

Compass Rose

June-August 2011



L'Envoi

by Rev. Vail Weller, Lead Minister

It is with deep appreciation that I sit down to try to write my final column as a minister at UUSM. By now you know that I have accepted a job working for our Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations as the Special Assistant to the President for Major Gifts. Translation: I will be working in Stewardship and Development for our UUA. I'll be focusing on getting to know a group of fifty major donors. I'll be sharing their ideas, interests, and concerns with the administration of our UUA, and over the course of time, it is the hope that I will cultivate major gifts from them, to support our faith.

I believe that Unitarian Universalism has a transforming message for individuals and for our society as a whole. I am really eager to minister in a new way. As exciting as all of this is, I am of course very sad to leave UUSM. What a wonderful, warm, engaged group of people! I knew from the start that this is a special congregation, and I have truly been privileged to serve as your minister. I believe we have been a very good match. I have been through life changes and upheavals with many of you, and I have watched your children grow with such affection. You all will always be in my heart.

I want to assure you that this congregation will attract great leadership. The Bay Area is a place that people want to live. The church is in a healthy state, brimming with potential. UUSM is filled with the most interesting, wonderful people. The staff is amazing. The justice work impressive. The caring genuine. The energy compelling. Who wouldn't want to work in such a place? Even at the time of this journal's publication, your Transition Minister Selection Team is honing in on mak-

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Mission, Vision, and Purposes

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

Mission

We are a religious community of open hearts and open minds working together to transform ourselves and the world.

Vision

We are a growing, welcoming, and diverse congregation, grounded in and living out our liberal religious values.

Purposes

Worshipping

A sense of transcending wonder inspires our life together as a religious community. Through a diversity of services and rituals, we open our hearts and minds, and are moved to take action in the world.

Caring

All people are welcomed, dialogues flourish, and relationships grow and deepen through joyous and difficult times. Individually and collectively, we exemplify love, compassion, respect, and hospitality, both within our congregation and in the greater community.

Connecting

We invite and encourage all congregants to participate in congregational life, and we create opportunities, through social and spiritual fellowship, for everyone to form deep and lasting connections. We create meaningful connections with other Unitarian Universalists, and with other religious and service groups.

Learning

We have a cohesive and engaging lifespan religious education program, which inspires us to understand Unitarian Universalism, to nurture our spiritual growth and identity, to live in accordance with Unitarian Universalist principles, and to develop our leadership abilities. Our religious education program attracts and serves the greater community.

Acting

We demonstrate our liberal religious values through effective social action, providing leadership and creating partnerships in the local community and beyond.

Giving

We are generous with our time, talent, and money. Through our stewardship, our congregation thrives, and we create greater justice, equity, and compassion in the local and global community.

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Compass Rose

A compass rose is a diagram, usually displaying the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west, that appears in virtually all maps, charts, and other navigation systems. (The "rose" in the term refers to how the compass points resemble the petals of the flower.) It is our hope that *Compass Rose*, the quarterly journal of the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, will likewise serve as a guide to help you get your bearings as you travel in your spiritual journey.

Turning Toward Each Other

by Deanna Vandiver, Intern Minister 2010-2011

Asked why he comes every single Sunday, John replies, "Someone might miss me if I wasn't here."

- Victoria Stafford, *Walking Towards Morning*



During a recent meeting at Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, the gathered group was asked to think about what UUSM meant to each of us. Like an arrow, these words shot through my being – "UUSM named me minister." Unbidden, tears sprang to my eyes. While the call to ministry has long been a part of my being, you have named me minister. For this, I thank you.

While the LEARNING GOAL I set out in my Learning Service Agreement was a bit, shall we say, expansive ("Training toward formation as a spiritually-grounded minister who can comprehensively function competently and with grace"), this congregation has graciously and skillfully partnered me in my ministerial formation. For this, I thank you.

Thank you for blessing me, for naming me minister. As a skilled and spiritually mature teaching congregation, you bless the world with faithful Unitarian Universalist ministries far beyond the limits of the walls of your building.

I am honored by your support of my invitation to preach here in July and look forward to seeing you at

the 10:00 am services. Such an immediate and tangible affirmation of the work we have done together is most gratefully received by this Intern Minister.

As a historic teaching congregation, the culture of this congregation understands that it is the policy of intern ministries to be "out of touch" for the year immediately following an internship. For us, that will mean being out of communication from the time I move back to New Orleans until General Assembly, June 2012 (where I hope to see lots of you Standing on the Side of Love in Arizona: <http://www.uua.org/ga/2012/index.shtml>).

In the interim time, I trust that you will stay deeply connected to each other, discerning together how you will continue to live into your vision and mission as a congregation. If you are tempted to "check out" during this time, please resist that temptation, knowing that your absence will be felt even more keenly in this moment. I encourage you to turn to each other, to be profoundly present in the upcoming transitions.

May curiosity, compassion, and respect saturate your relationships with each other and with the larger world in which we live as a people of faith. The gift of faithful presence that you give to each other can support you through the chaos implicit in re-creation – so that you may enter together into your joyful future.

May it be so.

With love and a grateful heart,
Deanna

Article Submissions

Articles for *Compass Rose* (max. 500 words) may be submitted for consideration to office@uusanmateo.org. (Contact the office if you have ideas for longer articles.) Poetry, photos, and art work are also welcome. Deadline for the next issue (covering September-October 2011): **August 11, 2011**.

Events and calendar items for *Compass Rose*, the UUSM website, and other UUSM publications may also be submitted at any time to office@uusanmateo.org. Please include a title, inclusive dates and times, location, description (max. 50 words), cost (if any), and contact information. Longer announcements may be considered – please contact the office.

