

First Church News

October 2012

**Sunday morning
celebration and
classes:
9:30 and 11:30 a.m.**



Email:
church@firstuu.org

Website:
www.firstuu.org

**5200 Fannin Street
Houston, TX 77004
(713) 526-5200**



Acceptance & Resistance

Rev. Bonnie Vegiard
Campus Minister
Thoreau/Stafford First UU Campus

Have you ever had the feeling that you accept when you should resist, and resist when you should accept? Many spiritual disciplines focus on acceptance, understanding that suffering is a natural part of life and resisting it only brings more pain, or advocating the loving acceptance of others even if they have been less than perfect. Other spiritual traditions focus on resistance, standing up for the oppressed, even giving your life if necessary. Surely both acceptance and resistance have a place in our spiritual lives. But when do they each get in the way?

This month's theme encourages us all to think about how our automatic, sometimes knee-jerk emotions may be reactions that get in the way of seeing a larger picture, and alternatively, to consider when and where thoughtful and intentional decisions to resist may be called for. The whole point is to choose your responses instead of letting reactions choose your actions. None of us is perfect at these choices, but practice does make progress. Think about the last time your emotions ended up in an action that made the situation worse. Then think of the last time that you pulled back from that reactive response and made a choice that actually made the situation better, even if it was harder to choose at some time. How can we commit together to the spiritual discipline of practicing healthy acceptance and resistance? I hope this sermon series gives all of us lots of food for thought.

Faithfully, Bonnie

SERMON TOPICS FOR OCTOBER

October 7

Make Believe

Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

Some things that we resist, we should learn to accept (a family member's annoying but nondestructive habit). Other things that we accept, we should learn to resist (social injustice). We can learn something from how children "pretend."

October 14

Soul Force

Natalie Browne, Religious Educator

When is it important that we move from acceptance to resistance? What is healthy resistance? How do we develop the special discipline that is needed for this kind of action? Come hear about soul force and how to use it.

October 21

Unity and Diversity in the 21st Century

Rev. Mark Kiyimba, UU minister from Uganda

Reverend Kiyimba is founder of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Uganda. He will be speaking on the struggles for gay and lesbian rights in Africa, Uganda in particular.

October 28

Blessing

Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

We begin a four-part series on Blessing: stolen, refused, never offered, and especially, a step-by-step plan for how to give someone else a blessing.



Rev. Mark Kiyimba, Guest Minister on October 21

The Reverend Mark Kiyimba is minister and founder of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Uganda. He also operates a primary school for over 550 students, many of whom have been affected by HIV/AIDS, and a children's home for AIDS orphans near Masaka, Uganda.

Rev. Kiyimba is an outspoken critic of Uganda's anti-LGBT legislation, which would mandate harsh penalties such as life imprisonment or death just for being homosexual in Uganda. The bill has moved on and off the Parliament's agenda without a vote on multiple occasions; it could still be voted on in the future. Rev. Kiyimba has been questioned on multiple occasions by police, who accuse him of using the church and school to recruit homosexuals.

Rev. Kiyimba was awarded the National Education Association's Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights in Washington, D.C. on July 1st. This award is presented to a person whose activities in human rights significantly impact education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation.

Thinking About Membership? Membership Day is Sunday, October 7.



To join First Church, we ask that you complete a few forms: New Member Information, Talents and Interests, Pledge Card and Skills Inventory. These forms are available in the office or from a Sunday Morning Welcoming Team member. New members can join on the first Sunday of each month at the Welcome Table in Channing Hall after church.

Wheel of Life



Our sympathy goes out to **Jeff Skarda and his wife Penny Cerling** for the death of Jeff's father, **Lynell Skarda**. Mr. Skarda died on September 2, at the age of 97.

Ocean Bruce, a new member of First Church, died unexpectedly on August 25. Ocean was longtime volunteer with the Transgender Center. A memorial service was held for him on September 8.

Another church member, Maurice Buell died on September 14. A memorial service for Maurice was held on September 19.

On Friday, September 7, **Charlotte Doclar** died at home. She was a long time member of First Church, an avid volunteer and a much loved part of this church. A memorial service was held for Charlotte on September 15.

We are happy to report that **Ellen and Rachel Naegeli** became parents, again, on August 25, when **Rose Ellen Naegeli** was born. This makes **Lily** a proud big sister.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Each week we publish an *Enrichment Guide* along with the new, improved *First Church Now* (formerly known as the *Blast*).

Activities: Common Threads, Tai Chi, Yoga,
Young Adults Sunday Lunches and Brunches

Discussion: Discussion Circle (the weekly topic will be included in the Enrichment Opportunities page each week), Early Morning Book Group, Great Ideas Group, Houston Women's Group, Parents Group & Poetry Group

Spiritual: Changing Women, Meditations and Mindfulness Practices,
Monday Meditations, Rhythm of Life

Group descriptions and contact information can be found in the Enrichment Guide on the information rack across from the church office. Additional opportunities for enriching your experiences at First Church, some seasonal and some once a year, are also in the Guide.



