

St. Paul's Church of Palmer



Unitarian Universalist

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Tracie Shea, Church Administrative Assistant
Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday 9 am-2 pm
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NEWSLETTER

March 2011

CHURCH CALENDAR

Services are at 10 AM in Fellowship Hall

March 6	Rev. Bill Baughan	"Conquering Fear"
March 13	Rev. Darrick Jackson	"A Mosaic Faith"
March 20	Rev. Jon Rehmus	
March 27	Rev. Darrick Jackson	"Tree: Guardian and Witness"

***** Coffee Hour immediately following the Sunday Service in Fellowship Hall. *****

One Minister's View

Belief without experience is an intellectual exercise. Life is prior to any beliefs about it, and life outlives all human beliefs. Genuine faith requires experience. Even amidst our intentional lack of creeds and doctrines, and even though we welcome a variety of religious understandings, there are four fundamentals of our faith.

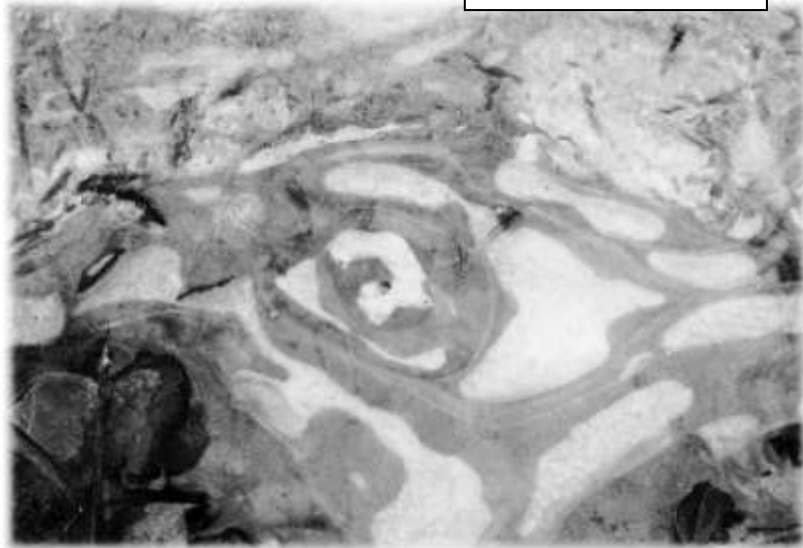
- 1. Our faith is an attitude about life and its significance.**
- 2. Our faith is in the realities of nature in which we live.**
- 3. Our faith reminds us that all of life is interdependent.**
- 4. Our faith affirms that we are Unconditionally Accepted.**



Photo by Noella Senecal

The first fundamental is that we are united, not by a common belief, but by a commonly shared attitude. Our faith is an attitude about life and its significance. One could say we are all theologians without a written theology. Historically, we have rejected all creeds and all doctrines, but, it's even more important to discover what we actually affirm.

Photo by Noella Senecal



The second fundamental of our faith is in the realities of nature in which we live. We have faith in what we can see, hear, touch, and feel, and think. Our faith is in what presents itself to us as the world, and the people in it. It is not speculative. It springs from immediate experience with our world. We cherish our freedom to ask questions about it, and the freedom to disagree with officially decreed answers that make no sense to us.

The third fundamental of our faith reminds us that all of life is interdependent. A modern word for this interdependence is "ecology". We can call ourselves "religious

ecologists." The next time someone asks what your church teaches, just reply, "We're religious ecologists." We humans, and all of nature, are bound together in a universal interdependent relatedness which transcends our personal existence.

The fourth fundamental of our faith is that we are Unconditionally Accepted just as we are. We do not say that we accept you provided that you memorize required words or perform designated rituals. We accept you, just as you are, without any conditions whatsoever, and with no attempt to change you. All that we ask of you is your loving kindness, and your concern for life's ultimate values.

Rev. Bill Baughan

Coffee Hour

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to Verna Besaw for preparing goodies for coffee hour week after week. Coffee hour is the time when we get to touch base with and care about each other and Verna makes that time "sweeter" for all of us.

Anniversaries and Birthdays

March 2	Verna Besaw	March 22	Bonny Rathbone
8	Paul Balog	29	Jackson Balog
12	Dan Windoloski		
14	Diane Faulkner	March 16 –	Karen Papineau and James Keydel anniversary
15	William Faulkner		

Food Share

Winter is still not over! Many folks are struggling to make ends meet. Please feel free to place your non-perishable items in the Food Share box, located near the coat closet in Fellowship Hall. Palmer Food Share at 39 Walnut St. is open on Tuesday and Friday from 10 am to 11:30 am. Those in need must register prior to receiving food, and then are eligible to receive food every 3 months. You can even mail monetary donations to Food Share, 39 Walnut Street, Palmer 01069.

Church Greeters

Gordon and Irene Christiansen and Verna Besaw have graciously offered to be greeters on Sundays. If you would like to also greet, you can call the church office at 283-8185.

