



In this issue:

Cover Letter	1
Statement of Conscience	2
UU Retreat	2
Happenings	2-3
Pain & Suffering	3
President's Letter	4
Maundy Thursday	4
Leadership Dev.	5
Membership Corner	5
Reflections	6
Kids Together Day	7
Easter Egg Hunt	7
Worship Schedule	8

TO THE GLORY OF LIFE

The 13th Chapter of the Book of Numbers in the Hebrew Bible is a story that has to do with Moses. Moses, as you remember, was asked by God to take a band of Israelite slaves – against tremendous odds – out of Egypt to live as free people within the promised land. The people who had only known Egypt – who had only known what it meant to live as a small band among a great throng - found it implausible to believe they could make it. But they went anyway, because they dreamt in their hearts that it might be so – that they might live not as small men and women in a great land, but as great men and women.

Indeed, scholars believe that even though it is equally implausible to us, the story is compelling to read because we want them to succeed. We want them to grow up, realize their potential, live as great people – because that is what we want for ourselves. And so it is a very heartening account – all up until the children of Israel make it to the desert of Moab, which sits at the far edge of the promised land.

They had come far. In fact they were only a few days journey away from all they ever desired. And Moses, excited that the dream was at hand, urged the congregation to climb the last hill and enter the promised land.

But they resisted. They paused. They had grown used to the desert. They had become accustomed to their ways as a small tribe. Things may be bad in the desert, they said, but at least they knew what it was like.

The community agreed that they had better find out more about the promised land before they decided to go there. So, they chose some spies to go ahead and, in a process much like a UU congregation would use, they chose 40 spies (making sure all the committees were represented) to go into the promised land.

When they arrived, they found that it was indeed a land that ran with milk and honey. But they also found that the land was already occupied - occupied by very big people – “giants,” in fact, is what the Hebrew version of this word translates into. The word is actually “Anaks” referring to the tribe of, specifically, the ‘long-necked ones.’

So the spies came back. And there was a majority report and a minority report. The majority report, of course, said, “We can’t go to the promised land! Yes, it flows with milk and honey, but it is occupied by giants – Anaks – the long-necked ones.

The minority report, given by Joshua and Caleb, was much more optimistic. It said, “Yes, the land flows with milk and honey AND we can find OUR place among the people there.”

Of course, the majority won out. And Moses was practically stoned to death when he persisted in encouraging the people to re-evaluate and continue into the promised land. The people did not continue. They remained in the desert dreaming about the land of milk and honey for another forty years. Their time was not rich and sweet, like they had hoped. It was dry and bitter. And the story of their lives became one about a people who had dreams they never realized and destinies they never fulfilled.

Every person, every family, every community of every age faces this same story at some point. A challenge that asks them whether they will take a risk, rise to their potential, reach the promised land, live as the giants and enjoy the milk and honey. Or will they wait in the desert, hoping but doubting, struggling to see themselves as the kind of people who grow beyond the challenges of their day.



Happenings

UUMANSingles

The singles group meets for a monthly potluck, the second Saturday of every month. E-mail Craig Kaufman or Carolyn Bommarito for more details craigk@uuman.org & carolyn@uuman.org

Happenings

UUMANDRUMS

UUMAN'S Drum Choir usually meets the first and third Sunday's of each month, from 1:30 for beginners and warm-up, 2:00-3:30 class. Classes are \$15 and are taught by renowned drum teacher Tom Harris, Director of the Excel Drummers and counselor at InnerHarbour. Loaner drums are available. If you are interested in making your own drum, contact Tom for information and to schedule a drum making workshop. For questions or information contact Pamela Reich uumandrums@uuman.org

What role we will choose to fulfill at UUMAN? Are we a tribe of people like Moses and Joshua and Caleb? Are we supposed to live in the promised land? Or are we the people who live lives of caution and uncertainty, ever dreaming but always waiting?

40 is a mythical number of years that represents the time it takes for real transformation of character. It could be 5 minutes or it could be 5 generations. But it will certainly take a willingness to risk standing among giants.

This year UUMAN is asking its members to grow and stand in a place that promises us a lot of what we have said we wanted as we've crossed deserts: to adequately care for our building and ensure it is here for us when we need it in the future, to fund the infrastructure that allows our programs and systems to run smoothly, to make sure our dreams become realities and to make sure that the people who come after us are inspired by what we created. That is what it means to reach our potential.

It is not an easy thing to do. Nothing worthwhile usually is. It asks us to grow. To become giants. To stand with the Anaks – the long necked ones. But what it really asks us is to see ourselves as deserving to be there. We have a place among giants – the long necked ones. All we have to do is learn to stick our necks out.

To the Glory of Life

Unitarian Universalist Clergy of Metro Atlanta Statement of Conscience March 21, 2006

War deserves serious attention, and the current war in Iraq now calls for a concerted response.

