

Letting Go

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.

—Raymond Lindquist

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**UUCS
Bingo Night!
3/16**

**See page 5
for details.**

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Courage is not fearlessness, it is acting for the good in the face of unknowing or uncertainty. Aristotle is astute in his ethics, to separate courage from fearlessness and to name the latter as kin to insensibility or madness. Courage begins with an honest taste of fear or discomfort, but it resolves as a choice to endure what one might not endure—because doing so is noble, just, or the means to some new potential.

“Courage is the power to let go of the familiar,” said Raymond Lindquist. Our UUCS Board of Trustees is courageous—admirably so. We were given an opportunity this year to become a “teaching congregation,” to share our time, talent, and treasure with an intern minister, a UU minister in training who would in turn share her time and talent with us through service. An internship is a required step in the path to ministry.

Our board courageously let go of the familiar in favor of a bold new opportunity. They did not do this fearlessly, but honestly took account of our financial situation and our congregation's energy level. They decided that an intern would bring us enthusiasm, energy, and faithful service, and that having an intern

would invite us into a powerful relationship with the wider mission of our UU faith. Together, we then applied for a grant to offset half of the intern's stipend and convened an internship committee to begin imagining an intern's tenure.

A teaching congregation consistently supplies interns with a home to serve, and in turn supports the growth and development of our association of congregations.

We may have an intern next year and we may not. If we do, we can test the role of serving as a teaching congregation. We have made the bold step to envision ourselves as more than a solitary outpost of UU values, preferring to link ourselves with the wider mission of our faith. If we will indeed have an intern, it will be announced soon... and courageously! Our board and the internship committee are excited to share the beauty and joy of this opportunity with you.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Courageously Letting Go



Rev. Anya
Sammler-Michael

As we develop as a congregation, courageously letting go of the familiar, even in the face of uncertainty, will enable us to move boldly, building the world we dream about!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Change the Question

When my wife and I were considering becoming UUs, one of our biggest fears was of what we thought we would have to let go to do so. We were both raised as Christians, she in the Catholic tradition and I in the Protestant, and although we did not have a religious home for some years prior to UUCS, we feared having to let go of the faith traditions



*Christopher Houck,
Board President*

of our pasts. How could we celebrate Christmas or Easter without Christ as the center of those holidays? How would we teach our children to say grace at the dinner table, and what would we tell them about the Bible and Jesus and God and Jonah when they heard their friends talking about their church? Would we go to hell for becoming UUs—or worse, be banned from the family Thanksgiving table? As it turns out, our fear of having to let go was unfounded.

When we changed the question from “What will we let go to become UUs?” to “What might we gain when we become UUs?” the decision to join this church became obvious. We have both gained a sense of spirituality, well-being, and community that was sorely missing from our lives and we’re very grateful to have been given a chance to help lead this congregation. I believe I now have a greater sense of respect and understanding of the Christian faith tradition in which I was raised than at any time in my life. We didn’t let go of the major religious holidays and they now have a deeper meaning when we celebrate. We’ve taught our kids a UU grace and look forward to the day when they might challenge the beliefs of their friends. We haven’t once been booted from the family dinner table and I am pretty convinced that we are not headed to hell.

For all of us as individuals, there is so much to be gained from this congregation and I feel that our greater community and world has much to gain from us when we are successful in “building the world we dream about”. We certainly have big dreams and it will take some work and resources to get where we want to go. As we move into the future, may we do so not with a fear of letting go of our past, but with a sense of excitement and anticipation for what we and our world might gain from moving ever onward.

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Letting Go: The Spiritual Practice of Parenting

When my son was a toddler, I could not find time to sit and meditate, but I probably needed it more than any other time in my life. Instead, I found ways to include moments of stillness and thought within my everyday activities. When my son played in his sandbox, I would lift a handful of sand, feel its temperature and texture, and watch it sift through my fingers. I thought of how all things change and contemplated the Buddhist teaching that the harder you grasp something the faster it slips away. These were helpful reminders as my son learned the power of the word “no” and asserted his independence more each day while still demanding much of my time. I think back to this experience often as I discover the many ways that parenting, for both parents and guardians, is a practice of letting go.



