



FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

First Church News

June 2011

**Worship and
Religious
Education
for Children and
Youth**

**Sundays
10:30 a.m.**



**5200 Fannin
Houston, TX
77004
713.526.5200**

Email:
church@firstuu.org

Website:

This Father's Day, Bestow Your Blessing

Periodically I read about a crisis in fathering. For example, one study found only 20% of the fathers surveyed felt that they had a close emotional relationship with either their father or their sons. Twenty percent! That means four out of five fathers are emotionally distant from either their dad or son.

One downside to this is that so many other fathers really don't know how to show their love very well. This inability to show love well can be seen as the lack of a blessing – to a son or daughter. And while sons usually feel this most acutely, daughters can too. And when a child, especially a son, doesn't get a blessing, there can be only one reason. And the reason for the lack of a blessing is – a curse.

But I believe the spiritually mature father must bestow a blessing on his children and children he cares for. How to give a blessing? A colleague writes of five steps:

1. Meaningful touch. Not accidental, but a “laying on of hands.”
2. Spoken, unmistakable appreciation. No pro forma, not vague, but specific.
3. Let them know you place a high value on them. This has more to do with your serious, appreciative attitude than anything else.
4. Picture an excellent future for the one you are blessing and let them know it.
5. Making an active commitment to help them achieve that future.

I have seen men and women engage in this behavior of blessing. And people who do it a lot seem to be setting an example for the rest of this.

If you are a father, or a father figure to someone, I challenge you to spend part of your Father's Day this year bestowing a blessing on someone you know.

Daniel

SERMON TOPICS FOR JUNE

June 5 - Congregation Meeting Sunday Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

June 12 - Is Happiness Achievable? Sermon by the Rev. Leonora Montgomery

June 19 - Where Have all the Fairies Gone? Sermon by the Rev. Adam Robinson

June 26 - What One Person Can Do To Change The World Sermon by Christina Branum-Martin

NOTES FROM THE JOURNEY

Rev. Adam Robinson, Assistant Minister

Back in February I was interviewed by a Houston Chronicle reporter about "Bring Your Teen To Church Sunday." As a result this quotation was published on February 19:

"We don't need a special day," said the Rev. Adam Robinson, assistant minister at First Unitarian Universalist Church in Houston. "The GLBT folks are welcome here every day. Proclaiming a special day is mainly a way to spread the word."

"It's for the parent who doesn't know what to do with their teen that is experiencing a different sexuality, who is wondering whether they'll be accepted in a faith-based environment," Robinson said.

I admit, not the most eloquent of responses, but for my friends it was enough.

(the whole article is at <http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/metropolitan/7435364.html>)

Email—Rev Adam To Rev Daniel:

Just got a call from a gentleman, who is having trouble bringing his "Christian faith" into harmony with his gay son. He and his wife saw my quotation in the Chronicle article about bringing your gay teen to church and want to meet to talk. I have them scheduled for a meeting next Thursday, the earliest our schedules would permit.

We met chatted for a couple of hours I gave them some book titles, information on PFLAG, some of my experience and feelings,

and left them with some hope. That part of the story I'm saving for my PRIDE sermon "Where Have All the Fairies Gone?" on June 19. You should come out and celebrate with us.

March 9 email from the gentleman to Rev Adam:

Adam, we very much appreciate your time and the information you shared with us on Thursday.

Our discussion was very helpful to us in our quest to gain a better understanding of God's world and the diversity that He has built into His creation. We very much love our son and it will help to see with more clarity the real world!

God bless you, we hope to see you again. Thank you for any added information you may provide to light our path.

It is indeed a blessing to walk the path we have chosen. My friends this wonderful faith we share gave me in John Murray's words the means to "posses only a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it in order to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women."

I pray we all find those moments and seize them.

Peace and light, Rev. Adam

NEWS FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Your Board of Trustees met on May 18 and we had a wide-ranging discussion that took us into overtime that evening.

First, let me say “thank you” to our members who stayed for the membership meeting on Sunday afternoon, May 15, and for those of you who voted absentee. Your discussion and positive vote on resolving our endowment transfer was very important and will help inform our next operating budget which begins on July 1.