As people of faith in a denomination whose ancestors cherished and inscribed specific liberties into our country's constitution, we, the Unitarian Universalist Clergy of Metro Atlanta, are saddened and troubled to witness those threads of liberty being ripped from the fabric of our nation's democracy.

As ministers whose faith is tethered to the inherent worth and dignity of all persons and whose aim is the interdependence of all existence, we are saddened by the loss of life, the loss of individual liberties at home, and the loss of direction from our nation's moral compass.

Ideals of enlightenment for all have been co-opted into entitlement of the few. Fears following the September 11, 2001 attacks have been used to violate the rights of citizens at home and the sovereignty of nations abroad. Reasons offered for initiating the conflict with Iraq and committing the lives and resources of our nation have proven unsound. And the rationale for continuing warfare without clear and measurable objectives for insuring regional stability and international peace is unconscionable.

We therefore endorse the April 1st Southern Regional March for Peace in Iraq and Justice at home.

Sincerely,

Rev. Greg Ward
President, Unitarian Universalist Clergy of Metro Atlanta



The Difference between Pain and Suffering

Senator John McCain said in Newsweek: "...If you gave people who have suffered abuse as prisoners a choice between a beating and a mock execution, many, including me, would choose a beating. The effects of most beatings heal. The *memory* of a (threatened) execution will haunt someone for a very long time and *damage his or her psyche*..."

McCain lived through an extreme example of the difference between pain and suffering. He knows how our minds torture us, how our fears, thoughts, and beliefs torture us. That is suffering.

Pain, on the other hand, is "an unpleasant sensory or emotional sensation associated with actual or potential tissue damage." *Suffering* is the story our minds weave around the emotional or physical pain: "When will it end? Will it come back? Can I handle/survive this? etc." Suffering intensifies the physical/emotional aspect of pain by adding layers of mental chatter.

The Dalai Lama, a Tibetan Buddhist, recognizes that pain and suffering are not the same. He lauds Western science for "making a tremendous contribution to the alleviation of *pain*" (hunger, disease, injury, harsh environments). He calls spirituality "complimentary to science" because it leads to "the alleviation of *mental and emotional suffering*."

Have you ever seen a sick child who "magically" gets better when a friend comes over to play? The mind, busily manufacturing suffering, got diverted into playing. The physical ailment wasn't healed, but the child dropped the mental suffering that made it worse.

Have you noticed how your mind creates suffering in your own life? There is a technique to deal with suffering - it's free, can be done literally anywhere, in a minute or for hours, and is simple (not to be confused with easy). It's called meditation. People of every religion and have used meditation as a spiritual practice to ease suffering.

Meditation allows you to quiet your mind. To let go of the incessant, maddening mental talk. When the manic chatter subsides you get a glimpse of peace, calm, stillness: "Be still and know that I am God" Psalms 46:10 (Judaism, Torah); "The kingdom of God is within." Luke 17:21 (Christianity, New Testament); "Empty your mind of all thoughts, let your heart be at peace." Lao-tsu 500 B.C.E. (Tao te Ching).

The most widely used meditation practice is to focus on the breath. The breath is always with us, it is effortless and instinctual. Don't expect miracles, strange sensory perceptions or otherworldly experiences. Don't expect anything - just watch and feel. As you learn to let your mind serve you your life will change.

1. Close your eyes.
2. Put your attention on your breath. Don't change it, no exertion. Simply observe.
3. When your mind wanders, gently guide it back to watching your breath.
4. Let go of judgment. **There is no such thing as a good or bad meditation.** If you don't "feed" the judgment (spin a story around it) it will dissipate.
5. Feel what happens. Try to meditate on the breath for 5 minutes. If it feels good, continue. When you get too restless or uncomfortable, stop.

Lisa Macy

Happenings

YOGA with Lisa @ UUMAN

On-going yoga classes in our beautiful sanctuary. Develop strength, flexibility and balance in mind and body. Learn poses, breathing & relaxation techniques & meditation to reduce stress, calm your mind, strengthen your immune system, and find more joy in life! Beginners & intermediates; men, women & teens. Newcomers welcome anytime. Wednesday 10-11:15 a.m., Sunday 4:45-6 p.m. Buy a class card for the number of classes you'd like to take: 10 for \$100; 5 for \$65; 1 for \$15 or 1 month unlimited \$65. Contact lisa@uuman.org or 770-395-7166

Happenings

Beltane/May Day

Event Reminder:
Sunday, April 30th
12-3PM.



Acting now for what we want later...good leadership at UUMAN

It's April! Spring is officially here. Time to make summer plans if you haven't started to do that.

