



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Fullerton
1600 North Acacia Avenue,
Fullerton, CA 92831

Jon Dobrer, Minister



Services begin at 10:30 am

January Sermons:

Jan 6 Making Resolutions that Count

Jan 13 Ritual and Spiritual Practice in Our Lives

Jan 20 Unitarian Universalists Around the World – Really!

Presented by Doris Dressler- Clark and Randi Hetrick

The service will include a slide presentation of the ICUU conference, worship and music with an international flavor, African snacks and an update on the emerging African congregations

Jan 27 Aging Disgracefully—Wisdom & Folly

FULLERTON COLD WEATHER SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS AT THE ARMORY on the corner of Brookhurst and Valencia in Fullerton. Meet every Wednesday at 5:30 PM to help out. Contact **Bill Bryant**



TRIBUTES

**Happy Holidays to all my friends,
Rose Bale**

**Happy Holidays to everyone,
Jack & Nancy Theibert**

**Merry Christmas, Peace and Joy to one and all,
Jim & Gwen Fyke**

George Bailey stands poised on the bridge, contemplating ending his life. George has been on that cold dark bridge just about every Christmas season since 1946 when "It's a Wonderful Life" came out (to not much acclaim). I have been drawn to George and that bridge since I was a young boy watching the film on our, then new, 9-inch Philco.

Eventually the world caught up with my high opinion of the compelling nature of the film. It has become a classic and greatly beloved. It is also regularly trashed as being schmaltzy and what is called "Capra Corn." I don't agree. It is an often dark treatise on American capitalism, social inequality and how money, greed and lust for fame distort our values.

My purpose however is not to review the movie. I want to talk about fear—real fear, primordial fear, existential fear; the kind of fear George Bailey experienced that drove him to the ledge.

We are all born with certain fears in our genetic code. Yes, surely some fears are taught and others learned. Some are neurotic. But some are also built in. Drop a feeder fish in a tank with predators. The feeders, who have never seen a predator, know they are literally dead meat. The predators, who have never hunted, instantly hunt. No teaching. No learning, just built-in fear. As humans we may be carefully taught to hate, but fear of falling and fear of abandonment are built into us.

George is in primordial existential despair as he stands in the cold and looks down, ready to jump into the water and an eternal frozen night. He feels utterly alone—despite the family who loves him, the town that he helped build and the joyful sounds of the holiday songs and carols. He is alone and feels friendless and useless. He is all but quoting

Psalm 22 and the Crucifixion as his dying soul is crying, "Father My Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The joy of the season makes it harder. The songs of faith make an ironic counter point to his ebbing faith. He is inconsolable. George believes all that he had, all that he had sacrificed his early dreams for, lie frozen in the slush. Despite his good works and his earnest application of good values, his reputation, he believes is in ruins. He sees no possibility of recovery. His is a fall from grace—a fall he is willing to complete by going from grace to the bridge and finally plunging into the river. This is fear, real fear really a profound fear:

But what we are afraid of, what has our society carefully taught us to fear? Number one on the list of most Americans is terrorism—and subsumed in this are Muslims, Al Qaeda and Iran. We are afraid of food—of mad cows, angry sheep and nervous chickens. We live in dread of filthy fish from fetid ponds in China. We are also afraid of lead in toys, toothpaste and jewelry from China. (Personally, I'm afraid China will run out of lead). We are afraid of the literalism of "kill the umpire" being construed as a terrorist threat. We are afraid to touch a child in either anger or affection. We are afraid of losing our rights. We are afraid of using our rights. We are afraid of even speaking our fears—lest we be labeled as un-patriotic or neurotic.

Our synagogues and churches live in fear of actually saying anything and losing their tax-exempt status. Our candidates live in fear of actually saying anything with any nuance or complexity and thereby turning off the money spigots.

(Continued)

(Minister's Column, Continued)

The rules that we accept at airports of no free speech and being subjected to unreasonable search and seizure—as well as literally unwarranted detainment—are spreading beyond the boundaries of our airports.

The good news is that now fear of our own government is not just from the far right but also now the left and even middle also fear the erosion of our liberties. Americans at one moment swagger with arrogance and the next cower submissively.

What is remarkable is that very few of the things we fear actually present a statistically significant threat to us. As frightening as terror is, both by its meaning and the indelible pictures in our heads of 9-11, we are unlikely to be victims. As nasty a Mad Cow Disease is, we do not have a bonafide death from Jakob Kreuzfeldt originating within our borders. As real as the dangers of steroids are (and I know since I'm subject to steroidal psychosis) our athletes dying young are more likely to be killed in cars or by lead poisoning from bullets than from 'roids. As poisonous as our air may be, as proscribed as our rights are becoming, the greatest dangers to our lives, our families and our society are, I believe, spiritual.

We are inclined, like George Bailey on the bridge, to see our lives in black and white, as success or failure, as good or bad. It is not so simple. Life is not so simple, and we are complex beings.

