



FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

First Church News

July
2009

Worship and
Children's
Religious
Education

Sundays
10:30 a.m.

5200 Fannin
Houston, TX
77004
713.526.5200

Email:
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From Interim Senior Minister David Keyes

REFLECTIONS ON A VERY GOOD YEAR

An enormous THANK YOU to all who gave so generously of themselves and their resources to make this church year just passed a notable landmark of progress. I could not have hoped for more forward-looking and cooperative lay leaders, nor for a more competent and dedicated staff.

Healing events bracketed a year when this church truly was restored to good health. All the vital signs are now positive: Giving is robust, you are gaining members, governance suited to growth has been adopted, and when you gather it is in a spirit of gladness and cooperation.

What a joyous event was the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on June 5. The Board worked hard to make sure it was a festive occasion with a soul-nourishing meal, rousing recognition of volunteers, and constructive exchange of ideas and opinions.

The passage of an ambitious budget capped a fine evening. That members overwhelmingly chose to be aggressive in spending, rather than to play it safe, means a great deal. To me it means that I and the staff must now make every dollar count—must work hard to make sure not only of being good stewards of what has been given, but also must do all we can to assure that our spending

produces results that will make a difference in the lives of congregants and the community. I will ask nothing less of all our volunteer leaders of teams and task forces.

After Sabbath time with family and friends in California, I look forward to returning in late August to begin my second and final year with you. It will be exciting and, I think, productive. Do remember to partake of the sweet little ritual of collecting a bit of water on your summer travels. We will gather our waters and this faith community on Sunday, August 30. Meanwhile, when you are able, do enjoy the excellent summer worship and lifespan learning opportunities planned by Rev. Adam and Religious Education Director Natalie Browne.

The Spirit abides. Kindness abounds. Blessings flow. May all good things be yours until we meet again—and thereafter.

Upcoming Worship Sanctuary, 10:30 a.m.

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Musical guests in upcoming services will include some very talented young pianists from the studio of Carl Gibbs, Jr. Mr. Gibbs was the creator of the Preparatory Music School at Houston Baptist University and has taught some of Houston's finest young pianists throughout the years. The students will typically present one meditative selection within the service proper and one virtuosic selection for a postlude. Come enjoy and celebrate the remarkable talents of these young people.

July 5 - "Happy Birthday to US"

Rev. Adam Robinson, Affiliate Minister

All progress has resulted from people who took unpopular positions.
All change is the result of a change in the contemporary state of mind.
—Adlai Stevenson

On the day after the celebration of our nation's independence let's look at the sacrament of democracy. Are there presents we still need to give ourselves?

July 12 - "Lifespan Faith Development and the Girl Who Was Born in China"

Natalie Browne, Director of Religious Education

All of us are on a journey. Natalie Browne, our Director of Lifespan Religious Education, will share her journey from China through Brazil to First Church, and from Presbyterian missionary kid through marriage and loss to standing before you. She will use her story to point out some of the tasks of faith development that most of us encounter and to suggest some travel essentials for the journey.

July 19 - "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Global Warming"

Amanda Robinson with Rev. Adam

Okay, so global warming is not very lovable. But what can this ecological, moral, and spiritual crisis teach us about God, the world, and ourselves? And how can we, as Unitarians, respond?

Amanda (no relation to Rev. Adam) is a native Texan with an English degree who served as Director of Religious Education at two different Unitarian congregations for the past five years. Now she works for Texas Impact/Texas Interfaith Power and Light and will begin study at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in the fall with the goal of becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister.

July 26 - "Religion and Science: a Sibling Rivalry"

Rev. Bob Tucker

The idea of a war between science and religion has a century-long history, and it is as contemporary as the latest battles at the State of Texas' Board of Education. Often this conflict is portrayed as two irreconcilable fields squaring off against each other. In reality, this is more a sibling rivalry than an irresolvable conflict. The discoveries of the new physics--relativity

and quantum theory (including the uncertainty principle and entanglement)--provide intriguing intersections today for religion and for science.

