

Salvation

Even if no salvation should come, I want to be worthy of it at every moment.

— Franz Kafka

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Sacred words have play in secular society. We *redeem* our coupons and our recycling. We *save* our money. Indeed, most sacred words had secular meanings before they were employed for religious purposes. Some may claim that *salvation* is all about souls, but the word *salvation* was in use long before young men with white shirts and black ties knocked on your door with a pamphlet and a promise.

The word *salvation* is from the Latin *salvus*, meaning sound in the sense of whole or intact and referring to people's health. The expression *salvus sis* means "may you be well" or, more freely, "good health." The Hebrew word for saving is from the root *yesh* which implies broadness or width, and also spaciousness and freedom from constraint. My grandmother also comes to mind when I think of saving and salvation: she grew up in the Great Depression and found her freedom, her blessing, in saving everything because everything has some worth.

For this etymology and the gift of my personal history, I refuse to give the word over, wholly and without contest, to those who would claim it has only one meaning and purpose. Sure, I could use other words to convey my meaning, but words

have power, and we would be wise not to cede that power. The next time someone promises you salvation, you can counter by asking, "What kind?" And it might not still their fervor, but it might serve you to explain the salvation you are after and the salvation you have already achieved.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Saving Salvation



Rev. Anya
Sammler-Michael

I am saved, in the way of the Latin *salvus*, by momentary recollections of my wholeness and the experience that I am part of a much larger whole. I have been saved by doctors who bound me together when I have broken and by friends who held me together when I could have split. I am saved in the Hebrew sense of *yesh* by the astounding freedoms I enjoy. When I feel myself constrained by time or space or financial burdens, I am saved by the freedom of an able

body, the freedom of mind to think, and the freedom of spirit to seek beauty. And when I am confounded by the seemingly incessant call to partake in conspicuous consumption, I am stilled by my grandmother's kind of salvation, the ability to see worth in what I have—hers was the salvation that claims this as enough, all that I need, plenty. I am saved. Hallelujah, I am saved!

How are you saved, dear ones?

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring: Birth, Change, and Growth



*Paul Roche,
Board President*

Spring is in the air. For me, spring brings energy and excitement like we have been experiencing at UUUCS. Lots of new faces, inspiring services, and excellent and varied programming are fueling our growth. The buds of a significant UU presence in Eastern Loudoun County are quickening, fed by the roots of our stewardship.

We've just come through another successful financial stewardship campaign. Although the totals were somewhat disappointing, they really were excellent given the number of folks who have moved away from the area. Thank you to everyone who pledged. A special thank you goes to those who "stretched" this time, the majority of us! But there is more to stewardship than pledging money and sending checks. True stewardship involves your time and talents as well as your treasure. For UUUCS to continue to flourish, more congregants must become involved in the life of the church. The church recently sent out a questionnaire asking about your talents. You may have gotten, or will get, a phone call discussing how you can best use your identified talents for the good of the church. Please engage deeply in that conversation.

Spring brings rebirth. In April, my granddaughter will be one year old. If she goes through RE, youth group, college, and UU young adulthood here, who will be her mentors, her teachers, her challengers? If we are going to reshape what it means to be religious in Loudoun County, we must all answer that call. Every one of us in her or his own way.

One golden opportunity for next church year is called "Attend 1, Serve 1." In September, we will be inaugurating an additional Sunday morning service. This is in part to relieve crowding but more importantly to allow more people more opportunities to find us and all we have to offer. The "Attend 1, Serve 1" strategy is to obtain volunteers who will do some level of support at the first service by supporting our vibrant and growing children's religious education programming, followed by attending the second service. More info will follow on this.

Perhaps you can think of other ways to help. Your church needs you. By extension, Unitarian Universalism needs you. Please enjoy spring and be part of the birth of something that is truly important.

April Justice Allocation

Sweet Virginia Foundation

In April, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to the Sweet Virginia Foundation. The Sweet Virginia Foundation and George Mason University are teaming up to address the collapsing honey bee population and bring the honey bees back through education and the establishment of apiaries. For more information, visit www.sweetvirginia.com.



APRIL IS CANNED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES!

