

The Pilgrim

Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person

March services

7 March/The First Sunday: Jessica Shinnick

21 March/The Third Sunday: Rev. Bruce Clear

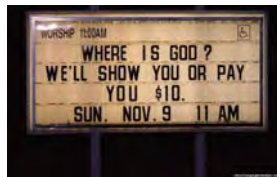
Where is God?

It may be an exaggeration, but if so, it's only a small one, to say that there are as many ways that people understand and connect with 'God' as there are, or ever have been, or ever will be people (to say nothing of any extra-terrestrial seeking beings we know nothing about.)

In our first service in March, NUUF member Jes-

sica Shinnick will be exploring at least some of those ways with music, readings and some discussion.

Not to be missed!



Keeping a civil tongue

Rudeness, one might be forgiven for believing, seems to have become increasingly common. Okay, it *has* become increasingly common. So what, I hear you ask, does that have to do with putting my UU faith into practice, which is, after all, the theme for this year.

In the service on the third Sunday, UU Minister the Reverend Bruce Clear (Indianapolis) will be discussing that very point, especially with an eye to the UU principle of 'respecting the worth and dignity of every person' (see banner above).



President's Message: Krissy Ferris

Walking with.... you

I was talking to a friend about NUUF the other day, and he asked, "If you don't believe anything, then what's the point of coming to church?" Of course, I was quick to mention that it isn't that UUs don't have any beliefs, but rather that we are commonly engaged in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. ("Sounds like research," he replied.) But the question remained: why be a UU, and how does that shape our identity?

In a way, Unitarian Universalism seems to be the kind of self-selecting identity that "those kind of people" chose. You know the ones I mean, right? They are hard to define, but you can be pretty sure that no matter where you go, the UUs you meet will want to engage in a

thought-provoking conversation, usually over good food and drink.

It might be best summarized in the Bond of Union of the congregation I attended in the US:

"We join hands in Unitarian Universalist fellowship, pledging ourselves to an individual religious freedom, which transcends all creeds; not to think alike, but to walk together."

That idea – that we can walk (and talk) together, without necessarily agreeing on the contents, but agreeing instead on the desire to share a conversation – is the essence of why I find it valuable to come to church. Of course, it's also about the friendships, the Joys & Concerns, the drinks after church (from coffee hour to

happy hour), the opportunity to sing off-key in public, and learning about other religious traditions.

But it all comes back to the above agreement, which I think all UUs share. The special quality of being not just willing but also excited about walking with people who hold different views is what promises you a stimulating experience wherever in the world you meet other UUs.

The UU church, then, provides a platform for meeting other people who want to share a sense of community, yes, but who also want to ask those deeper questions.

Sometimes we come to church looking for confirmation of our beliefs, sometimes looking for sparring partners to challenge our thinking. At other times, we might just be looking for a quiet moment of self-reflection, or the feeling of support that a community provides.

Maybe you could say that we're a church for people who want to find or make their own meaning, and want both the nourishment and the challenge of engaging with a community of similarly seeking people.

Of course, that's just me... why are you a UU?



This metal sculpture by British artist Frank Wilson ('Nine walking figures', available for £525 from the Bowlsh Contemporary Gallery) could easily be a reflection of a UU fellowship.

The March services will be held on 7 & 21 March 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.

Spring hopes eternal

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

March brings the Vernal Equinox. Once again day and night are evenly balanced. This is the time of the Goddess Ostara/ Eostra, Ishtar, and Persephone – all of whom are the personification of new beginnings. Plants and animals are appearing again. Everything is beginning to grow.

It is a time of finding balance and starting again. For me, personally, I do this by fasting. Call it a spring-cleaning. It is a way of rebooting my system. I am not unique in this. Many religious traditions prescribe some form of fasting at this time of year, think of Lent. Fasting is a way of reconnecting with ones own body and regaining clarity of spirit. That is why this custom has been a part of religious and spiritual practices worldwide for as far back as we remember.

But either way, fast or not fast, the springtime renewal energy reminds us that we can always start over. Deepak Chopra likens our body to a river. A river is forever changing since the body of water that flows through its bed is never the same. Like this our body continually renews itself. Every 5 days the lining of your stomach renews itself, every 5 weeks you have new skin and your skeleton is completely renewed every 3 months. So our bodies really are continuously starting over.

The only thing holding us back is our mind. We are forever looking back at what has already happened, to the point that it gets entwined in our forward

moving energy. It makes me think of the snowdrop that accidentally got trampled by the children last spring, which I now see blooming beautifully in my front garden. It didn't carry any of that trampled energy with it.