*Linda Weaver,
Director of
Religious Exploration*

From the first day of birth or the first day of welcoming a child into the family, caring for a child is a practice of letting go. The first scratch on a tiny finger confirmed I had to let go of the idea of doing everything perfectly and keeping my child completely safe. He went on to crawl, walk, and run, moving away from me as he developed his own abilities and independence. Day-care, preschool, and full days in elementary school all required letting go. This was followed by sleepovers and sleep-away camp, and eventually driving and leaving home. It is natural and important that all of this happens, but finding a balance between care and letting go requires a great deal of learning and spiritual transformation on the part of parents and guardians. At times I was impatient for a milestone and celebrated when it occurred. Often, however, I am filled with a confusing mixture of feelings, celebrating the growing independence, but saddened by it too.

Watching and talking with other people, I know that the connection between a parent and a child and the concern of a parent for a child never completely end. Last year I was talking with a business person when my teenage son called with a very minor crisis. The person laughed and said he had grown children and one time asked his 90-year old mother when parents stop worrying about their children. She quickly answered, “Never! I’ll worry about you as soon as you walk out that door today.” Letting go is a continual practice.

Children’s Religious Education topics and a list of programs and events for children and families is on the calendar at the UUCS website, www.uusterling.org.

A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

March: Letting Go

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.

March 1—3

From *The Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 24

*He who stands on tiptoe
doesn't stand firm.*

*He who rushes ahead
doesn't go far.*

*He who tries to shine
dims his own light.*

*He who defines himself
can't know who he really is.*

*He who has power over others
can't empower himself.*

*He who clings to his work
will create nothing that endures.*

*If you want to accord with the Tao,
just do your job, then let go.*

March 4—10

From Joseph Campbell

*We must let go of the life we have planned,
so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.*

March 11—17

From Shunryu Suzuki

Faith is a state of openness or trust... In other words, a person who is fanatic in matters of religion, and clings to certain ideas about the nature of God and the universe, becomes a person who has no faith at all. Instead they are holding tight. But the attitude of faith is to let go, and become open to the truth, whatever it might turn out to be.

March 18—22

A traditional Pueblo teaching

Hold on to what is good, even if it is a handful of earth.

Hold on to what you believe, even if it is a tree which stands by itself.

Hold on to what you must do, even if it is a long way from here.

Hold on to life, even when it is easier letting go.

Hold on to my hand, even when I have gone away from you.

March 25—31

From Mary Oliver

To live in this world you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.



Welcome new members of the UUCS family!

SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

The Bee and the Flower: A Traditional Chinese Fable

A rose withered. A bee, however, was still sucking on it because she had sucked nectar from it before. Now, on the same rose, all she could suck out was bitter, poisonous juice. The bee felt the difference because it was so sweet before. She became miserable and complained and complained, saying, “Why did the taste change? Why couldn’t it be just like before?”

Finally, one day, the bee gathered her strength and flew a bit higher. Then and there, she saw that near the withered rose, there were blossoming flowers all over the place.

Family Discussion

Have you ever held onto anything too long? What did you discover when you let go?

Are you holding onto an idea, a habit, or a thing you should let go?

Go through your clothes or toys and pull out the ones you no longer use. Consider giving them to an organization or another person who can use them. How does it feel to let go?

VALENTINES FOR DETAINED IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

In RE during February, children in preschool through eighth grade made 60 valentines for immigrant children who are living in detention centers as they await decisions on asylum or special visas. Attorneys and volunteers with the Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights Coalition (CAIR) delivered the cards when they visited the centers before Valentines Day. CAIR provides legal services to immigrants; its mission is to “ensure that all immigrants are treated with fairness, dignity and respect for their human and civil rights.” The children are housed in three different centers in Virginia. Most are between 13 and 17 years old, but some are as young as 8. Our contact person wrote that they appreciate any form of special treatment and acknowledgment, as they are often victims of gang violence, child abuse or neglect, or exploitation. She also wrote, “When our office has done Christmas cards in the past, the kids just light up and appreciate it so much.”

The children at UUCS did a great job of putting the first UU principle, “recognizing the worth and dignity of every person,” into action! They created many beautiful and thoughtful valentines that will brighten the day of children and teens in the detention centers.

Thank you to everyone who participated, especially to Joan Freidson for taking this beyond the walls of UUCS and making sure that everyone received a valentine! CAIR published this thank-you note on its website (www.caircoalition.org/2013/02/18/spreading-the-love-to-unaccompanied-minors):

Around the world, Valentine’s Day represents a day of love and friendship, a day spent with those closest to you. But for many unaccompanied minors in federal custody in Virginia, this day is a sad reminder of loved ones far away and the overall loneliness of detention. Whether they are fleeing a past ridden with gang violence, child abuse or exploitation, many of these children are in the United States with no parent or legal guardian. In addition, most are coming from Mexico or Central American countries plagued by poverty and a history of civil war.

