



First Unitarian Church

Steepletalk

First Unitarian Church

A Member Congregation of the Unitarian
Universalist Association

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Office Hours: 10am-2pm
Monday-Friday

Minister's Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday,
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Celebrations of Life

Sunday Services begin at 10:55am

May 6, *The Search for Truth & Meaning*

Speaker: The Rev. Dawn Cooley

Music: First U Choir

Children: Religious Exploration for Children and Youth

May 13, Coming of Age Service

Children: Multigenerational

May 20, *Welcoming, Part 3*

Speaker: The Rev. Dawn Cooley

Music: T.J. Allgeier

Children: Religious Exploration for Children and Youth

May 27, *Beyond Flanders Fields*

Speaker: The Rev. Dawn Cooley

Children: Chapel or Multigenerational

First Hour Opportunities

9:30am to 10:45am

Every Sunday: Round Table (see page 3 for more info)

First Sunday: Meditation with Edward

Second Sunday: Sunday Morning Books (see page 5 for more info)

Third Sunday: *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life* book study

STEEPLETALK

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editor@firstulou.org

Elsewhere in this Steepletalk, you will find “How to be Welcoming, Part 1”. The short answer is: Wear your name-tag!

Here are some additional tips to help make our church an inviting place for visiting guests (gratefully stolen and modified from those suggested by the UU Church in Eugene, OR):

On Sunday morning, what is my first opportunity to be welcoming?

Choose to park away from the building, leaving room in the closer spaces for guests and members who are mobility challenged. The staff spaces on Library Lane are reserved for those with mobility challenges on Sunday morning.

We have many guests every week. How can I help them feel comfortable?

Stop by the greeter table in the lobby and offer to accompany a guest into the sanctuary. If asked questions during the service, quietly answer questions. Your example will help them learn our customs and feel at home.

How can I tell who is a guest and who is not?

As we grow, we can't always know everyone. This is a good thing! Usually, first-time guests will have hand-written name-tags. They usually get a plastic name-tag after their second or third visit. So it can be hard to tell newer folks from long term members. When in doubt, a friendly smile combined with “I don't think we have met before!” will give the person space to either say “This is my first time” or share that they have been coming for a while.

Does it matter where I sit in the sanctuary?

Yes! Rather than saving seats, welcome guests to sit next to you or go sit next to them. Move to the middle of the aisles to save room for late comers. Save the seats by the children's area for those who have children.

How should I greet a guest during the ‘Greet Your Neighbor’ portion of the service?

Reach out. Move toward the guest if you need to. Find a guest and kindly introduce yourself and welcome them to our church.

What should I do as I leave the service?

Walk out with an unaccompanied guest. Offer to introduce visitors to the Minister or speaker. Invite them to join you for coffee hour. Introduce them to other members and friends, especially to those who might share a common interest.

What should I do during coffee hour to welcome guests?

Look for guests and visitors and talk to them about the Celebration of Life, the sermon, the Joys and Sorrows that were shared, the music. If it is at all possible, save church business for some other time because guests and visitors can not participate in that type of conversation.

How can I encourage guests to learn more about our church?

Introduce them to the Board Host at the Welcome Table after the service. Encourage them to sign up to receive the church newsletter, or pick up one of the many First Unitarian specific brochures available in the lobby. Encourage them to give their email address so that they can begin receiving the Midweek Update and other email communications.

Please *don't* talk to guests about the way it used to be, or share your anxieties about upcoming changes, or talk about conflicts from the past. Let them get to know the church as we are now: An inviting, warm, vital, welcoming community that appreciates their presence!

What should I do after becoming acquainted with a guest?

Call or send an email note to the church office (office@firstulou.org) with the guest's name and information you learned about them. Include the date of the visit. The information will be entered into the church database and used by the Minister, and the Membership Ministry to maintain communication with the visitor after the initial visit.

What can I do to be ready for questions from guests about being a UU?

Work on your UU “elevator speech” during spare moments. That's the speech you'd give if someone asks you a question about being a friend or member of the church while you are both on an elevator, with only a few seconds to chat.

Thank you for helping us to lovingly welcome visitors! Creating and maintaining the culture of a welcoming congregation is part of the joy and responsibility of being a part of our beloved community.

Please consider coming to the Member Ministry Reboot as well. It will be held on May 20th, after the church luncheon. See information elsewhere in this edition of Steepletalk.

