



The Flaming Chalice

NEWSLETTER OF STARR KING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH MAY 2008

A Month of Sundays

May Celebration Previews

Two Sunday Services at 9:30 A.M. & 11 A.M.

- 4:** *Sweet Days and Roses* (Rev. Katie Kandarian) The Celtic festival of Beltane is celebrated sometime around May Day. How are the symbols of flora and pastures relevant to us today? How might we live what Emerson called “the potent blood” of modest May?

Immediately following each service, the minister will hold a brief informational session in the Library for those with questions about Unitarian Universalism or interested in membership.

- 11:** *True North* (Rev. Katie Kandarian, Kate & Geir Jordahl) As a gift for Mother’s Day, we’ll experience a photo and musical journey through member Geir Jordahl’s beautiful new book of photography, *True North*. It should prove to be a spiritual experience.

Chalice Deadline.

RETURN TO Summer Schedule: One Sunday Service at 10 A.M.

- 18:** *In Giving We Receive* (Rev. Katie Kandarian & Carol Bodeau) A community of faith runs by volunteer love and service. Today we’ll acknowledge those gifts, both great and small, and practice both ends of service. Immediately following the service we will hold our congregational annual meeting.

Bookstore Open.

Sunday 18 May • ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Members are encouraged to participate in the Board of Trustees election, approval of Annual Budget and other matters of importance that are addressed at this vital meeting, immediately following the worship service.

- 25:** *Building Our Own Theologies*. How do we as UUs create our own belief systems? This week the *Building Your Own Theology* class will share their credos and perspectives. Let us consider how each of us is unique within our shared UU tradition.



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Katie's Bay View Rev. Katie Kandarian

One More Step

I was really delighted to see in my email inbox a message from Rev. Lindi Ramsden, Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, giving an update as to the efforts of our volunteers who have been working in various areas around the state, asking folks to refrain from signing petitions to place on the November ballot an amendment to the constitution to prohibit marriage between same sex couples. Lindi reported that the paid signature gatherers had never seen such organized resistance. (At the time of my writing they only have half of a week left to gather over 50,000 signatures; here's hoping our activism continues.)



What added to my joy was the fact that I was meeting with a member when I saw this email, and as I shared the good news with her, she told me that *she* was one of the volunteers from our congregation that traveled up to Sacramento to do this important work, to take one more step to witness to her religious values by actually spending a Saturday to stand on the side of love. She told me that she participated in a one-hour training and then, with a small group, was stationed outside a discount department store where the paid signature gatherers were asking folks to have this initiative put on the ballot. There were so many Unitarian Universalists in the volunteer ranks that other folks who were there that day decided that

they had better start attending a UU church if this was the wonderful kind of people they attracted. Our member also shared with me how easy it was to simply ask folks if they really wanted to place an amendment to the constitution on the November ballot. Many of them realized they did not.

We often hear requests in church to stand up for our values and our beliefs, and sometimes we think wearily, "one more thing" or "does it really matter?" What our Legislative Ministry is finding out is, yes, indeed, it does really matter. We can take one more step putting our faith into action and find in the doing the spiritual growth we had been seeking. We sometimes find ourselves surprised in the folks who are willing to join with us, and we can see that our deeds really do spell out our creed.

In this month where we say *thank you* to all our wonderful volunteers, I want to say a special thank you to those who went to Sacramento. They include Regina Fassano (Marriage Equality coordinator), Dirk Dino, Crystal Carroll, Karen Yearout and Nancy Harrison. Thank you to any names I may have overlooked; please tell me about your experience.

And remember: please join us for ONE service only at 10 A.M. on 18 May, where we thank all of our volunteers, who are utterly essential for the warmth and life of this congregation.

Blessings to you all!

Love,

Katie 

May Birthdays

Best birthday wishes to . . .



- 2 Kevin Smathers
- 16 Lavon Hodges
- 21 Karen Kramer
- 23 Joaquin Dominguez
- 25 Renae Dominguez
- 29 Carol Henrie

Have we overlooked your birthday?

