



The Latitudinarian

The Monthly Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley

REFLECTIONS BY REV. ERIC POSA

Monthly Theme: Sacredness

We, as a community of faith, seek to make meaning as an ever deepening spiritual community, engaging with all we find sacred. (from church Vision Statement)

Some of you know the parable from India, of the three blind men and the elephant. The man who feels the elephant's leg says the elephant is like a tree, the one feeling the elephant's trunk compares it to a large snake, and the one touching the tail believes the elephant is like a vine. None of us, on encountering an elephant, likely would think of a tree, a snake, or a vine, but these explanations fit the experiences of those three men. The men are not defining the elephant's reality as tree, snake, or vine, but using an analogy - a metaphor - to describe their encounter.

And so it also goes for our encounters with the sacred, or with what Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams called "the ultimate." The story expresses the limits to our ability to encounter directly that which is ultimate. For us Unitarian Universalists, we have come over time to affirm this mystery, and the widely divergent experiences and theologies of the ultimate, of the sacred. Every Sunday, as we enter into our time of silent meditation and prayer, I invite you to connect with that which you find sacred, which you find holy. That invitation reflects this diversity of spiritual experience and theological understanding which we hold dear.

As I said in a sermon some months ago, the most common name in our culture for the

Ultimate is "God." It's also a name loaded with connotations. Some of us don't like to use this name, because we reject so many of those connotations; in some cases, we even reject the connotation of "existence." The great liberal Christian theologian Paul Tillich, on the other hand, describes "the permanent discussion about the existence or nonexistence of God" as "a discussion in which both sides are equally wrong, because the discussion itself is wrong..." Arguing that God exists is just as wrong as arguing God doesn't exist, says this Christian theologian.

So what is this God, who cannot be said to exist, or not exist? Tillich gets it right, I think, with his definition: God "is the name for that which concerns [us] ultimately." Tillich simply removes ALL the specific connotations from the word "God." Rather, Tillich uses the word as the generic name, as the general metaphor, to label whatever may serve a god-like role in the life of a person. (I trust that, when you hear me uses the word "God," you understand I am speaking generally, in this larger metaphorical sense, of the ultimate, whatever that may be for you.)

The key question, then, is not whether or not God exists, whether the ultimate exists. Rather, is that which we find ultimate in our lives up to the task of meeting our ultimate needs? This, I suggest, is the most important question we can ask ourselves, when we work to discern what we understand as "sacred."

JUNE 2010

- Mark Your Calendars!**
- Thurs., June 3, 7:00pm—Social Justice Committee Mtg
 - Sat., June 5, 7:00pm—Conradance
 - Wed., June 9, 7:00pm—UU Drum Circle
 - Thurs., June 10, 7:00pm—UUCBV Board Meeting
 - Fri., June 11, 5:30pm—Coffee House 5x5
 - Sat., June 12, 12:00pm—Chick Flicks
 - Sun., June 13, 12:00pm—Worship Committee Mtg
 - Sat., June 19, 9:30am—Church Pantry
 - Thurs., June 24, 7:00pm—Finance Committee Meeting

JUNE WORSHIP SERVICES

June 6	"Gracias por La Vida"
June 13	"Singing for Our Lives" (BGLT Pride)
June 20	"I've Got a New Life Over in Zion" (Juneteenth)
June 27	TBA

9:30am—Spiritual Conversations
10:30am Service · Join Us for Coffee Hour After Service

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN BY HARRIET VARDIMAN SMTH

My thanks to outgoing Board President Rob McGeachin for leading what may have been the fastest, most efficient annual membership meeting in the history of the Unitarian Church of the Brazos Valley!

At that meeting on May 23, I thanked Rob McGeachin for his service as President this past year and recognized other outgoing Board members, John Ivy, David Pate, and Lisa Peterson. Steve Wikse also finished a term as a Trustee at large, but agreed to be nominated for a second term. So in Steve's case, we thank him for his service and welcome him back for two more years!

Three congregation members were honored with the Jesse Coon Stewardship Award for service to the congregation. Lisa Cairns was honored as outgoing chair of the Religious Education Committee; Mark Abel was recognized for his outstanding work with the Social Justice Committee; and Cindy Harmon-Jones received the Jesse Coon Award for her volunteer work as Music Director. So as not to go on too long with this month's column, I will say more about the Jesse Coon Stewardship award recipients in the July *Latitudinarian*.