May Happenings

First of all, here is a brief recap on some recent changes that have been made to RE at First Unitarian Church. Formerly known as Religious EDUCATION, the decision was made to make a subtle but substantive change in the name to EXPLORATION. The name change really says what takes place at First U; the task is to explore answers, not put them in concrete. All persons have value and bring a wide variety of experiences to the table and the word "exploration" underscores the importance of tapping into this rich tapestry rather than expecting right or wrong answers. This is what takes place at First Unitarian.

In a very few short months, First Unitarian Church will be following a new schedule on Sunday mornings. The formal announcement was made on Easter Sunday by the Ministry Council. The new schedule will include a dedicated RE hour for all ages. There will be offerings for adults as well as children and youth during the hour preceding Celebration of Life time where all ages will be worshipping together. This change is coming about because of the belief that adults need Religious Exploration and young ones need to experience worship. First Unitarian is about walking the talk, doing what we say we believe.

As for May, there are important events taking place. Please make use of the following bullet points when planning Sundays this month:

- (1) **May 13** marks a very important time in the lives of five youth of First Unitarian who are completing a program of exploration and growth, Coming of Age. A special Celebration of Life will be taking place on the second Sunday with these youth planning and leading the service. The highlight of the day will be as each shares her or his own statement of belief.
- (2) **May 20** is the final Sunday of RE for the 2011-12 church year. As part of this Sunday, First U will recognize graduating high school seniors, and the youth groups will carry on a tradition of bridging youth and older children into the youth groups. This is a process where upcoming sixth graders will be welcomed into the Middle School Youth and upcoming freshmen will be welcomed into the Senior High Youth.

Let us encourage one another to be positive about the changes taking place. After years of study and discussion by various task teams, these moves are being implemented with careful consideration. One extremely important fact to remember is that the same quality of RE is still in place.

Round Table**Church Library****9:30 to 10:45am Sundays**

FAITH DEVELOPMENT is the purpose of Round Table, which meets at 9:30am each Sunday for an exploration of a variety of topics. Participants engage in their own faith development and contribute to that of others who are present.

Youth are encouraged to participate. Child care is available at 9:30 for infants and pre-schoolers. Adults are welcome to bring children in their care. For more information or to suggest a program, contact Jasmine Walston by email at jasminegld@aol.com or by leaving a message in the Religious Education mailbox in the volunteer area.

May 6 *Islam And The Abrahamic Creed In Modern Life.* Guest speaker Aly Farag, Muslim Community Center at Westport Road, will address the coherence of Islam from theory of faith to realities of modern life. Program will start promptly at 9:30am.

May 13 *Spiritual Life Of The Founders.* We have been the recipients of the great wisdom of those who crafted our First Amendment. These freedoms are under siege today from many directions. Gary Falk, program leader. Program will start promptly at 9:30am.

May 20 *Pagan Sabbats.* Are the dates set in stone? What do they have to do with ethical eating? Lori Martin, program leader. Program will start promptly at 9:30am.

May 27 *Religious Symbolism In Music: "American Pie."* What religious themes can be found in Don McLean's song, "American Pie" and other favorite songs? Jane Martin Buckley, facilitator.

Notes from the Ministries

MEMBER MINISTRY REBOOT

You know how occasionally your computer freezes up and the only thing to do is to reboot it? Sometimes that happens in church systems as well: the old way of doing things becomes no longer optimal, and so a "reboot" is in order. Member Ministry will be having such a "reboot" after the service on **May 20**, and we invite YOU to participate. Help us figure out how your Member Ministry might best structure and organize itself to take us into this new era. No commitment after the meeting is required. Please RSVP to Holly Hogue at memberministry@firstulou.org to let us know how many to expect.

There will be a church luncheon that day, so come for our Celebration of Life, stay for food and fellowship, and then join us in the church Library at 1:00!

For those of you who may be wondering, Member Ministry is currently tasked with coordinating Greeters & Coffee Servers, conducting New UU classes, handling Receptions for Memorial Services, church luncheons and much more.

RESOURCE MINISTRY

The Resource Ministry is very pleased to have Michelle Pierce as Co-Leader with Kathy Drehmel for the 2012 --2013 church year.