I especially appreciate our Treasurer, Evan Michaelides, for explaining our tight financial picture. His analogy of our church finances (operating, reserve and endowment) as not unlike our own personal situation of checking, savings and retirement accounts was very useful.

We are endeavoring to make all of our deliberations open and transparent and keeping our members well informed while not making you overly anxious. Rev. O’Connell has been with us for less than a year and we are making steady incremental progress on our operations while enjoying excellent Sunday worship services and programs. Attendance at services and membership is growing steadily. Your Board is continuing to implement policy governance and better understanding our role and that of the staff.

We have some major challenges ahead – the Board approved and will recommend to you the next year operating budget. We also discussed the current stewardship campaign and the pros and cons of a second Sunday worship service. We are experiencing growing pains and have to come up with creative solutions to make First Church more available to our growing congregation. This is the kind of problem we should all love!

As I contemplate my golden years the only major regret was that I was not born and raised a Unitarian Universalist. I want our religion to be more accessible to families and young people – the earth would be a better place to live if our values, attitudes and beliefs were more widespread. Your Board and staff are going to continue to work towards having a well-funded, well-managed church so we can advance our progressive mission.

Please plan to attend our annual congregational meeting on June 5, and vote! We have a positive story to tell this year and it has been due to the hard work of many of our members and dedicated staff – let’s celebrate!

Thank you for your generous support and friendship.

Peter



From the left, top row: Peter Durkin, President; Earl Dredge; Lydia Luz, Vice-President; Sheila Whitford; Wendy Van Syckle; Mike Hart; Carolyn Leap. From the left, bottom row: Hazel Heddings; Evan Michaelides, Treasurer; Rita Saylor; Rev. Daniel O’Connell, Senior Minister; Ron Cookston; Lucy Anderson. Not pictured: Steve Braun; Rosita Kirkman, Parish Clerk.

SPANNING THE AGES

By Natalie Browne, Director of Lifespan Faith Development

“Where’s the theme for June?” I asked myself after looking at Rev. Daniel’s calendar for the year and finding nothing listed for the summer months. It reminded me that we have themes for nine months only—we’ll start up again in September. Meantime, creature of habit that I am, for a moment I was at loss for what to write in this column.

Most of us are creatures of habit—we adjust to doing things a particular way and gain comfort by doing so. We can easily get lost without structure. Even in retirement, many of us immediately find ways to schedule in the structure with volunteering, golf dates, classes, etc. And when summer comes, we schedule our children into swimming lessons and camp because we know that we will go crazy with the “I don’t have anything to do’s” that proceed from the mouths of children and youth who have been doing nothing other than waiting for this very freedom since March!

Admitting that we are creatures of habit, as you structure this summer, I encourage two:

1. Keep up your church attendance habit on Sunday mornings. I can almost guarantee you will feel more energized if you make the time for your community and for the insights that come with weekly worship. And if you have children and youth, they too will benefit by not losing contact with their church community.

The summer program will be more relaxed and allow for the kind of interaction they enjoy with their UU friends.

2. Make a point to develop the habit of leaving room for the unstructured time, those moments when the serendipitous just might occur, when you or your children are forced to use your own devices to fill the void. You deserve down time, time for chilling, time to just be.

At the last Circle Worship for the RE Children I had them learn one of Mary Oliver’s shortest poems. It is one of my favorites and many of you heard me refer to it a year ago during a sermon. Here it is:

Instructions for Living a Life

Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.

-Mary Oliver

This gem tells us that we need to take, make, and find time. Time is what we receive as a gift when we abstain from structure. And with it, we can pay attention, be astonished, and tell about it. For the children, I suggested they make a habit of doing this—can we adults do likewise without turned it in to a “must?” For once we do that, it’s no longer a good habit but a duty and something precious may be lost.

Wheel of Life



Declan Todd Brock, son of **Laura and Rob Brock**, was born on Sunday, May 15. His measurements were 8lbs 9oz, 22" long, and his head and chest both measured a little over 14cm around. Congratulations to the Brock family.

The following reports are available in full on the church website at
http://www.firstuu.org/treasurer_reports.php.

TREASURER'S REPORT

With only two months remaining in the fiscal year, it is a good time to try to project where we are headed. Year to date, we are still \$7,500 ahead on the income side. Expenses are \$6,000 below budget, with no particular trend discernable over the last few months. So it looks like we may end up essentially in line with our budget.