All submissions are subject to editorial discretion and revision.

A Path with Heart, A Chosen Faith

by Rev. Lauren Smith, Assistant Minister

“Look at every path clearly and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself and yourself alone one question...Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good...If it doesn't, it is of no use.”ⁱ



This teaching is one of a few to which I have returned many times for wisdom and guidance. Each time I re-encounter these instructions, I appreciate anew their powerful simplicity and their broad applicability to the challenges of living in and serving the world.

Ours is a chosen faith. When we become part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation, we covenant that we will walk together a path

pointed in the direction of wholeness, peace, freedom, and love. Together, we choose our way forward through life, making decisions along the way that shape our destiny and that of the communities in which we move. We make decisions about how to make a living, how and where to raise our children, how to nurture our souls, how (and whether) to participate in civic life. It can be overwhelming at times, the choosing. It can be paralyzing – sometimes because we have so many good possibilities in front of us that we find ourselves unable to commit to just one, sometimes because every avenue seems flawed. But there is comfort to be found in Don Juan's advice: Look closely. Test as much as you need. Then ask, “Does this path have a heart?” If it does, the path is good. If it doesn't, it is of no use.

Simply put, if our choice of direction is grounded in love, courage, compassion, and presence, it is good. It is good enough. We can move ahead with relative confidence and peace, and walk forward into our lives.

I have traveled a bumpy wonderful path with this congregation over the last four years, slowly learning this community and growing in ministry. And I cherish what I know about this community's heart. This is a congregation of warmth and connection, whose members and friends support each other in hard times and celebrate one another's joys. I have seen you stand with one an-

other through the most challenging moments in life. These are stories (too private to share in this forum) of people reaching out to hold and comfort and challenge one another. I carry with me the experience of alive, vibrant worship – the congregation in song, the reflections of worship associates and others, sermons that have moved and shaped me, the extraordinary gifts of the choir. I have witnessed, too, acts of service large and small – our longstanding commitment to Home and Hope and Homework Central; our annual Martin Luther King Day reception, at which residents of the neighborhood connect across racial and religious differences; our wonderful acts of witness on behalf of marriage equality and health care reform, which were both thoughtful and passionate. I'll never forget the sight of a gigantic banner stretched across the 101 overpass, emblazoned with the words “Equity + ♥ = No on 8.” I'll never forget the sight of our exuberant posse of children and adults, glad to be together, proudly proclaiming our values in the name of love.

Heart is courage, compassion, and love. The heart is the abiding center. Again and again, this congregation has chosen the path with heart.

Not long ago, on Mother's Day, we sang a new hymn called “If Every Woman in the World.” The last stanza goes, “If every nation in the world set a true course for freedom, if every nation raised its children in a culture of peace...there would be no more war.” I suppose, if I'm honest, I don't believe we can ever fully eradicate war. But I do believe that when we create congregations grounded in the values of peace, justice, compassion, and love, we transform the world – one person, one family, one child, one community at a time.

Coming This Summer

This summer, the children will be exploring the values of community in the Religious Education program. We're reprising a curriculum we offered three years ago, called Citizenship and Moral Values. Despite the title, it's a really fun curriculum. And if your children remember it from last time, rest assured! We'll be taking up different pieces of it than we did in 2008. The purpose is to help children articulate and practice the arts of living in community, living together with joy, creativity, and peace. The purpose is also to help them learn the arts of leadership. They'll get the chance to reflect on the choices they make, the reasons they make those choices, and explore what it means to

ⁱ Kornfield, Jack, *A Path With Heart*, quoted from Carlos Castaneda's book *The Teachings of Don Juan*.

make choices based on UU values. It's a perfect topic for both kids and adults as we ramp up to the 2012 elections. The themes of the curriculum include:

Choosing Peace and Kindness
Choosing Assertiveness and Courage
Choosing Leadership

Summer RE will take place during the 10:00 am service and will begin on June 26. Each week, classes will be structured around an opening activity, an introduction to the theme for that day, an activity so kids can remember what they talked about, and a closing chalice circle. It promises to be a fun-filled summer of exploration and growth. Take a look at the box to the left for more details. Also, watch the E-announcements for weekly updates.

Because of my departure, the summer RE program will be led by a new face. Emily Hartnett Webb is a second year student at Starr King School for the Ministry and brings a wealth of experience working with children and youth. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to her – and offer your support. The RE program thrives when it has the enthusiastic participation of volunteers.

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Of course, the children learn the arts of citizenship and leadership most of all from you – by watching you interact with one another, watching you engage in the journey of your individual and collective lives with heart, with courage, compassion, love, and clarity about the enduring values at the core of this community.

I have seen these things, and I have learned much in your midst. I wish you many blessings as your future unfolds, and I carry the memory of this time together into my own unfolding life and ministry.

In the words of e.e. cummings:

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart) i am never without it (anywhere i go you go my dear...)

*here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than the soul can hope or the mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart*

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

Many blessing to you as you continue your journey, and deepest gratitude,

Lauren

Summer RE at a Glance

Starting July 10, Children's Religious Education begins at 10:00 am in the UUSM courtyard. There will be multi-generational worship on June 12 (our annual Bridging service), June 19 (Vail's farewell service), and July 3 (Interdependence Day, led by Deanna Vandiver). On July 26 (Lauren's farewell service), the children will start in the Sanctuary for a story, then they'll be sung out for an abbreviated RE program.

