

Simple Gifts

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The All Souls Journal

A Unitarian minister once explained his ministry to his Christian colleagues by saying, "I am the Apostle to the Gentiles." He meant that he was bringing religion to many people who might otherwise have no religion at all. The people he was referring to were people who had given up on organized religion because they did not believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God or they had experienced religion as hypocritical, judgmental, greedy, oppressive, outdated, and/or unnecessary. Truth be told, there are a lot of people in the Unitarian Universalist church today who, if such a church did not exist, would not be in a church at all. The minister who claimed to be "the Apostle to the Gentiles" was being facetious. But it is true that our church provides a way of being religious that offers meaning, hope, and a process of developing and affirming moral values in a way that meets the intellectual, spiritual, and community needs of many who might otherwise have left religion a long time ago.

A church like All Souls attracts many free-thinkers and people who value moral and intellectual integrity. In

Are You a Gentile?

*-by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar,
Senior Minister*

that way, Unitarians do not like to be told what to do or what to believe. Yet, when a Unitarian discerns for him/herself what is right, there is a high degree of commitment to living that truth in the world whatever the cost. Some people misunderstand such a free faith and think Unitarians have no beliefs when the point is that Unitarians will not be restrained in our beliefs. In other words, no dogma, no doctrine, no religious official, or scripture is taken as a limiting factor for the discovery of truth. The upside of such freedom is the encouragement to seek wisdom

from many sources including the great scriptures and prophets of the world's many religions and cultures, the words and deeds of men and women of all eras, as well as from one's own experience. The downside is that there is no one authoritative text or personality who can be turned to for the answers to life's most significant questions.

Such a faith requires much of its members. Ultimately, each person needs to be the final authority

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**February:
Religious Authority**

The Authority to Believe in Ourselves † Democracy and The Call



in their own discernment of right and wrong. In living out such a free religion, no one else makes decisions for you, and that means living with a high degree of personal responsibility. A key component of the Unitarian Universalist tradition is that such free-thinking be done in community with others. Obviously, left to one's own devices, a person could develop some truly unethical and immoral values and beliefs. For example, some will remember the "Unabomber" who was incredibly intelligent and well-educated, yet lived a reclusive life and devised an ethical system that was destructive. The antagonist in the recent movie, "No Country for Old Men" lived strictly and faithfully by his principles. The problem was that his principles were homicidal. Even though most people would probably not veer that far off the path of righteousness when left to their own ideas,

a community of free and fair-minded people who are dedicated to seeking a right path become an important check and balance upon one another.

In a religion which leaves the ultimate authority regarding personal matters of faith to the individual, it is important that members honestly share their beliefs with one another and honestly let others know if they disagree with them. It may not be the religious path for everybody, but it is a tradition that draws to it people who care so deeply about their beliefs that they are willing to seek them out rigorously and then live courageously by them once they are discovered.

If that makes me "an Apostle to the Gentiles" that is okay with me, because these are exactly the kind of people I want to be around and precisely the kind of people I believe hold out much hope for religion and the future. †

<p>Our church program-year (September-May) is fashioned around nine theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings each month are by no means limited to the themes. However, these topics provide an axis around which many elements of church life gain more meaning and depth. They provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Be warned: Seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!</p>	<p><i>September - Vision</i> <i>October - Creation</i> <i>November - Democracy</i> <i>December - God</i> <i>January - Evil</i> <i>February - Religious Authority</i> <i>March - Freedom</i> <i>April - Redemption</i> <i>May - Mercy</i></p>
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The Authority to Believe in Ourselves

-by Kathy Keith, Executive Director



Authority of any kind can sometimes be an issue in a Unitarian Universalist congregation. And religious authority can seem like an oxymoron in a free religion.

Unitarian Universalism is built on the bedrock belief that each of us is our own highest authority regarding matters of faith. Can we really believe anything we want to? There is, after all, no test of creed to join our congregations. We UUs are held to a high standard; we can believe only what we are compelled to believe—compelled by the synthesis of fact and reason, feeling and experience, tested in community with fellow responsible, free thinkers. Belief must be tested, passing through the tempering fires of experience and reflection before it is faith.

Ours is not a faith for everyone. There are no afterlife incentives like heaven and hell, no guarantees that we'll rest for eternity in anyone's everlasting arms, or that we'll be reunited with our beloved dead. And while we often hear and say that "of those to whom much is given much is expected," it is not a prosperity gospel.

This faith is a gift we can seek and nurture in ourselves, as well as in our children. Just as there are stages of human development and stages of grief, there are stages of faith development. Recognizing and tending those stages can help us toward the inner peace, strength, and resilience that are some of the gifts of a mature faith.