Bob Tucker is a member of First Church, the retired pastor of First Congregational Church of Houston, and Executive Director of the Foundation of Contemporary Theology.

JASON OBY WELCOMED AS MUSIC DIRECTOR: BOB FAZAKERLY REMAINS ON BENCH

Dr. Jason Oby, the wonderfully-gifted musician who has been acting director of the choir for the past two years, will become First Church's half-time Director of Music in August. Interim Senior Minister David Keyes invited Jason to take the position following conversations with choir members and church leaders, and on the recommendation of Acting Music Director Bob Fazakerly, who wished to step down from the position and return to his long-held tenure as organist. As music director, Jason will be responsible for the total music program of the church, including choir, guest musicians, singing groups for children and youth, and special music Sundays. He will keep regular weekly office hours at the church starting in September.

Jason Oby has performed as a soloist in opera, oratorio, and recital at venues throughout the United States, as well as in Europe and Asia. He is a professor of music at Texas Southern

University, where he has just completed his 13th year. At TSU, Jason is the coordinator of voice, director of opera workshop and has been the director of choirs. He earned a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Degree in Voice from Manhattan School of Music in New York City and a Doctor of Music Degree from Florida State University in Tallahassee. Jason studied choral conducting with Rodney Eichenberger and Andre Thomas and has worked professionally as a choral conductor in church and university settings for nearly 20 years. His doctoral degree in voice carries a conjunct in choral conducting as a sub-specialty.

All owe special thanks to Bob Fazakerly for his good transition work following the retirement of Dean Dalton. Bob is recognized as one of the best (if not THE best) church organists and keyboard artists in Houston. He looks forward to concentrating on offering those gifts to the congregation, and to working with Jason.

Young Adults: Let's Meet

Let's meet right after church for lunch on Sunday, July 5 in the courtyard near Fannin. Check the Blast for our lunch destination and we'll get together for fun, fellowship, and food. All 20's and 30's are invited. See you soon.

How is your soul, my friend?

If you have any pastoral needs we are here to help. Our Care Team, Befrienders and clergy are available for you. Don't hesitate to contact us.

Email or call Rev. Adam Robinson, 713-526-5200 or adam@firstuu.org.

Shared Offering

- 5/24/09
\$762.00 Veterans for Peace
- 5/31/09
\$494.00 MECA (Multicultural Education and Counseling through the Arts)
- 6/7/09
\$472.00 Urban Harvest
- 6/14/09
\$865.00 Doctors Without Borders

REflections

By Natalie Browne

Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Summer is known to be a quiet time around here: individuals and families are taking trips, David Keyes is away, it's hot outside, and things just seem to slow down at church. I am using the time to prepare for the coming year and to do some summer "spring cleaning" of our materials shelves. During this month, I will also be envisioning with the Religious Education Committee and with the Adult Programs Committee just what we want our mission to be, grounding it in our philosophy of religious education, and creating an evaluation form against which we can hold our various offerings. It is intense and exciting work. It is the work of change, or at least of revisiting what we have and seeing if change is what we want and need.

One change that the Religious Education Program for Children and Youth is making this summer is to give ourselves a new name. We are now the Family Ministry of First Church. This name allows us to include the Religious Education Program for children and youth, the Youth Ministry (the current name for YRUU), the Nursery, the Parents Group, and any other service to families with children and youth under the same umbrella. For example, I am hoping that parents who visit us will have a

vehicle for better integration into the life of the church with the development of Parent Teams: more on that soon. Family Ministry will be balanced by the Adult Programs (who knows: we might end up changing that name too), together forming the core of our Lifespan Religious Education Program. This change feels right to those of us who have been discussing it over the spring. It opens all of us to the possibility of growth in new directions.

I am of the mind that we need to undertake whatever we can do to make our church sing the song of our values in a way that serves the needs of those who are seeking a community such as ours.

