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## Sunday Program and Service Leader Schedule

### March 7

9:15—Adult RE: “Emotional Struggle”, by William Ellery Channing

10:10—Choir Warm-up

10:40—Program: **Sidney Wilson** will speak on “The Art of Religion”.

Service Leader: **Paul Lee** Opener: **Pat Hart**

Closer: **Marge Hall & Carolyn Searcy**

Greeters: **Marge Hall & Nikki Rohrs**

### March 14

9:15—Adult RE: “The Human Heart”, Margaret Fuller

10:10—Choir Warm-up

10:40—**Rev. Fred Howard**, the minister from Valdosta will speak on “That Inviting Darkness: Partnering with Transylvanian Unitarians”

Service Leader: **Paul Lee** Opener: **Marge Hall & Carolyn Searcy**

Closer: **Gerda Smith**

Greeters: **Barry White & Bill Edwards**

### March 21

9:15—Adult RE: “Boundless Universal Love”, by George DeBenneville

10:10—Choir Warm-up

10:40—**Dr. John Frandsen**, retired Tuskegee University biology professor and research director of the U.S. Agricultural Research Service at Auburn will speak on “The Humanist Perspective”.

Service Leader: **Katy Clyde** Opener: **Gerda Smith**

Closer: **Julie Bouchard**

Greeters: **Nancy Awtry & Ann Newland**

### March 28

9:15—Adult RE: “Spiritual Renewal”, by Charles Chauncy

10:10—Choir Warm-up

10:40—**Hal Midgette** will speak on “Our Tribe”.

Service Leader: **Barry White** Opener: **Julie Bouchard**

Closer: **Janet & Norm Horofker**

Greeters: **Don Nahley & Tanya Davis**



## Movie Night

Everyone is invite to come to movie night on March 26, 2010 for a showing of the film “Charlie Wilson’s War” at 7 p.m. Bring your favorite drink and snack.

## President's Notes From Board Meeting—February 15, 2010 by John Nix

1. Treasurer's Report—Nikki Rohrs reported that for the month of January 2010 we had income in the amount of \$3,981.00 with expenses of \$3,069.00, leaving a surplus in our Operational Funds Account (ordinary income and expenses) of \$912.00 for the month.
2. Electrician Expenses—Based on revised estimates, the Board authorized our Administrator Brenda Stevens to spend \$1,100.00 for electrical work including: (1) installation of lights on both sides of the sign in front of our building, (2) installation of a timer which will control the lights on the sign and behind the stained glass window, (3) replacement of the motion light on the back of the building.
3. New Chairs—The board authorized expenditure of up to \$1,000.00 to purchase new chairs for our meeting area. (We estimate the cost of the chairs to be about \$50 each. We will attempt to purchase chairs which are similar in design and color to the chairs which are in current use.
4. New Curtains—The board authorized the purchase of curtains for the back bathroom and the two back bedrooms for an amount not to exceed \$150.00.
5. Fire extinguishers—The board authorized replacement of all five fire extinguishers for \$34.00 each, or a total of \$170.00.
6. Roof—The board requested the administrator to obtain opinions as to whether the singles on our roof need to be replaced, and if indeed, the cost or replacing the singles.
7. Driveway—The board requested several estimates be obtained for repairs or replacement of our driveway.
8. Yard Sale—A yard sale is scheduled for Saturday, April 24, 2010 with alternate rain date on May 1, 2010. Members are encouraged to donate items for the yard sale. The proceeds will be used to pay for new chairs for our meeting area. Since we have limited storage space, it is requested that, if practicable, the items for the yard sale be brought to our building no sooner than one week before the scheduled sale. Contact Paul Lee if you have any questions about the yard sale.

Members may contact our administrator, Brenda Stevens, to obtain a copy of the official minutes for the meeting

## Explaining UU by Ron Ussery

How many of you have been put on the spot about your association with Unitarian Universalism by a friend or relative? Or if you want to look at it more positively, how many of you have had a golden opportunity to explain UU to the uninitiated?

Connie and I were at a party a while back with a bunch of fundamentalists/ultra conservatives, and one of them said to us, "What church do you belong to?" I must admit that I winced, then replied "UU—that's Unitarian Universalist." That response quieted the room and then I was asked, "What do YALL believe in?" I really wasn't prepared for that in this setting, but I replied, "You name it, and some Unitarian probably believes in it. We're pretty flexible and pretty diverse."