I know I am simplifying some very complex processes and yet sometimes it is nice to do just that. To contemplate just letting go and stepping into the present (if only for a moment).

And so we greet and celebrate Ostara with her pale greens of new growth, her delicate and strong new beginnings. Goddess of the Dawn, Ostara heralds the triumphant rebirth of the sun and the return of the greening season. Associated with the element air, she stimulates our intellect, brings us new thoughts and the ability to soar.

Christina Tomlow-de Muinck Keizer
NUUF Women's Group



Hail Ostara, goddess of rebirth

We bid Thee welcome,
Returning Maiden of many Names
green-gowned Goddess
awakening the drowsy year
from its seasonal wintry sleep!

The ground stirs to greet
Thy gentle footsteps,
as shoots of buoyant life
break free in profusions of ecstatic color
through the weakening grip
of Winter-hardened earth.

Thou art the Lady most lovely,
Sweet Blossom of Spring,
perfumed in hyacinth;
Thine arrival trumpeted
by multitudes of yellow gleaming
daffodils

as the youthful Sun frames Thy form
in virile beams of golden strength.

Be pleased, O Lady,
to revel among us while we celebrate
Thy freshly-scented laughter
wafting gently upon warming winds
as springtime showers fall softly
upon Thine earthen breasts of
rolling land.

Vernal Maiden of the Equinox,
we invoke Thee
to be here among us!

From "The Crafted Cup" - Shadowynn,
1994, Llewellyn

What is UUSC doing?

Emergency aid agencies are trying to deliver aid to Haiti, but the airport is bottlenecked and a large-scale relief effort is still not in operation. Aid is taking a long time to reach those in desperate need. Throngs of people have left Port-au-Prince and are travelling to the countryside in search of help, medical care and shelter. Meanwhile those who are still in the capital city have constructed large makeshift camps in open areas, weaving shelters together out of cloth and plastic. Most distribution of aid has been chaotic.

- We are working with the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP), a national small farmers group, to set up reception points in the countryside to shelter and support the earthquake survivors streaming out of Port-au-Prince.
- With a sister organization, we are organizing supplies to two Haitian grassroots organizations, so they can distribute basic items to survivors in Port-au-Prince and Jacmel. Supporting local grassroots organizations to carry out the relief response builds on their knowledge and experience and empowers them to respond to their own people.
- We are working with a group of Haitian grassroots organizations to help them get back on their feet and operational.
- We are sending a staff assessment mission to Haiti from February 5-12 to meet with partners and determine communities' medium- and long-term needs.
- Our Programs Director has been training, by phone, medical teams providing emergency services on the ground.

Once we have completed the assessment, we will be able to develop our long-term response: reaching out to survivors who are on the margins of the relief and recovery efforts, including child domestic workers (restaviks), amputees, and women in the informal market sector.

Haiti has a vibrant grassroots movement with a vision of empowering people. UUSC will work closely with partners in this movement to reach those survivors at greatest risk of being overlooked.

What can you do?

Donations to the relief fund can be made through our website [www.uusc.org/haitiearthquake] and by mailing checks payable to "UUSC/UUA Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund."

Mail checks to: UUSC, P.O. Box 844001 Boston, MA 02284-4001.

Please visit our website at www.uusc.org, as we are posting frequent updates.

Earthquake devastates Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas in Haiti



Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, was devastated by a major earthquake on January 12. UUSC and the Unitarian Universalist Association have launched a joint earthquake relief fund to help the survivors. The situation is chaotic. The U.N. estimates that 3.5 million people are affected and as of January 21, over 70,000 people have been buried in mass graves.

Come, come, whoever you are.

Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving — it doesn't matter,

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come, even if you have broken your vow a hundred times,

Come, come again, come.

As quoted in *Sunbeams : A Book of Quotations* (1990) by Sy Safransky, p. 67



Why is this year different from all other years?

Because, this year.....

Shulamit and Alinda Levine-Helleman would like to invite UU members to join us for a Pesach (Passover) seder on Monday 29 March 2010 at our home in Nieuwegein (just south of Utrecht and easily accessible by auto or public transportation).

We're expecting a mixed group of guests, some with lots of Jewish background and experience with seders and some with no Jewish background at all. We would like to begin the ritual by 18:00, so we ask people to come by 17:30 if possible (if that's not possible, let us know when you mail and we can discuss it). The food is a coordinated vegetarian potluck, following the Sephardic rules. For those who would prefer not to cook, there are also many things which need purchasing. In addition to a potluck item, we would also appreciate a donation to help defray the costs.

Please let us know by 15 March if you would like to join us for the seder, by email to seder@starbirds.nl, or by phone (06-24731837). Shulamit and Alinda Levine-Helleman

What is Pesach?

