

# The Pilgrim

Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person

## April services

4 April - First Sunday: Rev. Wyman Rousseau

18 April - Third Sunday: Dallis Rademaker

### Avatars: Jesus & Buddha

James Cameron isn't the only one who knows about avatars. In Hinduism, for example, it is one of the ways of expressing the multiplicity of the single divine.

Religion, says our guest speaker for the first service in April, begins in wonder and 'ends' with avatars who model how we should put our faith into practice.

With that apparently simple statement, Rev. Rousseau, who will also be the guest speaker at the EUU retreat a week later (and was the guest speaker at the NUUF-hosted retreat in Kerkrade in 2005 making this a very welcome return visit) has prepared a topic that should have nearly as many facets as the Divine itself.

### Heavens proclaim the glory

Our own Dallis Rademaker, a man, as they say, of many parts will be leaving the normal legal environment in which he normally spends his day, to take us on a trip to nearly the beginning in an expanded reflection on the fact that the photographs taken by the Hubble telescope showing hundreds of galaxies

as they were (relatively) shortly after the Big Bang...are beautiful.

Why, Dallis asks, is the universe, which some say developed without intervention along evolutionary lines, not like his son's bedroom when he hasn't cleaned up after a month?

Inquiring minds want to know.

President's Message: Krissy Ferris

### Spring has sprung. Hallelujah!

Ahh, spring is here at last. Many of us have been waiting through a winter that seemed never to end, and worse, seemed to become colder and harsher just when you thought it was over. Now the days are getting longer, the sun is occasionally poking its head out, and the whole country seems to be in a more jubilant mood.

One of the first things that struck me upon moving to Amsterdam was the close connection I felt to the seasons and the weather. I thought that I had always been one to notice these things, but really, it turned out, I was quite disconnected. Sure, I vaguely noticed that the days got longer and shorter, and rejoiced when it was warm enough to leave my jacket at home, but in a world of cars and climate control, the seasonal changes are just an abstraction.

Here, there were many opportunities to become acutely aware of the changing seasons. One of my favorite moments of each year is the day that you leave the office in the evening and don't need to put lights on your bike. This is a sure sign that spring is coming, even if the weather is still grim. The next significant moments come as layers of winter gear disappear from the commute – first the gloves, then the hat, then a switch over to the less warm but more waterproof jacket, then the scarf, and soon, finally, the jacket itself stays at home.

Having such an awareness of the weather can be a burden (think of all those times when you really thought it wasn't going to rain, but then...), but it is also a great blessing. Every year I am aware of the passing of time and the changing of weather in a way I would not be if I was less exposed to it in my daily life.

The amazing thing is that in Holland, it goes beyond awareness and into a deep process of cultural appreciation. You must have noticed that at the mere suggestion of warmth and sun, the cafes rush to put their tables out on the terraces. Even more bizarre is the fact that the moment these tables are present, they're occupied. Now, remember, in America, it is difficult to persuade people to leave their climate-controlled environments on even the most perfect days. And here we are, sitting outside in just barely above freezing, huddling over our coffees to keep warm. Yet it makes everyone happy! Fantastic.

Later in the spring, we get the phenomenon of "rokjes-

dag" (literally: short skirt day) – the first day of the year when everyone gets out their summer clothes and celebrates

the fact that they can leave their jackets at home. While this is not a set day, knowing when it is seems to be part of the Dutch collective unconscious.

What is the conclusion from this? The Dutch are subtly, but clearly, a sun-worshipping society. Many people in the Netherlands may say that they have no use for religion, but they find it in other ways – in the neighborly freezing on the terraces, in the celebration of the sun, in the acknowledgement that this is the day when spring is really here. I think that's one kind of worship that UUs can join with enthusiasm!



The April services will be held on 4 & 18 April at 2 p.m. in the Keizersgracht Church, Keizersgracht 566, Amsterdam.  
*Bring a friend (or a total stranger)*

## The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, as part of the European Unitarian Universalists and affiliated with Unitarians and Universalists around the world, covenants to affirm and promote:

- \* The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- \* Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- \* Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- \* A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- \* The right of conscience & the use of the democratic process within our congregations & in society at large;
- \* The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- \* Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, which we are part of.

The living tradition that we share draws from many sources:

- \* Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life;
- \* Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- \* Wisdom from the world's religions, which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- \* Jewish and Christian teachings that call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- \* Humanist teachings that counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- \* Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions that celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As a free congregations we enter into this covenant with others, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

# Petals of laughter

By Christina Tomlow-de Muinck Keizer  
NUUF Women's Group

**E**aster is the time to celebrate the thrill of spring unfolding in nature. At this time we welcome the green god and his growth energy. With the power of the Sun, he coaxes the vegetation and growth from the dark fertile earth. In many cultures the spring goddess is celebrated at this time as the symbol of rebirth. She is the maiden goddess; a young woman who combines creativity, curiosity and imagination with the unbounded and joyful energy of a child. Around the world she is known by many different names:

