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TO THE GLORY OF LIFE

Dear Friends,

There are many who have fallen ill in today's world.

And the variety of illness is astonishing. Some are plagued with the cynicism that comes when with feeling the unjust are in power. Some have caught the malaise that says we can't or we won't stand up when oppressive powers are being exercised. Some have the terminal belief that it's every man for himself. Such spiritual illness is endemic in our times. And most of this illness is spread by examining what we call 'the facts.'

Yet there are also those for whom this illness is a myth. There are those who don't recognize the limitations. Who see a better way. A means to slip the trap of despair. To open the door for others. Who believe in spite of the apparent facts that there is another side to malice, narcissism, greed and war at the expense of the poor. Who believe a solution is actually in our reach - if we can but see it.

I believe UUs belong in the latter half. And I believe we search for a way to break this cycle of poverty, hopelessness and divisiveness. To see a better way.

There is a story that talks about this struggle.

Because it is a very old story, it helps point out that we suffer from a very old disease.

The story begins with the king as a boy, having to spend the night alone in the forest to prove his courage so he can become king.

While he is spending the night alone he's visited by a sacred vision. Out of the fire appears the Holy Grail, symbol of divine grace. And a voice said to the boy, "You shall be keeper of the grail so that it may heal the hearts of men."

But the boy was blinded by greater visions of a life filled with power and glory and beauty.

And in this state of radical amazement he felt for a brief moment not like a boy, but invincible, like a God, ... so he reached into the fire to take the grail, ... and the grail vanished, ... leaving him with his hand in the fire to be terribly wounded.

Now as this boy grew older, his wound grew deeper. Until one day, life for him lost its reason... He had no faith in any man, not even himself... He couldn't love or feel loved... He was sick with experience.

He began to die. One day a fool wandered into the castle and found the king alone. And being a fool, he was simple minded, he didn't see a king. He only saw a man alone and in pain. And he asked the king, "What ails you friend?"

The king replied, "I'm thirsty. I need some water to cool my throat". So the fool took a cup from beside his bed, filled it with water and handed it to the king.

As the king began to drink, he realized his wound was healed. He looked in his hands and there was the Holy Grail, that which he sought all of his life. And he turned to the fool and said with amazement, "How can you find that which my brightest and bravest could not?"

And the fool replied, "I don't know. I only knew that you were thirsty."

This is an old story. This version, by Richard LaGravenese, is one in a long line to talk about the grail.

The earliest versions began appearing in the 13th century. But the archetypal story still speaks to us today.



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

As UUs, who are educated and have many opportunities to know the world, we are often 'sick with experience.' We are too familiar with the ills that plague society. But the right answer doesn't seem as clear. It is the fool who, in the end of so many stories, sees the truth which eluded the sages and saves the village. But that is not to say that all of our intellect and worldly experience is for naught.

As UUs, we are called to see that there are different visions of power. One as a way to conquer and defeat and control; and another as a way to reach out for what is right in front of us and find a way to heal those who are hurting.

As UUs we have the power to determine what, in the long run, will be seen as fact and what will be seen as myth. The holy grail does not ignore power. But uses it in a way that serves, not our own supremacy but the supremacy of compassion, justice and mercy to the religious cause.

Historically, UUs have always been visionaries who have fought for the common good, not their own place at the top. It is that vision which is needed today.

And it is up to us to hold up a vision of the better way.

To the Glory of Life.

Letter from the Editor

Complacency and comfort are the enemy of a true seeker. When we think we have it down to an art, perhaps it is time to begin again. And so it has come full circle for me serving as editor of this esteemed publication. I recently realized that I cannot offer the sustenance that is needed for the newsletter to grow. The task has become rote and perfunctory. So I am stepping down in the hopes that a new vision might lead the UUMAN TIMES to greater places.

I have served this role with joy and pride. I am thankful to those who helped in creating such a quality publication and to those who enjoyed reading it. It truly was a creation of love and I will always have a special place for it in my heart. So it is with both sorrow and hope that I sign off as editor and look forward to seeing the prosperous future of this publication.

