

The Uniter



*Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church
of Urbana-Champaign*

December 2, 2009

Our Mission

*Build community.
Seek inspiration.
Promote justice.
Find peace.*

Our Vision

*We dedicate ourselves
to:*

*- Expanding religious,
educational, and social
activities that serve
our congregation and
the larger community.*

*- Acting on our indi-
vidual and collective
commitment to pro-
mote social justice.*

*- Enhancing the diver-
sity of our liberal reli-
gious community.*

*- Improving the acces-
sibility and function-
ality of our facilities,
and ensuring that
they are an asset to
our community.*

December 6

"Our Connections Around the Globe"

9:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Partner Church Committee

Mitten Tree

December 13

9:30 and 11:15 a.m.

"A World of Winter Lights"

Renee Cogil and RE Classes

Second Sunday Potluck

December 20

9:30 and 11:15 a.m.

"Unexpected Beginnings"

A Musical Service"

The Rev. Axel H. Gehrmann

Fred Stoltzfus and Kent Conrad

December 24

5:00p.m. and 7:00p.m.

"Christmas Eve Candelight Celebration"

An Intergenerational Service

The Rev. Axel H. Gehrmann

Minister's Corner

Axel H. Gehrmann

As the holiday season approaches, many of us are thinking about what gifts we can give to family and friends, as tokens of our abiding affection and tangible connection. Some of us also try to offer gifts to those beyond our circle of personal contact. "Guest At Your Table" boxes are one avenue we, as a congregation, try to reach out.

GAYT is a program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. The UUSC works to advance human rights and social justice both within the United States and around the world. By combining advocacy, education and partnerships with grassroots organizations, the UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis.

On the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving GAYT boxes were distributed at church. (If you didn't receive one, you can find them near the bulletin boards in fellowship hall.) The boxes are small cardboard containers, decorated with pictures of people from a variety of countries around the world. The idea is for our families to place a box on the table at which we have our daily meals, and during each meal take a moment to be mindful of someone - in this country or across the globe - who is struggling to overcome oppression or economic need. Then, during every meal between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve, you are encouraged to drop some coins into the box, as a small symbol of support for people in need. During worship services on Christmas Eve, you are invited to place your box (and its contents), under the Christmas tree at church. Our collected contributions will then be sent to the UUSC.

How will our donations be put to use? \$40 can buy materials for a woman in Northern Uganda to make her own groundnut sheller. A groundnut sheller helps reduce her workload and generate needed income for her family, as they return home after more than twenty years of war. \$170 can purchase a month's supplies of chemicals and testing strips for members of indigenous communities in San Marcos, Guatemala, who live downstream from the GOLDCORP mine. \$600 can repair a home in Gaza, under a home repair program run by youth groups.

The holidays provide us ample opportunity to be mindful of the many-layered community bonds that tie each of us to all. May we each find meaningful ways to strengthen those bonds.

See you in church,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Axel". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long tail on the 'l'.

R.E. Matters

Renée Cogil

A common topic of discussion these days is, "How do we change the focus of Christmas from commercialism to something more meaningful?" A change from intense preparations followed by an equally intensive and often emotional Christmas day to a gentle and calm marking of the days before Christmas and then Christmas day, with more enjoyable time spent with family or friends and a connection with meaning. While I wish I could offer an easy to follow recipe to accomplish this I cannot. But in the hopes of moving in that direction I offer here some ideas on celebrating Advent – the coming of Christmas – with a simple and joyful ritual that involves very little preparation while providing an opportunity for reflection and quality time spent with family or friends.

To begin make an Advent wreath. This can be a simple Styrofoam wreath wrapped in fresh or artificial evergreens, or simply a ready-made wreath. Place four candles, evenly spaced and nestled in among the evergreens. Traditionally these candles would be purple and pink, but any colors will do. Place a 5th candle in the middle of the wreath. This one is traditionally white. Now you are ready for Advent.