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|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 12 | Multi-generational Worship – Bridging Service and Flower Communion

Children in Sanctuary/childcare will be available |
| June 19 | Multi-generational Worship – Vail's last service

Children in Sanctuary/childcare will be available |
| June 26 | Summer curriculum begins!

Children start in Sanctuary (today only) for Lauren's last service

Choosing Peace and Kindness:
Covenanting |
| July 3 | Multi-generational Worship – Children in Sanctuary

No RE/childcare will be available |
| July 10 | Choosing Peace and Kindness:
Working Together |
| July 17 | Choosing Peace and Kindness:
Creating Peace in the World (Justice Project) |
| July 24 | Choosing Assertiveness and Courage:
Facing Monsters |
| July 31 | Choosing Assertiveness and Courage:
Sticking Up for Yourself and Others |
| Aug. 7 | Children's Chapel – Meet in courtyard |
| Aug. 14 | Choosing Leadership: Listening |
| Aug. 21 | Choosing Leadership: Conflict Resolution |
| Aug. 28 | Choosing Leadership: Creative Solutions |
| Sept. 4 | End of Summer RE – Celebration! |
| Sept. 11 | Intergenerational Worship/Water Communion

No RE/childcare will be available |

Our New Transition Minister: Rev. Denise Tracy



The Transitional Minister Selection Team is pleased to announce that UUSM's Transition/Interim Minister for the 2011-2012 year will be Rev. Denise Tracy.

Denise brings more than 30 years of experience in all aspects of ministry to her job at UUSM. Her specific skills in interim ministry, capital campaigns, and policy governance will help us a great deal during our time of change. Denise lives with her family in Elgin, Illinois, just outside of Chicago. She will be relocating temporarily to San Mateo during her interim ministry.

We eagerly await Denise's arrival during the first week of August, and she is equally excited about the prospect of meeting everyone in our congregation. After she has had some time to settle in, we expect to see her starting to lead worship services around the second or third week of August.

UUSM Transition Minister Selection Team –
Rajesh Ragoobeer, Leader
Barbara Du Mond
Homer Eaton
Sheila Sandow

Rev. Denise D. Tracy

Rev. Denise Tracy brings more than 30 years of experience in all aspects of ministry to her role as UUSM's Transition Minister. Most recently, she served as Interim Minister for Saint John's Unitarian Universalist Church in Cincinnati, OH, and the First Unitarian Church of South Bend, IN.

A graduate of the University of Hartford (CT) with a bachelor's degree in English Literature and Voice, Denise earned a Master of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School with a concentration in Parish Ministry and Women's Studies. After serving two years in the mid-1970's as a campus minister in Hartford, CT, she accepted a call to the UU Church of Greater Lansing, MI, where, during her eight-year tenure, she nearly quadrupled attendance at Sunday worship services, started a variety of different programs, and served as Host Minister of the UUA Lansing General Assembly.

Denise was subsequently called to be the District Executive of the Central Midwest District, the first woman

to hold such a position. Covering five states and 75 congregations, she helped build buildings, started new fellowships and congregations, taught stewardship, and worked with ministers and Religious Education directors to build and improve ministries. During her tenure, the district founded the Midwest Leadership School and Bayside Camp, and hosted the Milwaukee General Assembly, among other accomplishments.

In the early 1990's, Denise began consulting with the Alban Institute, working as a consultant in conflict resolution and mediation, long-range planning, and issues associated with growth and plateaued churches. A lover of challenges, she rebuilt a nearly-defunct Congregational church near her home, opening it to become the local homeless shelter, founding a Spanish-immersion after-school program, and merging it with a local Asian/Pacific Rim church – a six-year endeavor that was a study in cross-cultural religious experience.

Subsequently, Denise decided to use her gifts as a professional Interim Minister, serving congregations in Elgin, IL; South Bend, IN; Cincinnati, OH; and now, San Mateo. Her previous interim ministries have been noted for the way in which she worked with congregational leaders to garner impressive growth in membership, worship-service attendance, and stewardship, and rebuild community spirit in preparation for new settled ministries.

Rev. Tracy's published writings include *Stream of Living Souls – Stories for Home and Worship* (four volumes); *Wellsprings: Sources in Unitarian Universalist Feminism*; 12 Adult Education Curriculum packets, for building an adult Religious Education program; and *Healing Your Congregation: After Boundary Violations*. She is married to Bill Decker, and the couple has three adopted children – Tracy Decker Chavez (age 34, married with one child); Clarke Tracy (age 25); and Kyle Decker (age 14). Her non-professional interests include voice (studying voice, as well as singing in the church choir and participating in community choirs), Tai Chi (a student and teacher since 1980); gardening, reading, cooking, and travel.

A House for Hope

by Kathy van Leuwen, Director of Religious Education

Change does not bring out the best in me. Frankly, it makes me anxious. I find the end of the school year to be an intense time of change, deeply layered with meaning. All of the arrangements my family and I have so carefully constructed – the carpools, schedules, and relationships with teachers, classmates, coaches and teammates – are in a state of flux. It is a time of saying goodbye, sometimes for the summer, and sometimes for good. At this time of year, I really have to work to ground myself in faith that everything

will be OK, and to trust that, with grace, my family and I will manage to reconstruct our lives anew.

At UUSM, this summer in particular brings significant changes. Our beloved ministers, Lead Minister Rev. Vail Weller and Assistant Minister Rev. Lauren Smith, are leaving to pursue new and exciting opportunities to bless the world with their gifts. It is a bittersweet time. I am truly happy for each of them, proud of what we have accomplished together, and also sad to be saying goodbye.