The Board also presented a special Certificate of Appreciation to Eric Isakeit for his hard work in service to the congregation, helping to put the sanctuary in order after each Sunday's service.

The other major business of the annual meeting was the approval of a church budget for the year beginning June 1, 2010. A budget was approved that - in spite of difficult economic times - continues to support our church in its efforts to make meaning, make connections, and make a difference. Because pledges came in at a level that could not fund all the activities in the original budget as drafted before the spring pledge drive, the board recommended - and the membership passed - a budget that reduces child care expenditures to cover only a single nursery during the Sunday morning worship hour for infants and children age four and younger, albeit at reduced hours. Because the church had been paying child care providers every Sunday morning for a wide range of ages that necessitated multiple age groupings, child care expenses were increasing at a rate that far outpaced any other area of the church's budget or the capacity of pledge income

to keep up. In order to reduce those burgeoning child care costs, the budget approved by the congregation on May 23 does not include funds for child care during worship for children age 5 and up, which will effectively make it necessary to hold children's religious education during the worship hour when RE resumes in the fall. The approved budget continues to fund a paid professional Director of Children's Religious Education, albeit at somewhat less than half-time.

Details of the 2010-2011 church budget and the ramifications for scheduling of children's RE were discussed at length at a town hall-style meeting held after worship on May 16. The Board appreciates greatly the RE Committee members, teachers, parents, and other church members who participated in that very constructive and informative discussion.

During the coming year, monthly Board meetings will continue to be scheduled on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Jesse Coon Room. ***Members are always welcome at those monthly Board meetings.*** Only in instances where confidential personnel matters are discussed will the board adjourn the open meeting to continue in executive session, which is open only to board members.

At its June 10 meeting, the Board will vote to approve new co-chairs of the Children's Religious Education Committee - Marcia Bastian and Molly Ward. Normally, chairs are chosen from among experienced members of each standing committee with no Board action required. However this year, no experienced RE Committee members were available to serve as chair or co-chair going forward. Therefore, the Board will act in June to approve the RE Committee naming Marcia and Molly, two brand new committee members, as co-chairs. Thank you to Marcia and Molly, as well as all our other hard-working committee leaders and members.

Stay tuned for more news about children's RE, including the outcome of the search for a new part-time (at reduced hours) professional Director of Children's Religious Education. The search committee (composed of Lisa Cairns, Rev. Posa and myself) hopes to complete the interview process in the coming weeks and be ready to recommend a candidate to the Board in time for its June or July monthly meeting.

MINISTRY NOTES

Adult Religious Education: As we move into summer, our regular Religious Education (RE) offerings are temporarily on hold until September 12 (the Sunday after Labor Day). We will structure RE differently this next year; Children's RE will take place during worship, starting as soon as the children are "sung out" (during the early part of our worship service). Adult RE, unfortunately, will not be available on Sunday morning. That does NOT mean Adult RE is going away altogether; I am currently looking at different options for how to structure weeknight offerings of Adult RE, and plan to announce details in our August and September newsletters. Please contact me if you have questions.

Spiritual Conversations: In the meantime, there is interest, during the summer, in continuing an adult discussion time before worship. So, at least during the summer months, we will resume Spiritual Conversations in the library at 9:30 AM each Sunday. These conversations center around deep reflections of a poem or world scripture passage, provided at the start of each session. (We regret we cannot provide childcare during this time.)

Split-the-Plate: On the second Sunday of the month, June 13, we will once again Split the Plate, sharing our offering with a worthy charity in our Brazos Valley community. This month, in honor of Gay Pride month, we will split or plate with P-FLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Please come and give generously.

New & Prospective Members: Are you ready to become a member of this church? Our church welcomes new members during worship on the first Sunday of each month (that is, each month in which one or more prospective members are ready to join). Several new members plan to join on June 6. If you are interested in joining the church, contact Rev. Eric Posa, or Membership Committee Chair, Katie Womack, no later than Noon on Thursday, June 3.