At UUMAN it is not too early to think about what we want next Fiscal Year and even beyond. We're already doing that actually. We have Community Quest underway. We're conducting most of the financial canvass in April. Both of those will help guide us, enable us or constrain us...whatever the case might be.

It is also time to be thinking about our next leadership team. We vote to approve next year's budget in May. At the same time we vote to select the next leadership team we want to guide us. Via the Bylaws...at least three of this year's Board members will be back on the Board next year (Treasurer, Vice President to become President, President to become Past-President).

It is time to ask some important questions about leadership. The answers impact us dramatically. Do you trust UUMAN leaders to listen to your point of view? Does leadership foster an exchange of ideas so the best questions and solutions are out on the table? Can leaders and the community commit to a joint plan of action once the ideas are debated? Do leaders and the community hold each other to their word and act on those things each says they will act on? Do the results leaders and members strive for represent the best interests of UUMAN, even if what we do isn't liked by everyone?

These questions are important for the community leadership represents. Leadership is never perfect because it is human. But it can be strong. It can facilitate common goals. It can foster a way we communicate and work. It can develop action plans. It can support the risks we need to take as we change and it can create an environment that encourages every member to be included. Not only can it do those things...it needs to.

Maundy Thursday Gathering

Thursday, April 13th, there will be a short worship service at 7:15 in the sanctuary to commemorate Maundy Thursday. Although this celebration typically references the Christian tradition of the last supper we will use this time to talk about leadership and sacrifice and what we, as typical family members and loyal friends, do to offer leadership to the people and causes that are important to us.

We also need involvement. Though, a group of leaders can't make that happen. Involvement is up to each of member, each of us, individually.

How can you be involved in planning for next year? One way would be to think about these questions: Do you think we should continue to develop the foundation for community building that we started? Who can best represent you in a leadership capacity? Can you let them know you want them to be involved in a UUMAN leadership capacity? Is it "them" you'd like to see participate...or is it "you" who wants the chance to guide?

The best leaders we can get are people who care about UUMAN, who have a passion for making our community better and who are committed to work as a team with other leaders regarding the guidance of our congregation.

If this is you...or someone you know...now is the time to act. The Board will be announcing a Nominating Committee soon and will be seeking the names of those who can make the kind of difference good leadership makes. It would be awesome if you have yourself or another's name to offer.

To our future,
Kirk Bogue
UUMAN President



Leadership Development Opportunity...Scholarship(s) Available

Are you interested in learning and practicing the skills of leadership? Being more effective in interactions with others? Developing more insight into human dynamics, power systems and organizational structure? And being with other UUs in the process?

For one week this summer you can take advantage of a great opportunity to learn about leadership and about church culture and systems. You will discover valuable insights into UU values, history, culture, worship, education and becoming involved in interfaith dynamics. AND its at the Mountain Retreat Center in Highlands.

The Mountain School for congregational leadership employs a highly trained faculty who, together, amass more than a hundred years of church leadership experience. You will have opportunities for hands on learning situations in the following areas:

- Temperaments and styles
- Small group dynamics
- Organizational development for UU congregations
- Systems thinking
- Size dynamics
- Working with staff
- Conflict management
- UU heritage and values
- Inter-religious Relationships
- Worship

UUMAN is looking for one or two people who are interested in attending Leadership School at the Mountain between July 23rd and July 29th and who are interested in becoming a leader at UUMAN. Scholarships are available.

If you are interested in exploring this possibility, please check out the website at <http://www.mountaincenters.org/leadership.html> and email or call Greg at minister@uuman.org

Membership Corner

On behalf of UUMAN, the membership committee is delighted to welcome these new members, who officially joined UUMAN on March 4th:

Gary & Rosie Denning, daughters Judy (4) and Isabella (1 1/2)
Allison Jaffee
Jennifer & Patrick Kardian, daughter Caroline (1 1/2)
Mike & Jen Mitchler, daughter Makayla (1 1/2), son Jordan (3 1/2)

To read their bios and credos, check out the new member board in Fellowship Hall.
Please join us in welcoming our newest members and making them feel at home in this community.



REflections

In her beautiful book, *Loving Kindness*, Sharon Saltzberg tells of a meditation teacher from Thailand who came to visit the meditation center she founded in New England. After a time he came to her with a puzzled look on his face. He told her that in the East, children from the time they are very small are introduced to the truth of the dharma by first learning the benefits of generosity. Later they are given the foundations of morality and then later taught to meditate. This is the traditional process in the East. In this country it is quite the opposite. People come to the center to learn about meditation. Later the foundations of morality are taught. And only then, and as a kind of an appendix, is generosity taught.

Salzbert reports being amazed, "the scales fell from my eyes," she said. She had unconsciously fallen into the American bias. According to Buddhist teaching, holding on to things past the time when they are of use to us is one of the three poisons which can block dharma: delusion, hatred and greed. These three poisons are understood to be part of the human condition. They are to be worked with if healing is to occur.

