few months than ever before in my ten years here in Florida. It is totally normal for us to feel the tensions and be driven to discharge them. When we snipe at each other as a result of those same tensions, we destroy the safety we all seek to be able to weather these storms of heart and sky.

I write today to ask that each of us practice the love we have for each other. I ask that we take responsibility for our individual feeling by sharing the truth of our state of disequilibrium and asking for support for sharing those tensions appropriately. I ask that when the tensions overcome our best behaviors that we ask for and receive forgiveness from each other. As I know from the response to other disasters, natural and human made, we always have two choices on the other side. One is to separate ourselves and take our frustrations out on those closest to us and the other is to bind ourselves together into the kind of community that cannot be separated because we are too busy holding each other up so we can be strong.

There is nothing unusual about our response to the "world gone crazy" around us. What I pray for in this season is that we choose our responses and take ownership of our interactions, so that our communities become beacons of hope for the weary. I believe that is the hope of the world that we have right in our hands to actualize with each other. May it be so. May it be so.

*In Faith and Love,
Rev. Mary C. Higgins*

Introducing Mystery Friends!

This is a three-week pen pal program that links adult members and youth with younger “friends.” Here’s how it works:

Participants register in advance, and are matched in pairs – a younger person with an older person. Each pair of will be given a shared code name. You will find out your code name (“Confucius,” for example) via a postcard which will be sent to you.

Each person brings correspondence for her/his “friend” to church on Sundays three weeks in a row – January 29, February 5, and February 12. Younger friends address mail to their older friend (Confucius the Older, for example), and older to their younger counterpart (Confucius the Younger). The mail goes into “mail boxes” to be sorted. Mail for younger friends will be delivered immediately after classes end, in the classrooms. Older friends will pick up theirs after the service, in the Social Hall.

It’s important to come to church every Sunday, so that your mail can be delivered and received! On February 19, right after church, mystery identities will be revealed and final correspondence can be exchanged in person. The celebration will continue at the RE-sponsored lunch afterward.

Here are the rules:

1. Registration for the program is required, so that the matches can be made ahead of time.
2. Participants really must honor their commitment – you can imagine the disappointment of not receiving mail from your Mystery Friend!
3. Registration forms must be returned to church no later than Sunday, January 29. If you would like to participate, but not as a Mystery Friend, consider being a Mail Sorter/Carrier. There is a place on the registration form for that choice, too. Each of these roles is very important.

Need ideas for correspondence? Try describing a pet or favorite animal, relating an experience, sharing a photograph, or telling about a hobby. Exchanges must not be in the form of gifts other than correspondence, and this is one circumstance where it is absolutely appropriate for parents to read their children’s mail.

Let Rev. Millie know of any questions or concerns in person, or by calling her at UUC (531-7704, ext. 105) or at home (723-0350).

Alaskan Eco-Cultural Programs

Five Alaskan UU fellowships invite other UUs to our eco-cultural programs in June, July and August 2006. See the REAL Alaska! Alaskan UU’s provide B & B accommodations in their homes in Anchorage, Seward, Fairbanks, Juneau and Sitka, lead tours and hikes and host parties. Visit with Tlingit, Inupiat and other Native Alaskans. See whales, sea otters, sea lions, seals, bears, moose, caribou, wolves, puffins, eagles and other birds in the wild from the Arctic Ocean to the Inside Passage in the south, and visit Denali and other national parks. Rev. Dick & Mary Weston-Jones, leaders. Visit website www.wuurld.org, e-mail dick@wuurld.org, or phone toll-free 1-888-998-8753 for a brochure. Reservations are now being taken.

Buddhist Events at UUC and Tampa

Frank Tedesco is the kick-off speaker of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship of Tampa Bay open community talk series on Buddhist Traditions in the Modern World, January 8, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., “Socially Engaged Buddhism in Asia & the West” at the Lotus Room Yoga, 1101 W. Kennedy, Tampa (near the University of Tampa).



The first formal meeting of the UU Buddhist Fellowship of Tampa Bay will meet at UU Clearwater on Friday evening, January 13 at 6:30 PM. We will begin a half hour earlier to allow time for more meditation to convert the demonic spirits of “Friday the thirteenth” to a more peaceful and heroic way of interacting with religious liberals. Amongst other exciting topics, Frank will give an update of his Buddhist activities at the Pinellas County Jail. He is meeting with inmates in maximum security as well as with female residents in a substance abuse treatment program. We will discuss what, when and where UUBF will do in the spring of 2006. Depending on the predilections of attendees, we will show an engrossing film and/or enjoy refreshments of body and spirit.

Contact Frank Tedesco at frankmtedesco@yahoo.com or call 391-1152 or 512-4805.

2500 YEARS OF LIBERAL RELIGION: FROM THE AXIAL AGE TO THE PRESENT

An eight-hour program led by Rev. Davidson Loehr, Ph.D., of Austin, Texas.
January 20 and 21, 2006

Sponsored by the Religious Services Committee
and the Adult Education Committee

The liberal style of being religious seemed to develop almost spontaneously all over the world between about 2200 and 2800 years ago. The difference between “liberal” and “literal” religions is profound: change one letter and you change a whole world.

“Literal” styles of religion look for a small collection of quotes to support the biases, bigotries, habits and hatreds the believers happen to have – as they are being used today in America. “Liberal” styles of religion look to their religious teachings as stories, lessons, allegories and metaphors about how to live most wisely and well in the present, with the largest and most compassionate kind of character. This can be found in the Upanishads of Hinduism, much of Buddhism, Taoism, the teachings of Confucius, as well as in the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the highest teachings of Jesus and Muhammad.

