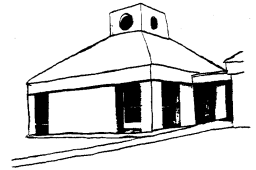


The Flaming Chalice

Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta

Located at: 1951 East Park Avenue
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2342
 Valdosta, GA 31604
 Minister: Rev. Fred Howard
<http://uuvaldosta.net>
 229-242-3714 e-mail: uuvaldosta@yahoo.com



What's going on... **March 2014**

Sun	Mar. 2	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – “Questioning Faith,” Rev. Fred Howard Meet & Greet Coffee after the service
W	Mar. 5	6:00 PM	Board Meeting in the RE wing at the church
Sun	Mar. 9	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – Justice Sunday with Lars Leader Meet & Greet Coffee after the service
M	Mar. 10	11:00AM	Break Bread delivery
W	Mar 12	7:00 PM	Immigrant and Migrant Workers Panel Discussion at the church
F	Mar. 14	6:30 PM	Pizza and a Movie night at the church
Sat	Mar. 15		<i>Deadline March newsletter</i>
Sun	Mar. 16	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – “Transforming Faith,” Rev. Fred Howard <i>Share the Plate Sunday</i> Meet & Greet after the service
Sat.	Mar. 22	9-12	“All About UU” with Fred Howard and Kimberly Tanner
un	Mar. 23	10:45 AM	Religious Education for children Service – “Buddhism and the Eight-fold Path,” Dr. Michael Stoltzfus Meet & Greet after the service
F	Mar. 28	6:30 PM	Games Night at the church
Sun	Mar. 30		Religious Education for children Service – “Humanity is in the Heart: Immigration and Moral Obligations,” Dr. Stephanie D. Hinnershitz Meet & Greet after the service
M	Mar. 31	11 AM	Break Bread delivery

March ... The bad news: your editor's computer had to be replaced early this week (new things to learn on a new computer after 5 or 6 years)! The good news: The Geek Quad at Best Buy, the best I can tell, was able to retrieve all of my data from my old computer which has saved a bundle of time and frustration. Carol Stiles is sending out to our e-mail list this first page with our calendar for March along with the second page about services and Fred's column. I expect the rest to follow as a full newsletter next week with the rest of the information. Thank you for your patience and to Carol for helping out.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- The inherent dignity and worth 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 and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large,
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all,
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Grateful for the religious pluralism, which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Sunday Services

Sunday, March 2 – Rev. Fred Howard, “Questioning Faith”

Mark Twain once quipped, “Faith is believing something that you know ain’t true.” We find a certain humor in that remark because it brings to mind some of the preposterous things that we’ve heard people accept in the name of religion. A bit of skepticism is often justified when it comes to what passes as religious “faith.” But there’s a double entendre in the title of my sermon. Doubt, questioning, and skepticism aren’t necessarily the opposite of faith but can actually be elements of a mature faith. This morning in the first of two sermons I’ll be doing on the subject of faith we’ll look at what faith is and what it isn’t, and attempt to better understand what it is we really seek when we walk through the doors of this or any other church.

Sunday, March 9 – Justice Sunday, Lars Leader

Lars Leader, our congregation’s new UUSC church representative, will be leading this annual service today. Each year in the fall and in the spring UU churches hold services which focus on our social justice work through the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and our local social service work.

Sunday, March 16 – Rev. Fred Howard, “Transforming Faith”

Many people equate the words “belief” and “faith” and this causes no end of problems for traditions such as ours that don’t unite people around certain beliefs or creeds. Faith and belief aren’t the same thing. Faith has much deeper, richer connotations, something that’s been referred to as “faith beyond belief.” There’s a double entendre in that phrase, as well as in the title of this week’s sermon, “transforming faith.” This morning I will illustrate what I mean through a story or two.

Share the Plate Sunday Offering: Donations to the plate this Sunday, not otherwise designated as pledges, will go to LAMP – Lowndes Area Ministries to the People. LAMP, is a non-profit organization assisting individuals and families in need. LAMP operates a homeless shelter (New Horizons Family Development Center), offers a day shelter, provides food for unsheltered homeless persons, as well as empowerment classes and referral services. UU Valdosta is one of the original supporting churches for LAMP. More information: <http://lampinc.org/>

Sunday, March 23 - Dr. Michael Stoltzfus “Buddhism and the Eight-fold Path”

After a brief introduction to the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths, we investigate how the Eight-fold Path seeks to combine wisdom, compassion, and concentration in each present moment so that we can participate more fully in the beauties and vulnerabilities of our shared lives and experiences. We will explore keys elements of Buddhist teachings and how the teachings must be lived in order to be worthwhile.