Michelle is originally from Louisville and has lived her most of her life. She, her husband, and their 8 month old son Charlie live in the Clifton Heights area off Mellwood. She works for the federal court system. She originally came to First U for Dawn's roller derby sermon to support her and the rest of the team as she is the head nonskating official for the team, but loved the church and its welcoming atmosphere and kept coming back. She joined First U last August and Charlie was dedicated at the church on New Year's Day. She is excited about being more involved with the church and happy to be training in the Resource Ministry. It is a great fit.

A Salute to House and Grounds under the leadership of Bob Ballard, and the Aesthetics Team under the leadership of Ann Ulinski for installing our First U Banners. It took a number of phone calls, trips to the hardware store, notes and diagrams left in mailboxes, conversations in the Social Hall, and numerous e-mails --- the job is done --- Thank You!

Ministry Theme: Truth

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." ~*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

"Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods." ~*Albert Einstein*

"Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth." ~*Buddha*

Reflection Questions

1. How do you know/did you learn to tell when something is true?
2. What truths have you gleaned from spiritual texts or practices?
3. Is it possible that two people can define truth in conflicting ways and both be correct? How?
4. Is there an "absolute" Truth, i.e., the same for everyone; or is truth "relative", i.e., depending on the situation or the observer?
5. If Truth is absolute and the same for everyone, who knows it and what is their responsibility to share it?
6. If truth is relative and not the same for everyone, how can people ever hope to agree on anything? How can we ever hope to live together in peace and harmony?

First U Happenings

FIRST U BOOK CLUB

We meet in the Parlor on the second Monday of each month at 6:00p.m. Please join us.

May 14th *Tender At The Bone: Growing Up At The Table* by Ruth Reichl

June 11th *Hungry Ghost* by Keith Kachtick

July 9th *Warmth Of Other Suns: The Epic Story Of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE SOCIAL ACTION SHOWER

All women of First Unitarian are invited to attend the Annual Social Action Shower at Linda Parry's home on Saturday, **May 19, 2012** at 11:30 am. It is always great fun.

We all bring something for families in need (somethings like towels, cleaning supplies, etc. - things one can not get with food stamps). A list will be provided on May 6, 2012.

We have lunch and enjoy a time of sistership. There will be more information on the Women's Alliance Bulletin board in the Social Hall and also on the list serve as well as in the FYI of the order of service and Wednesday Update. Hope to see you there. You can contact me as well: Kathy Thackeray.

BROWNBAGGERS

Brownbaggers Sound Off - "My Letter to the Editor"

On **Monday, May 14** come join us in the church library to eat lunch at 11:40 AM or so then share your "letter to the editor" (real or imagined). It promises to be an interesting and stimulating session! - See you there.

HELP Food Collection

Food collection in May focuses on **canned beef stew**, but any and all food donations are gratefully accepted. Donations can be placed in the large blue basket in the sanctuary, and are brought to the HELP food pantry, operated by Calvary Episcopal Church next door, by the youth groups. HELP's clients are also in need of personal care items - toilet paper and feminine hygiene products, toothbrushes and paste, shampoo, razors, deodorant, soap.

SUNDAY MORNING BOOKS

All discussions are held in the Parlor unless otherwise noted and begin at 9:30. Please join the discussion whether or not you have read the book. Contact Kathy Rogers or Jill Sampson for more information.

May 13: *Man Seeks God*, by Eric Weiner Led by Jill Sampson

Jun 10: *Never Far From Home: Stories from the Radio Pulpit* by Carl Scovel

July 8: *Being Alive and Having to Die: The Spiritual Odyssey of Forrest Church* by Dan Cryer Led by Kathy Rogers

August 12: *fathermothergod: My Journey Out of Christian Science* by Lucia Greenhouse

UU CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Numerology in Cultures and Religions. **Sunday, May 20**, 12:30 – 2:30pm, parlor. Glenn Glasgow will lead the conversation. UUCF meetings are open to anyone who is interested of any gender identity or sexual orientation: seekers, doubters, skeptics, critical thinkers, former Christians, current Christians, questioning Christians, Christian-curious, believers, agnostics, atheists, and followers of other faith traditions.

ROMEOS ROMEOS WHERE (AND WHEN) FORTH ART THOU???

The First Unitarian chapter of ROMEOS (Retired Old Men Eating Out) has changed its venue and time. We will still be meeting on the first Wednesday of the month (in May it is **05/02/12**) but we have changed the place to the Golden Corral at 4032 Taylorsville Rd. and the time to 1:00 PM (when the prices change). P.S. the Corral has great pot roast! See you there.

