

Faith

Reason and faith are banks of the same river.

—Doménico Cieri Estrada

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**UUCS Annual Meeting
May 20th
at Noon**

**See page 6
calendar for
details!**

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The worst ages of human-kind are marked by a strict insistence on dualism. Dualism is the purist's worldview—good vs. bad, angels vs. demons, believers vs. heretics, our country vs. your country, straight vs. gay, faith vs. rationality. Presently we see dualism at work in partisan politics and religious extremism. Dualism corrupts what I believe is the most beautiful capacity of the human mind: the capacity to hold two potentially contradictory ideas in balance. The hymn #159 in Singing the Living Tradition portrays this capacity: "My countries skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine, but other lands have sunlight too and clover, and skies are everywhere as blue as mine." It is possible to sincerely love one's own country while recognizing how every country is worthy of love. It is possible to love one's own virtues while recognizing the wholly different yet wholly worthy virtues of others.

Two virtues that often fall to dualistic critique are faith and reason, yet the Mexican writer Doménico Cieri Estrada finds a way to hold the two in balance. He contends that "Reason and faith are banks of the same river." Picture

this. Picture a river, wide enough that it would be difficult to cross but thin enough for you to see both banks at the same time. The water has, over time, carved the banks. It does not favor one side over the other, but carves both and requires both to direct its course.

Rationality is holding ourselves accountable to the bounds of logic and evidence even when it is difficult. Faith makes us tenacious. It gives us the strength to continue on our

journey, with the expectation that each step will bear fruit. When we are rational, we try to avoid natural biases, like listening to the evidence that supports our selfish interests. When we are faithful, we keep our eyes on the destination, rather than the hardships along the road. Rationality gives substance to our logic. Faith gives substance to our dreams. Both rely on humility. Rationally we recognize our limitations. Faithfully we recognize that we are a part of something so much

bigger than ourselves.

We, like the river, carve both banks and rely on both banks to direct our course.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Faith and Rationality



Rev. Anya
Sammler-Michael

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

A Growing and Deepening Faith

Sadly, UUCS recently lost two members who passed away, leaving an emptiness in many hearts. We also will soon say goodbye to a few families who are leaving this area to be closer to other family members. Each person will be deeply missed and fondly remembered. They have touched the congregation—and individuals in the congregation—in so many ways. Their legacies and the memories they built at UUCS will live on for a long, long time. It would be easy to find faith challenged and to mourn the loss to the congregation. However, I see hope, meaning, and the determination to learn and make a difference everywhere at UUCS. I have faith that the people, the spirit, and the message of the congregation will ensure the continued growth and impact of this welcoming and vibrant community, and I have already seen many signs of this unfolding future in Religious Education (RE).

Several new friends and members are already involved in planning for the next RE year, which begins in September, and several people have expressed interest in leading or assisting in classes. At least one person on each curriculum planning team has stated how much he or she likes the curriculum being reviewed. This will be the third year we use the online Tapestry of Faith curricula from the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the leaders and children can look forward to continuing to enjoy sessions based on these resources.

In addition, a number of friends and members have provided parents and frequent RE volunteers with a marvelous gift by offering to lead or assist in summer RE. Almost every slot is filled. The volunteers are excited to present this year's summer RE program, "We Are Made of Stardust" by Connie Barlow. They are looking forward to encouraging a sense of wonder where science and spirituality converge.

The Children's Religious Exploration Calendar and a list of programs and events for children and families is at the end of the RE column on the UUCS website at www.uusterling.org.



*Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Exploration*



*Dorine Colabella
Scher,
Board President*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Faith in One Another

I just finished re-reading the letter we all received from our vice president and chair of this year's stewardship campaign, Chris Houck, about the need to close the gap between our current giving and our goal. I am first struck by how incredibly generous this congregation is. I am also struck by how blessed we are by this situation. I know it could sound a little off to say it's a blessing to be in a shortfall or to have to look carefully at what we might have to do without next year if we do not reach our goal.

The truth is that we have built something wonderful and now we understand it as good and necessary. What we have built costs something financially to support. Most days, even though I know what it takes financially to run this amazing place, I simply have faith that those things will all be there for me when I need them. I count on a wonderful RE program and know that my children will be ministered to in a meaningful and respectful manner that will help them grow up well in this world. I know that Kris Adams will lead our choir and fill our space with moving and beautiful music. I know that Reverend Anya will deliver a sermon that will encourage me to think and grow. I know that our space is always there, ready to receive all of us and that it is a safe place for us to explore our spiritual paths.

These things, however, are not things I have always found in my life. I have not always had faith that they would be there. We didn't always have these staff members nor our beautiful space, and earlier in my life, I didn't have a congregation I could call home, a place where I feel safe and cared for—so naturally I didn't have faith in these things. But I certainly do now, and I cannot imagine us without them. I know it is these aspects of what we have that allow us to be who we are in the community, making the difference we make in the world. We are truly blessed.