Advent is a celebration marking the time before Christmas, and is celebrated once each week in December, typically Sundays. On the first Sunday in December light the first candle, and each week light another candle so that on the first week you light one candle, and by the 4th Sunday you are lighting all four candles. The first week's candle (purple) stands for hope; the second (purple) stands for love; the third (pink) for joy; and the fourth purple) stands for peace. Invite everyone present to name something that follows the theme of the candle. For example, on the first Sunday everyone might say something they are hopeful for, and on the second

Sunday they might give the name of someone they love, or share how they feel loved. A 5th candle is lit on Christmas Eve – it is known as the Christ candle. For Christian families, the lighting of the advent wreath can be a time to share Bible verses. For Unitarian Universalists who see Jesus as an important teacher, this can be a time to share something you have learned about the life of Jesus. Or perhaps you could read aloud a different Christmas story each Sunday, enjoy a Christmas song together, and follow it up with a special time of eggnog and cookies. If you need ideas for Christmas stories here are a few of my favorites: Christmas Tapestry and Tree of the Dancing Goat both by Patricia Polacco, A Small Miracle by Peter Collington, The Christmas Menorahs by Janice Cohn, Elijah's Angel by Michael Rosen and The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey by Susan Wojciechowski.

With warm wishes for the holidays,



From the Board Chair

Cindy Loui

Last Saturday, three quarters of your faithful board of trustees (and Axel and former board member Frank Knowles) journeyed to the Peoria UU church to learn about the up and coming topic of Policy Governance. Four members of their policy advisory group and their minister generously spent 4.5 hours ushering us into the world of Policy Governance. This is a popular model being adopted (and adapted) by many UU congregations as they grow in size and find that a liaison model (as we currently have) becomes unworkable. In classic "Policy Governance", the board makes policy that governs the church. The board then delegates authority to some entity (such as an administrative team) to run the church. The board's job then is to set policy and be sure policy is being followed rather than managing much of the minutiae of day to day church operations. This frees the board to consider long term planning, vision and mission and principles of the church, and improves the timeliness of managing church business. Is this something you would like to help the board explore? We are hoping to create a group to explore governance models and map the next steps for our church in this arena. Please contact me and let me know if you'd be interested in joining us in this endeavor.

Save the Date:
June 23-27, 2010 is General Assembly, in Minneapolis, MN. "GA" as it is called, is our denominational national meeting. There are workshops and worship services and a chance to meet other UUs from all over, to learn more about our denomination and find ideas and inspiration. All are welcome. Check out the web site to learn more: <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/>

Volunteer Corner

Peggy Patten

Recognizing our Unsung Stewards

There are many individuals who volunteer their time at Church, often the behind the scenes in quiet, invisible ways. **Maryly Crutcher, Marcy Joncich & Carolyn McMahon** deserve our thanks for keeping our supply of kitchen linens cleaned & ready for use on Sunday mornings. Let Maryly, Marcy & Carolyn know you appreciate their service. If you know someone deserving our "unsung steward" recognition, let Peggy Patten know at: m-patten@sbcglobal.net or 337-5668.

A new way to sign up for Sunday Crew tasks!

We are now using VolunteerSpot, a new web service, to help us organize our weekly sign up for Sunday Crew tasks: announcing, welcoming, ushering, providing decorations and hospitality. This service is free, but there are advertisements on the page which you can hopefully ignore. We believe this is the best/easiest system for Sunday Crew sign up. You can find the VolunteerSpot link on our Church's new Web site at: <http://uucuc.org/sunday-crew>

Once you link to VolunteerSpot you will be asked to enter your email address so the system can send you a link to your personal volunteer page. Once you get that email, you can use the link in it to actually sign up for Sunday Crew. (You'll want to save that email when you get it so that you can use the link whenever you want to sign up in the future.) We have reviewed the site's privacy policy and you do not have to worry about your email address getting shared with anyone. The site uses a calendar format which we think is pretty intuitive, but let Peggy know if you have trouble. Peggy can be reached at: m-patten@sbcglobal.net. Thanks for helping us move into the 21st Century!

Short Term Project Volunteer Opportunities

Want to help out at Church, but you have limited time for meetings or long-term commitments? Consider one of the following short term volunteer projects. Questions should be directed to the contact person listed below.