Circles Within Circles Retreat

The Women's Retreat on April 13 and 14th at First Unitarian was a great success. We thank the Retreat Committee; Nancy MacPherson (chair), Deanna Hopper, Rita Sasse, Jill Sherman and Peggy Storm-Muller, for the well planned and fun Retreat. It was especially nice to meet and retreat together with women from Clifton UU Church and Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church.

Besides birds, there are bees and bats, and all may be welcome in our yards (and churchyards).

There are about 4,000 bee species that are native to the US and Canada. Most of us are unaware that NO honey bees are native to North America! Honey bees were brought here by early settlers. Most native bees are solitary and nest in holes in the ground or burrows in twigs and dead tree limbs. The native bees rarely sting because they have no hive or queen to protect. Bumble bees, carpenter bees, leafcutter bees, digger bees, common squash bees, orchard mason bees and many other kinds of native bees pollinate many different kinds of flowering plants. And bee for bee, do so more effectively.

Copy the following into your web browser for a free downloadable publication, "Bee Basics: An Introduction to Our Native Bees." <http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/BeeBasicsBook.pdf>

You may want to plant flowers that bloom in all seasons. Spring flowers include Eastern bluestar, wild geranium, crabapple trees, and hellebores. Nodding wild onion, hyssop, milkweeds (which attract lots of butterflies, including Monarchs), Illinois bundleflower, and liatris are summer bloomers. In fall, try asters, bluebeard (a small bush), goldenrods, delphiniums and Joe-pye weed. Most of the plants listed are natives.

To make nest homes for native bees you may leave undisturbed areas or piles of sandy soil for ground nesters. Standing dead trees or logs are good for carpenter bees. If you have scrap lumber 3-5" thick, drill holes from 1/8" to 5/16" in diameter most of the way through the wood, spaced 1/2" to 3/4" apart. Orchard bees like the 5/16" holes if you have fruit trees. Hang the wood under your eaves in an area protected from direct sun and rain.

Bats are great for eating mosquitoes, moths and beetles. They are usually out at night. A little brown bat can catch more than 600 mosquitoes an hour! Try hanging a bat house at least 15' high in a place that gets 6 or more hours of sun. East or southeast is good. Use a pole, dead tree or a chimney. Bats should never be handled.

If you can provide water, especially dripping or moving water or a pond, you'll see a wider variety of wildlife.

First Unitarian of Louisville Covenant of UU Pagans

FULCUUPS

FULCUUPS is a free and open community of people who practice earth-based spiritualities.

Please join us as we celebrate the turning of the Wheel of the Year with our Sabbat Celebrations.

Sabbat Circles are open to the public and anyone with a positive path is welcome.

The First U Covenant of UU Pagans group (FULCUUPS) would like you to join us the our Beltane Celebration on **April 29th** here at the Church. Beltane is that time of the year when the earth is in spring bloom and this cross quarter festival signals the beginning of Summer. We will gather together and dance around the maypole in celebration of this earth based holiday. Doors open at 5:30 and the ritual celebration will begin at 6:00PM. Potluck dinner will follow around 7:00 PM so bring a dish to share.

*Midsummer/Walking the Labyrinth **June 24, 2012***

Doors open at 5:30pm and Circle starts at 6pm. A potluck dinner follows around 7 pm.

FULCUUPS offers classes meeting the First and Third Wednesdays of each month (unless otherwise noted).

Our classes are a blend of lecture and discussion with seekers, those new to the path and experienced practitioners in attendance.

Our classes start at 7pm and last till about 8:30pm

...and service is its law.



An Inspirational Quote brought to you by your Committee on Ministry

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, let us walk together."

Mark Your Calendar for Concert in July

It's not too early to reserve the evening of **Saturday, July 14th**. First Unitarian is hosting a family-friendly concert to bring you Traveler's Dream, a folk duo who provided the music for a service last summer. Michael Lewis and Denise Wilson captivate listeners with their close harmonies, singing spirited traditional Celtic and American songs along with original songs celebrating themes of tolerance and justice. Known for their impressive skills as multi-instrumentalists, Traveler's Dream has been praised for the "exceptional way they blend artistry, skill and performance with a great openness and rapport with the audience." Look for details in the June Steepletalk and the FYI section of Sunday orders of service.

How to Be Welcoming – Step 1

We encourage existing friends and members to please wear your nametags on Sunday morning. As we grow in numbers, we can't always know everyone. Wearing nametags helps us to get to know each other. It is fun to be able to put names to faces!