DRE Search: The DRE Search Committee is nearing the final stage of selecting our next Director of Religious Education. We hope to present a name to the board. Please contact me if you have any questions about this process.

BOARD LEADERSHIP

Board of Trustees:

Harriet Smith (harriet@deancode.com).....President
Sue Bloomfield (sbloom52@gmail.com)President Elect
Rob McGeachin (rmcgeach@lib-gw.tamu.edu) Past President
Joe Collins (uucbvwebmaster@gmail.com) Secretary
Gaye Webb (angels@hal-pc.org) Treasurer

At-Large Trustees:

- Martha Scott (mlrscott@aol.com) • Steve Wikse (bonniewikse@verizon.net)
- Kathy Wheeler (khwmdvm@aol.com) • Pat Childress (pachildress@verizon.net)

CELEBRATIONS AND MEMORIALS BY GAYE WEBB

Many thanks to the following persons for **their** generous contribution:

- David and Mary Ellen Pate in honor of their wedding anniversary.

Congratulations on achieving these important milestones, and thank you for including your church in your recognition of these very special occasions.

- Thanks to Melanie Johnson for donating the piano in the Jesse Coon Room.

BOARD BRIEFS BY LISA PETERSON

At its regular monthly meeting, the Board of Trustees took the following official actions:

- Awarded Lisa Cairns, Mark Abel, and Cindy Harmon-Jones the Jesse Coon Stewardship Award for 2009-2010
- Elected Judy Hart to the Committee on Ministry
- Agreed to propose budget option A at the Congregational Meeting
- Approved updated Director of Religious Education Job Description

Other business discussed by the Board included:

- Planning for the congregational meeting

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

Mary Ellen Pate (mepatenp@hotmail.com)Chair, Caring Committee
Trish Ponder (Spydurhllw@aol.com)Chair, Finance Committee
Katie Womack (kwomack@tamu.edu)Chair, Membership Committee
Kathy Wheeler (khmwdvm@aol.com)Chair, Committee on Ministry
Ken Appelt (klappelt@verizon.net).....Chair, Property Committee
Marcia Bastian (savanah_happy@yahoo.com)Chair, Religious Education Committee
Mark Abel (mrabel97@yahoo.com)Chair, Social Justice Committee
Carolyn Clark (cclark@tamu.edu)Chair, Worship Committee
Martha Scott (mlrscott@aol.com)President, UU Women's Federation

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS BY THE CARING COMMITTEE

The month of May begins a time of transition in our community. As the school year ends, any of us are adjusting our schedules. We move into summer with hopes and plans for some relaxation or maybe just a change of pace. In May, as in all months, some of our church members have experienced joys and sorrows.

Some joys among our church members, families, and friends are—

Leah Cairns won first prize in horseback riding in the Southwest Point Competition.

Laura Chesner's sister Allison was married.

Ryan Vaughn's sister is engaged.

Gaye Webb sold her house in Houston and bought one in this area.

Caitlin Collins is crawling !

Christian Schmidt is an official candidate for the UU ministry.

Harriet Smith's niece's theater group won second place in a Texas state competition.

Cindy Harmon-Jones will be attending a UU music credential program and is excited that we will be enhancing our music program.

Among our concerns—

Lisa Peterson's uncle passed away.

Harriet Smith's uncle John had an accident while launching his boat and hurt his leg. Her sister Rebecca had a bicycle accident and injured her elbow.

Suzi Posa's shoulder surgery went well, and she is recuperating at home.

Kathy Wheeler's daughter and son-in-law are divorcing, and he has been diagnosed with cancer.

Katie Womack's brother, Jess, is still convalescing at home in Athens, TX. Katie drives there every weekend to care for him.

Transitions:

Mark Abel moved into a new place.

Judy Hart is stepping down from the caring committee, after many years of leadership and service. We will miss her compassion and skill on our committee, but are thankful for all she did for so many.

If we've forgotten anyone, please let us know, and remember that we are here for all of you. As always, let us know if you need anything.