Assist with our new Church Web site. If you can help with one or more of the following tasks, contact Ryan Thomas, rthomas@mac.com or Elaine Gehrmann, gehrmanns@aol.com.

Content Coordinator: point person for all interested groups or individuals wanting to contribute content; checks site regularly for freshness and accuracy of content; works closely with the Editor.

Editor: good writer with voice of the Church for prospective members; provides quality control for photos and written content.

Photo Manager: manages photo galleries including management of consent; helps others get photos to right place; should be a little tech savvy & a good organizer.

Photographer: takes lots of photos especially of people engaged in family, church, spiritual and social activities at Church.

Image Editor: edits & uploads photos for use in Web site; needs to be skilled in image-editing software.

Consent Facilitator: gets consent for photos selected for Web use; a non-technical role requiring good interpersonal skills.

Audio Recorder: records worship services; this is a relatively non-technical role that requires a consistent presence for Sunday services.

Audio Editor: creates mp3s of sermons & special music performances & uploads them to Web site; this role requires some skill with digital audio-editing software.

Communications/Advertising Advisor: available to lend advice and guidance on occasion.

Our Church Family

Joys and concerns are not included in the web version of the Uniter.

Church Announcements

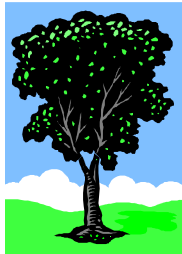
December Shared Offering: Partner Church Committee

The December shared offering recipient is the Partner Church Committee. The partner church committee is planning the December 6 service to acquaint you further with what has been done with your support and share the joys and concerns of both congregations. Ethnic music from both regions, a mini sermon by Axel and stories about our partner church congregations will frame our worship. And of course there will be great refreshments representing each country's cuisine.

One of our partner churches is in Szekelykal, Romania, and one is in the Khasi Hills of northeastern India. Our mission as a partner church includes reaching across boundaries to connect with our partners, challenging ourselves to be more open to different values and behaviors, and promoting global friendships, international awareness, human rights, and a better world. Providing some financial assistance to these two village communities is a part of this mission. Funds will go toward health care and educational opportunities, giving global perspective to our social action, and strengthening the bonds of friendship between us. Please come and enjoy!

Walnut Tree Resurrected

A Task force has been formed to determine ways to utilize the wood from the walnut tree removed this past summer. Members of the task force are Tim Temple, Jean Gillespie, John Coppess, and BOT liaison Anne Sharpe. The first project is to work with a local craftsperson to design and construct a walnut welcome table for our entry hall. In order to begin funding the project a number of bowls and cutting boards that have been made from the walnut wood by Monticello artisans will be offered for sale before Christmas. Photos of these pieces can be seen in the fellowship hall. In addition, Virginia and Chet Strohecker are offering hand-made items for sale, with the proceeds also going to the table fund



Stewardship Matters 11/29/09

Millie Davis, Sandy Finnerty and Karen Folk are currently members of the Feminist Book Group—one of the longest lived groups in the church. The three of us have collaborated on the ideas expressed in this Stewardship Matters because we want to let you know why our membership in the Feminist Book Group is one of a number of important reasons that the three of us (together with our partners) give nearly \$15,000 in our annual pledges to support our church community.

Recently when the group was talking about the book *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout, one passage led to a discussion of community. In this passage, which follows, Olive is resting after her son's wedding and thinking about the loss of her only child in a marriage to a woman she barely knows.

“This thought causes Olive to nod her head slowly as she lies on the bed. She knows that loneliness can kill people – in different ways can actually make you die. Olive's private view is that life depends on what she thinks of as “big bursts” and “little bursts.”

Big bursts are things like marriage or children, intimacies that keep you afloat, but these big bursts hold dangerous, unseen currents. Which is why you need the little bursts as well: a friendly clerk at Bradlees', let's say, or the waitress at Dunkin' Donuts who knows how you like your coffee. Tricky business, really.”

Another member of the book group, Sheila Garrett, spoke about this passage, commenting that the little bursts are those moments in time when we really connect in a deep and intimate way as travelers in this world. What gives us a lift is making connections with others even in small ways, like the unprompted smile from a stranger. Humanity IS connecting, an energy that is a sharing and recognition of community, an energy that we share in our church community.