Thank you for your support,
Patty Odom

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.
-Chinese Proverb

Rest Your Body, Mind & Soul Metro Atlanta UU Retreat

Spiritual Practices, Small Groups & Silence May 19 - 21, 2006 Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center Retreat begins Friday May 19 6:00 PM ends Sunday May 21 after the Noon lunch Register by phoning Northwest UU Congregation office 770-955-1408

Cost for all meals & lodging: \$160 if payment in by April 1, 2006 \$175 if payment received by May 1, 2006 Make checks payable to UUCMA and mail to: Rev. Dana Reynolds, 1240 Fairfax Hunt, Lawrenceville, GA 30042

Make your reservation early..... there are only 49 rooms available! For more information contact Greg.



Great Strides Walk for Cystic Fibrosis Cure

Dear members of UUMAN,

Many of you attended the Christmas Eve service and learned about the struggles that the Baker Family has with Cystic Fibrosis. Both Gavin and Jake suffer from CF and they need your help to find a cure. Each year the Baker Boys Battalion descends upon the Great Strides Walk in a sea of red to help raise money for this cure. We are hoping that this year you will help us!!

Last year the Baker Boys' Battalion rose close to \$50,000 at Zoo Atlanta and our goal this year is to break the \$50,000 mark! We have already received national recognition for our expansion efforts (we had BBB teams at 10 different sites across the US and Canada). Our goal now is to become a MILLION DOLLAR team. So far, collectively over the past 4 years, we have raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars. We hope that you will help us move towards our goal this year by walking with us or making a donation.

This year the walk will be held on May 13th at the Atlanta zoo. There will be lunch following the walk and everyone who brings in at least \$75 will get a free pass to the zoo. So in case raising money for a great cause isn't enough, there is one more reason to join us. This is a great family event and the more the merrier!

For those of you who are new to our efforts, let me take a minute to tell you about Cystic Fibrosis. CF is a genetic disease that affects more than 30,000 children and adults in the US. It is the most fatal genetic disease in the country. CF affects the lungs and the intestines. The life expectancy of a child in 1955 who had CF was 5 years. As the decades have passed that life expectancy has grown but there is still no cure. I read the other day that 50% of the people with CF today won't make it into their 30's..that's either Gavin or Jake. Not finding a cure is NOT an option!

GREAT news received this year - Dr. Scott - the lead CF doctor at Scottish Rite - told us that he believes wholeheartedly that he will see a cure in his lifetime.....he's never been able to say that before and certainly not to a bunch of CF families, but he truly believes it because of what is happening in CF research!!! We're getting there - we're in the homestretch.....all it takes is money to bring us what we need for Gavin, Jake and 30,000 other people out there suffering with CF.

I know it may seem early to contact you for a walk taking place in May but we want to get as many people involved as we can. There are two ways that you can help the BBB and other sufferers of CF starting now!

1. Come out to Zoo Atlanta on May 13st and walk with us. Contact me at 678-613-2457 (or catch me at church) if you want to walk or register on line at http://www.cff.org/Great_Strides/JessicaBaker
2. If walking with us isn't possible, then let your money do the walking for you.make a donation on line at http://www.cff.org/Great_Strides/JessicaBaker or send your tax-deductible donation (made out to the CF Foundation) to Jess at 750 Nettlebrook Lane, Alpharetta, GA 30004.

Please mail donations by May 1st, so that they can be turned in by walk day. Remember, no donation is too small - the CF Foundation utilizes 90 cents of every dollar for research, so every single dollar brings us closer to a cure! Lots of love,
Jess, Randy, & Emma

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

Don't forget the **HUNGRY EAR Coffee House** at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, on Saturday, April 1st. This month's show will include: "Heavenly Hash with Allison Adams, Paul Jean and Paige Parvin; Bob Weisman with Fred Horne, George Uterhardt, and Wade Medlock; and feature Alia and Liz Stahler. Show starts at 8:00 PM. A \$5.00 donation is requested and refreshments will be available. BYOB. All amateur folk musicians are welcome to perform. Call Tom at 678-503-0991 or email cumusicprep@charter.net to reserve a time slot.



Do you "have to" or do you "get to"?

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? A life of "have to"? Or "get to"?

I had the pleasure to spend time with two people this past week that I had never met before. Almost polar opposites they were. Circumstantially, they were at similar places about eight years ago. Today, they are at vastly different places with vastly different views of life.

