



New Garden Community Church

Unitarian Universalist - a labor-peace church

312-405-9470 ♦ minister@NewGardenUU.org ♦ www.NewGardenUU.org

meeting at 6pm, UE (United Electrical workers), 37 S. Ashland, Chicago

September 13, 2007

"Love for the Earth, Justice for the People"

Calendar:

- **Sunday, September 16, 10am** – Jean has been invited to be guest preacher at **Peoples Church of Chicago**, 941 W. Lawrence. It's just East of the Lawrence stop on the Red Line el. You're invited!
- **Sunday, September 23, 6pm** – Celebrate the **Fall Equinox** at New Garden, with a special program by singer songwriter **Susan Urban** and **SASS**. Service followed by potluck supper and conversation.

Saving Democracy

This has been a week of ups and downs.

It was the anniversary of September 11th.

The Administration appears to be beating the drums for war with Iran, with the TV and radio ad campaign, softening up the American people – "We don't want another 9/11!" "We should finish the job we started!" "We don't want a nuclear holocaust!" A *New Yorker* article from August 31, a blog from respected professor Barnett Rubin at New York University mention the campaign – a conversation Rubin had with his source, whose institution was given "instructions" from the office of the Vice-President to roll out a campaign for war with Iran in the week after Labor Day.¹

I had the opportunity to hear much of the hearing before the House on Monday, September 10 with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. The good news is that the General plans to start removing troops fairly soon – in response perhaps to the growing disaffection of the American people with the war. And yet by next summer, a year away, we will only have returned to the

same troop levels as we were a year ago, before the surge.

Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen spluttered over the MoveOn.org ad, naming General Betray-us so many times that others began mispronouncing his name. [I'm proposing this cartoon: Ileana leaning forward, generous décolletage spilling out of her blouse, a worried look on her face as she tells the General how concerned she is about a "premature withdrawal." (Her words.) From Iraq, that is.]

I kept wishing someone would ask, "What are we doing to strengthen Iraq civil society? What's our plan there?" If a military solution is not the solution, then what is? Not that I trust the U.S. government to genuinely help: it made a royal hash early on of creating a public radio network, destroying its originally independent spirit, and turning it into a mouthpiece for the Iraqi government.

I was buoyed a bit by Barack Obama's declaration that he would draw down combat troops right away, with the goal of getting them out by next summer. But there is still the issue of the "permanent bases" that no one seems to identify, and that troops would have to stay to defend.

I was plunged into gloom by an interview with Dr. Peter Phillips, director of Project Censored, on community radio in Madison WORT -fm. Each year they compile the top 25 un- or under-reported news stories, research them carefully to make sure they aren't bogus, and publish a book.²

The interviewer, a young European woman, noted that laws passed in the last couple of years could easily allow this country to become a police state. She asked with incredulity if this looked like fascism. He responded, approximately, "It

¹ <http://icga.blogspot.com/2007/08/post-labor-day-product-rollout-war-with.html>

² http://projectcensored.org/censored_2007/index.htm

doesn't contain the anti-Semitic element of Nazism, but it is the allying of business and government to repress dissent, control labor; yes, it's the classical definition of fascism."

Well, that was depressing! But I also hear that when people start learning about this stuff, they go from being afraid to being angry. I have a lot of faith in the American spirit, summed up in the flag with the snake representing the American colonies: "Don't tread on me!"

Howard Thurman, the influential black theologian at Boston University, Howard University, and Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, Atlanta, wrote in the aftermath of WWII, about the strength and focus that people experience when they give themselves over to something outside themselves – in the case of fascism, something that is not worthy of worship:

Here is a reason in passing why in any immediate and open struggle with democracy, fascism for a while has the upper hand. Democracy is more

scattered. It tends toward various levels of autonomies and certain kinds of general behavior. It is not until it is deeply challenged that its purpose takes on a metaphysical character and thus becomes a basis of integrated action. In such a struggle now the balance may shift to the side of democracy because the individual in a democracy may have a greater sense of universality and a more authentic sense of freedom. It is conceivable, however, and I think this is a part of the genius of democracy, that there is something inherent in the nature of the ideals for which it stands, or of which it is symbolic, that is capable of inspiring the same kind of devotion and sense of metaphysical purpose that is inherent in fascism. (Howard Thurman, *The Creative Encounter*, Harper and Brothers: 1954, p. 74-5.)

Democracy, in other words, can inspire us to be braver, to commit ourselves to more than we thought we were capable of, to take on Goliaths when all we have is the slingshot of freedom and compassion, humor and outrage.

peace, Jean

Rev. Jean Darling
New Garden Community Church (UU)
c/o 131 S. Humphrey Ave
Oak Park, IL 60302