There is no timetable for these stages. We don't grow out of or into them on a schedule. In fact, to be authentically experienced, they must be developed through life experience, tempered by grief and joy, disappointment and success, reflection and transparency.

James Fowler¹ has identified these stages of faith development, just as Howard Gardner² has identified different ways of knowing. We take both of their contributions into account in our religious education offerings.

Primal Faith, formed in infancy by a basic sense of trust and reliability in our environment, is reinforced in church with our parent support groups, from parenting classes and Mostly Unitarian Moms and Dads, to the casual coffee klatches chatting in the Family Room as parents wait for their children. We can nurture that primal faith in ourselves and our children by being trustworthy and reliable and ensuring that our church programs observe the highest standards of quality and child safety. We nurture it in other adults in our church community with our respectful interactions with one another, and exhibiting self-respect.

Intuitive-Projective Faith is faith by imitation, or "ought" faith. Our programs for young children center around the young child's place in the church and the world. They are surrounded by people who are living out their values, and finding the world to be a good place because they contribute toward making it so. Everyone in this congregation is serving as a religious educator for our children and adults by modeling the love and acceptance of one another that we hope to see our children exhibit as they grow up.

Mythic-Literal is the "taught" faith. It is inclusive, love-seeking, and based on shared traditions, stories, practices, and beliefs. Parents and teachers represent authority. This is one of my favorite reasons for encouraging spiritually mature people to teach church school – they are literally transmitting the faith to the next generation – or, in the case of adult education, to the wider world. The core curriculum of our All Souls Kids (ASK) program is Bible stories, called by one wiser than I, "the central paradigm of our

society.” Wisdom stories from the world’s religions and the inspiring lives of Unitarians and Universalists through the ages are shared as well.

Synthetic-Projective faith is “bought” faith. As our children enter adolescence and middle school they are ready to look at, and possibly align themselves with, those other than themselves. If you remember adolescence as a time of disliking what you saw in the mirror, or of having the world’s stupidest, meanest parents you may also realize how necessary this stage of development was in differentiating from your parents and moving on toward becoming your own person. It is peers who hold the authority. In the church school, World Religions (The Great Questions in seventh grade and How Others Worship in eighth grade) provide an informed access to other perspectives.

Individuating-Reflective faith is a chosen, or “sought” faith. In our ninth grade Coming of Age Program, those youths who are spiritually ready to begin to understand their own authority in matters of religion, supported by their teachers, the ministers, the youth director, and their families begin to synthesize their own faith. They express that faith in the personal credo statements they share with the congregation in the Coming of Age Service. Adults who wish to engage in a similar process may enroll in the Building Your Own Theology class that begins in March, led by experienced facilitators John Jacobs and Nancy Vanderlip.

Conjunctive, or “fought” faith, requires introspection and re-evaluation that Fowler contends is not found before mid-life, when life’s transitions force us to reflect, to readjust, to accept that there can be more than one truth. Fought faith is “alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions,” says Fowler. It is the faith of the elders of our tribe, those who have seen and lived through beginnings and endings and beginnings again.

4 **Universalizing**, or “wrought” faith, is the last

identified stage, and may create a call that leads to a “radical actualization” of one’s faith. Universalizing faith is independent, seeks truth, and is selflessly dedicated to bringing the kingdom of God to the earth. Holders of this faith are considered to be extremely rare – Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are examples. Few of us can shed the shackles of society to live for the good of humankind. All of us can admire those who have and will.

As we move through these stages, we test, then re-invest. Whether it is faith in God, in the Goddess or simply in Good, we enrich our lives by tending our faith as intentionally as we tend our body and mind—and it’s never too late. You have the authority. Join us on our journey! †



¹James W. Fowler. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development*. HarperCollins. 1995.

²Howard Gardner. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books. 1993.

Moral vs. Religious Authority

-by *Kate Starr, Youth Director*



As Unitarian Universalists, especially YoUUth, we are suspicious of Religious Authority of any kind whether scripture, a church, or a minister. We tend to believe that the final authority rests within us. But if we are to rely solely on ourselves, especially our reason gained through direct experience, how do we obtain guidance on difficult moral questions?

Certainly in our covenantal community, we encourage each other's spiritual growth through worship and free and responsible dialogue in our search for meaning. But if Jesus showed up today and asked us to leave our family and friends to spread the gospel, how would we discern whether he was truly worthy of following or a schizophrenic lunatic?