He learned how to install heating and air-conditioning equipment working for another company. He didn't get along well with others there and besides, he knew how to do it better than they did. So to make a living he decided he had to start his own company. He was able to overcome obstacles working with what he called the "many cheats in the industry". His business grew quickly at first. He hired people who had to do it his way or they wouldn't be long for the success train he was riding. He took ill and determined he had no choice but to let his right-hand man to lead the group. Right-hand was a better leader. Right-hand trained the team and praised them for a job well done.

Having Right-hand on the team was purely a stroke of luck. He and Right-hand never talked about leadership; their interview discussion focused solely on whether Right-hand could wire an air conditioner. He came back to work after his illness and because his business was growing, he had to let Right-hand continue guiding the crew. When Right-hand decided to pursue his true career ambition and left the company, he again had no choice but to have the next-best hand take over the team leadership role. He didn't believe this would work, but he viewed he had no other choice. So he let Next-best have the job. Next-best was a horrible leader and drove most of the rest of the team away.

From that point the company began to fail. Back to working with just himself and a mounting pile of unfulfilled commitments and rising debt, he wondered what to do next. He was never one to bestow trust, care or respect. Now he feels very alone and in want of those three things himself.

She entered her profession selling personal care products to women as a part-timer with a vision of being able to purchase hub caps for her broken-looking car. Through various circumstances she would become a single parent. Her primary income was her corporate job, but she stayed involved in her part time work for some sorely needed extra cash. She felt a little aimless at times regarding the direction of her life, but she watched and learned from everyone she met. She was intentional about helping others. It was meaningful for her to see others benefit from help she provided. Her help was often a connection she would make between two other people who

could help each other. Her corporate experience included a couple of layoffs. Eight years ago, faced with the uncertainty of not having more influence over her income, she put her trust and faith in herself and in "the goodness of humanity". She went out on her own full time selling the personal care products she had been selling part time. She never really had to "sell" her products, though. There seemed to be a natural demand for them by people who wanted to buy from her after she had helped them in some way. The real value she provided to others took two forms. One had always been helping people get connected with someone else who it would be beneficial for them to know. The other was helping people feel good about themselves by helping them be more confident about their appearance and self-image.

Doing both of these things for others without the expectation of a reward is paying her back. A fraction of the people she assists help her in return by doing business with her or connecting her to other people who do. And it is enough business that she is one of the highest producers for her company this region of the country has seen.

He wakes up every day with the hassle of "having" to make a living. She wakes up every day wondering who she'll "get" to help.

Her spirituality and belief in a few principles regarding work ethic and kindness help her live life as "half full"...where he sees and lives his life as "half empty". Her outlook and life standard is contagious for people she comes in contact with. His is an affliction people walk around to get away from.

This made me wonder how we each look at UUMAN? Do we get to come on Sunday? Do we get to be in community with each other? Is what we offer to each other desirably contagious? Does how we look at our relationship to UUMAN and what we get to contribute help us feel better about ourselves and others we're in relationship with? Can we be the goodness that makes a half-empty story like his a half-full story like hers? We get to when we choose to.

May we let that be so.

Kirk Bogue



Poverty / Economic Justice Study Group Forming

Several events and trends over the last few years awaken us to growing injustice in the world. Katrina exposed the underbelly of poverty in this country and its connection to racism. AIDS in Africa underscores the poverty and racism overseas. The gap between this nation's and the world's wealthy and poor continues to grow. A growing number of workers each year go without health insurance or pensions.

What do these trends mean? What is their connection to globalization, exploitation, the world economy and even human nature? How do the trends relate to immigration policy? Economic policy? Environmental policies? And even peace and justice? Is there anything at all that can be done about these trends?

More important is there anything we at UUMAN can do about them? Are you interested in coming together with other UUs to study these questions? If so, please join us at an introductory meeting.

Date:

Monday, March 13th at 7:30 for dessert and coffee in Fellowship Hall

Purpose:

- To examine poverty in all its manifestations, as it relates to racism, globalization, exploitation, various economic systems, and perhaps most of all, human nature.
- To nurture each individual on his or her quest for greater understanding and spiritual growth.
- To foster greater understanding among community members who bring different perspectives and beliefs to this journey To encourage each individual to act according to his/her own inner truths and UU Principles and Purposes

Materials:

Books chosen by the group from those such as Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich and The End of Poverty by Jeffrey Sacks. Literature that is available from the UUA, UUSC and UUJEC.