While I am not one to eagerly embrace change, and know firsthand the challenges these transitions mean for us at UUSM, I am optimistic about the future of our religious community and deeply committed to the remarkable faith tradition that we share. In a way, I have to be. Being part of this community and this faith is what gives me hope: hope for myself, hope for my children, and hope for the world.

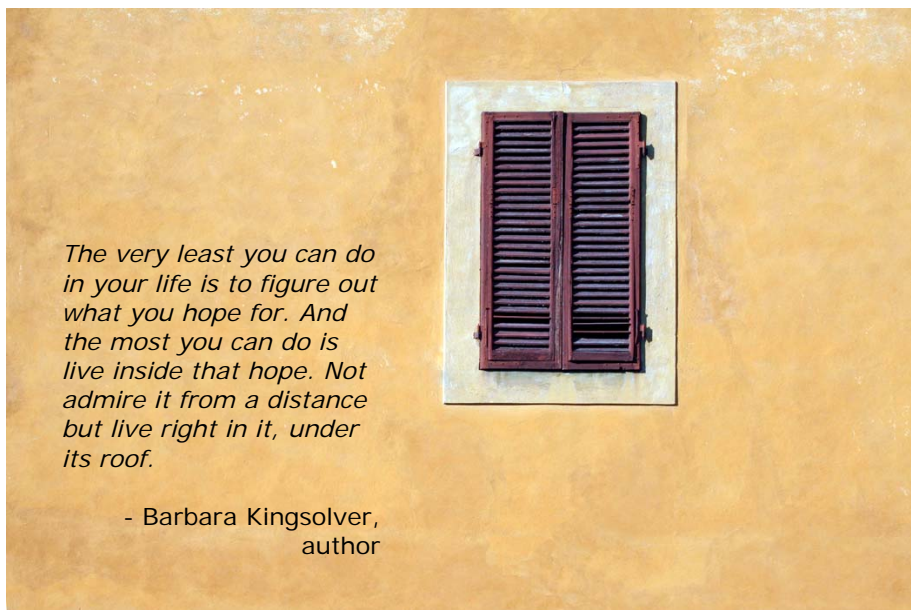
In *A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-first Century*, Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens argue that progressive religious theology is one of hope. This hope has inspired and supported two centuries of social progress, from the abolition of slavery to the pursuit of

marriage equality. As progressive people of faith, Rebecca Parker writes, we have inherited a precious gift, “a communal theological house, built by those who lived, labored, and loved before us.”ⁱ Blessed with a theology that is grounded in an expansive love for life, we have, says Parker, “the courage to hope for justice, peace, and sustainability in this world.”ⁱⁱ Being mindful of this powerful heritage can help sustain us on our journey to transform ourselves and the world.

Unitarian Universalism offers us a covenant of shared hope. As a covenanted religious community, we put our faith in each other as we journey together in our spiritual lives. As John Buehrens writes, “No one can fully hope alone.”ⁱⁱⁱ We need life together. Buehrens explains what we do in progressive religion:

We offer a framework of covenantal commitment. We live by shared hope. We make a path by walking it – not alone, together. And we pray that along the way, those who walk with us will be converted and will make a deep personal commitment to its radical form of hope – not for themselves alone, but for everyone.^{iv}

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The shared journey of Unitarian Universalism and progressive religion offers us, and the world, a much-needed message of love accompanied by a deep responsibility to live it.

Transitions are challenging but they are also exhilarating, ripe with possibility. When my kids return to school, in spite of my worrying, things eventually do fall into place. As we piece our lives back together, we discover new friendships, stumble on fresh opportunities, and find different ways of getting where we need to go.

As we at UUSM enter this time of change and uncertainty, my hope for us is that we have faith in ourselves and in each other. May we continue to provide “a house

for hope.” May the walls of our house hold love, our roof shelter us from rain, our foundation prove strong, our doors open to all seekers, and our threshold give us entry to the sacred.

ⁱ Buehrens, John and Parker, Rebecca Ann. *A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-first Century*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010.), xvi.

ⁱⁱ Buehrens and Parker, 22.

ⁱⁱⁱ Buehrens and Parker, 89.

^{iv} Buehrens and Parker, 58.

The Heartbeat of Our Mission

by Shawn Reifschneider, Music Director

This summer the UUSM congregation says farewell to our Lead Minister, Vail Weller, our Assistant Minister, Lauren Smith, and our Intern Minister, Deanna Vandiver. All the wonderfulness and wholeness of who they are will be missed greatly, including their amazing leadership of this congregation. They are pursuing the calling of their hearts. We, too, must continue to pursue what has called us. For our mission is still the same: to be a religious community of open



hearts and open minds that works together to transform ourselves and the world.

As we move into our future, we must own this mission to our very core, our very existence, our very heart. Our Unitarian Universalist values are too important to making our world a better place to keep to ourselves. All the world needs to own these values with us. We can take a lesson from our Evangelical Christian neighbors. The passion with which they share their belief system is undeniable. Their mission is to spread a saving message of “Good News.” We may not necessarily share the same theology, but we certainly have a saving message

to spread. Let us find others to join us in making this world a loving community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

In a recent worship service the UUSM choir sang “It Takes a Village” by Joan Szymko. If you listen carefully to the piece, you’ll notice the rhythmic undercurrent of a heartbeat throughout. The text includes these lines:

*It takes a whole village to raise our children.
It takes a whole village to raise one child.
We all everyone must share the burden.
We all everyone will share the joy.*

Each one of us must take part in working toward our future. Let our mission be that heartbeat, an undercurrent of your own personal journey. It will then be, for all of us, the lifeblood of our collective journey.