George chased a dream. He wanted success and adventure. He wanted to be an explorer, someone famous. He wanted to be an architect and build skyscrapers a mile high and bridges (ironic, huh?) miles long. He equated success with fame and fortune—and when that didn't happen for him, he was blinded to what success, real success, is and how he had, in fact, achieved it.

The gift that he got on that bridge was not a literal angel (I'm no It's a Wonderful Life fundamentalist). He got to attend his own funeral and hear the eulogies—only done in the dramatic form of how the world would have been without him. It is a variation of Dickens' Christmas Carol. George got an angel instead of a ghost. He was thus able to see that his success was in his family, in the good will of his neighbors and the love and respect of his friends. He came to understand that while he was looking up and not seeing the skyscrapers he hadn't built, he also did not see the houses he had built, the hearths he had stoked, the lives he had touched and the good he had done.

George was not a perfect man. He had his demons and disappointments. He had a temper, and under stress he could lash out in anger or sink to despair. He was, in a word, human. He did not have a perfect life. He did not have a wonderful life; one that reminds us the some fear is inevitable. The great antidote for fear is not more fear or even different fear. The antidote for the primal fears of falling and abandonment is a life well lived, with generosity of spirit and love—a life holding and being held in the loving arms of others.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—JANUARY 2008

At this time of new beginnings many of us find it a common experience to follow the age-old urge to make resolutions, typically involving diet, exercise, thrift, good deeds, and the like. With a clean slate and a fresh calendar, it seems as if it should be a perfect time to get all these beneficial habits going--walking the recommended 10,000 steps each day, cutting out those pesky white carbs, starting a new savings regime, and/or performing anonymous daily acts of kindness. How simple and compelling it

seems to make these vows to ourselves, promises well intended to better our own life and the lives of those around us. And yet, haven't we all long observed and experienced feelings of guilt and disappointment when we let ourselves down and don't live up to all the bright goals we've taken on. Soon the great plan is often given up in frustration, not to be thought of again until perhaps the start of the next year, when the cycle repeats anew.

In view of this all-too-human foible, I've decided to make it easier on myself for 2008, to simplify the process and cut out extraneous aims. This year I'll narrow the scope and choose just one thing. What springs to mind as being a most valuable and worthy personal habit to develop is that of an outlook of gratefulness, or (more hokey) an attitude of gratitude. Those who believe that our thoughts influence and create the reality we experience cite a universal *Law of Gratitude* and tell us that attaining this mindset can lead to an unshakable happiness. From a different perspective, the minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, Galen Guengerich, expresses the conviction that "*gratitude should be the defining element of our Unitarian Universalist faith. In the same way as Judaism is defined by obedience, Christianity by love, and Islam by submission, I believe that Unitarian Universalism should be defined by gratitude*".

I've been trying some preliminary practice even before the start of the year. Recently, as I was griping over the mess and inconvenience of a small household renovation project, a friend reminded me instead to be glad that I had another bedroom to move into, another bath to use. One morning there was no hot water—I turned my mind to the vast numbers who have neither running water nor heat and I began to feel thankful and less indignant. With practice, the usual holiday stresses of gift-buying, entertaining, card writing became an impetus (rather than for fatigue and "it's all too much!") for conscious thankfulness for family, friends, and the means to be able to perform these tasks.

Note: One thing I'm especially grateful for is a long-awaited vacation in Egypt and Jordan January 12-February 2. Should the need arise during my absence, please contact Donnette Gultinan (Administrator), Kathey Schuster (V.P.), or Lou Arnwine (Secretary).

In peace and fellowship,
Mary Rhodes

Mark Your Calendars! *Service Auction* Saturday, February 9, 2008



This is our only major fund raiser of the year, we want you to donate and attend!!!

Can you host a party, teach a lesson, provide a service, or give a homemade item or gift certificate? The deadline for member donations is Sunday January 13, 2008. Please don't wait until the last minute to let us know what you would like to donate.

If you'd like to volunteer to help out with the auction, contact **Cathy Boon**, our Service Auction chairperson. There will be a Service Auction Committee meeting on Sunday January 6 at 9 AM in the Social Hall.

Cathy Boon,
Chairperson

Service Auction

Foreign Foods Friday will be enjoying a cuisine that is closer to home this month. Many of the best Mexican food is to be found in fast food or small 'mom and pop' places that cannot accommodate a group like ours. So this month we will be having our dinner at the venerable Mexican chain restaurant Don Jose's. It is located at the corner of Placentia and Yorba Linda, 1725 N. Placentia, Fullerton. We'll meet at 7 pm as usual. **Sign up in the social hall after church or see Lou Arnwine.**

O Karma, Dharma, pudding and pie,
gimmie a break before I die
grant me wisdom, will and wit
purity, probity, pluck and grit
Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, kind
gimmie great abs and steel-trap mind,
and forgive, Ye Gods, some humble advice-
these little blessings would suffice
to beget an earthly paradise:
make the bad people good-
make the good people nice;
and before our world goes over the brink,
teach the believers how to think.