Meantime, on the home front, the Older Youth continue to use *Popcorn Theology* to consider questions of ethics and spiritual growth. The Younger Youth is once again using *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* in the same way. And the Pre-K'ers through 5th graders are busy responding to stories through a variety of art forms. Artists from our midst are leading them in experiences as varied as songwriting, pointillism and quilting.

I guess it isn't as quiet as it may seem.

Special Parent Meetings in July

The Search Committee Wants to Meet with Parents Sunday, July 12, at Noon, Room 207

Members of the Search Committee will interview parents about what they are hoping for in the next settled minister at our church. This is your opportunity to have your voice heard for yourself and for your children. Please make every effort to attend. The nursery will be open and an extra worker will be available to supervise children with games in the Fireside Room.

Family Ministry Team Vision -- Including Music Sunday, July 19, at Noon, Room 207

We'll present the new Family Ministry Team vision and plans. A part of the vision is to better integrate children into the music program of the church. Thus, our new Music Director, Jason Oby, will present first, followed by Lifespan Religious Education Director, Natalie Browne, and members of the Religious Education Committee. We strongly encourage your attendance and input. Nursery care will be provided along with activities for children.

Visitors and returning friends and members are invited to gather with Welcoming Team volunteers at the Welcome Table in Channing Hall after Sunday worship for coffee, conversation, and fellowship.

FROM YOUR AFFILIATE MINISTER

This month I want to pass on a letter I received recently:

Dear Rev. Robinson,

As the volunteer coordinator of Interfaith Care Partners, I have the pleasure of working with First Unitarian Universalist Church. I am impressed with the way these dedicated members provide in-home companionship and support to those who cannot help themselves.

I'm writing to let you know of a special honor earned by several members of the team. The President's Council on Civic Service and Participation created the President's Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.

In 2008, the Care Team volunteers from First Unitarian have given 1,281.25 hours in their service with Interfaith CarePartners. For their individual service in 2008 five people from our congregation's team have received President's Service Awards.

Diane Stotz, Lois Hardt, Ken Steinhardt, Shirley Holmes and Will Bolin each received the Bronze President's Volunteer Service Award for giving at least 100 hours of service during the course of the year. Together they gave 843 hours of service to the care partners.

Sincerely,
Monica Baumgarten, Care Team Coordinator

Thanks to the loving support of the Care Team, care partners are ministered to in their daily lives, medical trips, and even deaths. Their loved one's burdens and grief are eased by the kindness our congregation expresses through these generous servants of humankind.

If you get a chance...no, I take that back...make some time to say thank you to one of the folks mentioned above or anyone else who is involved in this area of First Church's pastoral ministries. If you are looking for a way to make deeper connections to others and find the place where your heart can touch another, come help us take care of each other. My email is adam@firstuu.org, I look forward joining you in ministry through the Care Team.

Peace and Light
--Rev. Adam

ENROLL IN GROCERY STORE PROGRAMS, EARN FUNDS FOR FIRST CHURCH

Randall's has a great program in which the church can earn 1% of your purchases. Visit the customer service booth and ask them to assign your Randall's card benefits to First Unitarian Universalist Church, **NUMBER 1740**. Subsequent purchases will earn funds for the church each time you use your Randall's card.

Kroger redesigned their program last year. Now they require shoppers to re-register their recipient preference each year. Now is the time to do this, as the new program year has just begun. Take your Kroger Plus Card and the **Kroger program letter we have at the information table** to a Kroger cashier. Once you've registered, your purchases will benefit the church for the remainder of the program year.

Your Search Committee continues to gather information from you. We've formulated a set of questions and have begun to meet with focus groups. At the time of this writing, we've met with past presidents, past search committee members and current staff. We have also heard from members who've shared with us at the weekly Table Talks in Channing Hall & who have written us e-mails.