"But what do YALL BELIEVE IN? Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" You could have heard a pin drop. Connie replied, "Some UU's do believe that. Some don't. Some of the people in our church were brought up Hindu, some Jewish, some even Catholic, I think. There are lot of us 'reformed Baptists' like Ron and me."

"But what do yall BELIEVE in?" they asked again.

"We don't have a creed," I said. "In other words, no one tells us what to BELIEVE IN. Instead, we offer companionship on the journey toward our own individual concept of Truth." I was aware that I had lapsed into something akin to ancient Greek. And I vowed to bone up to be better prepared in the future.

"Do yall believe in Heaven and Hell?" the puzzled interrogator asked. "Most UUs that we know do not believe in the traditional concepts of Heaven and Hell," Connie replied, being a little more direct that I probably would have been, aware that some in the group were recoiling somewhat. "We tend to believe that you create your own Heaven—or Hell—here on Earth in this lifetime," Connie continued, "and that's all we really have that we can count on. We tend to focus on the here and now. We stress good works, but we don't tell people what to think, or what to believe. We study other religions around the world and we respect all faiths. We tend to avoid feeling that we have the answer and that other religions or denominations have it wrong."

I began to wonder if that was true of us—of me. I'm not sure that I have the proper UU respect for fundamentalist, evangelical religion.

We managed to escape the party with most of the others just thinking we were really far out, and probably doomed to Hell, but at least they didn't attempt to burn us at the stake.

Another experience we had with explaining UU was when Connie announced to her elderly, Baptist mom that we had become active in the UU church. She asked about UU and we explained that ours is a "universal" church where anyone of any faith background is welcomed. "We don't define so much what we are and what we are not," we explained. "We feel that those structured walls around different faiths have helped fan religious conflict such as the current Christian-Islam difficulties," we explained. Connie's mother contemplated this and said, "I think that's great. We probably need more churches like that," and she seemed comfortable and changed the subject. Unfortunately on a subsequent visit, she fanned a clipping from the Savannah newspaper in our faces and challenged us, "Is this the church that yall go to?" she asked accusingly. A look at the headline showed that the article was a hatchet job by a fundamentalist designed to depict UU as a church that "Denies Jesus Christ." We scanned the article and explained, or tried to, that the writer reflects the kind of narrow, intolerant thinking that UU is determined to avoid. We don't deny Jesus, we explained, not really sure if that's true or not, "but instead we are tolerant of those who have differing views, such as Jews and Hindi and Muslims." She was still pretty uneasy about all this, but again allowed the subject to be changed.

Fast forward to a few months ago, when I was collaborating at my school with Dr. Belle Harrell, who has been here for two or three services. Belle teaches our high school's World Religion classes and I've recommended a number of resources to her that she's used in the class, such as [beliefnet.org](http://beliefnet.org). She told me that her class has had several guest speakers to do presentations of their faith, and she was wondering if I would be willing to make a presentation in behalf of UU. "Wow," I thought, "she's asking me to 'come out.'" I am aware of the generally conservative nature of our student body, let alone their parents and I was not fond of inviting a witch hunt. "I'll give it some thought," I answered, and proceeded to worry about my reaction and the potential from such a presentation.

I have to confess that my ultimate acceptance was a bit of a chicken response, clinging to the coattails of Dr. Mary Schley. I asked Mary to co-present with me, not only because I respect her and she and her family are very well known on our campus. But I felt that if I stood in front of the class alongside Dr. Schley, then I was much less likely to be excused as a nutcase—a cultist heretic. I mean, I'm already the only person I know in his late 50s who either walks to school or drives a red convertible sports car with an Obama sticker.

So, Mary and I laid our plans and launched our presentation in the theatre-style Lecture room of our high school. The rest of my presentation this morning is based on what we showed them and how we explained our church. We both dressed the way I am dressed this morning, in safari gear with binoculars to symbolize the "search." One of the first things I told the students, which I repeat to you, is that my speaking style is Socratic and I welcome participation and exchange at any time. And we got huge amount of participation, none of it what I would consider negative.

