

love. Within the Christian tradition it has been noted that the love feast is not a substitute for the Christian sacrament of communion - rather it is a simple, communal meal. Music and readings are offered to support quiet reflection on what we can do to lift others up. All hold lighted candles to end the service. Many Unitarian Universalist congregations celebrate lovefeasts during December as part of the Winter holiday season. With its celebration of Love and Light, it is applicable to Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa as well as Christmas.

Dec 24: Music Service

Join us for a holiday celebration in music and song!

Dec 31: Burning Bowl Service

The Burning Bowl ceremony is a time when we gather at the close of the year to reflect, identify and release those habits, beliefs, resentments, and behaviors that we no longer want to carry with us as a part of our consciousness. These characteristics that we choose to release will be written out and symbolically "released" as they are dropped into the burning bowl. This is followed by writing a personal affirmation for the coming year plus a short letter to our higher self, declaring our desires, hopes and dreams for the coming year.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Final meetings for this semester:

December 3

December 17

As our RE semester winds down, we realize how blessed we are to have THREE Sunday School groups this year, filled with curious children, lead by committed adults, exploring universal ideas and UU principles.

When you have a few minutes, stop by the RE rooms to chat with the children, learn their names, and admire their work.

Special thanks to those who have taught this year: Ken Sleeper, Susie Pedigo, Susie Adams, Elaine Gelbard, Laura Johnson, Mary Solomon, Sharon Andrews, Hans Sinha, Stevi Woolworth, Dave Woolworth, Yerger Andre, Janice Evans, and Paul Goggins.

YOUTH GROUP

The UUCO Youth Group has had an active month of fun, fellowship, and contributions to our congregation.

Special thanks for planning and leading our memorable Halloween service go to Beth, Jillian, Charlotte, Chuck, Ruby, and Mary. November activities included attending the musical "Clue" at OHS (Mary Ray on crew), participating in "Strut Your Mutt" for the Humane Society, and beginning to plan charitable activities for the Christmas season.

When you see a UUCO youth, be sure to ask about these activities and about some of their hopes and plans for the future.

EVENSONG

Our final Evensong session will be this Friday, December 1, from 4:30-6:00.

The topic is "Beliefs and Actions."

If you are planning to attend, think about the following: Come up with an expression (words, art, etc.) of your current beliefs.

How do you want to put your beliefs into action?

What projects can you imagine this Evensong group taking on? Also, bring any inspirational quotes or sayings you would like to share with the group.

SAVE THE DATE

March 25, 2007 UUCO will celebrate our 10th Anniversary

UUCO will mark our 10th anniversary in April 2007. We've come a long way from meeting in the Student Union Building on the Ole Miss campus to our home at 31 County Road 198. In honor of this new milestone in the history of our congregation, we are planning a weekend of celebration and homecoming for March 25, 2007. Saturday evening we are planning a party. Sunday, Rev. Barbara Jamestone, who presided over the first UUCO worship service in April 1997, will bring the service, followed by a pot luck dinner at UU Hall.

The celebration is still in the planning stage, with the planning team led by Paula Shanks, one of our founding members. We are looking for special

financial contributions to support our plans. We hope that many of the original members will be able to return to visit, and we are asking for UUCO members to help provide home hospitality for our friends during their stay.

So save the date and make plans to take part in celebrating 10 years as a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Oxford, Mississippi!

TUPELO GROUP: The UU Fellowship of Tupelo meets the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of each month at 11 a.m. in Temple B'Nai Israel, 1301 Marshall Street. Visitors are welcome. Check out our website, <http://www.UUTupelo.org>

>>>>>>> MEMBERSHIP <<<<<<<<<

Welcome to the following new members who recently joined UUCO:

- Mary Carruth
- Anne Quinney
- Hans Sinha
- Grady Cutrer
- Stevi Woolworth
- Tina Long
- Jillian Mattern--Youth Member
- Mary Ray--Youth Member

We are pleased and excited to welcome these new members, and we look forward to their involvement in the congregation.

>>>>>>> FROM THE BOARD <<<<<<<

Summary of September 20, 2006 UUCO Board meeting

The UUCO board met on September 20. One of the first agenda items was discussion of our pledge goal of \$20,000 for the year. As a result of that discussion, UUCO members can look forward to receiving a finance report, as well as a pledge form that can be completed by those who haven't had the chance to pledge yet, in the mail in early October. The letter will also include a "thank you" to those who have already pledged. This letter will allow members to see our financial needs and how we spend our funds. The board regretfully noted the departure of Adrian, UUCO vice-president, as she makes her

new home out west, and started the process of filling the vice-president's position. The congregational Leadership Development Committee will work with the board to choose a candidate. Due to the increase in attendance at our Sunday services, the board voted to spend money on additional chairs as well as some tables. The next board meeting will be held on October 18 at 6:30 p.m. Board meetings are open to the congregation but please contact the President, Gail Stratton, if you would like an item to be on the agenda. Minutes for the board meetings are available from the Secretary, Luanne Buchanan.