Two noteworthy events related to the church's finances occurred after the end of April: The church received an unrestricted bequest in the amount of approximately \$60,000. This is a great step forward in getting our financial house in order. About \$11,000 of this money will be used to pay for the replacement of an air conditioning compressor that failed in recent weeks; the remainder will go to our checking account to cover currently unfunded liabilities and shore up cash flow.

At a congregational meeting on Sunday, May 15, the congregation voted 95 – 3 to approve a resolution to pay \$3,600 per year to the Endowment Fund, superseding all earlier resolutions specifying other payment amounts and schedules. This resolves the issue of repaying past Endowment Fund transfers, and does so with a repayment schedule in line with our means.

SOCIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

June 25th is "Freedom Saturday" at First Church

Freedman's Town renovation: From 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday June 25: We will help the Yates Museum renovate and stabilize several of the six historic homes they own. If you have carpentry skills, we can use them; if not, there be plenty of other work for you. Folks 13 years and older are needed. Earlier that same week we will have an archeologist speak at FirstUU about the importance of Freedman's Town. This is a unique opportunity to touch history. Coordinator: Peter Rhodes (peter.rhodes@att.net). Sign up will begin Sunday, June 5.

Gay Pride Parade: Show your support for the GLBT community! The actual parade will run from 8:15 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on June 25. We will have two vehicles for those who wish to participate but not walk the parade route. Houston UU participation this year is being organized by Sharon Scherer Lockridge, sharon_scherer@yahoo.com of the Northwoods congregation. As we get closer to the 25th we will have directions and a map for the exact location where Houston Area UUs will meet to organize our contingent: See www.Firstchurch.org/pride.php for details. Sign up will begin Sunday, June 5. First UU coordinators: Richard Braastad, LetsDoLaunch@gmail.com and Craig Oettinger paixman@att.net.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Notes from the Stewardship Team

Canvass information has been regularly provided from the pulpit on Sundays and as an insert to the order of service. Key dates are shown with a target of canvass completion by end of May so that next year's budget can be determined. As of May 20, **76% of the congregation has pledged with total pledges at \$526,676**. The Stewardship Team will be telephoning those who remain un-pledged with a follow up canvass letter mailed to those who cannot be contacted by phone.

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH

Welcome to Lifespan Faith Development at First Church where we provide tools to help us grow spiritually, build stronger families, improve relationships and make the world a better place.

A complete and detailed list of the May programs can be found at [www.firstuu.org/pdfs/LFD Current Offerings.pdf](http://www.firstuu.org/pdfs/LFD_Current_Offerings.pdf).

FINDING YOUR WAY AT FIRST CHURCH (for our guests)



Sundays, 11:40 a.m. , lasting about 20 minutes.

Come for an informal conversation after the service. The Meditation Room is between the Sanctuary and Channing Hall. It is a pleasant place where you can meet members who will answer your questions while you enjoy a cup of coffee. You'll still have time for lunch in Channing Hall if you wish.

EXPLORING MINDFULNESS:



Practicing Awareness in Our Everyday Lives

Sundays, June 5 – July 31, (Skipping July 3) 9:15 a.m.

Facilitators: Carol Schwarten and Pam Perry

Newcomers are welcome each week. No experience is needed. Each Sunday we will practice mindfulness using readings, guided meditations, discussion, writing or contemplation and mindfulness practices.

COLLAGING WORKSHOP



Sunday, June 12 and then 4th Sundays of the month, 12:15—2:15 p.m.

Facilitators: Laura Michaelides and Natalie Browne

Join others seeking companionship and meditative quiet as we work on collages. Although some materials will be provided, bring whatever you think you might use or share with group members. Everyone is welcome! Multi-age group and child care available by reservation (email childcare@firstuu.org, with names and age of child.)

GREAT BOOKS DISCUSSION GROUP



Sunday, June 12 (2nd Sunday), 12:15 p.m.

Facilitator: Grace Amborski

The month of June selection for the Great Books discussion is **Anton Chekhov's "A Dull Story."** For more information contact graceamborski@sbcglobal.net.