Oh, yes, we have work to do, spreading the joy that we know as Unitarian Universalism. Let’s spread our “Good News” into our greater community, adding others as we go. Then, together with the unison heartbeat that is our mission, we will move forward to transform the world.

Bum bump, Bum bump, Bum bump...

L'Envoi

continued from page 1

ing an offer to a great minister to be your leader in the interim period. (*Editor's Note: A transition minister has been selected. See page 6.*) You have a stellar group of members lining up to be considered for election on the Search Committee for a called minister. I know that all will be well.

I want to encourage you to continue in your own commitment! As wonderful as our rapport has been, the true heart of the congregation rests with its people, not the particular minister who serves here. You will enjoy getting to experience a different style of ministry, with new strengths and ideas. Interim (or Transition) Ministers specialize in having transitional periods strengthen congregational life. Before you know it, you will be welcoming a new settled minister into your spiritual home.

It is now time for us to say goodbye. Although goodbyes can be difficult, I believe it is important to be able to articulate appreciation for relationships that are changing. It is tempting to avoid such honesty, but I have learned that beginnings and endings such as this one are significant spiritual milestones. I encourage you to participate with your full self, even if it is bittersweet.

I cannot even begin to thank you for the ways in which you have enriched my life. I will forever be grateful for your influence, and for the privilege of having companioned you for these years. I love you and will carry the wisdom I've gained here into service for our larger faith.

LOVE,
Vail

Frequently Asked Questions

Are you staying in the area?

That is our plan for now, but we are not ultimately sure. We love the community of San Mateo, but may end up moving to be closer to our extended families. We do know that we will be selling our house, as the church owns a share in the equity. So we are moving no matter what. We just don't know yet for sure if the move will be local or if we are leaving California.

Will you still be coming to church here?

I will not. I need to find a congregation where I can get involved, and you need to prepare to bond with a new minister, which would be more complicated with me around. We are still figuring out what will happen with our children; this has been their religious home virtually all of their lives. It may be that they will still participate in the Religious Education program.

Why are there all of these rules? Why can't we just stay in relationship?

The time of a minister's departure from a congregation points to the reality of the minister's complex relationship to a community. We are lucky to like each other, and of course we have fun together and are friendly, but we are not technically friends. Our relationship has been based on our connection to UUSM. I have been present to serve you spiritually and pastorally. And now that Lauren and I are leaving, you will prepare for new leadership. My distance from the congregation allows for you to be ready to connect with the new minister.

If we see you at the grocery store, should we walk right by you without speaking?

Of course we can greet each other! I will always care about you and about UUSM. It wouldn't be appropriate for us to get into conversation about what's happening at the church, however. You are beginning a new phase, and need time and space for this new phase to take shape.

Voices

Stories, reflections, and inspiration from the UUSM community

Transitions

by Ami Seebode

Last night at a meeting of Age-ing and Sage-ing we discussed historical events that we remembered poignantly, and how an event may have changed our lives. We were to remember where we were and what we were doing at the time of the event.

Most of us remembered the day John F. Kennedy was shot and killed. We remembered exactly where we were and what we were doing at that moment in time. One member of the group also remembered the swearing in of Lyndon Johnson as the next president of the USA. She remembered that as a comforting event. I had not looked at that as such until that comment and realized she was absolutely correct. Our Constitution was written with the possibility of such a catastrophic event occurring and how the government should proceed following such an event. The fact that we actually witnessed that happening was, if not comforting as such, reassuring that our governance would continue uninterrupted. We had witnessed a transitional moment in time and we were able to breathe a sign of relief.

We are now at a transitional period of time for our congregation, and I am reassured that our lay leaders will indeed follow the guidelines that are specified in our by-laws. It was with a sense of great sadness that we heard the news regarding our Lead Minister's leaving, and that was followed by the announcement that our Assistant Minister would also be leaving. Although we were indeed thankful for their leadership and pleased to know that they both will be leaving to begin new ministries, we have been anxious to know what will happen next.

Having been through this process five times during my membership at UUSM, I know the process works. Sometimes in the past we have had an uptick in lay leadership, especially in the pulpit itself and with the many administrative tasks that can be accomplished by a lay person. I would hope that you will indeed step into these positions as it becomes evident that they need to be filled.

We have already put into place a Transition team that will review the vitae of Ministers desiring to become an



Interim Minister for UUSM. (*Editor's Note: A transition minister has been selected. See page 6.*) We also have a plus that we have not had before – and that is our Intern Minister, Deanna Vandiver, who will stay through July to help us with ministerial duties until we have that Interim Minister in place in August. How lucky we are!

Very soon we will nominate and elect a Search Committee. I hope you will look forward to this task with an understanding of what this committee will have to do and select those individuals that will best represent all areas and people in our community. They will begin their work as soon as elected and you will again be called upon to fill out a survey about yourself, your aspirations for UUSM and what you are looking for in a minister. I encourage you to look at this as a hopeful process and that you will take the time to fill out that survey completely when you receive it. We were commended during our last search for the high percentage of returns on our survey, and I hope we can provide the same for this next Search Committee.

So where does that leave us? Yes, we are losing two outstanding ministers, but we have already begun the process of moving ahead toward a new ministry. It should be a time of hope and excitement. We are so fortunate, because we will all be involved in the process. This new Minister will be chosen by you, members of this congregation.

Although this is probably not comforting, I think it is reassuring. Trust yourselves, our Search Committee, and the process that we are undergoing as a congregation, and look forward to welcoming first the Interim Minister this Fall, and our new Lead Minister in the Fall of 2012.