Rather than following a Religious Authority, UUs tend to grant Moral Authority, and that is done by examining the direction of a person's, an institution's – and our own – moral compass. And, as UUs, we know we're heading in the right direction if our moral compass points in the direction of justice, equity, compassion, liberty, and peace.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) has a long history of a moral compass that points true north. Started during the rise of Hitler and fascism in post World War I Europe, the

Unitarian Service Committee and the Universalist Service Committee were started to investigate opportunities in America and abroad for humanitarian service as “may in its judgment seem desirable and wise.” In the 1940s, it provided relief, shelter, and safe passage for women and children to the United States. The number of people who were rescued during this time is impossible to calculate with certainty, but they are in the thousands.

These were the earliest occasions of cooperation between the two denominations which merged in 1963. This is also when the flaming chalice symbol, designed by painter and musician Hans Deutsch in 1941, was first used.

The UUSC continues to advance human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies. Through its JustWorks camps, attendees learn about human rights issues, how to promote intercultural understanding and reconciliation, and advocacy skills to address issues of poverty, discrimination and racism. It was the UUSC who came to Tulsa last summer to facilitate experiential workshops for us during REPAiRELATIONS, our 2007 Summer Social Action Project that brought black, white and Muslim youth together to talk about our feelings on racism and what we can do to improve race relations.



We all have an opportunity to support the UUSC by becoming a member of the UUSC and/or by attending the annual fundraising dinner hosted at All Souls on Feb. 21. Align your moral compass with that of a truly great organization.

Who's the Boss?

-by Rev. Debra Garfinkel, Minister of Pastoral Care



A little girl is on her knees at her bedside saying her evening prayer. Her mother kneels next to her. This child has had a particularly trying day at school – it seems that she lost her lunch money. She's been attending Sunday School and learning about Jesus. So she prays, "Dear Jesus. I learned that you helped a lady find a lost coin. Could you please help me, too? I lost three quarters. And please bless the cafeteria lady and my teachers and my friends and my mommy and my daddy. And please make my brother be nice to me." She opens her left eye to peek at her mother. Her mother smiles and nods. The girl closes her eyes again. "Oh, and thank you for listening. Amen." Satisfied, she climbs into bed, kisses her mother good night and falls asleep.

The next night, the girl is anxious to say her prayer. Her mother hurries to join her. The child begins, "Dear Jesus. I know you heard my prayer last night because Teacher says you listen to all good children and I am specially good. Are three quarters too many? Because the lady in the story only had one. Excuse me." The little girl pauses, opens her eyes and turns to her mother. "Mommy, who is the boss of Jesus?" Her mother is taken aback. "What do you mean, dear?" "I mean, who tells Jesus what to do and how to do it?" "Well, sweetheart, I think you might be talking about God." "Oh, that's right. Thanks." The child resumes her prayer. "Dear God. I'm sorry to have to bother you but I think your son maybe isn't able to do his job. Could you please help him find my lunch money? It's three quarters. Thank you very much. Please bless everybody, especially my mommy and my daddy who work very, very hard." She pauses and furrows her brow as if thinking carefully. Then she says, "And please bless Jesus. He's got a big job. Amen."

the Boss? What does this mean?

As Unitarian Universalists, we come from a long line of people who ask the question, "Who's the Boss?" In whom and in what do we locate the power for making faithful meaning, for making sense of this life? It's a struggle and a life-long learning process that benefits from sharing our questions and our stories.

The young child in the story might remind you of someone you know and love. There are times in our lives when distressing things occur and we suffer loss. It doesn't matter how anyone else judges our loss, it is still a loss to us and therefore important. It's important even if it is just three quarters. When that happens, we look outside ourselves for help and comfort – for some kind of restoration.

Our hope for restoration resides in many opportunities. Therefore, we turn to a trusted friend, a teacher, a counselor, or a minister. We turn to sacred texts and to religious or spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer. Sometimes we need only one source for comfort and assistance; sometimes our hearts are breaking and our entire being cries out for more and more and more. We cry out as the psalmist does in the Hebrew Scriptures, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1)

This work of living a life of purpose, of worth, of dignity, of responsibility, and of grace challenges us in times of desolation and also in times of consolation. Who or What is your Boss? Thankfully, we have a depth and a breadth of resources upon which we can rely. We have our free religious tradition and we have our community of faith. We have all our stories. And yes, we have our children's wisdom to remind us of what we already know – that ultimately, it's up to each of us to decide Who's the Boss. †

Religious Authority Personified

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Assistant Minister, & Kate Starr, Youth Director

When Religious Authority was a young music student in Guadalajara, Mexico, he played each note with precision, exactly as it was written on the page. His teachers encouraged him to imagine what mood or feeling the composer was trying to convey, and to play with more heart and soul. But Religious Authority was a literalist, and trusted neither his education nor his intuition to help him interpret the music.