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS CONTINUED

UU BIBLE STUDY

Sunday, June 19 at 12:15

Facilitator: Rev. Bonnie Vegiard



Join Rev. Bonnie for an open and wide-ranging exploration of the Biblical texts. Rev. Bonnie seeks to help liberal religious people feel confident about their knowledge of Biblical texts' origins. It's lots of fun to know what scholars say about why they say what they say. This course will take an historical-critical approach to the Bible, putting the texts in their context, which helps us know what we can and what we cannot take from them to apply to our lives today.

THE GREAT IDEAS GROUP

Tuesdays, June 14 and 28, (second and fourth Tuesdays) at 7:00 p.m.



Study the great thinkers, great writers, great religions, and great ideas of the past and present. We will have a series of discussions on science and religion with lectures and materials drawn from a variety of sources. For more information contact Eric at ericbotts@prodigy.net or Dan at drdr2001@aol.com.

WHEN IS "GONE" GONE? History, Archaeology, Landscape and Community in Freedmen's Town Wednesday, June 22, 7 p.m. Presenter: Carol McDavid, Ph.D.



This talk will serve as an introduction to the service day that First UU will be doing in Freedmen's Town on Saturday, June 25. Founded by emancipated African Americans after the Civil War, by the late 1800's and early 1900's Freedmen's Town was known as the "Mother Ward" for Houston's growing black professional class. By the end of the twentieth century less than 40 of the original structures remained and they are now dominated by a sea of gentrification. Some of the residents in the newer homes embrace the neighborhood's history but others use media and politics to actively reject it. Within

this context, the Yates Museum and other community groups have been attempting to preserve what is left. This discussion will include the interplay between historic preservation, gentrification, archaeology, mass media, and competing historical narratives, as they have developed in Freedmen's Town, Houston.

LIVING AND DYING WELL WORKSHOP: PLANNING FOR DISABILITY AND END OF LIFE

Saturday, June 25, 10 am to Noon



A panel of professionals, including a doctor, estate planning attorney, grief counselor and nurse, will answer questions about the forms we need to fill out for planning for (1) if we become incapacitated, and (2) what to do with our remains and property when we die. A packet of documents will be available at the workshop and several weeks in advance on Sundays on the Information Table in Channing Hall.

ONGOING LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT GROUPS



SUNDAY MORNING BOOK GROUP at 8:30

UU CHANGING WOMEN - Sunday at 9:15



MEN'S GROUP - Sunday at 11:45



SUNDAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE at 12:00

PARENTS GROUP (Fourth Sunday) at 12:15



MONDAY NIGHT YOGA FOR BEGINNERS at 7:00

TUESDAY NIGHT T'AI CHI at 6:15



FRIDAY MORNING POETRY GROUP at 10:00



SATURDAY MORNING YOGA at 9:00

SATURDAY MORNING T'AI CHI at 10:30

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT (Second Saturday) 6:00



**We Want You Here To Vote at the
Congregational Meeting on Sunday, June 5, 2011**



The Leadership Development Team is pleased to announce our candidates for the Board and Leadership Development Team (LDT) for our new fiscal year which begins July 1, 2011. First Church members will elect one new member for the Board of Trustees and three members for the LDT. The candidates are:

**Connie Acosta for the Board of Trustees
Jon Naylor, Linda Richardson and Cindi Walker
for the Leadership Development Team**

To read the personal biographies of each of these candidates go to
<http://www.firstuu.org/candidates.php>



The young adults first Sunday lunch group will not be gathering this month so that everyone can attend the annual congregational meeting after lunch on June 5. Everyone in their 20s and 30s is invited to join other young adults after the worship service on Sunday, July 3, and head out to a local restaurant for a good meal, great conversation, fun and fellowship. **Join us on Sunday, July 3**, after church when we gather in the front courtyard.

**Thinking about Joining?
Membership Enrollment Day is the
First Sunday of Each Month**



If you would like to join First Church, we ask that you complete the Enrollment Forms: New Member Information, Talents and Interests, Pledge Card and Skills Inventory. These forms are available in the office or from a Sunday Morning Hospitality Team member. Membership Enrollment is held the first Sunday of each month at the Welcome Table in Channing Hall after the worship service. **The next opportunity is Sunday, June 5.** You can turn in your enrollment forms at the Welcome Table in Channing Hall. We welcome the possibility of your joining us soon and hope that your relationship with First UU Church of Houston will be spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally rewarding.