To be included in these birthday greetings, send an email with your name and the month and day of your Annual Celebration to editor@starrking.org.

Wheel of Life

*Please send information to the Pastoral Care Committee.
Good news is welcomed, as well as your sorrows.*

- ☺ Thoughts and prayers to Carol Henrie and Dick Albert on the loss of their two dearly beloved Saluki dogs, Delphine and Chanel.
- ☺ Sincere condolences to the Gruvers on the loss of John's mother.
- ☺ We're keeping the Meyersons in our thoughts during the time of Diane's father's illness.



The Board Bulletin

Meg Jurich, President, Board of Trustees



In spite of the efforts of our Canvass and Budget Committees, we head toward our Annual Meeting on 18 May with a deficit budget (-\$5774) for fiscal year 08/09. The largest shortfall is in the areas of pledges and fundraising. With the majority of pledges in from current members, the total is about \$1,000 less than for this fiscal year. If you have not

been contacted to make your pledge, please contact Marian Babbidge or Kay Athos of the Canvass Committee.

Fundraising, the other significant source of income for our church, is expected to raise about \$3,000 less next year. The Service Auction, our most lucrative fundraiser, is held every other year. Although it is a much-anticipated and lively event, the Service Auction is thought to be too labor intensive to put on every year. Therefore, in the off years, the fundraising team must contemplate more fundraisers, each of which make less money. We need to figure out a way to even out the financial swing between lean and fat fundraising years.

It is well known in the UUA that in churches of our size (roughly 150), finances are frequently a challenge, as we seek to implement our vision of having fairly-paid professional staff, meaningful programs and a generous position in the community. In drafting the budget for fiscal year 08/09, the Budget Committee held operating expenses close to last year's level, and saved about \$919 in committee expenses. However, expenses for personnel have increased by 4 percent. It is no surprise that in the high cost Bay Area, 76 percent of Starr King's budget goes to wages and benefits.


We will take up the issue of the deficit budget at our Annual Meeting after Sunday service on 18 May, when we begin our single service schedule until the end of the summer. You will receive a written notice ten days before the meeting, including a copy of the proposed budget. Please familiarize yourself with the budget and bring it with you to the meeting. We'll be looking at several options for balancing the budget before taking a final vote to approve it. The recommendation of the Budget Committee is that members be asked to pay their own dues to the UUA and PCD (\$79 per member) separately from their pledges. Currently, our church pays \$11,400 from members' pledges to UUA/PCD. It is quickly apparent that, were members willing to pay this small additional amount, our budget would be easily balanced. Other options are 1) using the excess income from this year's Service Auction or 2) doing a second canvass in the fall.



OUR CHURCH BOARD IN ACTION

April 2008

The following is a summary of the Board's business meeting. Feel free to discuss any of these items with Board members.

- Budget Proposal:** Reviewed the budget proposal for 08/09; expenses exceed revenue by \$5,774 with very little increases in line-item expenses. Committee suggested assessing members in addition to their pledges for UUA and PCD dues (\$79 per member). Also recommended that there be a written contract/letter of agreement between staff and the church for salary and job description, with a personnel committee to work through this with employees. Board approved to present the deficit budget to the congregation at the annual meeting on 18 May with a discussion of revenue needs and a potential special assessment for dues.
 - Unitarian House:** Garald Mosher is still discussing the sprinkler issue with the County. The moratorium in construction will be up on 4 May, when we can resubmit paperwork for the permit.
 - RE Liaison Report:** RE meetings are discussing trying to hire Carol Boudeau on an interim basis as the RE Director (one year). We are waiting on the UUA to approve this proposal, so any vote must wait until May.
 - District Assembly:** Darryl will carry the banner for the church. Board approved that the Board President may designate delegates for the Assembly meetings.
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- President's Report:** Reported on the possibility of having Carol serve a one year term as DRE, pending UUA approval. Ideas on fundraisers are to be submitted to the Board's Executive Committee. Karen Cook is meeting with a group to schedule fundraisers for next year. Meg congratulated Katie for meeting with the minister of the New Bethel Church on race relation discussions.
 - Minister's Report:** There will be a second gathering at the New Bethel Church in addition to the previous panel discussion. The second meeting will be 29 April at 7 P.M. and will be a conversation on race.
 - Treasurer's Report:** We are ahead on pledges and will continue to monitor throughout the remainder of the fiscal year. The water bill is very high, but we can't find a leak.