Summary of the October 18, 2006 board meeting

In keeping with our plan to use the meeting for discussions rather than committee reports, we focused on several issues of most immediate interest. Regarding membership, we talked about the need to practice openness to the religious backgrounds of our visitors as well as our members. We were pleased to hear about the new members ready to become part of our congregation on November 5. Our financial discussions included approval of our finance report as well as reaffirmation of our commitment to make charitable donations on a quarterly basis, using 7 percent of our intake of funds as the desirable amount for this purpose. The board is grateful for suggestions of worthy recipients. Our new P.O. box is a reality and will serve as a safe place to which all financial mail can be sent. That address is UUCO, P.O. Box 1822, Oxford, MS 38655. The street address will continue to be featured prominently so that people can find our church. Board meetings are open and any member of the congregation may attend. If a member would like to see an item on the agenda, please get that item to Gail Stratton 5 days before the meeting.

>>>>>>> MISCELLANEOUS <<<<<<<

BABYSITTERS EXTRAORDINAIRE

Three cheers for Mac Warren and Daniel Warren

for being our lead child care providers this semester. They have won the hearts of children and parents alike for being such competent and encouraging role models for our children.

Also providing invaluable assistance: Jean Hoffheimer, Hannah Holland, Chuck Sleeper--thanks to you all!

And special thanks to Ann Phillippi for organizing child care this semester, stepping in herself as needed so that we could enjoy carefree Sunday services.

Some thoughts on being thankful. This was the basis of the Sunday service presented by Gail Stratton following Thanksgiving.

Giving thanks and being thankful is a curious thing.

It may be one of those things that sets us humans apart from other animals.

It is part of civil society. It is part of what we teach children—to say please and thank you.

It is certainly a part of the world's major religions. I am not a religion scholar, only an interested UU, but I was easily able to find many examples of thanksgiving prayers. The psalms are full of thanksgiving and praise. There are hundreds of references of thanks to Allah in the Koran.

For example
From the Koran

[28.73] And out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks.

From **the new testament** as well, a famous quote of Paul
Ephesians 5:20
Give thanks to God in all things....

And from the Buddha

Let us rise up and be thankful,
for if we didn't learn a lot today,
at least we learned a little,
and if we didn't learn a little,

at least we didn't get sick,
and if we got sick,
at least we didn't die;
so let us all be thankful.

The Buddha

Many customs take time to be thankful before a meal, and since we have to eat regularly, that custom can build a regular time to be thankful.

And recent psychological research has shown that the one thing we can do to increase our happiness is to take time to be thankful. That taking time at the end of the day to list things for which we are thankful did more to increase happiness than any other single thing.

In giving thanks

We are affirming our relationship to others; affirming that we are in relation with others.

We are affirming that we need others, that there are things we cannot do or cannot do well.

We are affirming that we are connected and part of a community; we are much more than the sum of who we are individually.

I have a strong sense of that for this church. Together, we are much more than who we are as individuals.

Being thanked if affirming, calming, centering. Being thanked is often very motivating. Being thanked means you have made a contribution.

Giving thanks to the divine or to the universe is humbling.

It is to acknowledge that there is much about life that is given, much that we have that we did not earn.

We can plant seeds, but we cannot make them grow.

We cannot make the sunshine or the earth spin

To give thanks is to acknowledge the mystery of who we are and why we are here.

To give thanks is to step back and to see a bigger perspective

It takes us as individuals out of the center, even for a moment, and allows us to see much more.

To give thanks is to practice mindfulness. It is to be present in the moment.

Many religions teach about giving thanks in all things, even those things that are difficult. I would like to read a short piece by Pema Chodron about this.

Be Grateful to Everyone

If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, can be our teacher.

By Pema Chodron

This essay was excerpted from "Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living" (Shambhala Publications), which describes the Tibetan lojong, or mind-heart training techniques. Each lojong teaching corresponds to one of 59 "slogans" or guideposts. "Be grateful to everyone" is the 13th slogan. Reprinted with permission.

"The slogan "Be grateful to everyone" is about making peace with the aspects of ourselves that we have rejected. Through doing that, we also make peace with people we dislike. More to the point, being around people we dislike is often a

catalyst for making friends with ourselves. Thus, "Be grateful to everyone."

If we were to make a list of people we don't like--people we find obnoxious, threatening, or worthy of contempt--we would find out a lot about those aspects of ourselves that we can't face. If we were to come up with one word about each of the troublemakers in our lives, we would find ourselves with a list of descriptions of our own rejected qualities, which we project onto the outside world. In traditional teachings on lojong it is put another way: other people trigger the karma that we haven't worked out. They mirror us and give us the chance to befriend all of that ancient stuff that we carry around like a backpack full of granite boulders.

"Be grateful to everyone" is a way of saying that we can learn from any situation, especially if we practice this slogan with awareness. The people and situations in our lives can remind us to catch neurosis as neurosis, to see when we're in our room under the covers, to see when we've pulled the shades, locked the door, and are determined to stay there."

I would like to finish this morning by urging each of you, each of us, this next week to make an opportunity to thank someone close to you and thank someone not so close to you.

And, separately or connected to that, pay attention to the dynamics of thanks in your life. I think thankfulness is transformative, and I would very much like to talk with many of you about this in a week or two.

UUCO wishes to express our condolences to the
Phillippi/Warren family for the loss of Ann's mother,
Betty Phillippi. Know that you are in our thoughts.