



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

October 26, 2006

"Love for the Earth, Justice for the People"

Calendar:

- **Sunday, October 29, 6pm** – Singer songwriter **Susan Urban**, with **Kate Early**, leads "**Harken Now, the Darkness Comes,**" a celebration of the last-harvest holiday of **Samhain** (Celtic New Year or Halloween). Bring photos or mementos of those special to you who have died, and traditional foods for the service, and for the potluck afterwards: apples, pumpkin, corn, cranberries, cider.

BOOK NIGHT meeting (1st Tuesdays)
Tuesday, November 7, 6-8pm
at West Gate Coffeehouse
924 W. Madison, Chicago
November: Discussing Eckhart Tolle's
classic, ***The Power of Now.***

Ethical Contracting

Sunday, November 12, 2-5pm – conference on **Ethical Contracting** for congregations – thinking **green**, thinking **fair labor practices**. Epiphany UCC Church, 2008 W. Bradley Place, Chicago. Phone 773-728-8400 x.13 or 773-235-4640. \$10. Cosponsors: Faith in Place, Chic. Interfaith Comm. on Worker Issues, and Interfaith Worker Justice.

How to get what you want in your relationships – *and not be sorry later*

Four session Intro Relationship Workshop - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays in November and December. Phone 312.405.9470 or email minister@NewGardenUU.org to register.

- **Sunday, November 5, 6pm** – "**The Seventh Principle**" – our part in the

interconnected web. Potluck after the service – bring food to share.

Meditation Class

Sunday, November 19, 4pm – Marilyn Myles leads the second of four sessions on meditation. The class meets once a month, **3rd Sunday.**

You are invited to join a short meditation **each Sunday** at 5:30pm – we ring the chime, we sit, we stare at the flame. Be early for a short intro reading.

Radical Artists

A lot of people these days see mainstream Christian churches as rigid, even petrified, using language that doesn't make sense to the average person, with traditions that feel formulaic, with structures that don't leave enough room for thinking, for questioning, for love. One response is the emerging church movement – aiming for a church relevant to today, but which is also authentic to Jesus's teachings of two millennia ago.

Typical churches in this movement use popular culture to find spiritual truths (films, music); express spirituality with homegrown music and art in their services; are culturally open, though often fairly orthodox (if not particularly denominational) in their Christian theology.

As Unitarian Universalism has experienced the cultural shift in America of people seeking a more experiential faith, some of our churches and ministers have responded by turning back towards Christianity – there is a UUA-affiliated organization called the UU Christian Fellowship (<http://www.uuchristian.org/>)

There is even an offshoot of the Unitarian Universalist Association called the American Unitarian Conference, named after the old (pre-1961) organization (the AUA), that harks back to the 19th century – before the spoiling of Unitarianism by transcendentalist snake-oil salesmen like Ralph Waldo Emerson (oops, too snide – my bias is showing).

One of the stars in the Christian emerging church movement started up a retreat center for artists, called the “Artistry” (pronounced like “monastery”). The artists who lived there were expected to start one work a month, to participate in weekly meditation sessions, attend church, teach a class (in their medium) to the public, and give a show of their work during their stay. Artists participated in worship by painting the gist of the message during the service. They also were expected to have a job to help support the Artistry, as well as help with cooking, cleaning, and other domestic duties.

It was an exciting start – but, the minister said, the organizer of the retreat center was spending all his time getting the artists to follow the rules – “the maturity of the people living there was normally not high enough to enter such a structured environment.” (Bill Easum, *Under the Radar*, p. 56)

What a great idea – and how humorous that it didn’t work for that reason. It isn’t surprising that artists didn’t want to follow rules – it seems like the essence of being an artist is listening to some inner voice about what you are supposed to be doing, not following external rules. It made me wonder if we

would have done any better job creating such an art incubator.

I believe our goals as a religious movement have more to do with individuation – with developing into one’s authentic self, with moving past a rule-based morality and toward an ethic of relationship – for example, to treat others well because I recognize that we are connected, not because someone said so.

Too bad we don’t – as a society – house and feed artists and nurture them as this emerging church did for a time, to help them get started. I’d like to see an Artistry that wasn’t so rule-bound, that encouraged personal exploration, as well as community participation.

A radical Artistry would be:

- * counter-cultural – finding meaning in creativity and relationship, not owning stuff, not status,
- * cooperative – creating wealth for its members and for the organization;
- * nurturing loving, open community;
- * brave but not foolhardy – being willing to tackle battles growing out of the work.

What would be the point? An experiment, to provide a real refuge and place for young artists to grow: artistically, in freedom to pursue their art, and spiritually, in deepening their connection with a community of others. A place to meld artistic vision and spiritual depth, to balance individual and community. Can it be done?

peace, Jean

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