The **WindSync** concert and dinner scheduled for Saturday, October 6, has been postponed until Spring 2013. Refunds are available to anyone who has already purchased tickets, or the money can be held toward a future special fund raising concert or event.

Our Social Justice Ministry

Twenty volunteers worked with **Plant It Forward** to build planting beds used by Congolese and Benin refugees, who are being trained to be urban farmers. This project addresses many of our social justice issues (refugees, anti-poverty, empowerment, locally grown food, urban renewal, etc.) We will return to this project again. Leader: Alberto Farnos.



Our second **Social Justice Fair** was a great success, with representatives of 14 agencies we will work with over the next year. Over 160 volunteers signed up for the monthly projects! The goal is to develop two leaders for each project and recruit additional volunteers as need. The organizers are Angela Serody, Lois Hardt and Craig Oettinger.

First Church member Bob Hopkins was awarded the prestigious “Golden Hammer Award” from **Rebuilding Together - Houston** for work “exceeding expectations” by the social justice team last spring. The award is featured in the display case in the church entry. The team was co-led by Tim Miller.



A dozen volunteers have been trained as **Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrars** and will soon be out in the community signing up new voters before the October 9 deadline. This effort is our response to national and local efforts to constrain our ability to vote.

Long -Term Projects: On October 7, we will vote to rank these four proposals during short meetings after each worship service. The vote will guide our long-term focus for social justice for the next three years.

Check out the displays in Channing Hall on Sundays:

- 1) Developing a database and training volunteers to advise Houston’s homeless about available services;
- 2) Training mentors to work with students of McGregor Elementary School ;
- 3) Organizing a “Guardian Group” to welcome and assist a GBLT refugee to Houston;
- 4) Working with single mothers at Project Row Houses and Magdelean Bush Transitional Housing to support their efforts to become self-sufficient, with special emphasis on their children and parenting.





Once Upon A Time Fall FUNdraiser & Auction

Saturday, November 3

Start thinking about the wondrous services and special treasures you can provide for the silent and live auctions.

Donation forms and vendor contracts may be printed from the church website, www.firstuu.org and are also available from the church office. Donation forms, vendor contracts, and auction registration cards are available every Sunday at the FUNdraiser table in Channing Hall.

The deadline to turn in your Donation Form is Sunday, October 7. Forms turned in after October 7 will have those items listed in the addendum to the auction catalogue. Something new this year is a category of silent auction items that will be *only for kids*, with special pricing just for them. Visit the **Once Upon A Time** table in Channing Hall for suggestions about the services and items you can donate.

The entire family will be enchanted at **Once Upon A Time**, this year's Fall FUNdraiser and Auction, Saturday, November 3. The magical evening of fellowship, great food and fanciful fundraising will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the Silent Auction. The Live Auction, featuring round trip travel on United Airlines, incredible vacation opportunities and other high value items, will begin at 8:00 p.m.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 13TH - 11 AM TO 3 PM, WITH LUNCH
In Westwood Hall, Emerson UU Church,

SHARING THE MINISTRY & GOOD NEWS

A HOUSTON FELLOWSHIP - UU NETWORK WORKSHOP FEATURING:

The Rev. Don Southworth – Executive Director of the UU Ministers Association
The Rev. Natalie Fenimore – President of the Liberal Educators Association
Sarah Dan Jones – President of the UU Musicians Network

Join them for a day of conversation, ideas and action planning. Topics they will cover include:

- **Learning how to articulate and share our good news;**
- **Ways to share ministry and outreach between religious professionals, congregations, and other faith communities;**
- **Ways to practice and encourage abundance;**
- **Suggestions on best practices for ongoing learning and development for religious professionals and lay leaders.**

We will have fun, sing a bit, eat a bit and celebrate the possibilities of our life-changing faith.

**Please RSVP to Trish Kolodney at pkolodney@gmail.com or 713-501-8867
by Oct. 10th for a luncheon head count.**



Do you ever wonder how all those wonderful cakes, pies, cookies, brownies and other delicious treats appear on the table in Channing Hall every Sunday morning. Well, the Keebler Elves don't bring them, nor does Santa or the Easter Bunny. They are made, or bought, by a dedicated **group of volunteers who sign up for one Sunday each month** to contribute to the array of pastries that we sell as an ongoing special fund raising project. At this time we are in need of additional volunteers who like, or don't mind, baking or shopping for goodies for the table. Contact Caroline Brooks, our baker coordinator, at globe1958@sbcglobal.net to volunteer.

Growth Groups: Why They're So Important

September 20 -- I am excited today: we have sixty-three people registered for Growth GroUUs here at church this fall—and we still have one more Sunday when participants may sign up! I just asked Peggy Harvey, our church administrator, how many members we currently have and she said 363. That's official members and doesn't count friends and guests. But, using that number, this means 17% of our membership has decided to be part of a small group this fall. I am elated. I am elated because I am convinced by Larry Osborne's thesis in *The Sticky Church* that church becomes a place we want to stay in and grow when we have friends.