Community Meals

The Community Meals are held on the 4th Saturday of each month. If you would like to help out you can give Barbara Stone a call at 413-283-5257. If you would like to donate a food item or make a monetary contribution, you can also let Barbara know. The March meal will be held on **Saturday, March 26**, beginning at 5:00 pm.

FYI

Daylight Saving time begins on March 13. Remember to turn your clocks ahead!

Ash Wednesday is March 9.

The Board of Trustees will meet on Sunday, March 20.

March 20 -- Spring has arrived ! We truly missed you !!!!!

Congratulations to Rev. Bruce T. Prestweood-Taylor who was installed as minister of the Second Congregational Church, UCC, here in Palmer. Bruce is the 24th settled minister of the Church. Our retired minister, Rev. Priscilla Murdock, was among area ministers and United Church of Christ officials participating in a very beautiful, and meaningful, and sometimes humorous, service held on Sunday, February 20. Pastor Bruce's wife, The Rev. Beverly Prestwood-Taylor, interim minister of the Athol Congregational Church, was among the participants. Attending from St. Paul's were Cathy Senecal and Barbara Stone. Rev. Bruce had been interim pastor at Second Congregational for a few years and previously served as Chaplain at Wing Memorial Hospital. We wish Bruce well in his new "settled" position.



Photo by Cathy Senecal



Photo by Cathy Senecal

Enacting Our Vision Workshop

In November, we named our visions for our congregations. How do we make them into reality? Join Rev. Darrick in an exploration of how to move from vision into action. This workshop will be March 13, after the service.

Worship Help Needed

Rev. Darrick will be doing a staged reading as part of the March 27 service, and is in need of some readers and someone to do movement with him. No memorization is needed. If you are interested, contact him at djackson@uuma.org or 617-953-6502.



Governance and Ministry with **Dan Hotchkiss**

May 7, 2011 - 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
[Sturbridge Host Hotel](#), Sturbridge, MA

How much time does your board or committee spend managing programs? How much time do your congregational leaders - paid and volunteer - spend seeking approval for choices they could be trusted to make on their own?

Good governance starts with clearly defined roles and authority. It succeeds when lay and professional leaders conduct ministry together as collaborating partners. Such partnership requires clear role boundaries, effective delegation and a constructive system of accountability.

With an eye to keeping your congregation's mission at the centre of its ministry, this all-day seminar will help you to:

- clearly define roles and authority
- set clear policies
- streamline decision-making
- maintain clear limits
- trust others to make their own decisions
- create behavioral covenants
- make space for spiritual discernment and holy conversations

Presenter Dan Hotchkiss helps congregations move beyond frustrating and ineffective management of boards, clergy and staff. He helps participants, whether they want to sharpen their leadership skills, reorganize to enhance growth, or consider an entirely new model for board governance.

The author of *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership*, Dan Hotchkiss has consulted with hundreds of churches and synagogues across the American religious spectrum on a wide variety of issues. He is a senior consultant with the Alban Institute and is currently focusing his writing, teaching and consulting in the areas of planning, governance, clergy consulting and financial assessment. Dan is a knowledgeable, encouraging presenter with an engaging, conversational style.

Fee: \$50 / person - includes materials, refreshments and lunch

[REGISTER NOW!!!](#)

(Deadline: April 25 or capacity)

A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her own childhood was like. "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tire; it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this all in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?" I mentally polished my halo and I said, "No, how are we alike?" "You're both old," he replied.

A little girl was diligently pounding away on her grandfather's word processor. She told him she was writing a story.

"What's it about?" he asked. "I don't know," she replied. "I can't read."

I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colors yet, so I decided to test her. I would point out something and ask what color it was. She would tell me and was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued.. At last, she headed for the door, saying, "Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of these colors yourself!"

When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure." "Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised "Mine says I'm 4 to 6."



Clara Barton &
Massachusetts Bay Districts
of Unitarian Universalist Congregations

invite you to

Got Purpose? Part III
Getting it Into our DNA

About the Series

with Doug Zelinski, Director of Leadership Development

Got Purpose?
It Does a
Congregation Good

a three-part
Learning Congregation
Series



"Purpose" by Geoff Buchan

9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

March 12, 2011 - [Sheraton Hotel in Springfield, MA](#)

March 19, 2011 - [First Parish Church in Weston, MA](#)



- Do the words "mission statement" make some in your congregation cringe or yawn?
- Do you wonder what criteria to use in evaluating your shared ministry?
- Do you wish your budget was program-based and your pledge drives mission-directed?
- At the end of the year, do you wish you knew if all your efforts made a difference?

Born out of purpose and responsive to its calling, the mission statement is the template that shapes a healthy congregation.

DNA directs the structure of our physical lives. Mission statements do the same for our congregational lives. However, while DNA operates automatically and unconsciously, applying mission statements requires mindfulness and intention. This workshop details how to infuse "mission" into everything from governance to religious education, to newsletter layouts.