My own awareness of this American bias came from my use of the children's book, *The Rainbow Fish*, by Marcus Phister. In the story the lonely and unhappy but beautiful rainbow fish is moved to share his glittery rainbow hued scales with the other fish and finds a new life in

community. The book has been soundly trounced by opinion makers with conservative credentials and strong opinions about property rights and free market economies. My experience with children as young as three and four is that they get it. They know that they have things for which they are grateful and that holding on to them past the time of need creates distress. They also understand the decision to let go and the good feeling that the letting go creates.

In the coming weeks families will be filing income tax returns and UUMAN will be conducting its annual canvass. I would recommend sharing as much of either of these two processes with your children as seems appropriate. They should know that you have much to be grateful for and that a certain portion of what you have is given over for the use of others. When you come to those charitable contributions go a step further and do an accounting of how those contributions measure up against your values. Most of our children from grade kindergarten on up are pretty well versed in our UU Principles and Purposes and that these principles are akin to values which we all hold as community. Not only will your children have an appreciation for how their parents act on their values, but they will actually get it. I think children learn from a very early age what we all need to be reminded of from time to time: that it feels good to give

In faith,

Joan

Coming Up:

May 7,14, 21,28: Family RE & Youth Enrollment for 2006-07 church year

May 13: RE Council Retreat



April 2: Kids Together Day

Kids Together Day is a time when children kindergarten age and up gather together in Fellowship Hall following the first part of the worship service for some community building and programming with a social justice focus.

This time the focus of awareness is Cystic Fibrosis. Pam and Jessica Baker will talk about CF, the upcoming "CF Walk at the Zoo" (May 13th) and how the disease has affected the Baker family. They will talk a bit about the disease itself, the research and treatment. Mostly however, the program is experiential. The children will get to try on and manipulate the equipment that Gavin and Jake use on a daily basis, sample a snack consistent with the CF diet and learn a bit about the life of a CF family. If you are interested in being an adult helper for this program please give Nan Brown a call. 770-667-1575

April 16: Easter Egg Hunt

Watch for a sign-up poster for this event. Children will hunt filled (plastic) eggs following the worship service. Older youth will hide the eggs and provide programming. The Easter Bunny will make an appearance. Don't miss this! If you wish to help with this program contact Nan Brown at 770-667-1557 or Margot Harding 770-777-9245.

UUMAN TIMES

Acting Editor:

Kirk Bogue

Assistant Editor:

Dave Lakly

Publisher:

Robbie Copenhagen

Contributors:

Greg Ward, Pamela Reich,
Lisa Macy, Kirk Bogue, Joan
Armstrong, and others

Submissions:

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poetry, creative writing, or
anything else! Please send an
email to our newsletter
editor, at
newsletter@uuman.org with
any questions.



UUMANTIMES is the monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North Congregation.

Ministers Office Hours

Greg wants a chance to speak with everyone at UUMAN. Although he doesn't have specific office hours, he is available to meet with people every day of the week, except Fridays, at a wide variety of times. You are welcome to call him between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. at 770-754-5848 to make an appointment. (In case of emergency, you are encouraged to call (678) 849-4844 any time of day or night).

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.uuman.org

Worship Schedule

April 9 - "The Walk of Shame"

Speaker: Rev. Greg Ward; Worship Associate: Dave Hudson

When religion hurts instead of helps, something is wrong. When people ask what it is about their association with religion was so hurtful, many are quick to cite the judgmental nature – the shame and guilt associated. This sermon will attempt to examine these parts of religious – and human – nature.

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

April 16 - "Resurrection and the Meaning of Life Before Death"

Rev. Greg Ward; Worship Associate: Suzanne Rezelman

Easter is the paramount celebration of the Christian calendar primarily because it offers an answer to one of the great discomforts of human existence: mortality. Most of us will go to great lengths to avoid thinking about death. But what are we missing by failing to show up at one of the most powerful moments of our life – its ending?

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

April 23 - "I'm sorry, I didn't get your name?"

Speaker: Randy Blasch; Worship Associate: Don Rizzo

Stories from the bible all involve a certain leap of faith, but what if that leap is just too far to jump?

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

April 30 - "Stewardship of the Commonwealth"

Rev. Greg Ward; Worship Associate: Cliff Brown

Since the early to mid 1800's, Unitarians experienced great contention in our ranks regarding this question: individualism vs. institutionalism. Religion owes a great debt to Unitarians for advances made on both fronts. But the conflict threatened to divide and destroy us. Why was it such a concern and what of it is still alive today?

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.



UUMAN
11420 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA 30075

Get up-to-date information!
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