



Huntsville, Texas Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

November 2009 Newsletter

Services are generally held on the second and fourth Sunday of each month at 10:30 a.m. in the Laura Chapel of Huntsville Memorial Hospital. From 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., we gather and have coffee. For more information call (936) 295-3170.

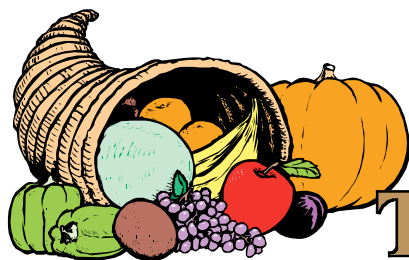
To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch Heaven.

~Johannes A. Gaertner

Sunday, November 22

Thanksgiving – Embracing the Concepts

Last year I gave my first Thanksgiving service. With this, my second opportunity to address this very special holiday, I find myself at a different Fellowship where the concepts of “thanks” and “giving” can be viewed in many different contexts. The contexts I plan to explore relate to the new church building currently under construction. Both the “thanks” and the “giving” parts of the service will be easy to address, but I plan to add a few twists you might not expect. Please join me in this celebratory service and if we continue to progress in 2010 as the Huntsville UU Fellowship has in 2009, this will be the last Thanksgiving service in the hospital chapel. Even though it is a beautiful chapel, the time is definitely right for the Huntsville UU Fellowship to grow and prosper in its own beautiful church.



Happy Thanksgiving





Sunday November 8th

Our guest minister will be John Wilson and his sermon, based on Ecclesiastes 8:10-17, is entitled "What Is Life"

Rabbi Harold Kushner refers to Ecclesiastes as the most dangerous book in the Bible. Religion seeks to connect people to God to free them from a seemingly meaningless existence. How can Ecclesiastes possibly do that? And then again, perhaps that very point makes it wisdom literature. The challenge of Ecclesiastes comes in its seemingly negative view of the world. Perhaps the pundits are wrong in such an assessment, and the careful reader asks to what extent does Qoheleth describe reality. Ecclesiastes in its negative tone challenges the thinking of each new generation. Living in the midst of uncertainty makes it challenging to keep our view on those things that make a "real" difference in life. Qoheleth challenges one to live in the uncertainty of the present while holding on to strong hope for the future. Then, as in our day, oppression threatens human dignity and self worth, making it difficult to retain any sense of centeredness. He observes both the positive as well as the negative in our world, and we cannot dismiss him as no more than a pessimist.

In that case, it seems the sage merely intends to differentiate between a life lived poorly and one lived well. A great lack of fair play seemed to exist in the picture Qoheleth paints and in our day as well? Even more fundamentally, what do such contradictions say about God? Or should we expect them to reveal anything about God at all? Picture the scene in the text. The conflict in the text appears in the point that the wicked do better than do the righteous. One can easily imagine sitting on an adjacent balcony in the center of Jerusalem near the entrance to the Temple. A lot of pomp and circumstance

goes on there. We can see the market booths where worshippers purchase their offerings for Yahweh. We see the poor, ill, and oppressed populace who only desire release from their suffering. As he watches, he recalls the one who had died. He owned most of the shops in the market and had profited greatly at the expense of the poor. The beauty of much of the wisdom literature and Ecclesiastes in particular consists in its ambiguity, which allows one to rediscover it with each new reading. In my view, Qoheleth has reflected on the inconsistencies he observes and wants to but cannot discover how God works in such a world.

With a long and varied career as an engineer, physicist, professor and Methodist minister, Dr. John F. Wilson exemplifies a life where faith and science coexists in harmony.

"Faith has always been the center of my life from as early as I can recall," Wilson said. "For me there has never been a question about God's place in my life, so I have not wrestled with questions about the existence of God where many of my fellow scientists find conflict."

Serving as Fellow at the University of St. Thomas Center for Faith and Culture, Wilson combines his scientific and theological expertise to direct and organize conferences and symposia to foster dialogue among a consortium of scientists, religious leaders and academicians.

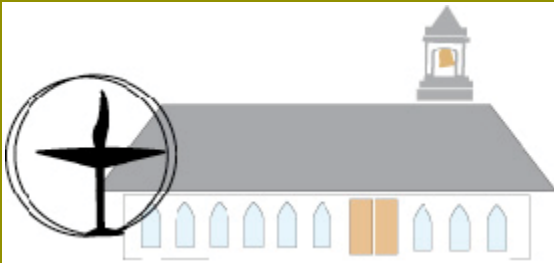
"We need to respond to the questions being raised in the culture between science and religion, otherwise folks do not feel they can make a commitment to Jesus Christ and the Church and maintain intellectual integrity."

Wilson earned a Master in Science in physics at the Drexel Institute of Technology, and a doctorate in physics at the University of Houston, where he served as an assistant research professor in particle physics. Wilson earned a Master's in Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.