Vail Leaving?? WTF??!!!

by Cordelia Leoncio

For about a week after I heard Vail would be leaving UUSM, I *swore* that if anyone told me, "But we're gonna be fine!", I would punch them in the face. Since that wouldn't be in keeping with our Covenant of Right Relations, I kept my fists to myself and did my whimpering on Facebook.

Sure, okay, we're going to be fine – whatever "fine" means. But – hey! – how about that grief thing? The denial-anger-bargaining-depression-acceptance thing? The thing that's playing itself out in all sorts of ways. Sometimes in heated marital exchanges:

Him: "Why didn't you tell me Vail was leaving?"

Her: "I didn't know anything! I found out through your @#*%! text message!"

And sometimes through a bit of brightsiding: "Well, I guess we'll be able to make payroll."



When I found out that Lauren would be leaving too... Well. Game over. Excuse me while I lie down on the floor. Comfort me at the risk of a punch in the face. I'm gonna wallow in the filth of cat hair and baby detritus while my dreams die. My dream of Vail greeting my daughter at her Bridging Ceremony. My dream of having my son grow up alongside Lauren's sons. Such lovely dreams. Unrealistic, given Vail's and Lauren's gifts and aspirations, but lovely.

And I'm fine. I'm not saying that I don't have flashes of feeling betrayed, indifferent, resentful, disappointed, scared, hysterical, or just all-out sad. I'm saying that by going ahead and feeling all of it, I've been doing just fine.

And, yes, I have known all of this time we are going to be fine. (Notice that I'm bracing for a punch in the face.) Not just because we have gone through ministerial transitions before. Just look at all of those photographs going up the entryway stair. We have many among us who have traversed this particular change before. Even I could share a story or two about going from Joy Atkinson to Dr. Bob to Vail.

No, we're not going to be fine because it's been done before. We're going to be fine because this is US I'm talking about. Wait, I take it back; we are not going to be "fine." We are going to be AWESOME.

Oh, my beloved people, let me tell me you once again just how awesome we are, individually and collectively. Your awesomeness isn't determined by how unfazed or crazed you have felt by the imminent changes. It isn't determined by how long you have been visiting or been a member. Awesomeness isn't earned. You are awesome. You just are. (How's that for a rewrite of our first principle?)

And when we scooch all of our awesome selves together...Whoa. You get a community of people with strong opinions, human fallibility, and an array of life challenges that still manages to gather together – on Sundays and other times – to share silence, break bread, sing songs, express gratitude, offer shelter, hold hands, deepen friendships, challenge injustice, and risk joy. We do all this and so much more, often with care-filled intention, love, and humor. What isn't awesome about that?

But more about me. (Sadly, I'm not kidding.) Once upon a time, I was a self-defense instructor. Really. I worked with an organization that trained me to offer instruction in full-force self-defense techniques (scrappy street fighting, not martial arts), while offering emotional support in order to help women, men, and teens heal from rape, abuse, and violence. It was formative, excruciating, and endlessly enriching work.

continued next page

Anyway. I liked to think of our class gathering times (“opening circle”) as building a circle of belonging. There came a day early on when one of my students, obviously in great distress, chose to leave the class on day 4 of 5. (I found it amazing and brave that she actually came in to tell all of us in person!) The rest of us sank into a palpable funk – our circle had been broken.

I had everyone breathe, shake their limbs, and then scooch together to form a tight shoulder-to-shoulder circle. We finished our check-ins. I reminded everyone that our departed classmate had made the best choice she knew how for herself, and how wonderful it was that she was really letting herself feel what she was feeling. I said that we should, too, and that we were about to go on with the rest of the class. I made our warm-up exercises and drills as loud and fast and boisterous as I could (I was a brand new instructor, so this was a challenge) and it totally worked. We were re-focused and connected again. Our circle was whole, as really it had always been.

My point here: We are awesome, and all the more so when we scooch together.

As I write this, our annual Flower Communion is a month away. I know that Flower Communion can be and has been a ceremony of departure. We head off into our summer adventures until we’re called back together by our ministers at Water Communion. But I am hoping for some “scooch together” in addition to “blessed be our journeys” that day.

By scooching together, I mean: Let’s not wait for a minister to call us back together. I mean: Keep showing up whenever and however you can. Yes, come on Sundays. Yes, volunteer. By all means, participate as often as you are able and as you feel yourself called to do so.

But also, look the person next to you in the eye. Welcome a real answer when you ask, “How are you?” Wear your nametag. Go ahead and cry. Or laugh out loud! Share your hymnal. Ask for help (as I am now). Sing louder if you hold back. (Or sing just a bit softer if it would help you to really hear the beauty of your neighbor’s voice.) Bring snacks. Take deep breaths. And when the time comes to say goodbye, say goodbye.

And thank you. Oh, my awesome, beloved people, thank you.

Visiting Our Philippine Partners March 25-27, 2011

by Carol Cook

The last two thirds of a mile on the road to our partner church in the Ulay UU Congregation of Negros Island, Philippines is a muddy, slippery, uneven, rocky, and steep path. On the previous two visits we had arrived by van. Luckily, this year our drivers didn’t want to risk it – so we walked! – perfectly framing the three days of our visit. The calls of birds and farm animals accompanied our arrival in the mornings; the bubbling chatter and laughter of the children accompanied our return in the afternoons.

We were there for the Ulay community’s first Community Capacity Building workshop led by four talented local facilitators, well trained by Dr. Richard Ford in only three days. The process took place over two days – what an honor to bear witness to the birth of this new chapter in our partners’ lives!