While our monthly book group discussions are about the books and about the strong women characters in them, they are also a chance to share of ourselves and make that connection and recognition of our own humanity. Our participation in the book group doesn't just inform us and entertain us, it also takes us outside of ourselves to introduce us to new friends and to other cultures, lifestyles, and religions we read about. It deepens our own spirituality and our commitment to give generously of our time, talents and money to the larger church community and to the community beyond our own congregation.

We encourage you to think about the ways you connect to others in our church community—the “little bursts” and “big bursts”—and how your financial gifts to the church reflect the importance of your connection to our church community.

Please Let Us Know Why You Give to Our Church

It's hard to believe that we are again in the midst of another holiday season. During this time of hustle & bustle, it is important to think about all that we are grateful for. Friends, family and good health rise to the top of the list. Soon thereafter, however, is our church home.

We invite you to tell us why you support the church on the postcard you received by mail the first week of December or by going online to <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229X5H6A4WR> Please respond by December 15. You may wish to reply anonymously, which is fine. However, if we may share your statement with your name, please let us know we may do so.

During these times of religious intolerance, we believe that having a liberal religious community that honors the good in all religions is imperative. Using our free pulpit, Axel has recently spoken candidly on the need for universal health care and the rights of gays and lesbians in our communities. In addition to addressing important social issues in the larger community, we are grateful to have a place where like-minded people can join together in fellowship. Both of us have close friends that we've made with others at our church. These friendships have bolstered us during hard times and have been a source of joy when we come together for coffee houses, auction events, church groups, and Sunday services.

While we are grateful for the presence of our church in the larger community and appreciative of the community that we have built within its walls, we know that we cannot take either of these for granted. We think it is important to remind ourselves and each other what we are grateful for and what makes our lives meaningful. And, it is important to reflect on how we can actively contribute to and foster what is meaningful.

The above are some of the reasons the two of us support our church. We would like you also to make a statement

about what it is about our church that motivates you to contribute to it. We hope to share the responses that we receive with the congregation. Thank you! Millie Davis and Karen Retzer

The Bucket Listers – A New Church Group

Next Meeting: December 13th, 7-9 p.m.

Do you feel immortal? Do you have all the time in the world? Then the Bucket Lister group is NOT for you! Otherwise, join us as we discuss our dreams and goals as well as strategies for achieving them. We welcome new participants. Please contact Renee Cogil with questions and to let her know you will be coming.

UU Service Committee Holiday Cards Are Here

We are selling these cards to help raise funds for the worldwide social justice work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. The cards can be purchased at the Social Action Committee table after each Sunday service from now through December, or until they are gone. Each packet of cards is sold for \$10.

Holiday Pot Holder Sale

Please watch for the potholder sale, which will be taking place in the Fellowship Hall after each service on **December 6th and 13th**. The Potholders are handmade by the Stroheckers, and are \$5 each. Proceeds benefit the production of the walnut welcome table.



Poinsettias

Let's paint the sanctuary red for the holidays with a gorgeous poinsettia on every windowsill. You are invited to sponsor a poinsettia for the sanctuary AND to take it home following the second service on Christmas Eve. To sponsor a poinsettia, fill out an order form and place in the basket in Fellowship Hall along with \$10 per plant.

Choir CDs still for Sale

Looking for a last minute Christmas gift, or a spiritual "pick-me-up" during the otherwise hectic holiday season? Consider purchasing a choir CD for \$10. The CDs will again be available for sale between the services on Sunday, December 13th. Look for Sarah Wisseman for more information.

UU CHURCH HISTORY BOOK STILL AVAILABLE FOR HOLIDAY GIVING! Special Offer in December: \$35 for Two

Have you bought a copy of the latest history of this church (1982-2007)? It was unveiled at the anniversary celebration last May just before the end of regular services so perhaps some of you missed getting a copy. They make great gifts too. Copies sell for \$20. From December 6 to December 20 you can get two copies for \$35! Please stop by the table in the fellowship hall between or after services each Sunday or contact the church office or Gail Hueting (ghueting@sbcglobal.net).