Religious Authority was the only member of his large Catholic family to cross the border wearing a Saint Christopher medallion around his neck and carrying rosary beads in his pocket. Religious Authority earned little money playing guitar and accordion on the street corners of America. His music simply failed to inspire anyone, including himself.

It was when he met Authenticity and Integrity, and they invited him to an improvisational jazz session, that his spirit finally broke free and he found his true voice. With no sheet music to rely on, Religious Authority trusted the muscle memory, developed after years and years of practice, to make his fingers dance and linger in harmony with the others. It was in these sessions that the pure desires of his heart recombined old melodies and familiar stanzas to create something new, something personal, meaningful, and exciting. Occasionally, Accountability, the appointed band leader, has to rein him in – sometimes to question his departure of key or tempo; other times to give the rest of band, especially Tradition, time to catch up and catch on.

The group of five friends now call themselves QuintEssence and they play at dance halls, nursing homes, and class reunions nearly every Friday and Saturday night. The core of their collection is original compositions, but Religious Authority has also taught the band some mariachi music,

and Tradition has inserted a few klezmer tunes into their play list.

Since joining the band, Religious Authority has added wind instruments, including bag pipes, a didgeridoo, and an oversized euphonium, to his vast repertoire of instruments. He especially likes the feel of B-flat as it resonates in his chest. He's convinced that sometimes he can recreate the sound of the universe breathing. †



Lenten Practices for All Souls

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Assistant Minister



On Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2008, we will enter into the 40 days of Lent. The word “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lenten*, or spring, the time of year when the days begin to lengthen. Lent itself is always the same period of time, but its starting date is tied to the movable feast of Easter and can be as early as Feb. 4 or as late as March 10.

Lent is one of the most important seasons of the Christian liturgical calendar because it is an introspective period during which we take stock of our lives and our relationships. It is a time when we can celebrate the abundance of our lives by sacrificing for a period in order to make us more mindful and attentive to our blessings. Lent is a time to discover more about ourselves and our will and an opportunity to change ourselves as we prepare for Easter and the spring. This is a time to prepare ourselves for the coming season. How do Unitarians make ourselves ready?

This Lenten theme recalls Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness, and through them the discipline of self-denial reflecting the sacrifice of our will to a purpose greater than ourselves. It was during this time that Jesus went away into the desert for forty days and forty nights to pray and fast. It was during this time that Jesus was tempted to stray by Satan. During Lent we are encouraged to honor the life of Jesus by withholding something that we believe sustains us. Maybe we use sweets as a crutch, maybe it is watching television. The idea is to withhold whatever we use as a distraction that prevents us from being fully present or whatever pleasure we may be taking for granted.

If you are not quite sure how to practice the Christian tradition of Lent, I have devised a Lenten Practice Guide that might be of benefit to you during this time of reflection and awareness before Easter. You can try each one day by day or skim them all now to gather ideas of what you might give up for Lent. I suggest you give up one thing for the entire time and try the daily practices in addition to that single sacri-

fice. The remainder of the daily practices will be in next month’s Simple Gifts.

Pre-Lent, Mardi Gras, Tuesday, February 5

Our bodies allow us the opportunities of experiencing both pleasure and pain. Imagine life without one of the senses. We touch, taste, feel, and smell our way to beauty and joy. If you had but one day left to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh, to what would you turn your attention? Eating or drinking? Taking a walk out of doors? Spending time with a pet or a loved one? Practicing an art or enjoying another’s? Spend time today indulging yourself in some of the pleasures of life. Try to really be present with yourself for the entire experience. Lent helps us to recognize what it means to deny the very pleasures that we can indulge in this day.

Day 1, Ash Wednesday, February 6

“Remember that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)
All pleasures and pain of the flesh shall cease to be when we cease to be. Join in chapel at All Souls at 6:30 p.m. for an Ash Wednesday Service. The minister will mark each willing participant with black ashes, in the shape of a cross, which the worshipper traditionally retains until washing it off after sundown. The symbolism echoes the ancient Near Eastern tradition of throwing ash over one’s head signifying repentance before God and it honors the mortality of each of us.

Day 2, Thursday, February 7

(also Chinese New Year—Confucian/Taoist/Buddhist)
Give something away.
“Think of giving not as a duty but as a privilege.”
~John D. Rockefeller Jr.
Buy coffee for the person behind you, overtip, give someone something of yours that you know they have wanted, or donate your excess belongings to charity.