We had on the whiteboard the keywords you see here: (flipchart) Reason-Tolerance-Freedom as well as

"The interconnected web," "Search for meaning and truth," "No Creed." I began by telling them UU is actually a lot like this class—we study world religions and we have guest speakers from a wide variety of faith traditions and occupations. "Much of our services are intellectual, but we also strive for spirituality in a manner that does not offend the wide variety of people in our group." I told them we'd be delighted to take questions, but that my answers might not be terribly satisfying to them if they want to know what "We believe," or what "we teach," since we don't tell people what they should think or what they should believe, at least beyond a few very basic principles," and I pointed to Reason-Tolerance-Freedom and said, "that's pretty much all you need to know to understand UU."

I then showed a 10-minute video that I pulled from the [uua](http://uua.org) website and I'd like to share that with you now, unless anyone has a comment or a question first. I chose the video partly because it has the kind of wide-ranging viewpoints and profiles that I think exemplifies UU so well. One prominent speaker is a young man no older than the students in the room.

I got a few questions based on the video, mostly of the “Do yall believe...” Variety, which I could pretty much answer along the lines of “I can’t answer a question that begins that way. I can answer what I believe in or don’t believe in, but I can’t speak for my church and certainly not for UUA.

Mary read to the class the seven principles of UU, elaborating just a bit on them. Then I ran through some UU history, partly in response to more questions.

I also named a number of famous people who were Unitarians or Universalists and I could see their eyebrows lifting with many of those household names, such as Isaac Newton, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Adams and his son, John Quincy, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Huxley, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin, Pete Seegar, Kurt Vonnegut. I explained that such shameless name dropping is important because UUism is a creedless religion -- our deeds speak louder than our words -- and so it may be easier to understand UUism as a living faith by noting the individuals who have been associated with UUism. In light of that, would you like to hear more names associated with UU or one of our two legacy churches? How about Paul Revere, Thomas Paine, Millard Fillmore, Daniel Webster, Susan B. Anthony, Howard Taft, Clarence Darrow, Dorothea Dix, Thomas Elliott, Louisa Mae Alcott, Horatio Alger, Ambrose Bierce, William Cullen Bryant, Robert Burns, Samuel Coleridge, T. S. Elliott, Nataniel Hawthorn, Oliver Windle Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Milton, Herman Melville, Carl Sandberg, Mary Shelley, Henry David Thoreau, Sylvia Plath, Clara Barton, Albert Schweitzer, John Dewey, Alexander Graham Belle, Adlai Stephenson, N. C. Wyeth, Horace Mann,

More recently, e.e. cummings, Robert Fulghum (All I ever needed to know I learned in Kindergarten), Christopher Reeve (superman), and Randy Pausch (last speech). You may wonder how it is possible that so many famous people are associated with a church you’ve hardly ever heard of. UU is not real big in the South, thought it is growing. Its strength is in the Northeast, particularly Boston, and that’s where an awful lot of the movers and shakers in our history have come from.

I reported some statistics that I got from the uua website from a recent national survey of uua members, which showed that almost 50% of us identified with Humanist principals and we talked about what being a Humanist means. I explained that the survey results add up to more than 100% percent since, consistent with UU openness, respondents were not confined to only one response. I noted that 25% of us identified with Jewish traditions, 19% of us consider ourselves atheists or agnostics, and another 19% identify with a nature- or earth-centered view of the world, such as paganism; 13% of us identify as Deists or Theists (although I also explained that “God” does not mean the same thing to everyone in this category, and that for me, as one example, I find God in the connection that links all living things). Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam accounted for lower numbers, as did a wide variety of other approaches.

When I mentioned atheism/agnostics, I was asked how an atheist can be part of a church. “Oh I believe that atheism can be a religion in that some atheists preach their view of the world with just as much fervor as the most fundamental evangelist. I related that the atheists that I know within UU tend not to proselytize in that manner, but rather maintain tolerance of those who believe otherwise. Besides, I said, we welcome people of all faith approaches, and we have many lively discussions that arise out of the differences in our group. And agnostics, of course, exemplify the whole idea of searching the truth and meaning without claiming to have those answers.

In the history of UU, I related some things that I didn’t know until I did a bit of research on the UUA website in preparation for this talk. Such as, Unitarians got their start when a group of people rallied around the idea that God was a singularity and that the idea of the Holy Trinity was misplaced and not really very well founded within the scriptures. Later, I said, Unitarian beliefs stressed the importance of rational thinking, a direct relationship with God, and the humanity of Jesus. Universalism emerged as a Christian denomination with a central belief in universal salvation; that is, that all people will eventually be reconciled with God.