Support Our High School Youth Group's Endeavors

The UUUCS High School Youth Group is sponsoring a collection for LINK, a local non-profit providing emergency food to people in need in Herndon, Sterling, and Ashburn. Place donations of food and personal hygiene items in the boxes in the lobby at UUUCS.

Upcoming Food Themes:

*May – Rice and canned tuna
June & July – Cereal and peanut butter
August – Pasta*

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Where is Salvation?



Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Education

I was in college the first time I was asked, “Are you saved?” The question stunned me and I could only ask, “What?” Thoughts flew through my mind. My paternal grandfather christened me in the church he served. My maternal grandmother was a dedicated member of the church in which my mother had been raised. My father had thought about becoming a minister and both of my parents considered teaching their ministry. I attended church almost every Sunday—until I didn’t.

Cutting through my thoughts, the question was repeated, “Are you saved? Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Have you been reborn in Jesus Christ?” Of course, I had heard about born again Christians, but this was amazingly foreign to me. I stammered an answer about having deep ties to a faith and a family that believed you could be saved at birth and through your actions. I thought about but did not mention the many questions I had heard in church and from my parents about the role of Jesus; the nature and existence of the Holy Spirit, Heaven, and Hell; how much of the Bible could be literally believed; and who could be saved and how. There was something both powerful and disconcerting to me about the absolute certainty of knowing that your sins were forgiven, that God was looking out for you, and that you would live eternally in Heaven. However, this certainty has never made sense to me.

So how would I answer now? Yes, I am saved. Any God I could believe in is too loving to condemn people for not believing in a specific way. I believe Jesus was an important teacher and I strive to learn from his example and do good in the world. Yes, I have been reborn.

The nature of God or divinity is beyond me and I do not know what happens after we die. So I see the working of salvation and the work of the divine in the world around me. I find the hope of rebirth and salvation in crocus leaves pushing through snow, in newborn lambs, and in the giggle of babies. I have felt reborn by the grandeur of a starry night that brings with it the wonder of being part of an immense universe that will continue long after me and the realization of the smallness of my problems. I have been saved by a comforting word or a hug that reaches across the loneliness of pain and reminds me that others care and that I am not alone in the world. I find salvation in nature, in people, and in my own actions.

Where have you found salvation? Is it in a spiritual practice, a belief, music, poetry, art, a special person, or a community of friends? Whether you have found it or are still looking, join us this month as adults and children explore this topic and create connections that can bring salvation to themselves and others.

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.

Adult RE Lecture Series: “The History of Jesus”

Just who was the Jesus of history? Not the Jesus of theology, but the Jesus of *history*? Was he a Cynic philosopher, Marxist, revolutionary zealot, proto-feminist, apocalyptic prophet, son of God, magician, or God?

Jack Dalby will lead this lecture series on Thursdays from April 9–30 at 7:00 pm. Registration is available on the UUCS website, www.uusterling.org (check the adult RE menu items), or you can register at the event table at UUCS.

Want to share something in the May newsletter?

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

Please send anything you’d like to include to newsletter@uusterling.org by April 15.

A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Salvation

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.

April 1–8

From poet Adrienne Rich

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed.
I have to cast my lot with those who, age after age,
perversely, with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

April 9–15

“Salvation” by Rumi

*There is no salvation for the soul
But to fall in Love.
It has to creep and crawl
Among the Lovers first.
Only Lovers can escape
From these two worlds.
This was written in creation.
Only from the Heart
Can you reach the sky.
The rose of Glory
Can only be raised in the Heart.*

April 16–22

From the Religious Humanist’s 23rd Psalm

*A deep intuition leads me along a path that is true
for the sake of existence itself.*

*Even though I walk through a valley with dark shadows
ultimately I will not fear,
For the energy of the universe is within me.
Even in the face of threats to my well-being
and my very life,
The spirit of life nourishes me,
honors me with its presence,
and reminds me that I really
have more than I need.
Surely goodness and kindness
radiate upon me constantly,
and I shall dwell within this universe
with its transforming processes, forever.*

April 23–29

From Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

*“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and
gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then,
for a second time in the history of the world, man will have
discovered fire.”*

April 30

From “The Merchant of Venice” Act IV, Scene I, by William Shakespeare

*The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s
When mercy seasons justice.*

“What We Need Is Here,” by Wendell Berry

*Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.*

SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

Uncluttered Faith

By Max Lucado, www.maxlucado.com.