Create Fond Memories for the Holidays

Save the date, Saturday morning, **Dec. 5th, 9:30 to 12:30**, for holiday craft making and baking together with your UU friends. We will bake some goodies, make some beautiful things, and enjoy our time together. Bring the kids, your grandparents, or your friends next door. We will all have a merry time together.

Upcoming Events

Questions and Answers on UUism

On **December 6**, following the worship service, the minister will offer a brief orientation to Unitarian Universalism and this church in his office. The session is informal and designed to answer your questions, whatever they may be. Everyone is welcome, whether you are new to the church or have been attending for a while.

Church Groups

Adult Discussion Group meets Sunday in the library for a lively discussion of topics ranging from political to religious and beyond. The group meets Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome! Led by Chuck Cooper.

Bridge Group meets from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Children's Chapel. Due to the holidays, they have changed their meeting dates to **December 7 and December 28**. All levels are welcome. Contact: Barb Mann: barber_mann@yahoo.com.

Gastronomical Society Group hosts themed potluck dinners once a month at a member's home or at a restaurant. This group is open to anyone who loves to cook various ethnic and regional cuisines and to try new things. Contact Emily Sanders (emily@sanders-home.net) for more info.

U.U. Play Group For children from birth to 5 years of age. Join us Fridays from 10:30–12:30 in the nursery. Can't find us? Look for us on the playground. It is a chance for young children to play and socialize, and for adults to meet other UUs. Contact: Renée Cogil, 384-8862 or re-director@uuc-urbana.org.

Women's CommUUnity An informal discussion group for women and an opportunity for quieter, more in-depth discussion and connection. We meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:15 p.m. in the Library. Next meeting: **December 16**. Join us! Contact: Maryly Crutcher: maryly7@comcast.net.

Feminist Book Group. An opportunity to read works by women and to discuss them in a friendly and supportive environment. Meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month, from 7 to 9 pm in the Library. **Next meeting is December 15.** The book for discussion is "My Stroke of Insight, A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey" by Jill Bolte Taylor. For more information, contact Karen Folk, foxfolk@aol.com or 367-9723.

Join a Chalice Circle

Chalice Circles are an opportunity for friends and members of the church to develop deeper connections and wider service within our community through small-group involvement.

Chalice Circle - first and third Thursday of the month, 7:15 pm. Contact Geoff Levin (384-1827, glevin47@comcast.net)

Chalice Circle—second Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m. Contact Elaine Gehrmann (344-2335, Gehrmanns@aol.com).

Caring for Aging Parents and Elders Circle—third Monday of the month, 7 p.m. Contact Karen Retzer or (352-9482).

Writer's Circle—third Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m. Contact Pat Nolan (384-7477, pnolan96@aol.com)

Sustainable Living/Deep Ecology Chalice Circle Third Friday of the month, 7 - 9 p.m., with optional 6:30 dessert potluck. Contact Amy Hassinger: amyhass@gmail.com; 384-7735 or Emily Laugesen: emilyslaugesen@yahoo.com; 384-5921.

Community Events

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE HOLIDAY GIFT?



The Red Herring has over 15 blends of organic fair-trade coffee and 2 shirt styles that will bring a smile to your friends and family!

TheRedHerring.org/coffee
TheRedHerring.org/shirt



Share a pound of coffee or a shirt this holiday with someone you love for \$15.00 shipped to any address in the U.S. Or for just \$10, you can pick them up in the Red Herring or at church December 20th, after either service.

Orders placed by Dec.10th will be delivered by the 25th.

The Red Herring Vegetarian Restaurant & Coffeehouse are programs of Channing-Murray Foundation, the Unitarian Universalist Campus Center at 1209 W. Oregon, Urbana. CMF started as a program of this church and since 1991 has operated as an independent UU Campus Ministry. For more information, please visit www.ChanningMurray.org or call 217-344-1176.

Would you like to subscribe to our weekly E-News letter? If so, please send your name, phone number and email address to admin@uucuc.org. If you would like to announce your church related events in the E-News, please send your submission to admin@uucuc.org no later than Thursday, noon.