The Caring Committee:

Mary Ellen Pate (Chair), 696-6142

Rev. Eric Posa, 209-4019

Pat Childress, 690-8613

Carolyn Clark, 823-0676

Sonja Allbritton, 693-7584

Lauralee Phillips, 220-5645

Joe Castiglioni, 690-0640

Carole Johnson, 690-6561

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE BY JUDY MCCOY

Social Justice Committee voted to use Committee funds to pay our church's dues to the Brazos Valley Coalition for the homeless, an organization that keeps homeless census and is an advocacy group for homeless issues.

We continue to provide volunteers for the Church Pantry on the third Saturday of each month from 10:00 until noon. While the primary work of the pantry is to provide food for persons in need, they also provide other essentials for healthful living such as disposable diapers for babies. The pantry always needs diapers especially in sizes 3, 4, 5, 6. You can bring items to the church for the volunteers to take to the pantry. Volunteers can sign up to work at the pantry is at the Social Justice table during coffee hour after worship service on Sundays.

Social Justice Committee will also have a sign up sheet to take breakfast foods to the Pilgrims in the Park on alternating first Sundays. We will begin this schedule in July, which happens to be July 4th. We would ask three people to sign up each time – two people to plan and do the food and one back up person to step in if someone has an emergency and cannot make it. It's a very simple meal which is usually hard boiled eggs, donuts, juice, and coffee. Whoever volunteers to do this has some lee-way in what they actually bring. It is held in Neal Park for about 30 or so people who are mostly homeless or otherwise unable to attend traditional church but who congregate for simple services usually led by their pastor, Lenni Lessberger. More information and the volunteer sign up sheet will be at the Social Justice table Sunday mornings during coffee hour after worship service.

The annual NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet will be held Saturday evening, June 5th at 7:00 at the Hilton Hotel. Social Justice Committee is sponsoring a table, and we have eight tickets. Actually, some of the tickets are already spoken for so we have 5 tickets. Tickets are \$43.75 each, and you can purchase tickets at the Social Justice table after worship during coffee hour.

As always, we thank the volunteers who work in projects we take on behalf of our congregation and all of you who put change in offering plate. Change for change funds so much of what we are able to contribute to social justice causes in the community. We have such a generous, socially conscious congregation, and we appreciate the support given to our work.

JUNE 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10:00am-Bagel Break	2 12:15pm-BBA Meditation 5:30pm-Adult Choir Practice 7:00pm—Book Club	3 7:00pm—Social Justice Committee Mtg	4	5 7:00pm-Contradance
6 9:30am—Spiritual Conversations 10:30am— Service 3:30pm—BBA meditation 4:30-BBA Book Club	7 7:00pm-BBA- Meditation, Reading and Chanting	8 10:00am-Bagel Break	9 12:15pm-BBA Meditation 5:30pm-Adult Choir Practice 7:00pm-UU Drum Circle	10 7:00pm-UUCBV Board Meeting	11 5:30pm—Coffee House 5x5	12 12:00pm-Chick Flicks
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27 9:30am—Spiritual Conversations 10:30am-Service 3:30pm—BBA meditation 4:30-BBA Book Club	28 7:00pm-BBA- Meditation, Reading and Chanting	29 10:00am-Bagel Break	30 12:15pm-BBA Meditation 5:30pm-Adult Choir Practice			

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Unitarian Universalist Church of
the Brazos Valley**

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UUCBV Office Hours:
Tuesday 9:30am-1:30pm
Wednesday & Thursday 12:00pm-4:00pm

Minister's Office Hours: Tuesday 10am - 2pm
and Thursday 2pm - 6pm
A&M Campus Hours: Monday 12pm - 4pm



Address Service Requested

UUCBV Covenant

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley, covenant with one another to:

- ...affirm and promote an open, safe, and respectful environment in which to come together for worship and fellowship,
- ...encourage spiritual and intellectual growth in our children, youth, and adults,
- ...respect one another's viewpoints and experiences,
- ...offer our individual talents and resources, to be honest about what we can and cannot do, and celebrate our connections to one another and the sacred circle of life.

**Friday, June 11
5:30pm
Coffee House 5x5**

A reader's theater featuring five children's authors, including the church's very own Kathi Appelt, as well as Janet Fox, Varian Johnson, April Lurie and Jenny Moss. Refreshments will be served.

Admission is \$10 for adults, 5 for students.

**Check out their website at
<http://fivetexasauthors.com/>**