**Celebrate the Summer Solstice
Tuesday, June 21, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

Join us in the Fireside Room as we cooperatively assemble samplings of locally grown fruits and vegetables. No pot luck but instead a variety of the tastes of summer. Come and share your reflections on this turning of the seasons through readings, singing and dancing. All ages are welcome to participate.

12th Annual
Houston Peace Camp
July 25-29, 2011
For children in
kindergarten through
5th grade.

HPC provides an alternative day camp experience that fosters an understanding of peace, justice and environmental awareness.

For more information and registration contact Lyn Furay at 713-726-1266.



The **Care Team's**
next meeting will be
on **Sunday, June 26**
at **12:00 p.m.**



Our shared offering partner for the month of June is **HATCH** (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals). HATCH is dedicated to empowering Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Questioning adolescents ages 12-20 to become responsible citizens and positive contributors to society.

JUNE 2011

Every Sunday Morning

8:30 Early Morning Book Group
 9:00 Changing Women
 10:30 Worship Service
 10:30 RE for Children and Youth

11:30 Lunch
 11:40 Finding Your Way at First Church
 11:45 Men's Group
 12:00 Sunday Discussion Circle

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 6:00 Adult Programs Team	2 7:30 pm Choir Practice	3 10:00 Poetry in Motion 12:00 AL-ANON 7:30 Folk Dancing	4 9:00 Yoga 10:30 Tai Chi
5 Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell See: Every Sunday Morning 9:15 Exploring Mindfulness 11:45 New Member Sign Up 12:15 ANNUAL MEETING	6 7:00 Beginner's Yoga	7 5:30 Beginners Tai Chi 6:15 Tai Chi Class	8 5:30 Welcome Team	9 7:00 Peace Forum 7:30 pm Choir Practice 7:00 Web Team	10 10:00 Poetry in Motion 12:00 AL-ANON 7:30 Folk Dancing	11 9:00 Yoga 10:30 Tai Chi
12 Is Happiness Achievable? See: Every Sunday Morning 9:15 Exploring Mindfulness 11:40 Welcome Guests 12:15 Great Books 12:15 Collaging Workshop	13 7:00 Beginner's Yoga	14 5:30 Beginners Tai Chi 6:15 Tai Chi Class 7:00 Great Ideas	15 7:00 Board of Trustees	16 7:30 Choir Practice	17 10:00 Poetry in Motion 12:00 AL-ANON 7:30 Folk Dancing	18 9:00 Yoga 10:30 Tai Chi
19 Where Have All the Fairies Gone? See: Every Sunday Morning 9:15 Exploring Mindfulness 11:40 Welcome Guests 12:15 UU Bible Study 12:15 RE Curriculum Meeting	20 7:00 Beginner's Yoga 7:00 Rhythm of Life	21 5:30 Beginners Tai Chi 6:15 Tai Chi Class 7:00 Solstice Celebration	22 7:00 When Is "Gone" Gone?	23 7:30 Choir Practice	24 10:00 Poetry in Motion 12:00 AL-ANON 7:30 Folk Dancing	25 9:00 Yoga 10:30 Tai Chi 10:00 Living and Dying Well
26 Change the World See: Every Sunday Morning 9:15 Exploring Mindfulness 11:40 Welcome Guests 12:00 Care Team 12:15 Parents Group	27 10:00 Newsletter Crew 7:00 Beginner's Yoga 7:00 Befrienders	28 5:30 Beginners Tai Chi 6:15 Tai Chi Class 7:00 Great Ideas	29	30 7:30 Choir Practice		

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First Church News

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*A Community of Love Beyond Belief:
Transforming Ourselves, Houston and the World.*

Church Office Hours:
Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell, Senior Minister
Rev. Adam Robinson, Assistant Minister
Rev. Robert L. Schaibly, Minister Emeritus

Natalie Browne, Director of Lifespan Faith Development
Jason Oby, Music Director
Bob Fazakerly, Organist

Peggy Harvey, Director of Administration
Tom Cowen, Facilities Manager
Jessica Pierce, Nursery Coordinator
Hilman Laws, Weekday Custodian
Aaron Laws, Weekend Custodian

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