In our focus groups, we are asking questions about our congregation, such as: How would you describe our congregation to a prospective minister? What are the strengths of this congregation? What are the weaknesses? What congregational issues will be the most pressing in the next two to five years? We are also asking questions about what the congregation wants in a new minister such as: What leadership characteristics will the next minister have to demonstrate in order to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities at First Church? What skills, talents or professional strengths

do you hope our new minister brings to the ministry? What is the worst mistake your new minister could make?

We will meet next with groups including, but not limited to: parents of children & youth, the choir, the men's & women's groups, the Board, the Leadership Development Team, Adult Programs, the Older Youth and the Care Team. Our goal is to meet with or hear from as many members as possible. Do you want your group to have a focus meeting? Contact us. We also continue to be available for Table Talks before and after church on Sundays. If you haven't shared with us, make sure you stop by. We want to hear from you.

The Search Committee

Lucy Anderson, Carol Burrus, Peter Durkin, Liz Gilbert, Mary Koch, Evan Michaelides & Sheila Whitford
search@firstuu.org



THE TIPPING POINT PARTY Saturday, July 25, 7:00 p.m. in Channing Hall

Bring your favorite finger food or dessert and your best ideas for tipping us into new ways of sharing our dreams and visions. What's your favorite medium? We'll be brainstorming about books and movies and who knows what idea you might bring. Childcare will be available.

--Sponsored by the **Idea Team** of First Church

SWUUSI - the Southwest UU Summer Institute

If "The Way to Peace is Through Us", then we want to open our hearts, support our friends, and strengthen our spirits. Join Unitarian family and friends of the Southwestern Conference at Oklahoma's Sequoyah State Park from August 2 through 7 for rest, renewal, and inspiration for peacemaking. www.swuuc.org/swuusi/

We set aside this week of camp to allow the warmth of religious fellowship to soothe and settle our spirits, strengthening us for a more peaceful approach to daily life.

The deadline for First Church News is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Email your church news, announcements, and pictures for consideration to newsletter@firstuu.org.

Board Update

Thank you for your thoughtful participation in our Annual Meeting on June 5. Maybe it was sharing dinner beforehand, but we demonstrated that we **can** disagree respectfully and peacefully.

On **June 17**, your Board of Trustees met with our newly elected members, Steve Braun, Ron Cookston, Earl Dredge, Lydia Luz and Eva Thibaudeau. Those continuing on the board during the 2009-2010 church year are: Connie Acosta, Janis Collins, Mike Hart, Hazel Heddings, Carolyn Leap, Harry Nagel and Sue Steinhardt.

We elected **new Board officers**. Beginning on July 1, **Earl Dredge** is President. Our two Vice Presidents are **Hazel Heddings** and **Carolyn Leap**. Congratulations. Please continue your fine support for this new board and officers.

Your Board participated in a focus group with Mary Koch and Sheila Whitford from the Search Committee, telling them our hopes and dreams for the church and our new settled minister. In the coming weeks, please take advantage of your opportunity to participate in a focus group to tell the Search Committee about **your thoughts and wishes** for our church and new settled minister.

We appointed new board representatives to the **Leadership Development Team, Connie Acosta** and **Sue Steinhardt**. This group, formerly known as Nominating Committee, has an expanded role: **growing church leadership**. They will meet throughout the year and will plan training opportunities for church members, as well as locating potential new church leaders. You elected these people to the LDT at the Annual Meeting: **Richard Braastad, Meg Ferris, and Adrienne Tappen**.

The Ends Statements Subcommittee presented their first draft of our **goals** or **Ends Statements**, which represent the direction that you recommended in your Appreciative Inquiry. Soon we will share those outcomes with you. We will ask our church staff, both professional and volunteer, to work toward these ends in their daily church work. To read our Provocative Proposals (developed from your Appreciative Inquiry input), click on the link at the First Church home page: www.firstuu.org.