I have faith in all of us as well that we will meet this challenge, by showing gratitude for these blessings in our lives, by making a pledge or adding to our pledge to help close the gap.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

Updates From the Social Justice Council



Shelley Tamres,
Co-Chair, Social
Justice Council

Adopt-a-Highway

May 6: Save the date! UUCS is once more participating in the Adopt-a-Highway program after a long hiatus. Please join members of the Social Justice Council (SJC) on Sunday, May 6, for a cleanup of Davis Drive at noon after the service. (The cleanup will take the place of the monthly SJC meeting.) So wear your grungies (long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy shoes) and bring a pair of work gloves to join us in cleaning up our street. The more participants, the faster we finish. Please let me know if you're coming (shelleytam@aol.com) so I can get a head count.

And some more dates to save: As a prelude to this year's General Assembly, our first Justice-themed one, Rev. Anya has proposed that we have a series of movie nights to view several documentaries on the subject of immigration. So please plan on joining the SJC at 7 pm on the following evenings in May for a movie and discussion:

Movie Series on Immigration

Friday, May 4—9500 Liberty

Friday, May 11—Lost in Detention

Wednesday, May 23—The Other Side of Immigration

Friday, May 11—Lost in Detention

Wednesday, May 23—The Other Side of Immigration

Offerings

Offerings

To honor the May liturgical theme of faith, the SJC selected Meadville Lombard Theological School and the Starr King School for the Ministry. Meadville Lombard and Starr King are the only two dedicated UU seminaries. They provide our movement with resources, continuing education, historical archives, and well-prepared ministers. They too have felt the crunch of the economic crisis and are struggling to maintain their programs.

Thanks to your generous contributions during the month of March, we sent \$410.00 to Mosaic Harmony.



E.B. Kirkbride stands by her crewel embroidery piece. The design is a tree, specially selected to adorn the UUCS pulpit and remind us of our commitment to growing in community. E.B.'s gift of artwork was recognized at the April 1st, 2012, worship service.



Trish Harris stands by her multi-layered art piece. The second in that she hopes will become a series of wall hangings for the UUCS space. Trish's gift of artwork was recognized at the April 1st, 2012, worship service.

A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

May: Faith

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

This reading, which flows through the whole month of May, is based on James Luther Adams's essay, "Guiding Principles for a Free Faith" in On Becoming Human Religiously.

April 30 / May 5

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Our first stone reminds us that we are part of a living tradition in which revelation is continuous.

Together we engage in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

May 6 / 13

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Our second stone reminds us that we freely choose to enter into relationship and community with one another.

May 14 / 21

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five

smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Together as people of conscience, we build relationships of justice, equity, and compassion that further the wholeness of the interdependent web of all existence.

Our third stone reminds us that we have a moral obligation to work toward establishing a just and loving community.

May 22 / 27

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Together we speak and act prophetically with the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Our fourth stone reminds us that good things happen as a result of human effort.

May 28 / 31

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Together, as beings with inherent worth and dignity, we create goodness and virtue.

Our fifth stone reminds us that the divine and human capacities for achieving meaningful change are reason for optimism.

Together we may be hopeful that change will move us toward a more just, loving, and free world.

The roots of our living tradition have been developed over centuries, but new ideas and understandings are still being revealed.

Some stones are smooth and polished, while others are newly found and rough.

We are part of this living tradition. Through it, we become whole, and through us, our tradition becomes whole.

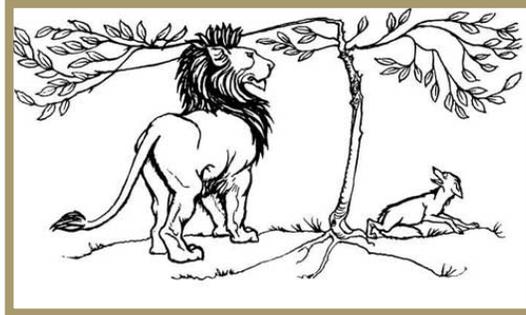
SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

The Fox and the Lion, a retelling of a Sufi wisdom tale

Once there was a woman who prayed to understand what path she should take in life. One night, after praying, she dreamed of walking in the woods. The next day, she journeyed to the woods, searching for the answer to her prayers. It was quiet and peaceful. Then she saw a patch of red fur. It was an injured fox, lying in the shade of a large tree. Before she could reach the fox, she heard the nearby bushes rustle and out came a lion with a fish in its mouth.

Frightened, the woman hid herself and watched as the lion laid the fish near the fox, turned around, and left the way it came. As she watched the weakened fox eat the fish, she said to herself, “There is my answer! The Great Provider—who takes care of the fox—will also take care of me. I do not have to do anything. I will be taken care of, if I just have faith.”

The woman went back home, happy to have her answer. And indeed, she did not do anything. She did not go to work. She did not feed herself. She did not even bathe. She became hungry sitting in her house, so she went to town to see if she would be provided for there. Yet no provisions came. People avoided her. She grew weak from hunger. She fell into a rest-



less sleep and dreamed that she was back in the woods.

“Oh, Great Provider!” she implored in her dream. “You took care of the little fox, but you will not provide for me?”

The Great Provider replied, “You are mistaken. I do not want you to be the fox. I want you to be the lion.”

