



UU FELLOWSHIP OF TYLER WEEKLY UPDATE

ANNOUNCEMENTS for the week of December 28, 2009

SUNDAY JANUARY 3

WORSHIP 11:00 am -- Tom Stovall & Mary Andrews, "The Wheel of the Year."

POTLUCK LUNCH FOLLOWING THE SERVICE -

ALL ARE INVITED!

IMPORTANT NOTE: Religious Education for Children will be available on 1st and 3rd Sundays during the 11:00 worship service.

New Year's Day

By Rev. Kathleen McTigue

The first of January is another day
Dawning, the sun rising as the sun
Always rises, the earth moving in its rhythms,
With or without our calendars to
Name a certain day as the day of
New beginning, separating the
Old from the new.

So it is: everything is the same,
Bound into its history as we ourselves are bound.
Yet also we stand at a threshold,

The new year something truly
New, still unformed, leaving a stunning power in our hands:
What shall we do with this great gift of Time, this year?

Let us begin by remembering
That whatever justice, whatever
Peace and wholeness might bloom in our world this year,
We are the hearts and minds, the
Hands and feet, the embodiment of
All the best visions of our people.

The new year can be new ground for the seeds of our dreams.
Let us take the step forward together, onto new ground,
Planting our dreams well, faithfully,
And in joy.

UUSC Guest at Your Table On November 22 we opened our annual UU Service Committee (UUSC) Guest at Your Table program at our worship service. If you missed picking up your Guest at Your Table box, you can do so any Sunday at church, or make your donation to UUSC directly, or to John Sims, our UUSC local representative and Community Action Team Leader. <http://www.uusc.org/guest> Final collection of boxes and/or donations will be in late January/early February. UUFT is one of only four congregations in Texas designated as a "Vision of Justice Banner Society," which denotes congregations where 50-75% of their congregants are members of UUSC.

UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES

- 10 Jan -- "Not Without a Hitch," Rev. Paul Beedle, UU Minister from Houston
- 17 Jan -- Scottie Johnson, UU Seminary Student
- 24 Jan -- Dr. Mickey Slimp, UT Health Center
- 31 Jan -- Ms. Naomi Byrum, TJC (tentative)
- 7 Feb -- Rev. Paul Beedle
- 14 Feb -- Allison and Tom Stovall
- 21 Feb -- Dr. Jimmie Reese, Lon Morris College, Jacksonville
- 28 Feb -- Carol Langston--Children's Advocacy Center

A BIT ABOUT THE UU FELLOWSHIP OF TYLER: Welcome to our church -- It is a place we love and which we tend with care. We do not ask what you believe, or expect you to think the way we do, but only that you try to live a kindly, helpful life, with the dignity proper to a human being. Preachers here have the task of presenting religion fearlessly, freely, and faithfully. Hearers here have the responsibility of testing what they hear, not only with the critical mind, but also in the living of everyday life. The members of this congregation welcome the support of all who believe that religion is wider than any sect and deeper than any set of opinions, and that all might find in their friendships strength and encouragement for daily living.

The principal financial support of the church is through the contributions of members and friends. Our church is an independent, covenanting, voting member of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The Fellowship relies completely on local contributions to maintain the building & grounds, to compensate guest ministers & speakers, and to cover other programs and costs. Members are expected to make a financial commitment consistent with their circumstances to support the Fellowship, and to give of their time and talents as they are able. Voting membership is open to all persons over 18 years of age who are in sympathy with our Principles & Purposes. If you are considering joining, please schedule a visit with our Board Members (Mary Andrews, Linda Mann, Brenda Corley, Mike Ellsberry).

Our church is a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) www.uua.org and of the regional cluster, North Texas Association of UU Societies (NTAUUS) <http://www.ntauus.org/>

A note about caring for our worship space: We have had several spills and food-related problems in the sanctuary lately. Obviously, this can result in cleaning and pest control issues which could represent a significant expense. We must ask that no food or drink be brought into the sanctuary. If you are part of a group which meets in our building at times other than Sunday, please make this known to your group. All food and drink consumption should be limited to the kitchen/fireside room, and it should go without saying that every individual is responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

NTAUUS NEWS (North Texas Association of UU Societies)

We have applied for a grant from NTAUUS. Your board trustee, Mike Ellsberry, is much better versed than I am in the proud history of this organization, having served as its president for a number of years. It's worth knowing - ask him about it if you are not familiar with it. When Daniel Polk, the current NTAUUS president, spoke to us Nov. 15, he informed us that NTAUUS would again be soliciting grant applications this year. The board quickly went to work and submitted our application for a grant to be used to financially support our existing commitment to a ministerial presence at least twice a month. We have been successfully supporting this out of our own budget so far this year, but with the addition of the NTAUUS funds, it is our hope that we might secure the services of a part-time consulting minister who would be able to coach us in our growth process, rather than just a series of guest speakers. But first we'll have to see if our grant application is approved - we'll keep you posted on that!