- **Eostre / Ostara** is a much celebrated goddess of spring. She is associated with flowers and springtime, and her name gives us the word 'Easter.' She is associated with Anglo-Saxon spring feasts.
- **Flora** is the Roman goddess of spring and flowers and has her own festival – Floralia – celebrated every spring. Romans dressed in bright robes and floral wreaths and offered milk and honey to the goddess.
- **Freya** is the Norse fertility goddess who abandons the earth during the cold months, but returns in the spring to restore nature's beauty. She wears a magnificent necklace called Brisingamen, which represents the fire of the sun.
- **Saraswati** is the Hindu goddess of the arts, wisdom and learning. She has her own festival each spring in India, called Saraswati Puma. She is honored with prayers and music, and is usually depicted holding lotus blossoms and the sacred Vedas.
- Aztec spring goddess **Xochiquetzal** was associated with concepts of fertility and female sexual power. She was protector of young mothers and a patroness of pregnancy, childbirth. Xochiquetzal is always depicted as an alluring and youthful woman, richly attired and associated with all vegetation, especially flowers, and followed by a retinue of birds and butterflies.

I particularly like the ancient Japanese story of the sun Goddess **Amaterasu** who hid in her cave all winter long and would not show her face. The world suffered without her shining warmth and everyone tried to convince her to come out. At last it was laughter that coaxed her out. **Uzume**, the shaman-Goddess of laughter, did a

bawdy dance, which elicited howls of laughter from all assembled. So loud and enticing was the uproar she created that Amaterasu's curiosity got the better of her and she came out from her cave. After a long, cold winter laughter brings back the sun.

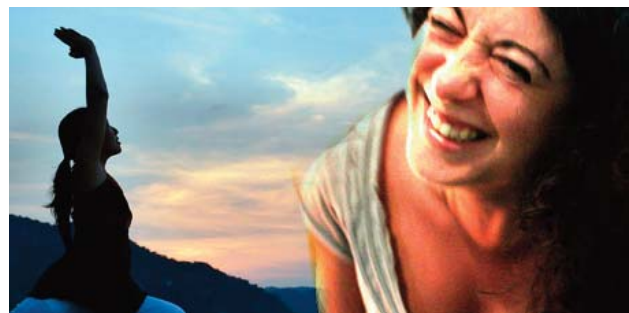


So laughter brings back the light. Uzume dances her comic dance and makes everyone laugh. Not just a little snicker but big, rolling belly laughs. Modern research confirms the life renewing power of laughter. It causes us to relax, it enables us to gain perspective, it helps ease us through difficulties. When was the last time you had a good laugh? Perhaps life is so hectic and challenging it is hard to see the humor. Uzume show us that the light returns when we choose to laugh and see the humor in all of life's challenges.

Consider this: Laughter has been shown to boost the body's production of infection-fighting antibodies. It helps lower blood pressure and increases oxygen in the blood, which encourages healing.

Humor also has several important stress relieving benefits. It reduces the level of stress hormones like epinephrine, adrenaline and dopamine and increases the level of health-enhancing hormones like endorphins, and neurotransmitters. Laughter provides a physical and emotional release as well as an internal workout. A good belly laugh exercises the diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles.

A recent study ("Laugh for no Reason", by Dr. Madan Kataria) stated that preschool-aged children laugh up to 400 times a day, but by the time we reach adulthood, we laugh a mere 17 times per day on average. So embrace the energy of youth and spring and - laugh! Look for humor around you. Laugh at anything you can. Be silly and amuse yourself with your own sense of humor.



Laughter yoga, introduced by Dr. Madan Kataria now has programmes around the world...but you really don't need the help...just laugh!!

# NUUF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Greetings from your NUUF RE leaders. We are a fast-growing class, and are proud to announce that we now have EIGHT delightful young UU's in attendance most months!

After planning and leading the December holiday service (see photos), the NUUF-RE class is now following the "Tapestry of Faith: Wonderful Welcome" curriculum. In February, we explored tangible and intangible gifts and made valentines.

We would like to extend a special welcome to Alevia and

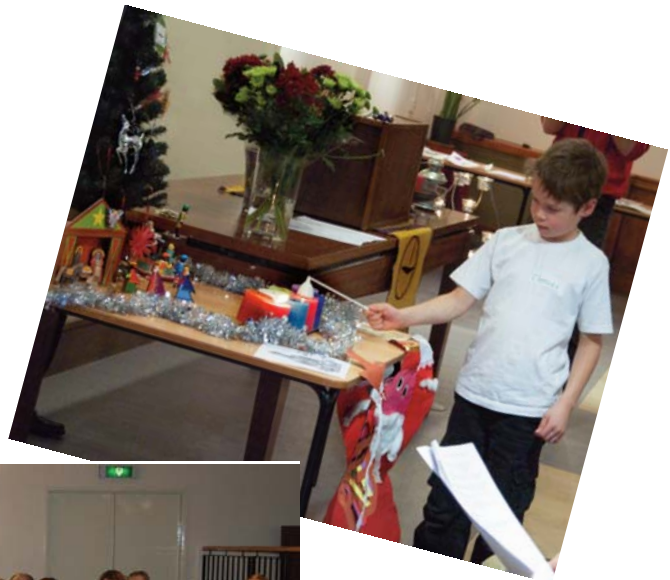
Glenn Dolye, who are our newest class members.