Philip Appleman - *Good Poems*

I AM THE NEW YEAR.
I am unused, unspotted, without blemish,
I stretch before you three hundred
And sixty-five days long.
I will present each day
In it's turn, a new leaf
In the book of life
For you to place upon
It your imprint.

I AM THE NEW YEAR.
Each hour of every day, I will
Give you sixty minutes that
Have never known the use of man.
It remains for you to use them
With sixty jeweled seconds of
Love, hope, endeavor, patience
And trust in God.

I AM THE NEW YEAR.
I am coming -
But once past, I can
Never be recalled.
Make me your best!

(Author Unknown)

Religious Education NEWS

This Swedish festival of lights helps to brighten up the long winter nights in December. On Sunday, December 16th a beautiful Santa Lucia and her delightful attendants brightened our hearts by making their way through the sanctuary. Santa Lucia celebrates the life of an Italian saint, Lucia, who found her way to Sweden and was known for her kindness and love.



**SANTA LUCIA &
HER ATTENDANTS**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR JANUARY

- January 6th: Regular Classes Meet
R.E. Committee Meeting at 12:15 in the Youth Chapel. All welcome. Childcare provided.
- January 13th: Regular Classes Meet
OWL Parent Meeting – UU Church of Long Beach
Contact Susan Perlson for more information.
- January 20th: Regular Classes – Pre-School and Elementary
Adult Service – Middle School and High School
- January 27th: “Game Day” – Pre-School and Elementary
Regular Classes – Middle School and High School

“After Hours” YRUU Group

The [Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara](#) is hosting a social action mini-con from February 1st – February 3rd. More information will be provided via e-mail. If you are not on the list, please contact Celeste Mendelson.

UU Church in Fullerton Calendar

Jan 3	Thu	11:45a Men's Lunch Group	
		7:00p Choir Practice	
Jan 6	Sun	9:00a Service Auction Committee Meeting	In the social hall. Contact Cathy Boon.
		Making Resolutions That Count	Sermon by Rev. Jon Dobrer
		12:00p Youth RE Committee Meeting	Contact Susan Perlson
		12:30p Lunch Bunch	At Marie Callender's , Placentia. Contact Pat Woodhull .
Jan 7	Mon	9:30a Fuddy Duddies	Contact Jan Lillibridge
		7:00p Women's Wisdom Circle	At the home of Alice Dyer Topic: What was your best experience with drugs or alcohol? Your worst experience?
Jan 8	Tue	7:00p Board Meeting	
Jan 10	Thu	7:00p Choir Practice	
Jan 12	Sat	Circle Supper Night	Contact Marcia Taylor
Jan 13	Sun	9:00a UU and You Membership Class	
		10:30a -11:45a Ritual and Spiritual Practice in Our Lives	Sermon by Rev. Jon Dobrer
		12:00p Social Action Committee Meeting	Contact Bill Bryant for more information
		12:30p Lunch Bunch	At Marie Callender's , Placentia. Contact Pat Woodhull .
Jan 16	Wed	11:45a Men's Lunch Group	Meet at Carrows in Fullerton , every 4th Wednesday.
Jan 17	Thu	7:00p Choir Practice	
Jan 18	Fri	7:00p Bridge Night	Contact Claude Coppel
Jan 20	Sun	10:30a -11:45a Partnership Church Presentation	Special Service presented by Randi Hetrick and Doris Dressler-Clark
		12:30p Lunch Bunch	At Marie Callender's , Placentia. Contact Pat Woodhull .
		Martin Luther King Readings	At the Service
Jan 21	Mon	7:00p Investment Club	Contact Gwen Fyke or Brad Woodhull .
		7:00p Women's Wisdom Circle	Contact Barbara Keller for topic and location
Jan 22	Tue	5:30p All Souls Potluck	In the social hall. No pork or shellfish please.
		6:30p Salon Discussion Group	With Rev. Jon Dobrer . Following the potluck.
Jan 24	Thu	7:00p Choir Practice	
Jan 25	Fri	7:00p Foreign Foods Friday	Contact Lou Arnwine to sign up / restaurant information.
Jan 27	Sun	9:00a UU and You Membership Class	
		10:00a UUSC TCommittee Meet	Meet on the patio. Contact Anne Thorward - information.
		10:30a -11:45a Aging Disgracefully	Sermon by Rev. Jon Dobrer .
		12:30p Lunch Bunch	At Marie Callender's , Placentia. Contact Pat Woodhull .
Jan 31	Thu	11:45a Men's Lunch Group	
		7:00p Choir Practice	

UUCF President: Mary Rhodes

Board members: Lou Arnwine, Ed Tschabrun, Catherine Gallaher, Will Nettleship, Tom Stark, Kathey Schuster, Susan Perlson and Mike Steiner.

Church Information Phone: (714) 871-7150

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The deadline for the next issue of the
CommUUnicator is NOON, December 18th
Please submit all items to Randi Hetrick

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