Day 3, Friday, February 8

Fridays during Lent are a time of commemorating Jesus’ death and a time of self-reflection. Set a timer (the microwave, your watch) and sit still,

focus on your breathing and your heartbeat for ten minutes. Let the waves of thought flow in and out but try to return your attention to your heartbeat or your breath.

Day 4, Saturday, February 9

Give up... your pride.

“If you were going to die soon and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?”

~Stephen Levine

Think of a person with whom you have a strained relationship and make some gesture toward improving that relationship.

First Sunday of Lent, February 10

Sundays are days of celebration during Lent and do not count in the forty days. Try coming to church during both services today. Attend one worship service then try dropping in on a class or morning forum. After the second service, introduce yourself to someone you don't know and invite them to join you for lunch. (You can blame me.) Ask them how they came to attend All Souls and why they keep coming back.

Day 5, Monday, February 11

Give up... complaining.

“Instead of complaining that the rosebush is full of thorns, be happy that the thorn bush has roses.”

~German Proverb

Abstain from complaining all day; focus on gratitude.

Day 6, Tuesday, February 12

Give up... 30 minutes a day

The word “lent” means “lengthen” and stands for that time in spring when the days grow longer.

If you do not already have a spiritual practice, try journaling for 30 minutes a day for the remainder of Lent. Set your alarm clock for thirty minutes earlier than usual and write freehand. Try not to get in your own way. Allow your thoughts to flow onto the page. This is not writing a book, it is emptying the clutter in your mind. Do not show these pages to anyone, they are only for you.

Day 7, Wednesday, February 13

Give up... driving.

The average American consumes six times more

energy than the world average per person. Eighteen percent of every dollar spent by the average American family is devoted to transportation. Find alternative means to keep your normal schedule: bike, walk, rideshare, try public transportation. Journal about your experience. (Or tell me about it!) Come to 6:30 chapel.

Day 8, Thursday, February 14

Valentine's Day

Give love away.

We are surrounded by people who love us and yet we may not know it. Tell someone who you think may not know that you love them. If that feels too risky, tell someone who may not know how much you appreciate that they are in your life.

Day 9, Friday, February 15

Nirvana Day–Buddhist

(anniversary of the Buddha's death)

Give up... judgment.

“If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?” (Matthew 5:46)

Just for the day, give up judgment and try to put curiosity in its place. Focus on finding the inner light, inner child, or the hidden Buddha in someone you find difficult to like. Spend some time today releasing your judgment of that person. What is the lesson they have to teach you? You are seeing them through your lenses; you can do nothing else. How is this person a reflection of who you are?

Day 10, Saturday, February 16

Give up...the television.

Read a book. Go outside. Spend time with people you care about. If you are already giving up television for Lent, try giving up the internet, video games, or NPR. I know it will be tough but you can do it.

Second Sunday of Lent, February 17

Try coming to church during both services this Sunday. Spend one in worship and one in the Memorial Garden or in a new class. Sit down to lunch with someone you do not know and ask what they think about this month's theological theme, or if they have read Simple Gifts. Discuss.

Day 11, Monday, February 18

Give up...music.

“A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence.” ~ Leopold Stokowski
In Bach’s day, often the organ and choirs were silent during Lent. Try moving through the day with no music in the car or at work. Leave your iPods charging and your radio off. Pay attention to what it is like to be with the silence. Pay attention to your own process and what music does for you by noticing when it is gone.

Day 12, Tuesday, February 19

Give up...sugar.

Americans consume on average 133 pounds of sugar per person per year making up somewhere between 20-25 percent of the calories in a person’s diet. What would a day be like without sugar or sugar substitute or corn syrup (which replaces sugar in many refined foods). Reading the labels for a day will certainly heighten your awareness of what you are consuming. Pay attention to your weaknesses, your resistances, and your attention span.

Day 13, Wednesday, February 20

Give up... the night to the day.

Wake up early enough to see the sunrise. When was the last time you rose to see this glorious act of beauty that happens every day? Watch for the first glimmer and stay until you know it is all the way up. If this is not at all possible, plan for a sunset to have your full attention. You can find the exact times on the internet. Come to 6:30 chapel.

Day 14, Thursday, February 21

Give up... the news.

See what it is like to narrow your focus away from the global. Do you use the news as a means to escape the here and now? Do newsworthy issues serve as fodder for conversation with others? You may have to find something else to talk about. Take interest in those within your immediate contact. Or if you avoid the news at all costs anyway, pay attention to the news all day. What are you avoiding by not observing the news?