Documentaries from a wide variety of perspectives as chosen by the group

When and Where:

Meeting times will be determined by the group at the first meeting on March 13th, This group would be open to anyone who is interested in learning more about the causes of poverty and sharing their quest (NOT debating) with other UUs.

Those who join must be willing to listen to each other and to be open to a wide range of perspectives as its members engage in honest search for understanding of this complex issue. This study might lead to action if the desire bubbles up naturally for specific individuals in the group or for the group as a whole, but we would not attempt to speak for UUMAN. Instead we will work to encourage the growth of each individual on his or her path toward greater understanding, accepting each person exactly where they are.

If you are interested, please email Kate Hudson. We hope to see you there!!

Kate Hudson
Mark Sexton
Kara Sweeney

Answering the call for UUMAN Evolution

As UUMAN matures two things are becoming much more apparent: (1) We are being taken much more seriously by the general public - who is curious about us and wants to find out how to rent our facilities and to know more about us; and (2) and we are needing more people to represent UUMAN in human fashion. Robbie would like to spend more time promoting UUMAN for weddings and other rental possibilities. In order to do that, we need to see if we can address some of the regular duties - answering phones and being a general live presence for the public. Most of the need for this comes between 10 - 2 p.m. M-F.

If you have a few hours that you would like to offer some general UUMAN presence during the week, please call Robbie on Wednesday or Fridays (9-2) (770) 992-3949



REflections

"The Lily" by Mary Oliver

Night after night
 darkness enters the face of the lily
 which, lightly,
 closes its five walls
 around itself,
 and its purse
 of honey,
 and its fragrance,
 and is content
 to stand there
 in the garden,
 not quite sleeping,
 and, maybe,
 saying in lily language
 some small words
 we can't hear
 even when there is no wind
 anywhere,
 its lips are so secret,
 its tongue
 is so hidden--
 or, maybe,
 it says nothing at all
 but just stands there with the patience
 of vegetables
 and saints
 until the whole earth has turned around
 and the silver moon
 becomes the golden sun --
 as the lily absolutely knew it would,
 which is itself, isn't it,
 the perfect prayer?

During a recent UU 102 gathering for newcomers who were considering membership I was asked a question following my presentation. The question was about prayer and it's place in our religious education program for children and youth. Do we have prayer in our classes? Do we teach about prayer? Well, no. and, yes.

During this winter term, Jewish and Christian Teachings, a couple of our classes learned about the Lord's Prayer. Such lessons usually include a discussion of the nature of prayer, UU views on prayer and place prayer in the context of other spiritual disciplines. As a religious educator I have come to feel that we do our young people a great disservice if we do not introduce them to the practice of the various spiritual disciplines. We're all different and different temperaments lend themselves to different practices.

It's different for very young children who readily apprehend the spirit through direct sensory experience. Most of us lose that ability before we reach adolescence. Some of us find it when we spend time with pre-schoolers. Others, like poet Mary Oliver, never lost it.

And, then there's a good chance that the parent who asked the question had something more concrete in mind. There are collections of prayers for children and families available. The UU Kids Book has such a collection and there is another new collection co-authored by our own Karen LoBracco. Many families find the practice of saying a blessing before meals a meaningful family tradition. If these are resources that are of interest to you, please just ask.

Blessings,
 Joan

Teachers Meetings:

March 5th Jr. Youth and 4th-5th Grade Teachers
 March 12th Kindergarten - 1st and 2nd-3rd Grade Teachers
 March 19th PreSchool and Toddler Teachers
 March 5th - Spring term begins
 March 12th - Youth Service, Secret Friends Celebration
 April 16th - Easter Egg Hunt for children and youth



The Youth Service

It's that time of year again, time for the youth service. And the UUMAN youth are very excited about it. In one youths words "We are breathlessly awaiting our new up coming event in our spiritual journey." The topic this year is 'Cause That's What We Do. In the course of the service several youth will share their personal spiritual journey. They will explore the meaning behind their unique chalice lighting and their place in our UU society. This is one service you won't want to miss-- so clear your calendars for March 19th, oh, and bring a box of tissues.