10 AM ADULT FORUMS (all forums meet in the classroom just off the Fireside Room)

On First Sundays, "On Their Shoulders," facilitated by Dan Parsons - an introduction to some of our UU ancestors and s/heros.

On Second Sundays, "Our Mysterious World," hosted by Joel Lowry. This forum will address subject matters such as strange phenomenon and experiences, and alternative perspectives. Participants will be invited to share personal experiences or opinions concerning weekly topics. "As a Unitarian Universalist, what is your take on this topic, and how does it fit into your spiritual path?". Skeptics, believers, and "neithers" are welcome.

On Third Sundays, "Pathways," Coordinated by Pat Parsons - a discussion of our various spiritual paths.

Caring Community / Personal Milestones: We are grateful to Allison Stovall, retired medical social worker, and former member of 1st UU Church Houston's Befrienders Group, for coordinating our Caring Team. We are looking forward to everyone sharing in this important aspect of our church. Allison welcomes contact from church members - you can email her at ASto6312@aol.com or call 903.765.3272. Please let Allison know when your birthday occurs so we can recognize you. If you prefer, we can leave out the year. If you have an item to be shared in this newsletter, please contact Allison.

AREA NEWS AND EVENTS / SOCIAL ACTION

PATH (PEOPLE ATTEMPTING TO HELP) The Blanket Drive continues throughout the cold winter months. Food item for January is Canned Soup. Nonperishable food & personal care items are needed throughout the year. You may place your donations in our PATH basket in the corridor. You can always make monetary donations on line at www.tylerpath.org Please consult the PATH bulletin board or check <http://www.tylerpath.org>

EAST TEXAS CRISIS CENTER As an ongoing service project, we'll be collecting personal care items from the East Texas Crisis Center Wish List. This list includes Toothpaste, Q-tips, Deodorant, Cotton Balls, Hand Sanitizer, etc. The Crisis Center houses women and children displaced by family violence. If you'd like to donate, you may bring your items to the church any time - a "Crisis Center Shopping Bag" is located on the hallway table.

MEETINGS & GATHERINGS

Board Meeting: Agenda items should be emailed to uutylertx@yahoo.com. Board meetings are open to all members of the church. Non Board members may speak at meetings by requesting items be put on the agenda, but do not vote. No regular meeting is scheduled for December. Minutes are posted on the bulletin board.

Tyler Together Race Relations Forum. John Sims keeps us informed about this community organization, a group of concerned individuals from the Tyler area working to promote racial and ethnic equality through programs, open-discussions, education, and advocacy. The Race Relations Forum meets the last Monday of each month 11:30am-1:30pm and the general public is welcome to attend. More info at <http://www.tylertogether.org/>

ARE, an Edgar Cayce study group, meets at our church on Monday evenings at 7 pm.

A Secular Home Schoolers Group meets at our church. They have a Yahoo Group which may be accessed at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HIPTYlerTX/> New or prospective members must introduce themselves before being invited to activities.

The East Texas Freethinkers Group (A meetup.com group) meets at our church at 7 pm on the first Thursday of each month, and on occasional Friday evenings.

Fairwood Methodist Church - our neighbor across the street - offers Tai' Chi as follows: Mondays and Wednesdays at 12:00noon. Thursdays at 6:00PM. These classes are in the Family Life Center. Thanks to Rev. Rick Tate for sharing this information with us.

UUA CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP (CLF)

Our church subscribes to the **UUA Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF)** for small congregations. You might be interested in checking out the many online resources at <http://clf.uua.org/> You can even take an online course! To find out more about online courses, go to www.clfuu.org/learn Most classes carry a \$40 registration fee.