On **July 26**, board members will be available at **9:30 am** and **11:30 am** for **Listening Sessions** at specially marked tables in Channing Hall. This is your opportunity to ask your questions, tell us your compliments and concerns.

Sue Steinhardt, Past President, Board of Trustees

Wheel of Life



On June 8, Bob Quick's daughter called to tell us Bob died while he was in California for his granddaughter's graduation. Bob had been recovering nicely from a recent illness and his death took us by surprise. **The memorial service will be on Saturday, July 18 at 2:00 p.m.** Our sympathies are with the Quick family.

Patty Ryan proudly shares the news that Hunter Ryan, her son and a former First Church youth, has graduated from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI with a B.A. in philosophy. Congratulations, Hunter.

Jack Dixon's mother, Yvonne Dixon, died on Sunday, June 7 at the age of 81 after a long illness. Jack has been back and forth to Oklahoma a lot recently to spend time with his family. The funeral service was held on Wednesday, June 10, in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma followed by a graveside service in Duncan, Oklahoma. Our condolences go out to Jack and his family.


Living By Heart Retreat

with David Keyes

SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT FOR ALL

Saturday, September 26, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Clarann Estate in Chappell Hill

I hope you will join me to learn a wonderful spiritual practice and to treat yourself to a slow-paced day of relaxation, meditation, contemplation, singing, conversation, and personal rededication.

The centerpiece of the day will be a video presentation featuring Harry Scholefield, one of our movement's great sages, in conversation with Laurel Hallman, whose devotion to this practice has helped her build First Unitarian Church in Dallas, one of the strongest and largest churches in the denomination.

We'll gather at the church at 8:00 a.m. for a continental breakfast, then car pool to Clarann Estate, a favorite destination of the Spirituality and Nature Chalice Circle. The beautiful walking trails and secluded lake side decks and gazebos make it ideal for quiet retreat and meditation. Lunch will be included, and we'll take maximum advantage of the grand outdoor spaces.

I do hope you'll register soon, by signing up in Channing Hall, calling the office, (713) 526-5200 or emailing office@firstuu.org. I'm requesting a \$20 contribution for food and expenses. Scholarships gladly given.

Best,
David

New Covenant Groups

We now have two new Covenant Groups that started meeting in June. One meets on Wednesdays and one on Thursdays. If you are free on either of those nights contact Rev. Adam at adam@firstuu.org or 713-526-5200 to find out how to join one of them. If another night works better for you fill out a registration form. As soon as we get enough people for a new group on your night we'll let you know. The registration form and additional information about Covenant Groups are at the information table in Channing Hall on Sundays.



SUMMER TREASURE HUNT

Summer vacations are here. While you stroll the streets of Istanbul (not Constantinople), visit Parisian boutiques or browse through the markets of Marrakesh, be on the look-out for treasures. Bring back something for the First Church **Services Auction** this fall. Scarves, linens, knick-knacks, art work...is there a better reason to shop than supporting your church? (It is almost a moral obligation...) Enjoy your summer.

--Services Auction Committee

Remember to mark your calendar now for Saturday, November 7.
It will be one big "starry night" at the Annual Services Auction.

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PRESENTS:

SUMMER FILM SERIES
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

When: Second Friday of each month: **July 10 and August 14.**

What: Potluck dinner, movie and discussion for youth and adults; potluck dinner, movie and games for children; nursery provided.

The adult movies invite some provocative questions. Don't miss ***Hoosiers*** (*could I/would I forgive?*) in July and ***Contact*** (*could there be something out there, really?*) in August.

FOR JULY:

Potluck: *last names starting with A-G: desserts; H-N: vegetables and salads; M-T: main dishes (can be a substantial salad); U-Z: bread or appetizers. Cool beverages provided.*

Needed: *Volunteers for set up, serving and clean-up. Sign up in Channing Hall or contact Natalie Browne at Church, 713-526-5200 or natalie@firstuu.org.*

EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY PROGRAM

4 Sundays, July 12 - August 5, from 9:15 - 10:15 a.m., Room 304

All are invited to attend any or all of the four programs exploring our differing perspectives about spirituality. The hour will start with a reading, followed by interactive discussion, ending with a couple of guided mindfulness or meditation practices.