Day 15, Friday, February 22

Give... thanks.

“Gratitude is the memory of the heart.”

~Jean Baptiste Massieu

Write a hand-written thank you note to someone who has touched your life sometime in the past two weeks. Mail it.

Day 16, Saturday, February 23

Give up...speaking.

“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.” ~Mother Teresa

Silent retreats have fed my spirit in ways I never imagined. Try a silent mini-retreat today. Don’t answer the phone. Let those around you know that you will be silent during the daylight hours today. Begin with the sunrise and end at sunset. Journal about your process, your resistance, the resistance of your friends and family, your temptations, your success, and your failure.

Third Sunday in Lent, February 24

When you attend worship today, sit in a different place than usual. Introduce yourself to the people sitting around you. Wear your nametag. When you come through the line after the service, let the ministers know about your Lenten practices.

Day 17, Monday, February 25

Give up...smoking.

“For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?” ~Kahlil Gibran

If you smoke, there are a million reasons that you already know why you should quit. Now is the time. If you have not been a smoker or have quit, celebrate your clean air choices! Let your meditation today focus on filling and emptying your lungs, completely. Try remembering to breathe deeply all day.

Day 18, Tuesday, February 26

Give up... giving up.

“How does one become a butterfly?” she asked. “You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.” ~Trina Paulus
What is there in your life that you regret not finish

ing or working on? Take one step toward that goal today. If it is learning to play an instrument, surf the web to find a class or teacher. Always wanted to skydive? Find out the costs and what is involved. Want to learn French? Learn three French words today. Take a tiny step today toward your goal.

Day 19, Wednesday, February 27

Give up... resentment.

“Lord, when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive him?” (Matthew 18:21)

Seven times seven times seven times may indeed be the answer, not because he will wrong you that many times more, but because it may take that many attempts to actually forgive him. Make a conscious effort to let go of a resentment that you are holding. Write a letter that you intend never to send. Tell the person your understanding of what happened, how it hurt you, how you have been holding onto this pain. Write the words “I forgive you” seven times or seven times seven times at the end of the page. Rip the letter to shreds and burn it, safely. This may not be enough, but it is a good beginning or the beginning of a good ending. Come to chapel tonight at 6:30.

Day 20, Thursday, February 28

Give up... caffeine.

“Sleep is a symptom of caffeine deprivation.” ~ Author Unknown

Can you go without caffeine for a day? Maybe you have already given up coffee, or tea, or soda for Lent but have you given up all of your caffeine delivery mechanisms? Can you be with yourself without caffeine? Do you even know what you are like without it? (Actually, this might take several days to discover.)

Day 21, Friday, February 29

Give... of yourself.

“Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.” ~ Buddha

Give your time to someone else. This will look different for everyone. It may mean spending the day trying to help everyone

around you. It may mean offering your undivided attention to those you love for a designated time. It may be donating your talent or time to do service work. Focus on the gift.

Day 22, Saturday, March 1

Give up...money.

“Money often costs too much.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson.

With no pre-planning, try not to spend any money today. Eat what you have in your house (be creative), entertain yourself with board games, books, and company – maybe a potluck with others doing the same. We already have more than many have. We spend money every day that we have already agreed to spend, rent/mortgage, utilities, the gas in our car. Try to make do today without spending an additional cent. †



Spiritual Exercises: The Resurrection and the Life

-by Jeremy Elliott, Intern Minister



“This is the way the rhythm moves... One day there is sleet and ice; in the silence of the nighttime the snows fall soundlessly—all this until at last the cold seems endless and all there seems to be shadowy and foreboding. The earth is weary and heavy. Then something stirs—a strange new vitality

pulses through everything. One can feel the pressure of some vast energy pushing, always pushing through dead branches and slumbering roots...

When the preacher says as a part of the last rites, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life...’ he is reminding us all of the ancient wisdom: ‘Upon the night view of the world, a day view must follow.’ ” -The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

Winter’s end is marked on the Christian liturgical calendar by the Lenten Season. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 6, and lasts for forty days until Holy Saturday, March 22, and the celebration of Easter, March 23. The observation of Lent is connected to the lunisolar calendar. Christians celebrate Jesus’ triumph over sin and death as the seasons shift and the winter gives birth to the new life of spring.

The days of Lent are a remembrance of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert facing the temptations of power, greed, and evil. They also mirror the days that Moses spent on Mt. Sinai with God, the years that the Hebrew people wandered in search of the Promised Land, and to a number of other

Biblical stories. The forty days are always presented in the Bible as a time of preparation and purification.