The relevance for our times comes through realizing that we live in the most pluralistic nation on earth, and we desperately need bridges between different religions rather than walls around them. Literalism

builds walls and seeks armies; liberalism seeks the deep commonalities between all people, and builds bridges.

While the topic is bigger than eight hours – or eight books – can surround, this workshop gives an excellent introduction and overview to this perspective on religions. It will help people of differing beliefs find the compassion and understanding that might lead us toward a more humane future together.

Dr. Loehr will lead this program on Friday night January 20 from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m., and Saturday January 21 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater. Tickets are \$10 for Friday night only, and \$25 for the entire program. Dr. Loehr will also be the speaker at UUC on Sunday morning. Call the office at 531-7704 to make reservations, or sign up in the Social Hall after Sunday services.

Visit the website of the Austin UU church to read some of Dr. Loehr’s sermons and for more information about him and about his book, *America, Fascism and God*. The URL is www.austinuu.org.



Art Committee News

"Both Sides Now!" will open with an Art Reception

Friday night January 13 from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. The show will contain large colorful abstracts and some unique sculptures by Martha Brooks Marshall and Margaret Conte, two talented artists from Valrico. The show continues through February 22.

Nine pieces of art have been sold from the current Plein Air show, "Revealing the Land." UUC receives a 30% commission of all sales.

Charlene Carnes, Chair of Art Committee

Attention All "Peanuts for Change" Collectors

If you have a PEANUTS FOR CHANGE box, JANUARY will be the TURN-IN MONTH. Bring your box in any Sunday during January, preferably with some change or folding currency in it. Ways and Means will gladly receive whatever you've collected (as long as it's U.S. money). We'll refill your box with goodies for the last half of the congregational year. There are 115 boxes out. If they are all turned in and we average \$25 a box, we could raise \$2,875.00 for UUC. With our expanding programs and services which provide so much benefit to all of us, Peanuts for Change is an important program for the continuing vitality of our community. Thank you, Mark Brandt, Ways and Means Committee

Miracles Flowers

I hope that by now you have had an opportunity to view the vibrant new exhibit, "Miracle Flowers: A tribute to Georgia O'Keefe" that is currently hanging in the Octagon hallways and Chorale Room. "Miracle Flowers" was conceived by Janet Aponte and Kathy Iwanowski to coincide with the exhibition of O'Keefe's work at the Tampa Museum of Art. It is the work of six Tampa Bay artists who have been influenced and inspired by her work. O'Keefe was a celebrated American artist whose unique use of color and composition fused with emotion, melded worlds of realism and abstraction together. This exhibit is hung throughout our hallways and our Chorale Room and it has brought a whole fresh look to our campus. What a nice experience during the height of the Solstice to walk in and be greeted by such light and color. All of the works are

available for sale with 30% of all sales being donated to the UUC Hurricane Relief Fund.

Just another quick note about appearances: We are asking that everyone do their best to tidy up after themselves when using a room for an event or activity. If each of us walks our coffee cup to the sink, returns the chair they got out to the rack, remembers to put away the song book or take home the jacket, we will have a neater place for the next group. Our custodian's time will be spent better on cleaning and repairs instead of picking up clutter. Please help raise the collective consciousness by doing your part and reminding each other that spending a minute to tidy up when you are finished will help to use wisely the precious resource of paid staff time.

Barb Buckland, Business Administrator

National Farm Workers Ministry Update

This is a special thank you to UUC and all our support congregations in the UU Social Justice Cluster for their donations and hard work in making our Christmas drive a success. We were able to give presents to 480 children in Hillsboro County. Also, we had food and presents left over to take to families in the areas around Lake Okeechobee which had been hit hard by hurricane Wilma. Please come by the Social Justice table to see pictures of the children you helped.

– Peace and Love, Joe Morgan,
Pinellas Support Committee of
NFWM.

UUCWU Holiday Bake Sale

Congratulations go to our congregation for another successful bake sale. Our income was \$660 with very little overhead. We did take out money to decorate the two planters on either side of the church sanctuary doors in the church foyer, enjoy! It truly was a fun-festive - fundraiser! We thank all of you for your contributions: the workers, bakers, buyers, decorators and other elves for a job well done. Happy Holidays to all - until next Christmas.

– Anneliese Ekberg,
Bake sale chairperson

The Octagon Arts Center
Proudly Presents

Rod MacDonald in Concert

Friday, January 6, 2006 - 7:30 p.m.
\$12 Advance/\$15 at Door
Children Free

Wry social commentator, good humored satirist, serious thinker, Rod MacDonald tackles an incredible variety of topics in his songwriting and performing.

SUUSI Equinox

Sunday January 15, 10:00 a.m.!

How long until SUUSI?

Find out at www.suusi.org/cgi-bin/countdown

Drumming Away

Are you marching to your own beat? Do you long to hit some drums and make music? Drumming sensation Matt Meyer of Rhythm Revelations will be leading a workshop on drumming on Sunday, January 8 at 3:00 p.m. Suggested donation \$10 (but cost shouldn't be a deterrent). BYOD (Bring Your Own Drum) if you can or we'll have several available. If you have any questions, see Frank Wells.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS OF CLEARWATER

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OCTAGRAM

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of Clearwater, Inc. Octagon Arts Center

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DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT OR A QUESTION RELATING TO THE MINISTRY OR MINISTER?

If so, please contact one of the
members of the Congregational
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Sol Winner 397-1935

Dorothy Wylie 797-5736

Steve Poekert 804-4735

Chuck Shimer 517-3801

*Please send OCTAGRAM submissions to the church
office by mail, drop off in the Octagram mailbox,
or by email to mail@uuclearwater.org. Deadline
for December issue is November 20th, 2005.*

**Sunday Worship Services
are at 10:30 am**

Visit: www.uuclearwater.org