What's Happening in *Religious Education*

by intern minister Carol Bodeau

Lots is happening in our Religious Education program right now, and we have exciting plans for next year. Here's a sampling of what's been going on:

The SKY group is beginning to prepare for the Bridging Service, scheduled for 8 June at 10 A.M. We have eight youth ready to bridge this year!

The Middle School group recently celebrated their own Seder, on the Sunday after we held our congregational Seder. The younger kids are just finishing up learning about heroes in UU History.

The RE Task Force held a forum discussion to get ideas for the RE program, and is working hard on creating structures and ideas for next year. The congregation decided to start a year-long learning theme for the whole congregation, focused on ecology and environmentalism.



Things to look forward to in the coming weeks and months include:

Meetings in May between the RE Task Force and kids, youth, teachers and families for feedback and visioning.

Summer "funshops" led by members of the congregation. If you would like to lead an activity for the kids one day this summer, please contact Laurie Matthews.

In the fall, we'll be running our SKY group, a Middle School OWL group (letters will be going to eligible kids' families soon), an elementary class and a toddler/nursery group.

There will be classes, projects and social events focused around the year's "green" theme, as well as monthly kids' worship.

And finally, one thing that will be happening next year is that, while the RE Task Force continues to create a 5-year plan for the program and to work on making sure we have all the necessary procedures and policies in place, I will be returning to Starr King UU Church in the fall as a part-time Interim Director of Religious Education. The members of the Task Force are Karen Cook, Meg Jurich, Suzanne Quijano and Donnie Rett, along with myself and Rev. Katie Kandarian. Please talk to any one of us if you'd like to share ideas or participate in creating the program.

Committee Highlights

Marriage Equality

by Regina Fassano

As you are well aware, the Religious Right had launched a vigorous campaign to put a measure on the November 2008 ballot that would change the definition of marriage. Currently, there is no definition. If the measure were to pass it would define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. They had paid signature gatherers at various locations throughout the state of California.

In response, the UULM and Equality for All had launched its own campaign asking people to sign a pledge not to sign any petitions that would prohibit same sex unions. Groups of people were organized to go to Orange County, Fresno, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego counties. At the time I submitted this to the newsletter, I had heard we were slowing down the opposition, but we were still looking to get more signatures. Along with several other people from the congregation, I had gone up to Sacramento to help in preventing this measure from being put on the ballot.

Also, we're still waiting to hear whether the California Supreme Court will decide that it is unconstitutional to deny same sex couples the right to get married. Even if the Supreme Court does rule in our favor, if a measure to prohibit same sex marriage were to get on the ballot and pass, it would overrule the Supreme Court decision.

Noteworthy news recently is that Gov. Schwarzenegger has come out publicly against this amendment that would ban same sex marriage.

Committee on the Interior, *Lavon Hodges*

Reminder Regarding Posting and Providing Fliers

Please date any fliers you wish to share with our Starr King community. Also, please ask a member of the Interior Committee before posting or placing any fliers or posters, so that you can be directed to the appropriate display location. Your cooperation is appreciated!

Our Church Here . . . All are welcome to participate!

EVENTS & CLASSES

Saturday 3 May

Free Storytelling Workshop at Starr King Church

Join the Worship Committee and Rev. Chris Holton-Jablonski from 9 A.M. to noon for this fun and playful experience in learning to lead children's stories for worship.