From *And the Angels Were Silent*, copyright (Thomas Nelson, 1992) Max Lucado. Used by permission.

One of my favorite stories concerns a bishop who was traveling by ship to visit a church across the ocean. While en route, the ship stopped at an island for a day. He went for a walk on a beach. He came upon three fishermen mending their nets.

Curious about their trade he asked them some questions. Curious about his ecclesiastical robes, they asked him some questions. When they found out he was a Christian leader, they got excited. “We Christians!” they said, proudly pointing to one another.

The bishop was impressed but cautious. Did they know the Lord’s Prayer? They had never heard of it.

“What do you say, then, when you pray?”

“We pray, ‘We are three, you are three, have mercy on us.’”

The bishop was appalled at the primitive nature of the prayer. “That will not do.” So he spent the day teaching them the Lord’s Prayer. The fishermen were poor but willing learners. And before the bishop sailed away the next day, they could recite the prayer with no mistakes.

The bishop was proud.

On the return trip the bishop’s ship drew near the island again. When the island came into view the bishop came to the deck and recalled with pleasure the men he had taught and resolved to go see them again. As he was thinking a light appeared on the horizon near the island. It seemed to be getting nearer. As the bishop gazed in wonder he realized the three fishermen were walking toward him on the water. Soon all the passengers and crew were on the deck to see the sight.

When they were within speaking distance, the fisherman cried out, “Bishop, we come hurry to meet you.”

“What is it you want?” asked the stunned bishop.

“We are so sorry. We forget lovely prayer. We say, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name ...’ and then we forget. Please tell us prayer again.”

The bishop was humbled. “Go back to your homes, my friends, and when you pray say, ‘We are three, you are three, have mercy on us.’”

Questions for Discussion

Why do you think the bishop told the fishermen to continue using their simple prayer?

Rev. Marlin Lavanhar describes salvation as the “movement toward health and wholeness.” What helps you heal when you feel broken?

What do you do to help other people or the world heal?

Consider planting seeds and watching them grow as a spiritual practice to heal yourself and the world. Will you plant vegetables or flowers to nourish the body or soul? Will you plant in pots, in the backyard, or in a community garden?

GENERAL NEWS

Sanctuary Art

By Judy Gruner

The artwork in the sanctuary in April and May is by two artists, Ellie Flaherty and Sharon Van Duizend—friends whose art is displayed together.

Ellie Flaherty works with fabric and has been sewing most of her life. Five years ago, she found her creative passion when she joined an Art Quilt study group taught by fiber artist Cyndi Souder at Artistic Artifacts in Alexandria, VA. Her love of fabric extends to ethnic textiles, aboriginal prints, and batiks. She increasingly uses her own fabric monoprints and hand-made silk paper which she embellishes with beads, embroidery, and textile paint.

Sharon Van Duizend’s background and training is in art education. Her decorative and hand-made papers are an outgrowth of having been a weaver and enjoying texture as part of each expression. Some mixed-media works are fused with photography and line drawings. All profits from her sales in this show will benefit programs for art (Save The Children) and music (Playing For Change) to empower children worldwide. Some of her images are also available as floor mats, mugs, pillow covers, iPhone or iPad covers, and much more through www.society6.com/windthoughts.

Did you know that if you buy artwork that is displayed in our sanctuary, UUCS receives 20% of the money? If you are interested in purchasing any of the pieces, please contact Judy Gruner.

GENERAL NEWS

A Radically Hospitable Congregation

It is a joy to see a Sunday service flow smoothly. Sincere and conscientious greeters, warm and caring congregants, joyful singing, a compelling and thought provoking sermon, and not least an opportunity to feel connection to our community during coffee hour. For many, it may be the best two or three hours of their week. It is clear that such events do not occur spontaneously, yet it is not as obvious that critical steps to success occur in the first minute of greeting and in the less-organized social time we call coffee hour. Hospitality is one service that your membership team addresses. But warmth and intentional hospitality is not a service that our team can offer alone. A “radically hospitable” congregation shares the gift and responsibility of hospitality equally among all its members.