Ulay UU Congregation, our partner church



Community Capacity Building breakout group led by Rey Minasalvas of the Ulay congregation and Myrnalyn Caballero of the Aquino/Casayan congregation

On Sunday, the third day, we had opportunity to worship with our partners in the morning and socialize in the afternoon. Lots of singing and games with the children, taking of photos and shared conversations. Later that evening we attended the graduation ceremony of the college student we sponsored through her last two years of college via the UUPCC's Pathways to Partnership program.

Punked

by Diana Candee

March 27, 2011 – I am attending the early service with Dori Wheeler (84). We are sitting behind a handsome young man with red hair. He is wearing a big jacket with writing on it. Dori tries to make out the word – it spells PUNK. She takes a card, writes P-Pretty U-Unusual N-Nice K-Kid on it and hands it to him. Big smile from Kenny. Why I love Dori and Kenny and UUSM.



Dori with a Pretty Unusual Nice Kid

Fate

by Rob Voss

The future is
Unavoidable
Greatness or exiguous
Tales will be told of all
Your passion denied
As you smack the slype
That carries us all
To the far side of death
Can you rather choose
Which choices change fate?
Can you foretell
The elements of desire?
No. It is what it is.
But will that slake
Our desire for effort?
We either float along
Or guide our rudder
With fury and fancy.
All of the yesterdays
Culminate in all
The Tomorrows
As was written
In spirituel,
Our destiny calls

Some Special Occasions

Through all the transitions taking place, it is well to keep in mind the continuing richness of congregational life at UUSM. Here are some photos of some special occasions that have taken place the past few months.



Winter Carnivale
February 19, 2011



Celebration Sunday

April 10, 2011



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Kelsey Sachs



Photo by Kelsey Sachs

Easter Egg Hunt

April 24, 2011



Photo by Kelsey Sachs

Mystery Friends

May 1, 2011



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Marco Picon



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune



Photo by Tom McCune

Worship Services

Summer services take place on Sundays at 10:00 am unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, June 5
(9:00 and 11:15 am)

"Festival of Music"

Worship Leader: Rev. Vail Weller

Sunday, June 12

"Bridging and Flower Communion"

Worship Leaders: Rev. Vail Weller and Deanna Vandiver, Intern Minister

Worship Associate: Joe Sandmeyer

Sunday, June 19

"What Goodbye Means"

Worship Leader: Rev. Vail Weller
Worship Associate: Kenny Preston

This will be Rev. Vail's farewell service at UUSM.

Sunday, June 26

"Of the Many, One"

Worship Leader: Rev. Lauren Smith
Worship Associate: Julia Wilson

This will be Rev. Lauren's farewell service at UUSM.

Sunday, July 3

"Interdependence Day"

Worship Leader: Deanna Vandiver

Sunday, July 10

"Undoing Racism"

Worship Leader: Deanna Vandiver

Sunday, July 17

"Out of All the Flags I've Flown"

Worship Leader: Deanna Vandiver

Sunday, July 24

"Do It Anyway"

Worship Leader: Deanna Vandiver

Sunday, July 31

TBD

Sunday, Aug. 7

"That Which Is True Across All Religions"

Worship Leader: Matthew McHale

Sunday, Aug. 14

"Drumming"

Worship Leader: Matt Mayer

Sunday, Aug. 21

TBD

Sunday, Aug. 28

TBD

For updates on upcoming worship services, please visit the website and click on Worshipping.

Pledge Note

UUSM's fiscal year runs from July to June. This means we are closing out our books at the end of June. If you made a pledge and have not finished paying it, we hope you will! If your circumstances have changed and you are no longer able to, simply let the Lead Minister or the office know. And if you find yourself moved to make an additional gift, this would be a wonderful time to do so.

Announcements and Events

Religious Education

Endings and Beginnings Children's Chapel

Sunday, June 5, 10:15-11:00 am
Sanctuary

Kathy van Leuwen and Shawn Reifschneider will lead a child-focused worship experience exploring the significance of transition in our lives for children in first grade and up. We'll participate in an inclusive ritual to mark the endings and beginnings happening at this time in our lives. Religious Education classes for Pre-K and Kindergarten classes take place at 10:00 am at Petite Sorbonne as usual.

Adult Enrichment

Getting to Know UU

Social Gathering and Dessert Reception
Sunday, June 5, 6:30-8:00 pm
Hemingway Lounge

Visitors interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism and UUSM or considering membership are invited! Please RSVP to 650-342-5946 x 11 or office@uusanmateo.org by May 29. Childcare available if requested.

In Her Name Circle

Led by Joy Reichard
Fridays (see dates below),
7:00-8:30 pm
Ann Benner Room

The group meets to celebrate the many manifestations of the Divine Feminine.

June 10 Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Passion

July 8 Sekhmet, Egyptian Lioness Goddess

Aug. 12 Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt and the Amazons

For more info, contact Joy at 415-819-8769 or jreich14@sbcglobal.net.

Newcomer's Circle

Every 4th Sunday, 11:15 am-12:00 pm
(next dates: June 26, June 24, and Aug. 28)
Hemingway Lounge

This basic introduction to our community allows people a chance to learn what UUSM is all about. All visitors welcome, no RSVP required.

Community Events

Congregational Meeting

Sunday, June 12, 11:30 am-1:00 pm
Beck Hall

Join the next Congregational Meeting! Agenda will include voting on the budget and next year's special collection beneficiaries.

Annual Picnic

Sunday, Aug. 28
Offsite

Save the date! Be sure to join UUSM's Annual Picnic as we come back from our summer travels and settle down for another church year. Details soon.