Kelly J. Ritter

Mid-South District Annual Assembly

April 28-30, 2006: Author, Naturalist, and Environmental Activist Janisse Ray

Janisse Ray grew up in a junkyard on U.S. Route 1 outside Baxley, GA. She made her way from there to North Georgia College in Dahlonega and then onto Montana and Mississippi and now Vermont, with trips home to Georgia in between. Ever since she left home at the age of seventeen, she has held the beauty and wonder of the pine woods and wiregrass of southeast Georgia next to her heart. Today she actively works to preserve the natural beauty of this area. She is the perfect choice to deliver the keynote at this Annual Assembly focusing on Living Simply, Living Spiritually, Living Sustainably because these ideals are promoted in all of her writing and put into practice in her everyday life. Ms. Ray is the author of "The Ecology of a Cracker Childhood," " Wild Card Quilt: Taking a Chance on Home," and her newest book, "Pinhook: Finding Wholeness in a Fragmented Land." Don't miss the opportunity to meet this extraordinary woman and to hear her speak. Her books will be on sale in the bookstore and she will be available for book signing as well.

More information, including the other sessions and registration, is available online at www.uua.org/msd.

Living Simply, Living Spiritually, Living Sustainably Mid-South Annual Assembly
April 28-30, 2006- Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Mark your calendars now! Make your plans to attend. Begin to organize car pools, make hotel reservations or arrange home hospitality. You do not want to miss this MidSouth District event! Nursery care and children's activities are available, at no additional cost. Don't miss the Good News from the Service of the Lively Tradition on Friday evening. On Saturday there will be a keynote address from author and environmental activist, Janisse Ray. There will also be a Bridging Ceremony for the Youth. Be present to help move them from teenagers to young adults. Saturday night enjoy the talents of folks in the district at the Coffeehouse (bring your instruments). A bookstore will be open throughout the conference. You can purchase everything from jewelry to meditation manuals, from postcards to tote bags, and, of course, books! Janisse Ray will be in the bookstore providing signed copies of her books as well. You folks who like to sing, come early to choir practice, and join in the Amazing Choir of blended voices from around the District. Of course there will be lots of "green" information and sessions. You can find out what other congregations are doing as they work to earn the honor of becoming known as a Green Sanctuary. Share your own congregations' efforts. The UU Ministry for the Earth manuals will be available. Dr. Sharon Roberts, whom many of you had a chance to hear at the Healthy Congregations Conference in Auburn last fall, will be back along with members of the MSD Green Team. More information, including registration, is available online at www.uua.org/msd.

UUMAN TIMES

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We welcome all types of
newsletter submissions.
Please send us your articles,
editorials, announcements,
poetry, creative writing, or
anything else! Please send an
email to our newsletter
editor, Patty Odom, 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

March 5

"Unitarian Universalism and Authority Figures"

Speaker: Rev. Greg Ward; Worship Associate: Suzanne Rezelman

UUs emerged out of the heretical strand of the protestant reformation. We held the role that challenged authority and took on authority figures. We spoke truth to power. We had lots of ammunition. But we must ask the question: does our pride in that role and that stockpile of ammunition lead us to sometimes shoot ourselves in the foot?

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

March 12

Youth Service - 'Cause That's What We Do

Speakers: The UUMAN Youth

In the course of the service several youth share their personal spiritual journeys. They will explore the meaning behind their unique chalice lighting and their place in our UU Society.

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

March 19

"Hearing God"

Speaker: Suzanne Rezelman; Worship Associate: Randy Blasch

There are many different ways to hear the voice of God in our lives. This is a personal story of what happens when a good atheist starts receiving -- what may be -- divine guidance.

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

March 26

"Things to Remember on the Road to Tzedakah"

Rev. Greg Ward; Worship Associate: Cliff Brown

Ancient Jews at one time practiced ritual sacrifice. Somewhere on the march toward modernity, this fell into disfavor a means of charity or altruism. Today, we might feel relieved they did since Jewish practice is where we draw much of our own religious traditions. So how is it that we practice this part of our religion? Or do we?

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.



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Get up-to-date information!
Sign up now and
join UUMAN
@ www.uuman.org.