Universalists, the other part of our spiritual heritage, were Christians who believed in universal salvation, meaning that all people will eventually be reconciled with God. That “all” people means that they did not buy into the concept of Hell.

One student then asked how UUs could deny the existence of Hell if we are tolerant of the Christian tradition. I asked that student if they remembered that I really couldn’t answer for all UUs and that we have no creed. But that most UUs probably do not buy into the idea of a Hell and for a variety of reasons. But that the denial of Hell was a teaching of the Universalist Church. UUA arose out of a combination of these two churches in America in 1961 and that tend to avoid teaching absolutes. But some of the

reasons that some UUs site in their belief that there is no Hell is that such a concept is foreign to our idea of a loving God. Further, that many UUs—quite likely a large majority—do not hold to the literal interpretation of the Bible and instead view all holy texts as extremely important documents worthy of our study. Speaking of Hell in particular with a view toward the Christian or the Hebrew bible, there is a case to be made that Hell is far from a universally held view among the writers of the Bible and in fact, its description is very narrowly confined to principally only one writer. “Now, I am not attempting to convince you of a particular point of view,” I told them. “I am rather describing a particular view that is not uncommon among UUs.

“In fact,” I told them, we’ve all heard of the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright’s ancestors came from Wales as victims of religious persecution because of their fervent belief that there is no Hell. Wright’s uncles were Universalist clergymen. And Wright himself was a Universalist and designed several Universalist Churches.

That’s about the extent of what we were able to present to this high school class, primarily because the rest of the hour was filled with their questions. Perhaps you have questions, either from the perspective of a high school student, or from your own viewpoint. If I can’t answer them, then perhaps we can come up with an answer together.

## Joys and Concerns

Our fellowship is growing. It is a pleasure to introduce three new members to our fellowship. **Chris Newland** was born in New Jersey as the second of five children. A proud and committed father and husband, Chris has worked with troubled youth for over thirty years. He likes to travel, read, and cook and has been teaching himself to play the mandolin. His wife **Ann Newland** was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she attended her first Unitarian Church. She has lived in Massachusetts and Virginia and has been in Georgia since 1985. She is a graduate of Virginia Tech and Troy State University. She is currently working on an online Ed.S. degree in instructional technology from Valdosta State. Chris and Ann have three wonderful children, **Jesse**, born in 1983, **Hannah** 1986, and **Eliza** 1990. She has been a nutritionist, lactation consultant, and she is currently an educator of fourth graders.

**Salman Elawad** also recently joined the Fellowship. Salman was born on December 24, 1946 in the town of Gedaref in Eastern Sudan in East Africa. He attended elementary and middle schools in Gedaref and high school in Port Sudan, a city along the Red Sea. He attended the University of Kartoum in the city of Kartoum, the capital of Sudan. He won a scholarship from the University of Kartoum to study for the Masters and Ph.D. degrees in the United States. He received his Masters degree from the University of Hawaii and his Ph.D. from the University of Florida. He and his wife **Maia** stayed in the U.S. from 1974 to 1980. He taught at the University of Khartoum in Sudan from 1980 to 1990. He and his family came back to the U.S. in 1990. He worked as a Research Associate from 1990 to 1992 at the University of West Florida, as a biology professor from 1992 to 2000 at Pensacola Junior College, and as a biology instructor from 2000 to the present at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. He has five Children: **Hassan** (30), **Aymen** (28), **Gamal** (26) **Malik** (24) and **Rayyan** (21).

It is with sadness to have to report the loss of **Mary Farmer’s** partner of eleven years. **Jimmy Wayne Taylor** died on February 11, 2010. Mr. Taylor suffered all his life with hemophilia, later diabetes, and kidney problems. He worked for a time at Fort Benning, but retired based on medical disability. Mary has been unable to attend our services recently because she was his primary care giver. A chapel service was held on Sunday February 14, at Strifler Hamby. The Fellowship is asked to remember Mary in your thoughts and prayers as she grieves for the loss of her partner.



## Birthday Celebrations

John Studstill	4 March
Alia Spradlin	6 March
Harry Clyde, Jr.	6 March
Lois Atkins	16 March
Norm Horofker	25 March
Carolyn Searcy	30 march

## The Fellowship wishes

**You all**

**Happy Birthday and hopes**

**That you have a**

**Fun-filled**

**Celebration!**