Sunday, March 30 – Stephanie D. Hinershitz, “Humanity is in the Heart: Immigration and Moral Obligations”

Immigration is currently a heated topic in the United States, with many Americans advocating for “reform” to our existing policies; however, in the midst of the political and economic debates, what is usually lost is an understanding of the experiences of immigrants themselves and, more importantly, the failure to see immigrants as individuals with specific needs and desires. Why do immigrants come to the United States, either “legally” or “illegally,” and how is the United States’ response to these various groups of people a reflection on how we see ourselves and the needs of all humans?

This talk will provide a historical overview of immigration to the United States as well as highlight the issues of human rights and moral obligations in migration. Dr. Stephanie Hinershitz is a member of the Valdosta State University History Department.



MINISTERIAL MUUSINGS

Rev. Fred Howard

March 2014

O friend, my bosom said,

Through thee alone the sky is arched,

Through thee the rose is red,

All things through thee take nobler form,

And look beyond the earth,

And is the mill-round of our fate

A sun-path in thy worth.

Me too thy nobleness has taught

To master my despair;

The fountains of my hidden life

Are through thy friendship fair.

These lines are from a poem by Emerson entitled “Friendship.” These words have become more true than ever for me in recent weeks as Kathy and I have dealt with her cancer and the total reset that the news has brought about in our lives. If there is any upside in the turmoil we have been through, its definitely been in the reminders we’ve been given of how loved we are by so many dear friends, not only in this community but in every community we’ve been a part of in the past. One of Kathy’s dearest friends, a cancer survivor herself, told us from the beginning that people would come out of the woodwork to offer support once word got out, and that has proved to be true. So many people that our lives have touched through the years have reestablished contact with us since we got the diagnosis in November. Through cards, letters, emails, facebook, and you name it, they have come forth just to offer a word of understanding or comfort. Not only have they been there for us in these unobtrusive ways, they have also been there when we needed to talk in depth about what’s going on with us as we try to get our heads and hearts around this. The best listeners don’t try to sugar coat it or offer advice. They just “let be.” What a great phrase - let be.

Emerson knew a lot about friendship. According to his biographers, he spent a great deal of time and energy cultivating an extensive network of friendships far and wide. It was said that Emerson had more friends than anyone in America. His definition of a friend is the best one I’ve ever heard. He said that a “friend is someone with whom I can I can think out loud.” That pretty well sums it up I think. A friend is someone who can be with me however I’m feeling and listen no matter how I want to express those feelings, no matter how painful it may be for them to sit with me in the sadness, anger, or pain that I’m feeling.

I can think of no better way to build the beloved community than to learn to let be, to be a circle of friends for whom others can think out loud. To be a friend who can listen compassionately without attempting to fix or heal you. Just let you be and sit with you and share whatever it is you need to feel. Isn’t that what it really means to be in community with each other? May it be so for us at Valdosta UU.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CAROL STILES

All the world's major religions give credence to the idea of "welcoming the stranger." The Bible verse Matthew 25: 35 says "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Hebrew scripture teaches love for the foreigner because "you were foreigners in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). The Qur'an teaches doing "good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet" (4:36). Our UU Sources include "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." Recently the UUA General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a statement of conscience, "Immigration as a Moral Issue," which states in part: "A belief in 'the inherent worth and dignity of every person' is core to Unitarian Universalism: every person, no exceptions. As religious people, our Principles call us to acknowledge the immigrant experience and to affirm and promote the flourishing of the human family."

Last fall we held a series of conversations on Immigration as a Moral Issue. On Wednesday, March 12, we will host a panel, open to the public, focusing on immigration issues affecting migrant farmworkers. Our speakers (noted elsewhere in this newsletter) will discuss how contradictory state, local, and federal laws and policies can put human beings in untenable situations – afraid to be visible, for fear of being deported and separated from family. We are inviting other churches to send representatives to this panel, and we encourage you to pass the word on to your neighbors and friends. Sister Simone Campbell, of NETWORK (Nuns on the Bus), recently said: "Fear causes people to protect their own rights and think that they can't give these same opportunities to others. The antidote to fear is community." Please join us as we continue building a community that welcomes the stranger as our neighbor.

In community,
Carol

For the full text of Sister Simone's letter, please see the following link:

<http://standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/day-8-the-antidote-to-fear/>

Immigration and Migrant Farmworkers Panel Discussion

Wednesday, March 12, 2014, 7:00 PM
Unitarian Universalist Church of Valdosta

Speakers will include Dr. Stephanie Hinnershit, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Valdosta State University, on "A History of the Migrant Laborer Experience in the United States" and Israel Cortez, Coordinator, Region 2 Migrant Education Program Office, Georgia Department of Education, who will speak on "Who are the Migrant Farmworkers?" The panel will be moderated by Carol Stiles, President, UU Valdosta. This event is sponsored by the UU Valdosta Accepting Difference Project.