Chris is Minister of Religious Education at the UU Church in Kensington (Berkeley) and is a master story teller. *Everyone is welcome.*

Saturday 3 May

Annual Open Mic (Talent) Night

This is a free event, with a dessert potluck to share, open to the congregation and friends. Share your talents! Bring your appreciation! To perform, please sign up at the Community Table.

Doors will open at 7 P.M. Showtime will commence at 7:30 P.M. The event will run until about 10 P.M. (this includes clean-up). See Bill and Ruth DeSmidt for details (510/582.7297).

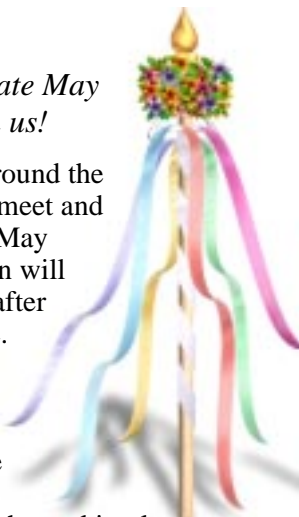
Sunday 4 May

Come Celebrate May Dance with us!

Come Dance around the May Pole, eat, meet and be merry! The May Day Celebration will start promptly after Second Service. There will be a short prayer, then the Haida Dance, then the May Pole to be held outside in the parking lot.

Please bring a finger food lunch item to share; if you do not wish to bring a finger food for the Lunch Potluck, please bring your own lunch. Drinks (plates, napkins too) will be provided.

See Bill and Ruth DeSmidt for details (510/582.7297).



FESCO Shelter Shuffle

Saturday, May 10, 2008
San Leandro Marina

Join us to raise funds for FESCO, The Family Shelter
For information and registration, see www.fescofamilyshelter.org

Saturday 17 May

Circle Suppers Are Back

Circle suppers resume on Saturday 17 May. Share a meal and get to know members and friends of Starr King church. Sign up for the dinner at the Community Table or speak to Joyce Kinnear for further information.

Be prepared to bring a dish for a dinner of about 6 to 8 people at another member's home. It's a great way to meet people, connect and have a great time.

Building Your Own Theology

Building Your Own Theology, an adult Religious Education series, concludes in May. At our worship service on 25 May, members will share personal ideas about the meanings and mysteries of life and about what is sacred. Each participant develops a personal credo, a statement of religious truth and meaning uniquely his or her own.

The final two classes will meet on Sundays: 11 May (following second service) and 25 May (after worship).



Intern Reflections

Carol Bodeau



Soon we will be moving into our summer schedule here at Starr King UU church, and as we do so, we can already feel ourselves being pulled outside to the warmth and flowers and explosion of life.

As we immerse ourselves in the sensations of living on a beautiful earth, we may also be feeling an increasing awareness of the fragility and delicate balance of this, our planet home.

We as Unitarian Universalists are called to be not just appreciative of, but also responsible to, our blessed earth and all the creatures with whom we share it. As a community we are taking this call seriously in many ways.

Our Green Sanctuary Committee is moving forward to align all aspects of congregational life here at SKUU with our environmental awareness. A number of us have been attending classes on Earth Spirituality and learning about theologies that embrace the earth as divine. And many of us learned the basics of composting on the weekend before Earth Day.



This focus on *Enriching our Soil: Towards the Beloved Community* is and will continue to be at the center of congregational life over the next year. Together, we can — in the words of a beloved hymn — ‘work towards a planet transformed by our care.’

This month, I encourage you to ask yourself, “How am I personally called to love the earth more fully? How am I called to participate in this great work of living out my UU principles? How can I act today to affirm the interdependent web of life, of which we are all a part?”

Your smallest actions make a difference, so choose one thing that you can do today to love the earth and all our relations more fully and completely.

In peace,

Committee Highlights

Earth Ministry, Karen Urbano

What a wonderful April it has been! A whole month was devoted to Earth care at church, and we can look forward to a theme of Earth and Justice for the next church year. How many great opportunities this presents for Earth Ministry at Starr King Church!

