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TO THE GLORY OF LIFE

Dear Friends,

I'm not supposed to be writing about this, but I can't help myself. Last week when I found myself on top of Scaly Mountain – a gorgeous piece of the Blue Ridge overlooking three states, it was spring. Everything around me bloomed radiantly. A captivating beauty stood before me. And I held a cup of water in my hand.

I couldn't quite enjoy the majesty of it all. The half full, half empty conundrum held me hostage. And I couldn't set myself free. The question which bound me: should I just relish in the beauty around me? Or was there something more to it? Something more that was being asked?

At first glance, the hawks circling overhead, and the intoxicating smell of magnolia in the air seemed to be saying, 'relax,' 'enjoy.' But I couldn't. Something else called. Thousands upon thousands of voices on the wind, in the air – in my head – voices of animals, insects and flowers – called out - issued a plea. A plea that wasn't asking me to ignore the beauty around me. But was asking me to see something beyond the beauty. And beyond my enjoyment of it.

The voice of stewardship is what was calling. The beauty was captivating. But the voice behind the beauty was even more compelling, making it impossible to simply enjoy what was around me. I was aware of too much that was before me.

Writer, E.B. White knew that dilemma. He said, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve (or save) the world and a desire to enjoy (or savor) the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

When Earth day came and went this year, it left a message. One of those messages

was one I caught on the news briefly one evening. The image of President Bush riding his bicycle to work – An image trying to convey his stewardship of the earth. An image obviously an image conceived of and produced by the media. The same media who were following behind in the six trucks covering the event. It was a farce. But one that did more to raise my awareness than was intended.

The cup of water I held was given to me by one of the ministers during a worship service. It came during a service where we talked about our stewardship – specifically stewardship of the earth. By itself, it wouldn't have made much of an impression. But it came after hearing about a Broadway play.

Urine Town, if you haven't heard, is a popular musical. It is a farce which depicts a city suffering from unending drought where water is so scarce private bathrooms are outlawed. Everyone must pay crippling fees to use public latrines run by a monopolistic corporation. The same corporation that sells bottled water. Those who cannot pay get dragged off to "Urinetown," a mysterious place from which they never return.

Our worship leader said that when he brought up the subject of the play with a friend of his congregation, he heard them say the whole thing – especially the title - was distasteful. When he explained the premise the friend continued on that it was a completely ridiculous and inconceivable topic.

And yet, 1.75 billion people on the planet don't have adequate drinking water. 2.5 billion don't have adequate waste systems. Many of these billions die every day because we fail to take this seriously. Because we fail to be good stewards.



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

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

I wasn't supposed to write about this. But I couldn't help myself. See, one of the things that gives me hope about our world is when I come across communities who are able to hear the call behind the beauty in front of them. The call beyond what we are given. The call to save, as well as savor, the world.

That's what I see UU communities doing. Looking beyond the normal things we are asked to do to find ways to be stewards of all those things that go uncared for – all those things that sustain and affirm life. Not because we can't help ourselves. But because we realize we can't help only ourselves.

To the Glory of Life.
Rev. Greg Ward

YYRU - It's Hard to Say 'Goodbye'!

This time of year often means a lot of 'Goodbyes'...sometimes it is just for the summer with friends going off on adventures, family vacations or to camp. Sometimes it is 'Goodbye' as you set off on the next stage of your life, be it middle, high school or college. Sometimes it is 'Goodbye' as you move across town, across the country or maybe even across the world! In any case, whatever the situation you find yourself saying 'Goodbye' in, it is never easy! The pain is not related to something that we don't have, but it lies in the (sometimes sudden) magnified realization of something precious that we do have...we are connected! We support one another! We love each other! It is scary to imagine that time & space could take that away from us...will it? Sometimes we think that we can trick our way out of it. Maybe if we don't say 'Goodbye' we will be able to somehow trick that very time & space into not coming between us...will it? Like a small infant with it's hands covering it's eyes, 'it's not really happening'!

