



# The Communicator

of the [Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Lake County](http://www.uu-lakeco.org)

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## Celebration of Life Programs

### May 4 – Rev. Susan Berryman, Cassadaga “The Power of Belief”

To believe? what to believe? or why to believe? – That is the question. Susan will present a challenge to you individually in an interactive message. She will once again create an atmosphere conducive to your personal search for meaning and insight, helpful to you on the path you travel. Her program will involve you with thoughtful questions and discovery. All queries, observations, and opinions will be welcomed. Prepare to find inspiration!



### May 11 – To Be Announced

### May 18 – Rev. Susan Berryman “Spiritual Growth”

Following Rev. Berryman’s engaging program on April 6TH, titled “Life After Life ? ? ?” numerous members asked how soon we could have her return. Her interactive involvement with the congregation and the almost spontaneous and thoughtful willingness of so many members to share their emotional experiences from years past was unlike any other Sunday experience in recent memory.

The **UU Congregation of Lake County** meets  
Sundays at the Woman’s Club of Eustis  
227 N. Center Street, Eustis, FL  
Discussion Group is at 9:45 a.m.  
Celebration of Life begins at 11 a.m.

Rev. Berryman’s message this Sunday will be the third in this trilogy of interactive events. It is titled “**Spiritual Growth — what grows, for what purpose, toward what end?**” We look forward to another thought-provoking and motivating discussion.

### May 25 – Rev. Roger Seidner “Remember and Respect”

On this Memorial Day, we will pay tribute to those who have made possible the freedom we enjoy today. Without the sacrifices of so many brave men and women, we would be living in a far different world. The watchwords “Freedom is Not Free” states very clearly and concisely the reason there is and needs to be a Memorial Day. Another emotion-filled mantra dramatically brings home the message of Memorial Day: “All gave some, some gave all.”



Reverend Roger Seidner, our Consulting Minister, is available to respond to calls for pastoral care in crisis situations. If you or someone you know has a need, feel free to call him at (407) 905-5767.

## Discussion Group Programs

May 4 – "Brain Function and Religion", Dr. Andrew Newberg, The Great Courses

May 11 – "Sub-Atomic Particles & Cosmology" By Stu Anderson, of our UU Congregation

## Everyone Can Help With the New UUCLC Building

Donations from members and friends are going to be very important for making the new UUCLC building as beautiful as we all want it to be. Some individuals will have the means and will want to make substantial donations toward particular furnishings which are important to them, such as art or musical instruments or decorative entrance doors or beautiful windows or benches for the garden.

However it is important that all of us who care about UUCLC have an opportunity to donate to the beauty of the building, regardless of how much money we have. Every one of us should be able to have our name, or the name of someone whom we wish to remember, somewhere in the new building.

The Finance subcommittee will be planning several opportunities for lots of people to participate at a low price. For example, we have located a company which does very affordable engraved bricks, which we could use as the paving for a patio or a memorial garden. These engraved bricks would be a way for many people to have their name or the name of a loved one in the new building. Another example is chairs for the sanctuary. A local company produces small engraved plates which can be screwed onto the back of a chair, with the chair donor's choice of engraved text.

The Finance subcommittee will have information on affordable donation opportunities like these, before the end of this year. In the meantime, anyone who might be interested in a memorial or tribute gift for the beauty of the new building might like to start thinking about it, particularly if you would like to make a donation over multiple years.

The members of the Finance subcommittee are Karen Woolhouse, Jack Champion, and Frank Bishop. Any of us would be pleased to talk with you about possible gifts or to answer questions. Any such discussions would be completely confidential and without any commitment.

## Book Club Meeting

The UU book group will meet May 13th at 3pm in the Grove Street office to discuss *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Kolbert. A review in Booklist gives the basic thesis: "It didn't take long for Homo sapiens to begin 'reassembling the biosphere,' observes Kolbert, a Heinz Award-winning New Yorker staff writer and author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* (2006). By burning fossil fuels, we are rapidly changing the atmosphere, the oceans, and the climate, forcing potentially millions of species into extinction." This book is available as an ebook from Amazon. Also check libraries.

## March 2014 Treasurer's Report

March income was \$3,768, bringing the fiscal-year total to \$28,906. March expenses were \$2,464, for a fiscal-year total of \$17,618, which was 42% of our yearly budget. The Ruth Gray Bequest Fund expenses were \$735,469, showing the purchase of the lot on David Walker Drive, and associated liability insurance expenses.