Social Action

Social Justice Letter Signing

Every 3rd Sunday, 11:15 am-12:00 pm
(next dates: June 19, July 17, and Aug. 21)
Beck Hall

Make your voice be heard! For info, contact Peter Cross at 650-591-3642 or civ2100@gmail.com.

Social Justice Council Meetings

Every 3rd Sunday, 11:15 am-12:00 pm
(next dates: June 19, July 17, and Aug. 21)
Hemingway Lounge

Find out the many ways you can put your faith in action. For info, contact Caryl Hughan at 650-692-4147 or educaryl@gmail.com.

Home and Hope at First Presbyterian

June 5-12 and Aug. 21-28
First Presbyterian of San Mateo
194 W. 25th St., San Mateo

Our partner First Pres will be hosting Home and Hope families on these dates. If you'd like to help out, contact Diana Candee at 650-697-7654 or albumgal@sbcglobal.net.

Ongoing

UUSM Book Group

Every 4th Sunday, 11:15 am-12:45 pm
(unless otherwise noted)
(next dates: June 26, June 24, and Aug. 28)
Cottage Living Room

Upcoming books to be discussed:

June 26, 11:45 am

The Reluctant Fundamentalist
by Moshin Hamid

July 24 *Beneath a Marble Sky (A Novel of the Taj Mahal)* by John Shors

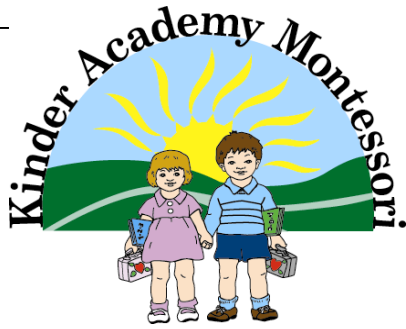
Aug. 28 *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout

For info, contact Anne Silver at 650-740-7221 or annehsilver@yahoo.com.



Special Floral Arrangements

Contributing Sanctuary flowers for Sunday services helps beautify the Sanctuary and honors those close to you. This is your chance to say "Congratulations!" "I love you," "I miss you," or "I'm proud of you." The flowers are yours to take home afterwards. Cost is \$100, with the proceeds going to fund UUSM programs. Contact office@uusanmateo.org if you are interested. To view samples, go to the website and click on Giving.



**Summer Camp
For ages 2.5-6**

- Full/Half Day Schedules
- In Combination with Montessori Enriched Curriculum

Music & Dance Camp

(June 20-July 1)

Collage Art Camp

(July 5-July 15)

Crazy Science Camp

(July 18-July 29)

Ocean Animals Camp

(August 1-12)

(650) 340-8819

300 E. Santa Inez, San Mateo
KinderAcademyMontessori.net

Walkie Talkies

Every 1st and 3rd Monday,
9:00-10:00 am
(next dates: June 6 and 20, July 4 and
18, Aug. 1 and 15)
Offsite

Women's group strolls twice a month.
For info, call Phyllis Mitchell at 650-
340-9091 or Mary Ann Weisberg at
650-344-5951.

Women's Potluck and Book Swap

Every 1st Monday, 6:00-8:00 pm
(next dates: June 6, July 4, and
Aug. 15)
Beck Hall

All UUSM women are invited! Bring a
potluck dish and a book to share. For
info, call Phyllis Mitchell at 650-340-
9091 or Sally Reed at 650-697-8433.

Age-ing to Sage-ing

Every other Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 pm
(next dates: June 7 and 21, July 5 and
19, Aug. 2, 16, and 30)
Hemingway Lounge

Seniors group meets to prove the ad-
age that with age comes wisdom.

Women's Age-ing to Sage-ing

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday,
7:00-8:30 pm
(next dates: June 14 and 28, July 12
and 26, Aug. 9 and 23)
Hemingway Lounge

An Age-ing to Sage-ing group just for
women.

Women's Chalice Oval

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday,
7:00-8:30 pm
(next dates: June 8 and 22, July 13
and 27, Aug. 10 and 24)
Hemingway Lounge

This women's Chalice "Circle" contin-
ues! For info, contact Debby Leschyn at
650-591-6616 or debby@belmateo.net.

Men's BBQ Night

Every 3rd Thursday, 6:15-8:00 pm
(next dates: June 16, July 21, and
Aug. 18)
Patio, Beck Hall

Join the UUSM men for a meal from the
grill and topical conversation. For info,
contact Randy Silver at 650-591-3056
or randy-silver-photo@juno.com.

**For more details on upcoming
events and an online calendar,
please visit www.uusanmateo.org.**

**Unitarian Universalists
of San Mateo**

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650-342-5946 x 12
minister@uusanmateo.org

Rev. Lauren Smith, *Assistant Minister*
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Deanna Vandiver, *Intern Minister*
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Rev. Joy Atkinson, *Minister Emerita*
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Board of Trustees

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office@uusanmateo.org
www.uusanmateo.org

Office hours: Tuesday-Friday,
10:00 am-5:00 pm

If you wish to meet with the
ministers, please contact them
for an appointment.

Ours is a caring community. If you are dealing with a difficult time or simply want someone to be present with you, please know that our ministers are here to support you spiritually, as are our Lay Chaplains. Keep a UUSM card in your wallet so you can call us when you need us. Our Lay Chaplains are coordinated by Ann Mason and Reeba Lynn. Please contact us at 650-342-5946 x 11 or office@uusanmateo.org so that we can provide you with the loving support of this congregation.

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

300 East Santa Inez
San Mateo, CA 94401

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