Our Green Sanctuary committee is wrapping up the environmental audit and is getting ready to lay out a plan of action for the steps that are required by the Green Sanctuary program. Several people on the committee are bursting with ideas. Our next meeting will be on Sunday 4 May at 12:30. If you have never been to one of our planning meetings, I hope you will consider attending to make your voice heard. And everyone in the congregation will have an opportunity to consider pursuing the Green Sanctuary application at the Starr King Annual Meeting on 18 May.

The UU Ministry for Earth Green Sanctuary program, which started with only five UU congregations in 2002, has now grown to over 150 either already accredited or in process. To date there are only two churches in our own Pacific Central District, Davis and tiny Visalia, that have received their accreditation. That number is set to grow tremendously as many more in our own San Francisco Bay Area and beyond are getting ready, including Starr King. I hope you will want to be a part of it.

From recycling bins, a composting system for garden and food waste, encouraging carpooling to finding a suitable environmental justice project, how will you contribute to our plan? Please join us!

Grounds and Landscape Enhancement,

Carol Henrie & Walt Korus

PLEASE JOIN US for All-Church Grounds Work Days in May on Saturday 10 May and Saturday 24 May. We'll work on both days from 9 A.M. into the afternoon, but we will be grateful for ANY time you can contribute.

We will be tackling those lovely weeds and invasive plants, using Green Sanctuary methods to preserve habitat and to create enjoyable social space. ALL are welcome; we will be able to find meaningful work for you, whatever your physical stamina. Bring your gloves.

Warmest thanks to those who helped tame our grounds in April: Joyce and Scott Kinnear, Colleen and Dirk Dino, Chris Bacina, Roy Dickerson, Dick Albert, Terry Hunt, Wendy Robertson.

Committee Highlights

Association Affairs, *Ramón Urbano*

General Assembly is taking place on 25 to 29 June in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. One of the orders of business will be the discussion and selection of two Congregational Study/Action Issues. This is a process that takes four years to reach becoming a UUA Statement of Conscience, the official UUA statement on social issues of our times. It is a basic part of our faith and began with the merger between the Unitarians and the Universalists in 1961. It is a discussion among Unitarian Universalist congregations, facilitated by the Commission on Social Witness.

The Commission on Social Witness consists of five members, three elected by the General Assembly and two appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees, for a term of four years. Their mission “to engage individuals, congregations, and districts in an ongoing process of study, action and reflection on pressing social issues to deepen our faith, to foster a greater sense of association among Unitarian Universalists, and to proclaim our vision of justice in the world”. As you can appreciate, its a corner stone of our faith and movement.

For the period of 2008 to 2012, the two proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues are:

Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice. “Religious organizations throughout the world have discussed the production, distribution, and use of food. Some people enjoy many food choices while others remain hungry. The food industry produces wealth, but small farmers and farm workers are often poor. Food production and transportation contribute to many environmental problems.”

Nuclear Disarmament. “Should the Unitarian Universalist Association work with other faith communities to advocate a dramatic reduction in the world’s nuclear weapons inventories, primarily those of the United States and Russia, in favor of reinvigorated nuclear arms control agreements and principles, such as those embodied in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty?”

Space here limits important details on these issues, but you can learn about the background and reasons for study, the significance to Unitarian Universalism, possible study questions and topics and possible actions by going to the UUA website under Current Study/Action Issues.

Besides being a meeting and conference with workshops for our Unitarian Universalist congregations, important social issues are addressed and direction given that affect all of us in these complicated times!



You may have noticed that the publicity material for the FESCO Shelter Shuffle, scheduled for Saturday 10 May 2008, looks stunningly different this year. That is because Julie Bayless, Starr King UU Church member, gave of her time to design the material.

The “path of walkers” will be used on the event T shirt. We asked Julie to tell us about herself and the project.

“I’ve been making pictures of one kind or another all my life. I’ve worked with pencil, watercolor, silkscreen, pen and ink and computers to make still images and animations. Though I started out in graphic design as a largely self-taught artist, I finally really got serious a few years back and got my BFA in Animation and Illustration at San Jose State.