Family Discussion

Where do you look for guidance? A person, a book, prayer or meditation, or somewhere else?

When have you been the fox, having needs met by others?

When have you been the lion, taking care of someone else?

“From you I receive, to you I give.

Together we share. And from this we live.” These words from a UU hymn speak to the importance of recognizing both the role of fox and lion in our lives. Your family might begin a practice of singing or saying the words together to help remember that each person both gives and receives within the family and the world.

What do you think your faith calls you to do?

SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

Don't miss this opportunity to hear Mosaic Harmony, well-known interfaith community gospel choir, at either of our spring concerts coming up soon: Sunday May 20 at UUCF in Oakton at 4 pm or Saturday June 2 at 7 pm at Convergence in Alexandria. For tickets and more information concerning the concerts, see Judy Gruner or Diane Menefee.



Mosaic Harmony

Want to share something in the June/July newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the June/July liturgical theme, *Unity*.
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place over the summer)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUS or during UUS events (send an email and attach the file you have: for more than three or four photos, email to let us know before sending them.)

Please send anything you'd like to include to newsletter@uusterling.org by May 15th.

ANNUAL MEETING — NOT JUST ANOTHER MEETING

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael
Sunday May 20th, 2012, at Noon

All our annual meetings are glorious expressions of our community spirit and commitment to the democratic process. This particular annual meeting... well, I wouldn't want to miss it. We ran a solid stewardship drive but came up quite short of our pledge goal. As a result, we need to prepare to make significant cuts — cuts we as a community will feel. Our finance committee has worked with integrity to propose appropriate cuts. The board has admirably wrestled with the issues and proposed a budget. This is not easy work and it is *impossible* work without the support of the community. By support, I mean first, your presence. Please be present at the annual meeting. Listen, share your ideas, join in this work. Together we will grow strong, no matter the test. The budget will be up for review and a vote at the annual meeting. This is not a meeting to miss.



CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date with UUCS Events

M A Y	////////////////////////////////////
Friday, 5/4	<p>7:00 pm — “First Friday” event: Kicking off the Social Justice Council’s immigration movie series</p> <p>The series begins with <i>9500 Liberty</i>, a film that is appropriate for children in middle school and above. An alternate movie will be shown in the RE space for younger children.</p>
Friday, 5/4	<p>7:00 pm — Women’s Earth-Based Spirituality (WEBS)</p> <p>Happy Beltaine! Join us at Patty and Mike McKay’s house for our annual plant exchange. Bring cuttings, seedlings, or whatever plants make you happy along with a pot and soil to transport your newly exchanged plants. We’ll discuss various May Day traditions as we honor the Ancients. Pot luck to follow.</p> <p>Email Patty at asheville14@yahoo.com for directions and questions about the gathering.</p>
Sunday, 5/6	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Faith”</p> <p>Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael reflects on the way faith attends her and others, at the most difficult moments of trial. Our choir will sing</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</p> <p>Noon — Meet outside UUCS to join the SJC-sponsored Adopt-A-Highway cleanup of Davis Drive. (Please note that this takes the place of the SJC meeting normally held on the first Sunday of the month.)</p>
Friday, 5/11	<p>7:00 pm — The Social Justice Council’s immigration movie series</p> <p>The SJC movie series on immigration continues with <i>Lost in Detention</i>.</p>

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<p>Sunday, 5/13</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Flower Communion”</i> Our diversity is our strength and our beauty. All are encouraged to bring a flower to share, and all will be invited to choose a different flower to take home. This annual service also celebrates mothers: mothers by blood and mothers by care. Our choir will sing.</p>
<p>Sunday, 5/20</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service: “Envy”</i> This is the final sermon in Rev. Anya’s sermon series on the Seven Deadly Sins</p> <p>Noon — <i>Annual Meeting</i> This is our annual opportunity to exercise our democratic principles! All are welcome. Members will be able to vote on the budget, our new Mission and Vision, the slate of new board members, delegates to the UU General Assembly, and bylaw changes. Please do your best to attend. We need a quorum to conduct business, and your voice is essential.</p>
<p>Wednesday, 5/23</p>	<p>7:00 pm — <i>The Social Justice Council’s immigration movie series</i> The SJC movie series on immigration movie series wraps up with <i>The Other Side of Immigration</i>.</p>
<p>Sunday, 5/20</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Youth Service!”</i> Our high school youth will honor their commitment to our congregation as well as their own spiritual growth by sharing this Sunday’s service. Expect the unexpected and prepare yourself for joy!</p>
<p>J U N E</p>	<p>////////////////////////////////////</p>
<p>Friday, 6/1</p>	<p>7:00 pm — <i>“First Friday” event</i></p>
<p>Sunday, 6/3</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i> Our children’s choir will sing.</p> <p>Noon — <i>Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</i></p> <p>12:15 pm — <i>Social Justice Council meeting in the mezzanine: all are welcome</i></p>
<p>Sunday, 6/10</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i> Our choir will sing.</p> <p>Noon — <i>All Church Picnic</i> The picnic will be held in Claude Moore Park immediately following the service.</p>