Pesach is a holiday to celebrate freedom from slavery. And Pesach is a time to remember that not all have that same freedom and that no one is truly free until all are free. The Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzraim, means 'narrow places' and for many has come to mean all those places where people are oppressed.

What is a seder?

A seder is a ritual meal to begin Pesach. We use a book called a haggadah which contains stories, songs, and rituals. We eat special foods and talk about the story of our slavery in Egypt and our freedom.

How is our seder different from all other seders?

In our seder, we add much to the basic ritual, with both a political and a spiritual focus. On the spiritual level, we speak of the journey of our souls. We live the story of the Exodus in our life journey. On the political level, we expand the story to look at other ways in which we are now oppressed and how we can help everyone to be free. We emphasize the importance of working for freedom, for ourselves and for other peoples, to act both locally and globally.

Our haggadah is in three languages, English, Dutch and Hebrew, with large portions only in English - poetry, songs, the story. The songs we use come from various freedom struggles. Everything we do in Dutch or Hebrew will have an English translation available. We use much of our own original material.

What are these Sephardic rules you are talking about? (a.k.a. What do we and don't we eat?)

There are five forbidden grains: wheat (except for matzah), barley, rye, spelt and oats. In addition, we don't use yeast or baking powder.

Retreat registration open now!!!

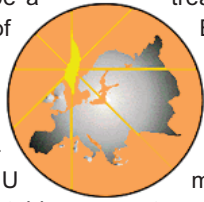
Registration for the EUU spring retreat which will be held Oberwesel, Germany from 9-11 April 2010 is now open. Early-bird discounts apply for registrations by 19 March, after which a late fee of €10 will apply.

The registration can be reached from the EUU website: www.europeanuu.eu.

The theme of the retreat

has not yet been announced, but it promises to be a pleasant mixture of enjoyment and spiritually uplifting encounters.

The retreat location is a familiar EUU haunt, the youth hostel in the hilly and forested countryside of Rheinland Pfalz, Germany.



In addition to the normal retreat activities (see the EUU website for details), Oberwesel also offers a medieval castle within walking distance (10 minutes) that can be toured, some lovely countryside to stroll in, the lovely town of Oberwesel to stroll about in and, within driving

distance, a cloister of the community that medieval mystic and composer Hildegard of Bingen once led (includes a very well-stocked gift shop including many Hildegard-related things to buy, and you can tour parts of the convent.)

The guest speaker at the retreat will be the Rev. Wyman Rousseau.

(P.S. there's a pool.)



Jugendgastehaus in Oberwesel, Germany, site of the EUU spring 2010 retreat.



UU Minister and haiku master Rev. Wyman Rousseau, guest speaker at EUU spring 2010 retreat.

NUUF Services 2009-2010

7 March Jessica Shinnick 'Where is 'God'?'	18 April Dallis Radamaker 'The heavens proclaim the glory of God'
21 March Rev. Bruce Clear 'A civil tongue'	2 May Rickie Moore & Henry Marshall
4 April Rev. Wyman Rousseau TBA	TBA
11 April Rev. Wyman Rousseau Oberwesel, Germany TBA	16 May Druids TBA
	6 June Rev. Derek Suchard

NUUF contacts

President:: Krissey Ferris kmferris @ gmail.com	Youth Religious Education Coordinator: Brenda de Jong bjanedejong @ gmail.com
Vice Presidents: Michael de Jong mbgdejong @ gmail.com Albert Manders albertmanders @ hot-mail.com	UU Minister Rev. Derek Suchard djsuchard @ gmail.com
Treasurer: Bill Britt wwjebritt @ gmail.com	NUUF bank account: ABN AMRO 45 64 52 702 Pijnacker
Secretary/Worship Committee: Jessica Shinnick jshinnick @ yahoo.com	Keizersgrachtkerk: Contact: Omar Aguilera 020 626-6868 (concierge)
	website: www.nuuf.nl

Service helpers

Service helpers help to prepare the church for the service and help at the bar during the coffee and sweets after the service. Helpers should arrive half an hour before the service starts (i.e. 1:30 p.m.).

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 email at 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
023 562 8681
or 06- 203 379 64
Willem van Leenhoff
071-523 25 96
Dallis Radamaker
06 10947649

Masthead

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Editor/Coordinator:
Derek Suchard
djsuchard @ gmail.com
06-20337964

Circulation manager: Bill Britt
wwjebritt @ gmail.com
015 369 2614

Copy and photographs/artwork can be sent by e-mail (djsuchard @ gmail.com) or by post to: Van Egmondstraat 28 RD, 2024 XN Haarlem, (Netherlands)

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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.