“It’s a great program; competitive and highly creative. It really changed my whole process as an artist.

“When Diane Meyerson suggested the FESCO Shelter Shuffle project to me, I already knew what an important organization it is to the community, and wanted to get involved. The FESCO logo seemed to be quite animatable, so I decided to give the logo character an active body to go with his/her already active arms. Since dogs participate in the Shuffle as well, I created a dog that would be consistent with the style and attitude of the people. A fun project!”

A blue-bordered box containing a stylized illustration of a person and a dog walking. The person is on the left, and the dog is on the right, both rendered in a simple, rounded, blue style. Below the illustration, the text reads: "Shelter Shuffle", "Saturday, May 10, 2008", "San Leandro Marina", and "Join us to raise funds for FESCO, The Family Shelter Contact Diane Meyerson for more information."/>

Shelter Shuffle
Saturday, May 10, 2008
San Leandro Marina

Join us to raise funds for FESCO, The Family Shelter
Contact Diane Meyerson for more information.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES & FUN

♣ **SKIFFLE dates have changed again to Wednesdays!** Starr King Instrumentalists for Fun, Laughter and Entertainment gather in the Sanctuary for instrumental music every Wednesday evening from 7 to 9 P.M. All instruments, levels of musicianship welcome.

♣ **Morning Discovery** meets in the Library from 10 to 11:15 A.M. on first and third Wednesdays (7 & 21 May). All are welcome to join us to explore community and spirituality, discussion and shared silence.

♣ **Evening Discovery** meets in the Library at 7 P.M. on first and third Wednesdays (7 & 21 May) for thoughtful reflection on different topics that focus on the spiritual, the religious or the personal.

♣ **SKIT** improv group meets in the Sanctuary on second and fourth Thursdays (8 & 22 May) at 7:30 P.M.

♣ The **Film Group** will gather on Saturday 10 May at 7 P.M. We will be viewing an evening of short films including the Academy Award winning *The Red Balloon*. Let host Stuart Fink (510/537.4421) know you are coming, and please bring a movie snack to share.

♣ The **Social Justice Committee** meets on second Sundays (11 May) after second service. All welcome.

♣ Join the **No Room for Racism** vigils that are held in Hayward every third Friday (16 May) from 4 to 5 P.M. at the intersection of Jackson-Mission-Foothill. An opportunity to stand for your values! Sponsored by South Hayward Parish.

♣ The **Book Group** will meet Thursday 18 May at 7 P.M. at the home of Natalie Forrest and Doug Sprague (510/886.1480) to discuss *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. All welcome! Please ring to let the hosts know you will be coming. The June book will be *A Spot of Bother* by Mark Haddon.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⦿ **How are chalice lighters and readers for services chosen?** The Worship Associate for the service asks someone to do it. If you would like to participate in worship by lighting the chalice and/or reading from the pulpit, just tell any Worship Associate, who will add your name to the list of interested participants. *Please note* that you must be at church 15 minutes prior to the start of the service in order to be asked.

⦿ **Do you know our Church history?** *An Ordinary Miracle* and *The Miracle Continues* are available in the church office, \$15 each or two for \$25.

⦿ **Help make our website brilliant!** Please submit your contributions of photos of church events and/or activities for the website (<http://starrking.org>) to webmaster@starrking.org.



⦿ **To schedule an event**, visit the online calendar at our church website (http://www.starrking.org/skuu_committee_meetings.htm) to check availability, then call the office and we will add your event. View the website calendar for all church events.

⦿ Please submit written announcements for the Sunday bulletin to Nancy by 1 P.M. on Tuesday. Office contact info: office@starrking.org or 510/581.2060.

⦿ To preserve a sense of worship on Sunday mornings, please remember to **switch off cell phones** and other devices before entering the Sanctuary.

⦿ **Committee chairs/events coordinators:** To avoid schedule conflicts, notify the Church Office Administrator of dates and times of ALL meetings and events (even if ongoing or off-site).