The Uniter is published every two weeks from September through May and every three weeks during the holiday season and summer months. Please submit announcements by email to admin@uucuc.org. The next submission deadline is Noon, **Thursday, December 10, 2009.**

Calendar of Church Events - 2009			
Date	Time	Event	Location
Thursday, 12/3	7:00 p.m.	Finance Committee	Children's Chapel
	7:00 p.m.	World Religions	SW Classroom
	7:15 pm	Chalice Circle	Offsite
Friday, 12/4	10:30 a.m.	Playgroup	Nursery
Saturday, 12/5	9:30 a.m.	Holiday Crafts	Fellowship Hl.
Sunday, 12/6	9:30 a.m.	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	11:15 a.m.	Worship Service	
Monday, 12/7	1:00 p.m.	Bridge Group	Child. Chapel
	7:30 pm	Worship Committee	Library
Tuesday, 12/8	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees	Child. Chapel
	7:00 p.m.	RE Committee	Fellowship Hl.
Wednesday, 12/9	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal	Sanctuary
Thursday, 12/10	7:00 p.m.	War and Peace Book Group	Child. Chapel
	7:00 p.m.	Green UUs	YRUU
Friday, 12/11	10:30 a.m.	Playgroup	Nursery
Sunday, 12/13	9:30 a.m.	Worship Services	Sanctuary
	11:15 a.m.	Worship Service	
		Second Sunday Potluck	
	7:00 pm	Bucket Listers	Library
Monday, 12/14	7:30 p.m.	Chalice Circle	YRUU
Tuesday, 12/15	7:00 p.m.	Feminist Book Group	Library
Wednesday, 12/16	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal	Sanctuary
	7:15 pm	Women's CommUUnity	Library

**The Unitarian Universalist Church
of Urbana-Champaign**
309 W. Green St., Urbana, IL 61801-3221
(217) 384-8862 uucuc.org

Elected Officers (BOT = Board of Trustees member)

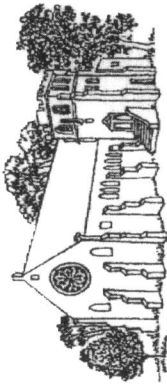
Cindy Loui, BOT	Chair	May, 2010
Teresa Jones, BOT	Treasurer	May, 2010
Anne Newman, BOT	Clerk	May, 2011
Brian McNurlen, BOT	Worship Committee	May, 2010
Pamela Van Wyk, BOT	Finance Committee	May, 2012
Anne Sharpe, BOT	Property Committee	May, 2011
Peggy Steele, BOT	Social Action Committee	May, 2012
Cynthia Hoyle, BOT	Personnel Committee	May, 2011
Cindy Ingold, BOT	Vice Chair, Ministry	May, 2010
Chris Carlson, BOT	Membership Committee	May, 2011
Jesse Spencer-Smith, BOT	Moderator	May, 2010
Amy Robison	Financial Secretary	May, 2011

Committee Chairs

Chris Hannauer, Finance
 Bob Strauss, Personnel
 Sam Beshers, Worship
 Emily Laugesen, Green UUs
 Tom Gillespie and Jerry Carden, Property
 Jennifer Greene and Pat Nolan, Social Action
 Geoff Levin, Ministry
 Ann Brodsky, Religious Education
 Doug Jones, Membership
 Brigitte Pieke, Partner Church
 Peri Ceperley, Care Core: gethelp@uuc-urbana.org

Staff

Axel Gehrman, Minister minister@uucuc.org
 Tues, Wed, Fri: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
 Renée Papini Cogil, re-director@uucuc.org
 Director of Religious Education
 Tues-Thurs: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., call ahead
 Janis Meesey: Office Administrator admin@uucuc.org
 Mon-Fri: 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
 Fred Stoltzfus, Choir Director fstoltzf@illinois.edu
 Kent Conrad, Music Director kconrad@rocketmail.com
 Beth Cobb, Assistant for Services bethac54@comcast.net
 Elsa Holden, Childcare Coordinator eholden2@illinois.edu
 Myron Winkler, Sexton
 Jacob Sicinski, Sunday Sexton



THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
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