



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

November 30, 2006

"Love for the Earth, Justice for the People"

Calendar:

- **Sunday, December 3, 6pm – "Roots of Unitarianism I"** – What do we have in common with the humanist scholars who left Italy with the Inquisition breathing down their necks?

Spirituality Book Discussion Group

Tuesday, December 5, 6-8pm – leads off with discussion of Eckhart Tolle's classic, *The Power of Now*. Meet at the back table, Westgate Coffeehouse, 924 W. Madison. The public is welcome.

- **Sunday, December 10, 6pm – "Human Rights Day"** – A representative from the Eighth Day Center for Justice will show a video about the **Earth Charter** and discuss what is being done to implement this great document.

How to get what you need in your relationships – in ways you won't regret later

Intro Relationship Workshop – last session till spring, **Tuesday, Dec 12**, 7-9pm. To register, phone 312.405.9470 or email minister@NewGardenUU.org.



Meditation Class

Sunday, December 17, 4pm – Marilyn Myles, long-time practitioner, group leader, leads this session on meditation. The class meets once a month, **3rd Sunday**.

You are invited to join a short meditation **each Sunday** at 5:30pm before the service. (First Sunday, singing practice.)

Winter Blues

It's the beginning of Advent, in the Christian calendar. As a kid, I associated Advent with those calendars some kids got, with little doors over various dates that they got to open when the time came, and get some kind of prize. I had a friend who opened all the doors right away – it made me wonder if the blessings behind the doors worked if you did that.

Our clergy Bible reading group looked at the readings for this coming Sunday, and they sounded so grim, so apocalyptic! This wasn't what the season of Christmas is supposed to be all about! One of our members complained, These readings are for grown-ups – what do we tell the kids? And this stuff about people fainting from fear, and "distress among the nations" – where is the Good News here?

I always feel most like an outsider in the group during this time – since for Unitarian Universalists, Jesus is human, a great teacher; we are not waiting for the coming of God. For us, the baby Jesus can represent all the precious babies born to people on Earth.

For many of us, the holiday has a lot of cultural, sentimental value, since we grew up singing the carols, putting presents under the tree, opening our stockings on Christmas morning. It represents a festive time, of family, of exchanging gifts, decorating, baking, dressing up for parties.

It can also be a time of discomfort – of annoyance at the endless music and the materialism; or pain, if we are reminded of dashed dreams or people we've lost; or alienation, if we are not Christian and don't share the joy of the season, and don't enjoy having people waving it in our faces.

There is something inherently gloomy about winter coming on, with each night longer, each day darker, colder. But we have faith that winter will come, and then go, and the light will return, and we can even know the exact minute of the winter solstice, if we like.

Human affairs, though, we are less certain about. So much bad news! So much violence! Such a quagmire we've gotten ourselves into in Iraq, and failed miserably to make life better for people there (whatever our original motives).

In thinking about the "distress among nations" the Bible passage refers to, I was reminded of M. Scott Peck's book, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. Peck talks about how every group begins with what he calls "false community," where people are nice to each other, but are not being honest – they don't feel safe enough to reveal what's really going on with themselves.

Real community, Peck says, is one in which members trust one another, feel free to express their needs, feel confident that others will care, will be committed to their well-being.

To reach this idyllic state, groups go through four stages. False community gives way – when the tensions grow too great – to chaos, where members fight amongst themselves, expressing the lack of trust they were already feeling (even when they were smiling). Then when everyone is exhausted from expressing all the suppressed emotions and concerns and fears, members are

left with a kind of emptiness. From this empty place they are able finally to experience real community.

I wondered if our community of nations was not in this place of chaos.

The ground rules for groups who wanted Peck to lead them included safety and equality for members of the group – if someone could fire you for what you said during the chaos phase, real community would never come about.

The equivalent for nations are the protections we've tried to set up with our international laws: the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war, the human rights documents, the International criminal court.

All people want pretty much the same thing – to live their lives, to work, to have enough food, to have a roof over their heads, to raise their children to successful adulthood. Instead of assuming these universal human needs, and the good will of nations (and building in protections against bad will), U.S. foreign policy currently operates under a reverse Golden Rule – do unto others before they do unto you.

We are living in scary times. May our leaders be blessed with more wisdom than they've shown so far, and the capacity to see that treating others as they'd like to be treated themselves will take us a lot farther toward a real community of nations.

peace, Jean

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