⦿ Donate interesting books in excellent condition to our **Church Bookstore** for resale. Shop in our bookstore on third Sundays. See Evelyn Cormier.

⦿ Our **SKUUC Food Donation Basket** for South Hayward Parish Food Pantry is located just inside the eastern entry door in our Sanctuary. Please be generous every week and donate healthful nonperishable food items.

⦿ Stuart Fink has placed a Lions' Club collection box on the Community Table. **Eyeglasses you no longer use** will go to Latin American countries, along with eye doctors who will fit people in need.

⦿ The Religious Education Committee would like to remind parents with small children that **the service can be heard in the library** should you need to leave the sanctuary due to crying or antsy children. The volume adjustments are near the speakers.

⦿ The **Outreach Committee** suggests recirculating the *UU World*. Leave old copies in waiting rooms, or put them in the Outreach Committee box in the church office for use at public events.

⦿ **A Gentle Reminder** from the Worship Committee: Candles of joy, sorrow and concern should be brief and pointed, or the service may run too long.

⦿ **Babysitters Needed.** The Religious Education Committee is in need of babysitters during Sunday services. Please contact Karen Kramer (783.2221).

⦿ Our Sanctuary serves as an all-purpose room; things get moved several times each week to accommodate meetings and activities. *PLEASE* after an event or meeting, **leave the Sanctuary in the worship configuration**. Put chairs back *each time* they are moved.

⦿ The Worship Committee reminds us that the **musical postlude** at the end of the service is a part of worship; please remain seated to maintain a reverential quiet until the last note.

Activity Reports: Starr King Fun!

Basic Composting Workshop Sunday 20 April

Renee Ray, Master Composter

About 24 people, including 3 kids, attended. We had a free lunch followed by a basic composting workshop. Then we built a hot compost pile using our collection of old straw, manure, dried and fresh leaves, coffee grounds, tiny redwood chips, chopped twigs and grass clippings. We even tossed in our biodegradable plastic made from corn and our food scraps deep in the center of the pile.

On Tuesday I brought my compost thermometer to see how our pile was heating up. It was 148 degrees! On Wednesday it was 146 degrees. This was great news. We truly built our hot pile.

Every Sunday after second service, Renee, with any volunteers, will be turning the pile to help “reactivate” it. If all goes well, we will have beautiful compost in about two months.

More basic composting workshops will be available, as well as worm composting and children’s RE programs. Keep an eye out for our future RE Three Sisters Garden, as well as many other fun events and happenings on our Starr King Green Sanctuary Grounds.



Renee and assistants build a compost pile, layering green and brown organic materials and mixing with air and water.

Starr King Seder

Our annual Seder was held in the Sanctuary on Friday 18 April. Rev. Katie Kandarian presided over the

ritual of the Passover story, and Starr King members and friends participated by reading the Haggadah, the story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt.



The Passover story is relived with ritual narrative and song, and customs include drinking four cups of wine, eating matza and partaking of symbolic foods placed on the Passover Seder Plate. The Seder is an intergenerational ritual which is performed in much the same way all over the world.

Following the ritual, everyone enjoyed a traditional family-style meal prepared by Starr King chefs.

Thanks to all those who helped set up, cook and clean up!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

♣ **Serving Sunday Morning Coffee** is a great way to meet members and spread happiness! *Your help is needed* in the set up position. This person would arrive at church about 35 minutes before first service, start the coffee and set everything up, then remain and serve coffee after first service. Please let Terry Babbidge (889.9462) know if you can fill this important slot on Sunday.



♣ **Calling All Volunteers!** Please join our All-Church **Grounds & Landscape SPRING Clean-Up Days** on Saturday 10 May and Saturday 24 May. We will work from 9 A.M. into the afternoon. Our main focus will be to tackle the weeds on our cultivated plateaus, but we're flexible and can find a way to include you. Bring gloves to protect your hands. Our mission is to create a beautiful, water-wise environment of native and Mediterranean-adapted plants that affords inspiring beauty and spiritual solace, while providing habitat. Work ranges from light weeding and cultivation to irrigation maintenance to vigorous weed-clearing and mulching. We always have fun! Contact Carol Henrie (886.1018).