On Valentine’s Day, the Detained Children’s Program spread the love to unaccompanied minors at the three juvenile detention facilities in Virginia. Each child received an individualized, handmade Valentine cards made by members of the community. The creative card makers included parents and children from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling, Virginia, as well as a team of 1st graders from the Daisy Troop Girl Scouts and the Countryside and Algonkian Elementary schools in Sterling, Virginia. These volunteers dedicated their time to designing and putting together nearly one hundred red and pink cards, with inspirational and hopeful bilingual messages to the children such as, “Thinking of you/Pensando en ti,” “You are important/Usted es importante,” and “Happy day of friendship/Feliz dia de amistad.”

These colorful and thoughtful notes will certainly make each child feel special because they will know that someone nearby is thinking of them. Thank you to everyone who participated in this project!



Want to share something in the April newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the April liturgical theme, *Freedom*.
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in April and the first two weeks of May)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUS or during UUS events

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



During class, RE students make valentines for immigrant children who are living in detention centers

STEWARDSHIP DRIVE: WE'RE GONNA BE READY!

The 2013 Stewardship Drive will kick off meaningful conversation about how this drive can shape the future of this congregation. Then shortly after the discussion, we will have a fun-filled bingo time including food, prizes, and a children's activity. Mark your calendars for the evening of Saturday, March 16th so you don't miss this wonderful night!

Stewardship
BINGO
Night

Saturday Evening
6:00 PM
March 16, 2013

All Ages Family Event!

Evening will include short Stewardship presentation and an opportunity to submit your financial pledge for the 2013-2014 church year.

Hosted by the 2013 UUCS Stewardship Committee



CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

M A R C H	////////////////////
Sunday, 3/3	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Letting Go of the Familiar” Siri Om Kaur Khalsa, a world renown Yogini, joins Rev. Anya in reflecting on the purpose and gift of letting go. Lisa Fiorilli will fill our space with the sounds of jazz.</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</p>
Friday, 3/8	<p>7:00 pm — COEXIST concert is canceled</p> <p>Join us for Bingo Night next Friday instead!</p>

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<p>Sunday, 3/10</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service: “Carry-on Baggage”</i> In a pulpit swap, Rev. Kate Walker of Mount Vernon Unitarian Church explores what UUs can do with our guilt and regret. She will also dive into the theology of universal atonement and redemption. The UUCS choir will sing.</p>
<p>Friday, 3/16</p>	<p>6:00 pm — <i>Bingo Night: We’re Gonna Be Ready!</i> The 2013 Stewardship Drive will kick off meaningful conversation about how this drive can shape the future of this congregation. Then shortly after the discussion, we will have a fun-filled bingo time including food, prizes, and a children’s activity. Mark your calendars for the evening of Saturday, March 16th so you don’t miss this wonderful night!</p>
<p>Sunday, 3/17</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service: “A Community of Care”</i> Our new Pastoral Care Team will be commissioned and Rev. Anya will reflect on the postmodern search for communities that offer care for the whole person—body, mind, and soul. Harry Harris will offer reflective music on the guitar and dulcimer.</p>
<p>Sunday, 3/24</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Passover”</i> A very special interfaith guest, Rabbi Linda Josephs from Beth Chaverim Reform Congregation, will share the stories and meaning of Passover from her faith tradition.</p>
<p>Tuesday, 3/26</p>	<p>6:00 pm — <i>Shared Passover Seder with the Beth Chaverim Reform Congregation</i> Beth Chaverim has invited us as honored guests to share in their Seder—a rich experience of story and ritual commemorating the Jewish people’s exile from Egypt. The Seder is intergenerational and concludes with a special meal. It will be held at Beth Chaverim’s location: 21740 Beaumeade Circle, Ashburn, VA 20147. To RSVP or ask questions, please email Rev. Anya at minister@uusterling.org.</p>
<p>Sunday, 3/31</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Easter Through New Eyes”</i> Rev. Anya reflects on the story of Easter and how its presentation and meaning has changed throughout history and throughout its travels around the globe. This is an all-ages service that will cater to an intergenerational audience. An Easter-egg hunt will follow the service!</p>
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<p>Tuesday, 4/7</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i> Noon — <i>Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</i></p>
<p>Friday, 4/12</p>	<p>7:00 pm — <i>COEXIST Concert</i> featuring our very own band, JUUSTUUS.</p>
<p>Sunday, 4/14</p>	<p>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i></p>