Christians honor the Lenten season to ready themselves for the death and resurrection of Jesus. Traditional spiritual exercises include prayer, fasting, and charity. These exercises are meant to be disciplines to form right relationships with God, yourself, and your neighbor. Right relationships demand that we be disciplined about how we live in the world. The spiritual preparation of this season requires that we rebalance our lives to reflect integrity, accountability, and love.

During this Lenten season, sacrifice something that you are attached to—a temptation, a food, or a way of being in the world—and bring something into your life that draws you nearer to that which is holy. You might try eating vegetarian, stopping smoking, forgoing television, controlling your road rage, or not shopping for any “fashionable excesses” for forty days to prepare yourself for the greater life that awaits you when you make these changes. As with the death and resurrection of Jesus, we must be prepared to surrender ourselves if we expect ever to discover something greater. Identify sacrifices and disciplines that everyone in your family can engage in to better themselves and our world.



Prepare yourself with dedication. Make room in your life for that stirring, the “strange new vitality” that pulses through everything, that vast energy pushing, bringing slumbering roots, fields, and forests to life. †

Democracy and The Call

In our Unitarian Universalist tradition it is the solemn responsibility of the congregation to select their ministers. We are free to call and ordain any minister of our choosing. The process typically begins with the help of the Unitarian Universalist Association, when ministers seeking a church and churches seeking a minister are able to begin a dialogue for a possible future partnership.

Churches normally form search committees to do the initial work. They are charged by the congregation to carry out the search and recommend a candidate. Members serving on this committee usually come from varied areas of interest within the church community. Participation on this committee requires a significant time commitment and includes reviewing ministerial information packets, traveling to other churches to hear the candidates deliver sermons, conducting personal interviews, and attending committee meetings and discussions throughout the process.

Ministerial packets are prepared to be shared with search committees so that they may better know the candidates. The packets tell the story about the minister's educational journey, experiences and unique qualifications. Included in the packet will be 5 to 6 sermons on a variety of themes, worship services and rites of passage performed by the minister, any published writing, short writings on different aspects of ministry, and a list of references.

During January 2006, All Souls formed such a search committee that worked closely with our Senior Minister, Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, in hiring Tamara Lebak in August 2006 as our Assistant Minister. She was hired with the understanding that at the end of a two-year period there was a possibility of a Call.

A ministerial relations committee was formed to work with Tamara, the staff and the congregation over the past 18 months. It has allowed us time to better define the needs of our church and the skills and qualities we will need from an Associate Minister. Marlin will continue to perform the major worship duties, work with

the board in guiding the church, and serve as Chief of Staff. Tamara will work with the Newcomers Board, continue to enlarge the Branches program, lead Soulful Sundown Services, and teach adult education classes. The committee feels it is now time for us to consider moving to the next step in The Call process—The Candidating Phase. We plan to present Tamara as our candidate.

The Ministerial Relations Committee will take their recommendation to the Board of Trustees this spring for Tamara to become our Associate Minister. It will then be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to set a date for a special Congregational Meeting to consider The Call. At this special Congregational Meeting the congregation will be asked to vote on a motion to call the Associate Minister. A vote will be taken. In order to feel it will be a successful partnership with a congregation, ministers being called always hope to have at least 95 percent of the congregation voting in favor of their Call. Following our vote, we would then need to have an acceptance of The Call from Tamara.

In the early fall The Call process would culminate Tamara's installation as All Souls Associate Minister. This installation ceremony will include Marlin, the congregation, and ministers from throughout the denomination who have played an important role in Tamara's ministry.

Truly, our ministerial candidating process is one of mutual selection and reflection on the part of the church and the minister. The time spent is worthwhile when it culminates in a partnership that can continue to grow and mature in the future.

The Ministerial Relations Committee of Rev. Tamara Lebak are: Claudia Arthrell, Donna Dutton, Amanda Faith, Gerry Foster, and Patrick Newman.

Religious Authority: A Brief History

-by Brian Hill, All Souls Member

Religious authority is a term that brings comfort to many, apprehension to some, and indignation to still others. Throughout history, the authority of religious doctrines has influenced, and, even decided, the courses of governments and the fates of individuals. From their earliest formulations, the decisions of religious authorities have done much to determine how people deal with each other and with their faith. As every American should know, a dispute over religious authority was what brought the Pilgrims to the New World. Once here, they practiced their own religious authority that favored only those who obeyed it unquestioningly.