♣ Please see Betsy Dye if you would be interested in operating the **sound system** one or two Sundays a month.



♣ Sign up at the Community Table to bring **flowers or plants for the altar**. Let us know if you are honoring a loved one or celebrating a special occasion.

♣ **Volunteer pianists:** Share your talents when our regular accompanist is off. Contact Joyce Kinnear (885.0781).

♣ **Babysitters needed!** The Religious Education Committee is in need of babysitters during our Sunday services. Volunteer to offer your services on a regular basis or on occasion. Please contact Karen Kramer (783.2221).

What's the Word? *Al Murdach*

This monthly column explores today's meaning and significance of some important religious words from the Christian tradition.

No.27: **Exorcism**

The notion of exorcism, or the act of expelling through ritual and incantation an evil spirit or spirits who "possess" another person, is an idea that most UUs and religious liberals today find quaint and antiquated. The assumption is that modern medical science long ago disposed of such concepts and now views sickness, strange behavior, visions and mental aberrations as symptoms of physical disease, mental illness or mistaken beliefs, and not as evidence of diabolical action. Hence exorcism, once esteemed in traditional Christianity, is now generally viewed as mistaken, unnecessary, and a relic of past superstitions.

However, popular culture, especially as evidenced by movies and gothic fiction, remains fascinated by the idea of exorcism. In these versions, exorcism seems to represent themes that point to an alternate and unsettling version of reality. Even some contemporary religious writers such as M. Scott Peck have lately revived the idea of exorcism and now see it as a valid approach in cases where individuals actually do seem to be possessed by unexplainable evil forces, which modern medicine and psychiatry seem powerless to treat. The Roman Catholic Church still trains certain priests to use exorcism on special occasions, where conventional treatment repeatedly fails and individuals seem to have no other alternative. Buddhism, earth-based religions and native traditions still encourage the practice of exorcism. It has even been noted that today the "practice of exorcism in one form or another is more prevalent the world over than is the practice of medicine" (Dean, *Psychiatry & Mysticism*, 1975, p. 235).

Given the current attention being given to exorcism, perhaps some reevaluation of the phenomenon is in order. The practice of exorcism has existed in most societies from ancient times. According to Josephus, King Solomon was famous as an exorcist, "a skill which expels demons (and) which is a science useful and sanative to men." We know from the New Testament that Jesus achieved great local renown as an exorcist, although this fact is often obscured by applying the label of "miracles" to all his interventions, thus serving to sanitize his practices. It should be noted that although Jesus effected many significant cures through exorcism during his ministry, some of his attempts did go awry. Matthew relates that when Jesus was expelling demons from two men in the district of Gadara, the demons asked to be sent into a large herd of swine feeding nearby. When Jesus did so, the herd "went rushing down the bluff into the sea and were drowned." The shocked swineherds tending the flock "took to their heels" and told the nearby townsfolk what happened. "The upshot was that the entire town came out to meet Jesus" and "begged him to leave their neighborhood." Jesus, despite his successful exorcism, was not exactly a big hit in Gadara that day!

What are we to make of reported instances of possession and exorcism today? Are these merely reoccurrences of outdated beliefs and superstitions, better explained away by employing current scientific procedures and modern medicine? Or are they instead, as Jesus and his followers saw such occurrences, evidence of a breaking through of divine power to control and eliminate the evil that seems to possess so much of the world and its inhabitants today? There is no easy answer to such questions, and such phenomena are actually not easily explained away. Perhaps it is best to simply accept, as did the great anthropologist Sir James G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough* (1922), that such events are like "primaevial rock rising from a smooth-shaven lawn" and represent deep seated forces that reside in our natures, our world, and our universe that we cannot completely comprehend but which we must respect and reflect upon in order to better appreciate life.

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