"For New Unitarian Universalists" is a **FREE ONLINE CLASS** with information on UU history, spirituality, organization, and more. To access click <http://www.uurgl.com/learn> and "login" and "create an account." After you create a username and password you will need to return to your email to confirm your registration. Then simply return to www.uurgl.com/learn , log in using the username and password you created and click on "For New Unitarian Universalists" to begin the class. The whole process registration process only take a minute or two—if you run into difficulties, feel free to contact our minister for lifespan learning at lunagar@clfuu.org

Bridges and Buildings: Thoughts for a New Year - by Tim Kutzmark, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church, Reading, Massachusetts

The railroad bridge seemed to stretch out for a mile over the ravine. It linked the sharp rocky edge of where we stood to some far away, unknown ending. If you breathed deep you could still smell tar, steamy and sticky, that had long ago bubbled up on the bridge's beams, heated by the late summer sun. The paint had faded over the last few years, but the warning was still there: "No trespassing." We laughed, and threw rocks at the other sign, the one proclaiming: "Do not cross."

No one but us kids ever came out there during the day. At night, the teenagers would come. We would find their beer cans, cigarette butts, even, once, a pair of Fruit of the Loom underwear, waist size 28 inches. But by day, that edge of that bridge was ours. It was a great place to hide—from grown ups, and from the world that wanted us to be everything we were not. It was a great place to dream of everything we might become.

Shoes hung around our necks, with t-shirts tucked into the waist of our low slung shorts, we would walk a little way out onto that bridge, just out over the deep creek that ran below. The bigger, braver boys would walk forward along one metal rail, balancing and reveling in the heat that seared dirty toes, pain proving they were more than just boys pretending to be men. The smaller of us would cling to the sides of the bridge, holding on as we edged out over the water, cautiously reaching legs from railroad tie to railroad tie.

We always stopped a quarter of the way out. Screaming, and yelling, "Train!" we would turn and rush back to the dirt and rocks, laughing and rolling together till it was time to return to home. Home, that sometimes harder place, where dreams could drain away. No one had yet crossed that railroad bridge, no one that we knew. None of us yet needed to know what waited at the far end. We'd heard stories. Ten years earlier the Nulandy twins got caught mid-bridge by the train. Jimmy jumped at the last minute, landing hard on the rocks. Kieran took the train full force on his back as he tried to outrun it. One bridge, two boys, two deaths. We always stopped a quarter of the way out and turned back.

But that day was different. Something had changed. That afternoon, we decided to cross over. We would claim the other side. We walked out to where we always stopped. This time, no one yelled, "Train!" and retreated. In the shadows cast by the sun, edges were blurring and yesterday seemed done. And then, almost as one, we stepped beyond. We let go of something, something that was once strangely us, but now was no more. We were in between. We were off balance. We were unknown to our own selves. As if on cue, the breeze picked up, whipping through the wooden beams.

It tousled Terry's hair. He smiled. Another gust, cooler, caused me to stop. Christian hollered and tossed his t-shirt high above our heads, and for a moment it rode the wind out beyond the bridge. I shut my eyes, threw open my arms, wide, and let that same wind rush across my skin. Then, with eyes open, we stepped forward.

And that's how it can happen, how a day that seems so ordinary can somehow become a day of new beginning. Those moments do not come easily. We have to consciously claim them, create them. We have to dare them into being. In the end, we have to choose to cross over. Each one of us stands on the edge of such a moment. No matter who we are, no matter how young or how old, no matter what our life circumstance.

On this moment of the New Year we each stand before our own bridge, a bridge that somehow, some way, beckons. For some of us, that bridge is frightening or unwanted. For others of us, that bridge is exhilarating and anticipated. For still others of us, it is a combination of both.

What bridge calls us forward? Is it a newborn child with new rhythms to learn, a troubled teenager we are trying to keep safe, an empty nest with no kids at all? What bridge calls us forward: a spiritual search leading us to a new church, this church?

What bridge calls us forward: a choice we might need to make, a career change, entering recovery, getting married in a month, an unexpected divorce, balancing work and relationship? What bridge calls us forward: a failure we need to move beyond, a joy we need to fully embody, watching our adult children and wishing they would make the right decisions?

What bridge calls us forward: growing older, retirement, our first grandchild, our second grandchild, great-grandparenthood, scaling down and moving into a smaller place, losing someone, loneliness? What bridge calls us forward: the failing health of a parent or our spouse, our own illness, death, finding life again? What bridge calls us forward? What must we do to step into that place where nothing is sure, but we are closer to where life is calling us?

It was a late summer day. We were a trio of excited boys. There was a bridge and a beckoning. There was a safe crossing and a tomorrow claimed. May it ever be so.