Charitable Giving

Our charitable collection for this month will be for the Senior Center of Walker County. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of Walker County seniors. They serve meals on-site, deliver meals to homebound seniors, and provide transportation and homemaking services. Please make all checks directly to The Senior Center of Walker County.



Building Update

On Sunday, October 25th, twenty-two of us shared a picnic inside our own facility! It was just a year ago on November 2, 2008 that we had our first picnic on that land. At that time, the weir was not completed and the building was just a dream! Now we

have a building and electricity and the Aesthetics Committee is busy picking our bathroom faucets. We thank John Pepper for donating the commodes for the bathrooms; they will be named after him. We also thank Don Ko, James Johnson, James Moore, and Lee Stringer for staying after the picnic and finishing the tedious job of caulking on the east and west gabled ends. It must be pointed out that almost the entire congregation helped with the chore of caulking during the past month (as can be seen in the picture below).

As Lee Stringer has stated "To me, our whole building program is about MUCH MORE than just a building. The building is just the outward evidence that something positive is happening. It is about putting our congregation on a stronger financial footing. It is about creating the facilities to better serve the Huntsville community. It is about having a place to serve families with children. It is about better meeting the needs of those people who are searching for a place they can attend without having to check their intellect at the door. It is about narrowing our focus to meet specific unmet and/or under-served needs in the Huntsville community."





We welcome our newest member, Sandy Stokes, who asked to sign our membership book at our October 25th service. Sandy is from Magnolia, Texas and previously attended the Northwoods Church in the Woodlands. She has moved to Huntsville to attend Sam Houston State University.

A Note from the Aesthetics Committee

Our church building has now reached the point where we can accept donations to furnish our building. If you have any items you'd like to give, please call a member of the Aesthetics Committee. Any donations that are accepted and then not used will be put in our Huntsville U.U. Garage Sale; this will provide additional income for furnishing our sanctuary. All donors will receive proof of their tax deduction for their contributions. We greatly appreciate any and all contributions to our new church building.



Aesthetics Committee: Anne Sigler, Chair, Phone: 295-8810
Members: Brenda Barr - 294-9615; Carol Turner - 577-8383;
Melissa Templeton-Mahaffey - mtcycle@hotmail.com; Paul Culp - 295-3404

2010 Southwest UU Women's Conference In The Name of Love



The 2010 Southwest UU Women's Conference will be held from February 26th - 28th 2010 at the Holiday Inn Select in Dallas. UUA Moderator, Gina Courtner, will be the keynote speaker. Registration costs \$165 before Jan. 15th and \$180 after that date. Please join us in a weekend for women. We will explore women's issues while having fun with music, art, and dance.

For more information or to register, see www.swuuw.com or <http://portal.icuuw.com/icuuw/Newsletter/ICUUWFallNewsletter09.pdf>

Recommended Books by Ann Staples



Cotton: The Biography of a Revolutionary Fiber by Stephen Yafa

This book, which was previously published as *Big Cotton* is a very readable story of cotton mainly in the United States. The book discusses cottons from its origins through modern times and all the societal ramifications of this crop. This book is available through interlibrary loan.

Gifted Hands by Ben Carson M.D. with Cecil Murphey.

This excellent autobiography tells the story of Ben Carson's life and how he became a gifted and well-known neurosurgeon. Several famous cases are discussed: the child whose half of her brain was removed, and other similar cases; plus the separation of conjoined twins. The main focus of the book is how Dr. Carson overcame obstacles with the encouragement and support of his mother, brother, other people, and his faith. He tells of overcoming his temper after a terrible angry episode as a teenager. There was a movie made about his life. This book is available through interlibrary loan.

The School of Essential Ingredients by Erica Bauermeister

The premise of this fictional book is an interesting one: the lives of various people are revealed through a cooking class that they all attend. Each chapter is about one person and one session at the cooking school. I would probably classify this book as a "woman's book." I did not read it completely, but it was well written.

The Lost Childhood: A World War II Memoir by Yehuda Nir

This book published by Scholastic Press is geared toward the younger reader, but deals with quite mature themes. Nir is an Associate Professor of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College and, with his wife, also has a private practice. This autobiographical book details how as a child, he and his Jewish family in Poland survived the Nazis by using forged papers and pretending to be Catholics. Unfortunately his father was executed at the beginning of the war. This book is timely as it tells the story forced by conflict to live by his wits and to grow up too soon. Unfortunately, there are many children currently that have to do the same.



Guest at Your Table 2009-2010

This year, join UUs around the country — and around the world — in welcoming a Guest at Your Table! For more than thirty years, the Guest at Your Table tradition has helped UUs build lasting connections to UU principles and support the movement for universal human rights. It is a simple and meaningful way to incorporate "faith in action" into your life.

Guest at Your Table is for everyone! It includes a meaningful worship experience, religious education, and at-home learning for people of all age groups.