Schedule:

July 12: What is spirituality?

July 19: What is spiritual growth?

July 26: What is the "spirit of life"?

August 2: What are spiritual experiences?

Facilitator: Pam Perry

 Move with Joy 

Mondays at 10:30 a.m.

ALL GAIN, NO PAIN. Moving to the rhythm of a variety of music enhances the spontaneity and creativity that makes Rosen Movement unique - and fun. Rosen Method Movement teaches us how to relax as we see the barriers we create against moving disappear. These free classes increase range of motion, encourage natural, free breathing, and improve alignment and flexibility. Participants experience the deep significance of how the emotions are connected to the relaxation process. Join Cindy Hart, instructor, as we ***Move with Joy***.

PARENTS GROUP - Sunday, July 26, 12:15 p.m.

We are using the UUA curriculum, *Parents as Spiritual Guides*. This program does not give us pat answers but guides us in answering our own questions. Please join us for our discussion of ways to explore justice with our children. Newcomers are always welcome.

Infants are welcome in our group. If you need childcare, please email childcare@firstuu.org with the name(s) and number of your child(ren) by Sunday, July 19. If you need more information, contact Sue at steinhardts@earthlink.net.

Relief & Recovery Service Trip to New Orleans
Gulf Coast Volunteers For the Long Haul

Upcoming Trips Announced:

August 23-29, October 11-17 and December 6-12, 2009

Our Mission: Helping people in the Gulf Coast region rebuild their homes, their neighborhoods, their communities and their lives for as long as it takes.

You are still needed: Volunteers are providing the lion's share of help in the Gulf Coast recovery efforts and are deeply appreciated.

Trip Costs: Volunteers arrange and pay for their own transportation to New Orleans. Long Haul provides housing, groceries, on-the-ground transportation, work sites and group leaders. A contribution of \$100 is requested to help offset expenses (college students are exempt). If you'd like to car-pool, contact peggy@firstuu.org.

For More Information or to Sign Up: If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our Trip Coordinator, Janet Parsons, at janetdp@gmail.com.

Visit us on the web at <http://www.longhaulvolunteers.org> for more information/inspiration.

**Gulf Coast Volunteers for the Long Haul, Reverend Mary J. Harrington, President
 478 Main Street, Winchester, MA 01890**



**UU SERVES
 COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES**

Saturday, July 11, 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Help cook at Bering-Omega, a hospice for indigent AIDS patients. Each month we work in a modern, well-equipped kitchen in a lovely old home in Montrose to make two hot meals for about eight people. To help: contact Frances at franburf@gmail.com.

Saturday, July 18, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Work in the laundry or help cook at The Beacon, a day center, downtown on Texas Avenue, which helps hundreds of homeless people. The Beacon provides laundry services, a hot noon meal, and more. To help: contact Carol at cschwarten@yahoo.com.

FIRST CHURCH NEWS is published monthly by First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin Street, Houston, TX, 77004. Phone: 713-526-5200. This is Volume 14, Issue 7, published on June 22, 2009.

First Unitarian Universalist Church

A Welcoming Congregation

5200 Fannin Street
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Rev. Dr. David Keyes, Interim Senior Minister
Rev. Adam Robinson, Affiliate Minister
Natalie Browne, Director of Religious Education
Peggy Harvey, Director of Administration
Tom Cowen, Facilities Manager
Jason Oby, Music Director
Bob Fazakerly, Organist
Maria Ramirez, Nursery Coordinator
Hillman Laws, Weekday Custodian
Aaron Laws, Weekend Custodian
~ ~ ~

Rev. Robert L. Schaibly, Minister Emeritus

**Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

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