A long-time member said to me recently that he was holding back in joining a Growth GroUUp because he was already "stuck on church." A friend of his rejoined, "Yes you are, but the newcomers need to get to know people like you if they are going to stick around." As a result, this member signed up.

According to the Alban Institute, when a church grows over 250 members (more or less), it becomes difficult for people to feel the personal connection that many newcomers are seeking. The name the Alban Institute has for this size church is "Program

Church" because it is the programs or groups that constitute its life. We are all communal creatures and we need affiliation: this means we have a need to belong. The challenge is that once we affiliate with a group our tendency is to become territorial and always to seek out our group as a place of security. Thus, despite our good intentions, we often seem unavailable to the guest because we're so busy talking to our friends.

Growth GroUUs provide the opportunity for the newcomers to form their own groups and no longer feel solitude in the midst of community. The genius of these groups is that every two or three months they restart. This provides three options: 1. The participant can opt to remain in the same group. 2. The participant can opt to join a new group and get to know some different folks. 3. The participant can take a break because exams are coming up for example, knowing that the opportunity to rejoin is no more than two or three months away. Therefore, if you were unable to join a Growth GroUUp in September for whatever reason, know that there will be new groups forming in the not too distant future! Stay tuned for the date.

Natalie Browne

FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?"

-- Henry David Thoreau

Good day and good month - once again the Board agenda for our September meeting was packed. . Thoreau reminds us to examine those things that keep us busy and be mindful of their purpose. As a Board member, it is great to be on a team that - for the most part - stays out of the minutiae and looks towards our goals (the ends statements). One of the benefits of Policy Governance is that we are (hopefully) focusing on the big picture: where our church is moving as we work to fulfill our mission to "transform ourselves, Houston, and the world."

Reverend Adam's resignation affected all of us. Our Senior Minister Daniel O'Connell has committed to keeping the Board in the loop as he considers his options for the future.

We are systematizing the work of the Board. We are refining a calendar for the year so that future Board members will have a document from which to plan, one that they can tweak, adjust, or discard as things change. We will orient new Board members once the slate has been announced by the Nominating Committee and hold the Board retreat in June in order to minimize down time as the church gears up for the new church year each August.

By the end of next month, the Board will also have a draft document and a process that we will use in order to monitor the work of our Senior Minister. A task force has examined what other churches use and is working to create a customized document that is fair, supportive and based on evidence, rather than preference.

The addition of the Thoreau and Northwest Congregations to our church is prompting us to consider how those campuses will be represented on the Board.

During the October Board meeting, the Board will consider the following change in the bylaws in order to ensure such representation:

"Beginning with the slate of Board candidates that will be presented to the congregation in May 2013, the Nominating Committee will ensure there is at least one member from Northwest Community UU Church (Copperfield) and from Thoreau UU Congregation (Thoreau/Stafford) serving as Board Trustees. This shall occur without increasing the total size of the Board."

The Board also approved a Grievance Process so that members can bring issues forward to be addressed in a timely fashion. The process has now been posted on the Church website. Issues regarding policy will still be handled by the Board; issues of personal preference or issues about the building will be dealt with by the Healthy Congregation team. Each month, the Healthy Congregation Team provides a report to the Board.

The Board is also involved with two big deal events: COME to our AMAZING LUAU featuring coconuts and hula dancing (or maybe just coconuts.) Experience the wonders of Spam, macadamia nuts, and fruity beverages! Purchase your seat at the First UU Services Auction Saturday November 3, 2012! Do you want to get to know members of the Thoreau and Northwest congregations? Do you want to have a little fun? Bring your family and your favorite dish to a fabulous potluck/games day on October 20th at 4:00. We will relax, laugh together, and then eat dinner.

--Lucy Anderson, President, Board of Trustees

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

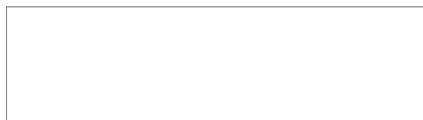
-- Henry David Thoreau

First Unitarian Universalist Church
5200 Fannin Street
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GO GREEN

The newsletter is available online. We email a link to the newsletter each month and to the *Blast* each week. If you do not need a copy mailed to you, please let us know, peggy@firstuu.org.

First Church News



Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell, Senior Minister
Rev. Robert L. Schaibly, Minister Emeritus

Natalie Browne, Religious Educator
Jason Oby, Music Director
Bob Fazakerly, Accompanist

Peggy Harvey, Director of Administration
Tom Cowen, Facilities Manager
Jessica Pierce, Nursery Coordinator
Tom Pile, AV Technician
Hilman Laws, Weekday Custodian
Dale Englefield, Weekend Coordinator

Church Office Hours:
Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sundays, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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