



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 22, 2006

"Love for the Earth, Justice for the People"

Calendar:

- **Sunday, September 24, 6pm** – It's Movie Night: **"Fierce Grace"** tells of Ram Dass's life, stroke, and embrace of a more inclusive view of faith. Bring food to share, eat potluck while we watch.
- **Tuesday, September 26, 7pm** – **NVC ("compassionate communication") group**, 2nd and 4th Tuesdays. Each night, some teaching, some practice. Is this therapy? I don't think so; it's learning how to get your needs met without acting like Yertle. Phone Jean for location, 312-405-9470.
- **Sunday, October 1, 6pm** – Dave Karcher talks about **"Turning The Powers"** – the intersection of ideas of theologian Walter Wink (*The Powers That Be*) and futurist and development maven David Korten (*The Great Turning from Empire to Earth Community*). Deposing the Yertles and creating coops in place of kingships?

Tuesday, October 3, 7pm – the first meeting of **BOOK NIGHT** (1st Tuesdays), where we figure out what books we will be reading together over the next few months. **Chocolate Café, 847 W. Randolph.**

- **Sunday, October 8, 6pm** – Film night (you try to define what is a film and what is a movie!) – along with thousands of others in Chicago and across the land, we see Al Gore's **"An Inconvenient Truth."** At least here Al doesn't pull his punches. Bring a dish to share.

UU Orientation

Sunday, October 8, 4pm – hear some Unitarian Universalist history and about New Garden – our vision, our goals; tell us your dreams and hopes. Followed by ceremony to welcome new members.

Meditation Class

Sunday, October 15, 4pm – Marilyn Myles begins a four session meditation class to learn **different styles of meditation** and begin practicing. The class meets once a month, **3rd Sunday**. We'll begin holding ½ hour meditation sessions before service, starting the following Sunday, October 22, at 5pm.

Yertle's Salvation

A wonderful idea came up during our reflection on Yertle the Turtle last Sunday. If you know the Dr. Seuss story you may recall that Yertle was king of the turtles – and all he could see – in his little pond. He decided he wanted to see more, and be king of more, and he ordered his fellow turtles to stack themselves up into a higher and higher throne, until, wanting to be higher than the moon, he went too far, and was deposed.

We began to think about what it would mean to have compassion for Yertle (even though he clearly had none for the turtles he was standing on).

Yertle was a clear example of out-of-control ambition and yen for power at others' expense – we see plenty of that in our world these days. Lots of us have been collectively wrestling with how to respond to people like

that, over the past few months and years. Many people believe that the only way to respond is with equal force, equal power. But we've been seeing that using such force only creates resistance and more force and violence, and so seems a dead end – it just creates more of what we want to see less of.

We haven't tried using compassion, and we have no idea what would happen. But here's a start: imagine Yertle (or other miserable leader) as – not a power-hungry tyrant – but as a person yearning for transcendence. He longs to be up high in order to see more of the world, to *connect* with more and other creatures, to transcend his small world, which has come to feel too small, too limited.

We all have such yearnings. Our dream job becomes just a job, after all; our dream house, an albatross of work around our necks; the love of our life, our spouse, grows clay feet. We long for the change that will make everything perfect after all. Yertle's mistake is in thinking he can reach that wondrous state of perfection by extending his vision and his kingdom ever farther.

So it is (we speculated Sunday, with pleasure and amazement) with all dictatorial leaders – they have mistaken power for the Answer. Thus they seek to have more and more power, because each additional bit doesn't bring them the satisfaction they're looking for.

So we find compassion by understanding them in this way. Reaching (and changing) them – “turning the powers” (as Dave Karcher puts it) – may be quite another task. I'm imagining that we need to grow this movement, this understanding quite a lot, before dangerous leaders can be deposed and made “king of the mud” as Yertle was.

In the meantime, we have ourselves to work on – after all, in our own small way we may be stacking turtles up to reach the sky, or hoping that someone we meet can make everything beautiful, or imagining that some organization we will find tomorrow or next week will have the key to bringing about utopia. So we do both kinds of work – we work on ourselves, and we work on the world. And we ally with people who have vision to live the better world, not just criticize the old one.

peace, Jean

p.s. I recommend *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies & the Truth About Reality*, by Brad Warner, formerly of Zero Defex and Dementia 13 punk rock bands from Cleveland. It's edgy, it's funny, it's wise, it's got a down-to-earth realness that I love. And he's a genuine Zen master!

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