But is it also possible that separation by time & space is no match for the power of the connection between human hearts? Is it possible that love can hold us close in our hearts in a way that no amount of time or space can interfere? I don't know. I would like to hope so.

But here's something that I do know...I do know that often we don't notice how connected & how loved we are until we think we might be about to lose it. It is & always was true that we are dearly loved & deeply connected to one another. It seems a shame to me that we might try to avoid the pain of a 'Goodbye' and in that attempt miss the moment where we can fully tell how much we really mean to each other. I have faith that if we give ourselves that moment, then we might actually stand a better chance of staying close over time & distance.

So this Spring I will be grabbing my tissues once again...I will be holding my heart open, knowing full well that it will probably hurt, but also knowing that I can't let us part without you knowing just how much you mean to me.

UUMAN Times in Transition

As you may have noticed, the UUMAN Times has been without a permanent editor the past few months. This has meant a few hiccups with the past several issues, and for that we apologize. We are pleased to announce that Lars Olsson will be our new editor starting with the June edition, and we look forward to continuing to provide the quality publication you have come to expect.



Building Bridges

I came across the story below, "Building Bridges", a couple of weeks ago. UUMAN was the first thing I thought about when I read it.

There has been a lot of bridge building going on at UUMAN over the last few months and even before that. It occurs in many private and public ways...by many people and at all times of the week.

We don't always succeed in recognizing those who make our connection to UUMAN better. At least I know I don't show gratitude as well as I think I could. But I do know I enjoy and appreciate our community and that it wouldn't be the same without the diversity of gifts each brings to the table and the work we've been doing to make our community stronger.

I picture a lot of faces at UUMAN when I read this story...perhaps you can spot them and see yourself as well!

With much appreciation for all UUMANs do,
Kirk Bogue, UUMAN President

Building Bridges

Once upon a time two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed, without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days work," he said.

"Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there. Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber drying by the barn? I want you to build me a fence - an 8-foot fence - so I won't need to see his place anymore. Cool him down, anyhow."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town for supplies, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing.

About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped.

There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge... a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work handrails and all - and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay on a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."

-Source Unknown

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



‘OUR WHOLE LIVES’ (‘OWL’) TASK FORCE FORMING

At UUMAN we are very proud to offer the ‘Our Whole Lives’ (‘OWL’) Lifespan Comprehensive Sexuality Education Program for our Upper Elementary Children, Jr & Sr Youth. Over the years we have experienced the significant benefits of offering these classes to our church community as part of our UU Faith Development & Ministry.

It has been a while now since we last looked at how we organize & implement our ‘OWL’ Program & classes at UUMAN. At the request of the Religious Education Council (REC) our Youth Director, Toniann Read, is convening an ‘OWL’ Task Force to take a look at our current needs & to make recommendations for the delivery & logistics (*calendar, age groupings, frequency etc*) of ‘OWL’ Programs for the next period of time.

This is a project with a limited scope. We will meet approximately 3 times over the next 2 months (May & June) with the goal of presenting a proposal at the July REC meeting.

We would like the ‘OWL’ Task Force to reflect UUMAN’s diversity, and so we are reaching out to you to ask you to serve. If you are interested in being a part of this discussion you can volunteer to be on the Task Force by contacting Toniann at yruu@uuman.org Please let me know by Sunday May 7th so that we can start scheduling sessions. You can also submit your ideas/suggestions for consideration by sending email to the same address.

With Many Thanks!
Toniann Read
UUMAN Youth Director.

RE Enrollment

During the month of May we will have RE Enrollment in Fellowship Hall. The enrollment fee remains the same as last year at \$40 per child or youth. Other program offerings such as Youth Programming, Our Whole Lives (OWL) and Coming of Age will include a registration process. Enrollment, however, is a prerequisite for participation or registration in any of the additional programs.