As with any form of control, religious authority can be and has been abused. Reading history, dissent would seem to be authority's natural enemy. A challenge to a belief system must seem, to the defenders of that system, to be a challenge to God. It seemed that the God-fearing thing to do was to exact punishment upon those who would resist the true path to righteousness. That is why there were no moral inhibitions among Massachusetts Puritans in casting out Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson¹. It is why Quakers and Jews were equally unwelcome among the truly elect.

Religious authority that believes its god speaks through a sacred writing seldom questions its sacredness. The priesthood that embodies that sacredness must have the respect, if not the reverence, that the writing itself commands. Historically, the stronger the priesthood has been, the less independence of thought and action has been tolerated. Martin Luther, for all his defiance of papal authority, created a movement that largely matched its Catholic rival's intolerance of dissent.

However, Luther and his Protestant successors did open the door for a revolutionary concept. The idea that religious faith requires genuine and freely given acquiescence to religious authority was a chief result of the Reformation. With the translation of the Bible into the vernacular of the common man, that man had the opportunity to know his god more fully. No longer was he

dependent upon a priesthood to inform him of what to believe and what to reject. Strict guidelines remained and punishment was still exacted for their violation. But the first cracks in unbending dogma had been made. As a result, Protestant denominations proliferated, and even the Catholic church became more thoughtful. Authority was no longer from the Pope alone but from the teachings of Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits.

But it was not until the advent of Unitarianism that religious authority had its ultimate transformation. With the Unitarian rejection of dogma, authority stepped aside in favor of free inquiry. Obedience was no longer demanded and not even valued. As a free faith, Unitarianism fostered free thought. Religious authority in this context had changed into religious advisor and facilitator.

The invitation of Unitarianism was, in part, for the individual to become his own religious authority. Never before had a denomination so entirely recognized the capability of the individual to come to his own conclusions. Not accepting that truth is a static, once and forever frozen reality, Unitarianism encouraged questioning of established truths and ancient wisdoms. Not mere authority but authenticity of conviction was the new ideal.

The future of religious authority in America should take the Unitarian path. A nation that professes to value the intelligence of its population should endorse the exercise of that intelligence. An educated laity realizes that the authority of scripture, like that of other forms of religious authority, must be adapted to suit different times and circumstances.

Religious authority that cannot deal with the present must necessarily remain outmoded and be of the past. †

¹Both examples of what happened to Puritans who went too far in seeking religious freedom in the New World, Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, were banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony, he in 1635 and she in 1637.

Source: *The American Tradition in Literature*. 11th edition: 11st eds. George Perkins, Barbara Perkins. Publisher: McGraw-Hill 2007 (81)

David Kroll to Be Honored by Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Meadville-Lombard Theological School will honor All Souls member David Kroll by establishing an award in his name. The David Kroll Award will recognize individuals who have exhibited extraordinary leadership and service to Meadville-Lombard. Dave himself will be the first recipient, June 7, in Chicago at the School's Honorary Degree Dinner.

Over the course of two decades, David has served the theological school as a trustee and, most recently, as a volunteer adviser to the Investment Committee. A former trustee and president of the All Souls congregation, David continues to contribute his financial expertise, adding to the institutional health and financial security of both institutions.

David and his wife, Marjorie, have been All Souls members since 1975. He has served All Souls in numerous other capacities, including as Chairman of the Youth Board, the Endowment Fund, Long-Range Planning, two Capital Fund Drives and chairing the Annual Rocky Stegman Memorial Golf Tournament. †

Program Guide

Winter/Spring 2008



ALL SOULS
UNITARIAN CHURCH

The Winter/Spring 2008 Program Guide is now available online or in the church office with comprehensive information about classes and programs offered at the church. www.AllSoulsChurch.org

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- 1) Submit your text electronically via email. Plain text is best.
- 2) Include your name and daytime number.
- 3) Not all submissions will be published. Submissions may be edited.

Questions?
Call Heather Hollingsworth at 743-2363.

Feb. Highlights

Feb. 1	Soulful Sundown
Feb. 2	Usher Training
Feb. 3	KISS/Joining Sunday
Feb. 6	Ash Wednesday Chapel
Feb. 10	Knippa Lecture featuring Rev. Forrest Church
Feb. 14	Day Alliance - Jenk & Jerri Jones
Feb. 15	Parents Night Out
Feb. 16	MUMs Annual Sweetheart Ball
Feb. 21	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Dinner
Feb. 22	All Soul Acoustic Coffeehouse: Robbie Fulks
Feb. 26	Evening Alliance - Dean Clark former Tulsa World Sports Editor

Sunday Service Times:
10:00, 11:30 am

Soulful Sundown:
7:00 pm, First Friday

Wednesday Connections:
Supper 5:15, Chapel 6:30, Classes 7:00 pm