Please remember that RE is only offered during the first Sunday meeting.

Adults: If you would like to volunteer to assist in one of our classes, or to share a special talent with the NUUF kids, please let us hear from you.

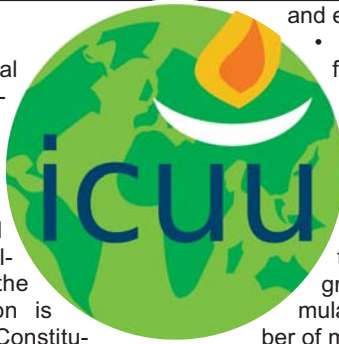
See you at church!

Brenda and Michael de Jong



About the ICUU

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists is a body devoted fostering connections between Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist groups around the world. Our mission is spelled out in our Constitution. In 2007 the ICUU also adopted the following statement:



The Mission of the ICUU is to:

- Build relationships through communication and collaboration;
- Develop spiritual community among member groups and their leaders;
- Identify and nurture prospective

and emerging groups;  
 • Foster our U-U faith for mutual inspiration, development and growth.

The Council is funded by contributions from national groups following a formula based on the number of members they report.

There are two levels of contribution reflecting the differences between the developing and the developed world.

Between Council meetings, the ICUU programs are managed and developed by a volunteer Executive Committee supported by a paid Executive Secretary and a team of volunteers around the world.



**You are Invited!**

to take part in

An International Unitarian/Universalist Theological Symposium

Belonging: Our Unitarian Identities and the Nature of our Relations

July 13 – 17, 2010

Rolduc Conference Center, Kerkrade, The Netherlands

Our focus will be theological exploration and discussion, of who we are as U-U's, in the many places in which we live and work, and of how we belong – to each other, to our global movement, to the world around us, and to God or Life.

For registrations - e-mail [execsec@icuu.net](mailto:execsec@icuu.net)

**NUUF Services 2009-2010**

<b>4 April</b> Rev. Wyman Rousseau TBA	<b>2 May</b> Rickie Moore & Henry Marshall TBA
<b>11 April</b> Rev. Wyman Rousseau Oberwesel, Germany TBA	<b>16 May</b> Druids TBA
<b>18 April</b> Dallis Radamaker ‘The heavens proclaim the glory of God’	<b>6 June</b> Rev. Derek Suchard “Service”



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**Service helpers**

Service helpers help to prepare the church for the service and help at the bar after the service.

- Helpers are asked
- 1) to come early to help set up and take down the service : set out hymnals, name tags, altar cloth, candles, etc.
  - 2) to bring flowers or some altar decoration
  - 3) to bring some cookies or baked goods for the 'coffee and conversation' hour
  - 4) to help Jan in the kitchen and behind the serving bar.

April 4: MJ and Krissy  
 April 18: Bill and \_\_\_\_\_  
 May 2: Rosemary and \_\_\_\_\_  
 May 16: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
 June 6: Willem and Els

If you can fill in your name to be a helper in the missing blanks, please e-mail Bill Britt at

[wwjebritt@gmail.com](mailto:wwjebritt@gmail.com)

**NUUF Services**

The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship services usually begin with a candle-lighting ceremony and sharing of joys or concerns. Each month a minister or a member of our congregation presents information about a particular religion, spiritual quest or another topic of interest to religious liberals. Music and singing is always a part of our service but we also provide time for contemplation and meditation. After the

service we have a social hour with coffee, tea, juice, refreshments and, of course, good company. We meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on the first or second Sunday of the month (Sept. to June) at the Keizersgrachtkerk, Keizersgracht 566, Amsterdam. For more information contact Bill Britt on 015 369-2614 or by e-mail at [wwjebritt@gmail.com](mailto:wwjebritt@gmail.com).

We hope to see you!

**The Caring Group**

The NUUF's Caring Group invites you to call someone from the Group if you need some help. You can also call one of us if you know of someone in the group who could use a helping hand, emotionally or otherwise, but who cannot call us for some reason. And, of course, please let us know if you would like to add your name and number to the group list:

Rev. Derek Suchard  
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 or 06- 203 379 64  
 Willem van Leenhoff  
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**Masthead**

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Articles, information or illustrations for publication in *The Pilgrim* may be submitted at the Fellowship service, by post or e-mail by the 10th of the month to Derek Suchard.

**The NUUF Women's Group**

meets on the second Friday of each month at 7 p.m. For information, contact Christina Tomlow on 030-288-7657.