...Carl Hommel

## UUCLC Information & Contacts

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## Voices of Contemporary Liberal Religion

### Christian Voices in (and out) of Unitarian Universalism



We have many voices within our UU community including Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, humanist, atheist, and Christian. Skinner House Books, a publishing arm of the UUA, offers books on some of these including Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian UUism. At this point in my spiritual journey, I consider myself a UU with a Buddhist philosophy and Christian roots, so I have read both of the UUA's books on UU Buddhism and Christianity. In fact, I have just completed *Christian Voices in Unitarian Universalism*. It is a short book of essays edited by Kathleen Rolenz who also wrote one of the essays as well as the introduction and conclusion. Interestingly enough, Kathleen Rolenz, a

Christian UU herself, is co-minister of the West Shore UU Church in Rocky River, Ohio, with her husband and co-minister, Wayne Arnason, whose sympathies are Buddhist. Together they have written a couple of books including *Worship That Works* which I have referenced here before.

As you might expect, like all UUs, the Christian UUs who contribute to this book have a variety of views, but Christ is central to their lives and thinking in a personal way. Rolenz helps us understand how deeply this is true in her conclusion to this brief volume where she writes about the first "revival meeting" of the UU Christian Fellowship. You may be surprised by what she writes, but you will also be able to hear the UU tones in her comment.

Since 1945, the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship has long been a faithful presence in Unitarian Universalism, publishing a respectable journal and maintaining a booth at General Assembly each year. What was unique about the 1999 revival was that it was primarily devotional in its stance. Unitarian Universalist Christians have long prided themselves on maintaining our rational and skeptical perspective on the Bible and various aspects of liberal Christianity. We have sought to analyze our faith and hold the Bible up to the cold light of truth and reason. Unitarian Universalist Christians of today are also embracing a more devotional attitude toward worship, God, and our personal relationships with Jesus. Jesus has moved out of the safe confines of the discussion group and into the hearts and minds of those who wish a daily walk with God and with Jesus.

The commitment to Jesus among UU Christians ranges from those for whom Jesus' life is the personal inspiration to "work proactively to bring about justice" to those who profess that "Jesus was the son of God" and who believe in the resurrection and in being saved "by grace." Some of these UU Christians partake in communion and baptism with the UU Christian Fellowship. Some seek out a UU- friendly Christian denomination such as United Church of Christ in order to take communion while remaining UU. One of the writers considers himself a UU Catholic, albeit in the "Catholic radical tradition." Another considers herself "A Bible-Thumping, Trinitarian, Charismatic, Born-Again Jesus Freak. One left her UU congregation for a liberal Episcopalian church after "finding little inspiration or help for growth and transformation in God in the UU setting and tradition."

Just about all of the writers report some difficulty in being a Christian in the UU setting. Ask yourself, would someone who is avowedly liberal Christian feel comfortable in the UU Congregation of Lake County, FL? Could they find "inspiration or help for growth and transformation" (with or without God) here? Could they find a home for their liberal Christian views? Kathleen Rolenz in her concluding essay cites the case of Dave Dawson of the Thomas Jefferson UU Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, who wrote:

'I ...desire...freedom to test the outer limits of my Christian faith. Within my church I am not told I am wrong, just looked at quizzically when I say I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Occasionally I have had it suggested to me that I might be more comfortable somewhere else, but that is rare. I also believe that the memory for tradition and history within the UUA is shorter by light years than it is in any other denomination. In two or three generations it is possible to pretend that our movement came from sources entirely outside of Christianity.'

By citing Dawson, Rolenz is reminding us where we came from and bringing to the fore the fundamental problems we have within our movement. How do we accommodate so much diversity? The problem stands in relief when we get to the Sunday service which Christians and perhaps Jews and Buddhists prefer to call "worship" services. She writes:

Unitarian Universalists pride themselves on theological diversity. However, tension arises when Unitarian Universalists gather for worship. How is our theological diversity represented? For UU Christians the lack of engagement with the Bible or the teachings of Jesus means that a piece of our history and tradition is sorely missing. For the Unitarian Universalist atheist or humanist, the repeated use of scripture and references to God or Jesus are seen as embracing either the supernatural or a theological belief they long ago rejected. What should we do?

She never really answers this question. Perhaps there is no answer. You/we must answer it for ourselves.