The membership team recognizes that our community is made of committed and busy individuals who want to build the world we dream about. Accordingly, the team is likewise committed to proactively making member assignments on behalf of the congregation. This system was inspired by the consultant, Bill Clontz, from the Unitarian Universalist Association, and it has worked to great acclaim in many UU congregations. The strategy may seem radical...and it is, that's the point! We want to be radically hospitable to each and every soul that enters through our doors.

Our new radical plan consists of the following highlights:

- Members of our congregation will be organized into seven hospitality groups, ensuring that the same group does not serve in the same month from year to year.
- Different colors will be used on name tags to help members know who is part of their group.
- Individual members will be asked to contribute specific hospitality tasks one time in each month that their group is assigned to serve. This means that no member will be asked to serve more than twice a year.
- Group members can coordinate with one another to swap dates within their months.
- Families are encouraged to serve together, inviting children and youth to be radically hospitable.

- Families that have young children can arrange to serve while childcare is available or can coordinate with other group members as necessary.

Our mission of building the world we dream about includes actively setting the welcome table for our visitors, friends, and members. The membership team is honored to be a leader in bringing this part of our vision to life. We believe the community can and will step up to the challenge and we hope that each of you receives this opportunity in the spirit of joy with which it has been offered.

The membership team also plans to host a Sunday forum on May 24 after the service. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions and suggestions; your membership team is Shannon Masiak (Chair), Elaine Hackett, Arin Beals, Michael Masiak, Yvonne Centala, and Brandy Trevino (Youth Rep).

Welcome New Members!

Karen Aiken

Roshan Chaddah

Mary Ellen Chaddah

Jimmy Meritt

Leslie Meritt

Bob Barwis

Jim Illetschko

Kim Monroe

Vincent Chu

Adam Winter

Lisa Winter

Jean Ault

Lisa Jones-Bateman

CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

A P R I L	////////////////////////////////////
<p>Sunday, 4/5</p>	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “Hope Reborn” In this Easter Sunday service led by Rev. Rebekah Montgomery, we will explore and reflect on the Easter message and the promise of the spring rebirth as powerful spiritual symbols in our shared faith experience. Come and celebrate spring and our lives and spirits renewed! The UUCS choir will sing.</p> <p>Noon — Easter Egg Hunt For children in 6th grade and younger.</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s class in Rev. Anya’s office All newcomers are welcome.</p>
<p>Thursday, 4/9</p>	<p>7:00 pm — Adult RE lecture series: “The History of Jesus” Please see article on page 3 for details.</p>
<p>Sunday, 4/12</p>	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “The Bones of Faith” Rev. Leon Dunkley will lead the service. As he says, “Sometimes, we don’t really pray. We just need to listen to some good, country blues. That music best reminds me about the many gifts of spiritual practice, the bones of faith, the rigging that breaks sometimes but heals and keeps us human.” The UUCS children’s choir will sing.</p>
<p>Wednesday, 4/15</p>	<p>6:45 pm — Evening worship service: “Salvation” We will meet as a one-time covenant group to discuss salvation.</p>
<p>Thursday, 4/16</p>	<p>7:00 pm — Adult RE lecture series: “The History of Jesus” Please see article on page 3 for details.</p>
<p>Sunday, 4/19</p>	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “Similar Spiritual Journeys Lead an Interfaith Clergy Couple to Different Conclusions” Andrew Mertz, soon to be Rev., (UU), and the Rev. Anne Pierpont Mertz (Episcopalian) will lead this service about how their similar spiritual journeys led them to different faith traditions. The UUCS choir will sing.</p>
<p>Thursday, 4/23</p>	<p>7:00 pm — Adult RE lecture series: “The History of Jesus” Please see article on page 3 for details.</p>
<p>Sunday, 4/26</p>	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: Annual UUCS Youth Service UUCS High School Youth will speak about the themes of volunteerism, community action, and social justice work that they have been involved in or plan to participate in.</p>
<p>Thursday, 4/30</p>	<p>7:00 pm — Adult RE lecture series: “The History of Jesus” Please see article on page 3 for details.</p>