Summer Fun

From June 4th through August 13th the RE Council will offer the Summer Fun! program for 2006. Preschoolers, age 3-5, will be presented with an environmental program entitled “Animal Babies” along with ample opportunities for outdoor water play. Upper and Lower Elementary age children will be offered “UU World Travelers,” a program that fosters religious and cultural awareness and features “passports” which are stamped as our children visit and explore various countries through song, dance, food, costumes, games and activities.

Here’s where you come in: Lots of adult help will be needed. Check out the display in Fellowship Hall to see what activities are available that match up with the special skills and contributions that you can make to help enrich these summer classes. Summer Fun! promises to be Great Fun! Be there.



REflections

By Rev. Joan H. Armstrong

This past Thursday I had the pleasure of attending a presentation and book signing by UU author Neil Chethik. Voice Male, Chethik’s latest book, explores the dynamics of male relationships. I was already familiar with Chethik through a UU World article about boys in Sunday School entitled “What Should We Do with the Boys?” Neil’s presentation and the Q and A which followed gave me an opportunity to explore that topic in greater depth.

In the UU World article, Neil tells the story of an eight year old boy who attends Sunday School at the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, Ontario. He had already begun to notice the attention paid to women’s rights in his religious education classes. One morning, the feminist message was particularly strident as his impassioned teachers led the children in naming women leaders, women heroes, and the court cases that had brought equal rights to Canadian women.

Finally, the puzzled boy spoke. “This feminism stuff is interesting,” he told his teachers, “but when are we going to have a class on boyism?”

Good question. Chethik writes: *“In a movement where just over half the clergy is female, where a great majority of religious education leaders are women, and where feminism is embedded in the principles, parents and education leaders are for the first time wondering aloud if boys are getting what they need from the church schools they attend.”*

At UUMAN we are wondering also. Our adult attendance is quite typical for most churches with 61% female and 39% male. In the church school we have no shortage of boys, but acting out is not at all uncommon and some parents tell us their sons are bored and would prefer not to come to church school.

We are listening. There are a number of ways to look at the church school environment and the materials and activities we choose to include in our program. This fall in upper elementary we will be incorporating lesson materials which feature building projects and active games rather than crafts and quiet activities. Teacher recruitment can make a difference too. One important step in making church school more enticing to boys is to bring more men into the teaching ranks. Currently one third of our teachers are men; our goal for next year is 50%.

Surely there is much we can do as we seek to offer an environment which nurtures the spirit in each of us.

Blessed be,
Joan

RE Calendar

- May 7: RE Enrollment begins and runs through the Month of May
- May 13: RE Council and Stakeholders Leadership Forum
- July 9: Kids Together Day (making lunches for MUST Ministries)
- August 6: Kids Together Day (for MUST Ministries)
- August 12: Teacher Orientation
- August 20: Ingathering

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, 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

May 7 – “The Suspension of Disbelief”

One of the most compelling elements of UUism is that it is the known as the “Religion of Reason.” On the other hand, most of us come to UUMAN hoping that to find meaning that transcends mere reason. We walk a fine line between unadorned rationalism and mindless superstition. A look at belief, ritual and worship from a “non-theist’s” perspective.
Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

May 14 – “Maiden, Mother, Crone”

According to very ancient cultures, there are three stages to a woman’s life. The first is a time of learning, of growth and of maturation. The second is a time of nurturing and caring for those who need us. And when the time is right, a woman will find her voice and assemble the wisdom she has acquired and assume her role as the crone.
Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

May 21 – “What Do You Mean by Faith?”

The lives and works of those engaged in healing/addressing the suffering of the world - Thich Nhat Hanh, Jim Wallis, William Sloane Coffin, for example - fascinate and inspire us. What do their ideas and actions tell us about their faith, the nature of faith, the mechanics of faith?
Children and youth begin in the sanctuary.

May 28 – “Beauty in the Land of the Bereft”

An Intergenerational Flower Communion Service
During Nazism, a bleakness fell upon the land. Those caught in persecution had few places to turn for hope, beauty or joy. Anne Frank was one of those people. So was Norbert Capek. This service celebrates those who bring beauty into the ugliest human times. Please bring a flower as a way to give hope to those who are without.
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.