Another book I want to call your attention to is *My Bright Abyss* by Christian Wiman. Wiman is not a UU Christian but could easily fall into that category. He is a distinguished poet and former editor of "Poetry" magazine. When he was 39 he was diagnosed with an incurable and rare blood cancer. He had been married for less than a year. He has no way of knowing when he will die, but he knows his life span is likely to be shorter than most. He has found himself up against the existential wall. His diagnosis led him to the kind of searching that many UUs are familiar with asking the question, not so much what follows this life as does this life have any meaning at all? Somewhat to his surprise and somewhat gradually he decided that he was a Christian. Do

not expect, though, if you should read this book, to find any conventional view of God and of Jesus. His is a secular faith rooted in the material world. God, for him, is in materiality. As for the afterlife, like the Buddha, he doesn't seem to know much about it. At one point, he talks about dissolving into the elements. At another point he writes, "It is not that conventional ideas of an afterlife are too strange; it is that they are not strange enough." He goes on to say, "Refusing heaven can be a form of faith if it's done to give God his true and terrible scope." So like the UUs who write in *Christian Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, his is no conventional Jesus faith. In fact, his essay is, to use the language of Kathleen Norris who wrote a review for the New York Times, "an insightful and bracing assault on both the complacent pieties of many Christians and the thoughtless bigotry of intellectuals who regard Christian faith as suitable only for idiots or fools." Like many UUs he does not believe that the quest for faith is ever finished. He has written an unfinished poem from which the title of his book of essays comes. One stanza goes

My God my bright abyss  
Into which all my longing will not go  
Once more I come to the edge of all I know  
And believing nothing believe in this:

As Wiman says in an essay in *The American Scholar* (written before *My Bright Abyss* was published), ever since he wrote that stanza, he has been trying to feel his way to the poem's ending as he has been trying to feel his way toward what he believes and toward a faith. At least his faith will never be finished. This is what

he says in *My Bright Abyss*, "Faith is not some hard, unchanging thing you cling to through the vicissitudes of life." Faith that is worth anything changes over time. Sounds like a UU position to me.

I read Wiman's book shortly after it came out in March of 2013 and have returned to it again and again not because I consider myself a Christian, but because it offers something to the searcher and it resonates with wisdom about life, death, and art. It is not an easy read but it has a place on my library shelf along with other books that have changed my life and that I return to again and again such as Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, John Dominic Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, and D.T. Suzuki's *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. You might want to give any of these books, along with *Christian Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, a try.

Before I end, let me remind you that we have a library of books which is faithfully wheeled out each Sunday. You can sign out any of these books by finding the little box with the cards in it. If you have questions, see Eleanor Fessler or Kit Tatum.

...Russ

### **Becoming a Member...**

UUCLC is designating May as "Membership Month". On the last Sunday in May we will formally recognize everyone who has decided to become a member of our group in the past six months. This decision enables you to participate in congregational votes, and also expresses a personal commitment to share your talents, resources and energy with others in a quest that is spiritual as well as practical, personal as well as social, individual as well as institutional.

For more information about membership, contact Eleanor Fessler, Membership Chairperson, either on Sunday morning or by telephone (352-735-7405) or Email (tedandeleonor@Gmail.com)

We will be happy to have you sign your name in our Membership Book.

...Eleanor Fessler

### **Greeting Cards Sold to Benefit the UUCLC Children's Program**

The sale of greeting cards to raise funds for materials for a UUCLC Children's Program is going well. As of April 21 we have raised \$190. Thank you to everyone who has purchased a bundle of these beautiful art greeting cards. The greeting cards were donated by Hinda Ramsay. Each card features original art and a verse created by Hinda. They are beautiful greeting cards with envelopes to match. All the proceeds from their sale go to UUCLC.

The cards are bundled in packages of ten, and a package sells for \$10.00. One bundle contains ten different birthday cards, and a second bundle, the all occasion bundle, contains a mix of birthday cards, sympathy cards, "thinking of you" cards, and others. The bundles of greeting cards are tied with ribbon and have a label identifying them as being sold to benefit the UUCLC Children's Program.

These greeting cards are good to have on hand for when an occasion comes along. Also, a bundle of cards makes a lovely and welcome gift for friends or family. Please keep the greeting cards in mind for your use or for gift giving. It's an easy way to help to establish a UUCLC Children's Program.

### **May Birthdays**

Lynette Auberjeunois, May 5  
Wilma Vogt, May 5  
Jack Champion, May 7  
Paulette Stewart-Johnson, May 13  
Esther Smith, May 14  
Jean Burda, May 20  
Jerry Tatum, May 30