Getting to Know Your Guests

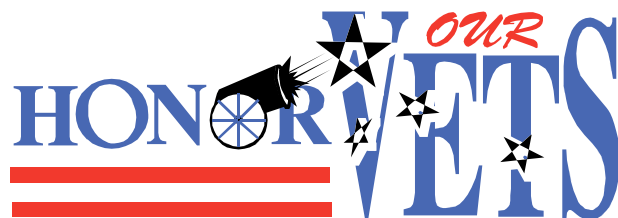
During Guest at Your Table, participants keep a colorful Guest at Your Table box — with photographs of special guests from around the world — in a prominent place in their home, like the dining room table.

Over the next four to six weeks, participants get to know your special guests by reading aloud to family and friends real-life stories from *Stories of Hope*, which connect UUs to real people whose lives have been transformed by the shared struggle for human rights. You will also learn about UUSC's social-justice mission, which puts our shared principles into action.

Sharing with Your Guests

During Guest at Your Table, you or your family may also make daily contributions to your Guest at Your Table box, as if sharing with your special guests. When human-rights supporters share their blessings with UUSC during Guest at Your table they ensure that UUSC's vital work to advance social justice continues, year after year. You and your family members can also earn UUSC membership by giving at the membership level during Guest at Your Table.

Our Guest at the Table Program will start on Sunday, December 6th.



Veteran's Day
November 11th



The Whole-Way House



PRESENTS

1st ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING and REENTRY SERVICES

Saturday, November 21, 2009

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Sam Houston State University

Lowman's Student Center (LSC)

Huntsville, Texas

Speakers:

Sheikh Nur: Imam of ICGA

Adlee Akbar: Whole-Way House VP and Activist - Dallas, TX

Muhammad Bey: Whole-Way House Founder,
License and Certified Substance Abuse Counselor and Activist

Mustafa Amin: Millati Islami Facilitator and Activist - Houston, TX

Lugman Mudhakkir: TPDP Founder and Activist - Tyler, TX

The Whole-Way House, Inc. provides a grass-roots community programming of substance abuse counseling/education. Presently the Whole-Way House program is offering services such as Millati Islami, transition housing for ex-offenders from TDCJ.



Eid Greetings
November 27th



A Note from our Ministerial Intern

Promoting and accepting diversity is a key aspect of our UU faith. It comes under our principles under many different guises including: "The inherent worth and dignity of every person," "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations," and "Acceptance of one another."

In fact, diversity is much broader than just accepting someone's gender, race or sexual orientation. Recently I took on a new job at work and I am now responsible for the work products of six fine engineers and technicians. Each of these individuals has years of experience and each is dedicated to doing his or her job. Each however, has his or her own style, and I realize my job is not to make versions of me out of each of them. My job is to allow each of them the flexibility to do his or her job in their own unique ways based on their own knowledge and experience. My job is also to ensure that the overall job gets done and in accordance with policies and procedures. At the same time, it is also my job to monitor their actions just to make sure that none of them falls off the proverbial cliff related to any of their assignments - in short I must provide guidance from time to time.

This brings me back to the Huntsville UU Fellowship. We don't have elaborate policies and procedures and if we did, it would be a tedious place to support. What we do have are our own individual styles and talents that we each bring to the various tasks at hand. One of my jobs as your Intern Minister is to help the Fellowship grow, not to control or dictate how we grow. We each want the Fellowship to grow and we each bring our unique skill sets to the many jobs at hand. Sometimes letting go and letting others do things their way can be difficult, but that is what is expected if we truly believe in diversity and in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. It is also expected if we are to be compassionate and understanding and if we are to accept one another just as we are.

At the same time each of us needs help and assistance from time to time and often others know important things we don't or they have practical experience we don't have. Accepting feedback is just as important and requires the same appreciation of diversity, compassion and understanding, and acceptance of one another. After all, we may do things differently, but in the long run we'd still like to be told that we are headed toward a cliff before we actually get there. Working together is a challenge, but if we will let our guiding principles actually guide us, we will be alright.

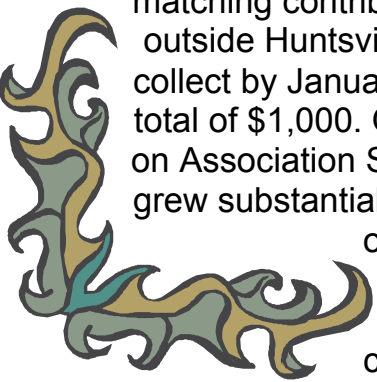
Namaste!
John




Challenge Grant



We have just received our first installment on the Chalice Lighters Grant. This will allow us to install two usable bathrooms, enclose some walls and install electricity to the building.



Alternative good news is that we have been offered a matching contribution from a friend outside the membership and outside Huntsville. For every four dollars in contributions we collect by January 10, 2010, she will contribute a dollar, up to a total of \$1,000. Our first collection for the building fund challenge on Association Sunday was a huge success - the building fund grew substantially. We are well on our way to meeting our goal of \$4000 by January 10th. Please continue to contribute. Remember that every four dollars that you contribute will do the work of five.



Huntsville Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship
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