The Workshops

PART I:
[Rooting Ourselves in Certainty](#) - offered October 9 and 30. For testimonials of participants' experience, see below.

PART II:
[Turning Ourselves Inside Out](#) - offered December 4 and 11. For testimonials, see below.

PART III:
Getting It Into Our DNA (see description in right hand column)
[March 12: Springfield, MA](#)
[March 19: Weston, MA](#)
[March 30: Follow up webinar](#)

Especially powerful for congregational teams but also valuable to individual attendees this workshop will help leaders:

- institutionalize mission throughout governance, programming, evaluation of shared ministry, community connections, etc.
- reorient congregational focus and activities - both ordinary and momentous - toward mission fulfillment
- preserve beloved community while working toward a focused mission
- identify strategies for nurturing leaders that advance the congregational mission

This learning experience is appropriate for board members, ministers, program staff, Committees on Ministry and other committee chairs or members.

Everyone is welcome even if those who did not attend Parts I or II.

FEE

\$75 per person / \$35 for ministry students /
\$300 for a congregational team of 4 to 6 and \$50 per additional member of the team

REGISTER NOW!

Individuals can register on their own. Teams of 4 to 6 can register by registering the first person and up to 5 others as "guests." If you are registering teams of more than 6, please make arrangements with the District staff by contacting Meck at cbd-mbd-programs@uua.org or 617-777-4431. To register for

- March 12 workshop, click [here](#). Registration deadline: March 7.
- March 19 workshop, click [here](#). Registration deadline: March 14.

From the Ground Up...

Late one February several years ago, I returned home from an afternoon of running errands to find the last remnants of my wood fire long extinguished, and only four soggy and snow-covered logs to save me from near hypothermia. Desperate for warmth, I stoked kindling and applied the bellows time and again before resting on the floor in front of the open stove door, mesmerized by little blue flames and bubbles of water and sap erupting from the ends of the logs.



At once the faint yet clear spring song of a chirping sparrow captured and drew my attention to the nearby window in an effort to catch a glimpse of this little emblem of hope for fairer days ahead. Peering into the underbrush, I found no sparrow, but then heard the cardinal's unmistakable whistle, the starling's repertoire of poor imitations, and the "wish, wish, wish" of a tree frog. Unable to detect motion in the tree crowns, I soon realized that even as my wood sacrificed itself to protect me from the cold, shedding smoke and ash and transmuting into light and heat, it was whispering to me the story of its own life in the forest.

March is a transitional month, and as I write this article in late February, watching yet another snowstorm outside my window, it's difficult for me to envision spring. Like a mainstream publication's use of "stock" photography, I must cull from "stock" memories what I can recall of springs gone by: trilling choruses of rivuletting icemelt, the drumming drip, drip, drip from the eaves troughs as water drops splatter on the house steps and a resounding "gong" as they strike the propane tank; the tinkling collapse of tiny air pockets in the condensing snow; the birds "changing their tunes" to a prelude for pair bonding.

The increasing daylight, the light play in the trees and the angling shadows inform our eyes that a change is coming. As a child I can recall being called home from play at twilight, resentfully and reluctantly leaving older companions to continue the games, and tossing and turning in my bed as the daylight slowly retreated and the Doppler'd echos of dogs barking and children playing were eventually silenced by my own need for sleep.



Eight years ago, in the early spring following her first stroke, my mother sat at the edge of her nursing home bed staring out the window at an oak leaf, withered and brown, clinging to its branch. Still reacquainting herself with the world from which she had long been absent she asked, "When the new buds come out in the spring, they will push the leaf off? Is that how that works?"

It was difficult for me to answer her because I sensed a deeper meaning in her circumlocution, but I had to be honest about the cycle of life, "Yes. That's how that works."

There are larger clusters of marcescent oak leaves this year than I can recall seeing in winters past. It seems cruel somehow that they should have to stand guard through the harshest of weather to protect the buds that will eventually launch them to their demise when the earth finally warms again. They overlook their verdant "Canaan" as they float to the ground and spring's intractable Shofar calls forth a new generation of green and untested flora. Fair or not, this is life's pattern and there comes a time when we, too, must sever the petiole of our endeavors and entrust them to those who succeed us.

Still, the work in which we presently engage is important. For me, the essence of faith lies in a confident belief that the impact of our intentions and deeds will eventually find their mark somewhere, though, more than likely, in places unknown and at times unimagined by us.

Even in the early half of the month, when the trees are bare and the ground still covered with snow, March promises the return of spring, though the trust that we place in the continuing cycle will one day elude us all. And when I settle to sleep for the last time, I hope to hear the sound of children continuing their games in the lengthening twilight. Their rules may change a little. They may learn from my mistakes without having my adventures.

They will have their own adventures and learn new truths.

Keep a perspective,

Cathy