As you leave church, please place your nametag in one of the purple baskets that are: at the table near the York Street entrance; on the shelf in the volunteer area; and at the Library Lane entrance.

Thank you for helping to make First U a more welcoming place!



See Dawn's article on page two for Step 2, and be sure to come to the Celebration of Life on May 20th for the conclusion of this series.

Interweave

"Interweave Continental is a membership organization actively working toward ending oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity, recognizing that we will not be free until all oppression is a thing of the past."



• **TOPIC TBA.** Sun, May 27, 12:30-2:30pm, library. Topic to be announced. Please check the FYI or website Interweave page for updates. Please bring your own lunch or snack. All First Unitarian members, friends, and visitors of any gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship orientation, or faith path are welcome.

• COMMITMENTS

By voting to become a Welcoming Congregation, First Unitarian Church agreed to the "Commitments" listed in The Welcoming Congregation Handbook. Commitment # 2 states:

"A Welcoming Congregation does not assume anyone's affectional/sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Vocabulary of worship reflects this perception; worship celebrates diversity by inclusivity of language and content."

• REFLECTION

What action will I take in the coming month to promote civil rights and full inclusion for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people?

• ADVOCACY

Fayette County. Fayette County public schools will suspend purchases from a local t-shirt company, which has been accused of discriminating against the organizers of Lexington's gay pride festival.

Teen Pregnancy & Marriage Equality. A Centers for Disease Control study ranked states for teen pregnancy rates. New Hampshire (16 per 1000), Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut are the states with the lowest rates. Curiously, these states also have marriage equality. States with the newest marriage equality laws — New York, Washington and Maryland — ranked ninth, 11th and 13th for the lowest teen pregnancy rates, while Iowa ranked 17th. Indiana ranked 32nd (38 per 1000), and Kentucky ranked 44th (46 per 1000). (dallasvoice.com)

Mass Wedding. More than 200 gay and lesbian couples from across Ohio participated in what they called the "largest illegal mass wedding ever held" at the Cleveland Galleria in late March. Hundreds of friends and relatives of the brides and grooms joined the celebration as eight priests and ministers recited marriage vows to couples of all ages. Additional information at Support Gay Marriage in Ohio on Facebook.

Contact Kentucky Legislators. Call 1-800-372-7181 to contact your Kentucky legislators. Visit fairness.org for legislative updates on BGLT issues.

Contact Indiana Legislators. Visit in.gov/legislative/ to find contact information for your Indiana legislator. Voice your objections to the Indiana Marriage Discrimination Amendment (HJR-6). Visit indianaequality.org for updates on BGLT issues.

• MORE INFORMATION

For more information or questions about Interweave, please contact Interweave co-chairs Jasmine Walston (interweave@firstulou.org) or Clare Zigner, or leave a message in the Interweave mailbox in the volunteer area.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sunday Mornings, Starting this Fall

1. What is "Exploration Hour?"

Exploration Hour is a dedicated time for the entire church community to gather to explore religious ideas. It provides opportunities for all ages to engage with others of similar age or interest levels, with spiritually-oriented curricula and subject matter, using reason as our guide. It includes the quality RE experiences for all ages that First Unitarian has offered for years as well as new opportunities for adults. The Exploration Hour then provides the opportunity for the entire community to gather in a regular weekly Celebration of Life.

"Exploration" indicates that we come together to examine our questions and challenge our assumptions, without an expectation of passively receiving doctrinal answers provided by some religious authority.

2. What will Sunday mornings look like, and when will the new schedule begin?

An Exploration Hour Fair will be held after the Celebration of Life on August 19, 2012. During this time, registration for classes will be available. Classes for youth and children generally require registration, while adult classes generally do not. Exploration Hour classes will begin on August 26:

- 9:00am Greeters, teachers & childcare providers arrive
- 9:15am Exploration Hour programs begin
- 10:30am Programs end; pick up children from classrooms
- 10:30-11am Unscheduled time for conversations, snacks or preparations for Celebration of Life
- 11:00am Celebration of Life begins
- 12:00pm Coffee Hour

3. What will young children do during the Celebration of Life?

First Unitarian Church welcomes young children in the Celebration of Life and encourages their attendance with their parent(s) or caregivers. Childcare will be provided for infants and toddlers. Children's Celebration will be designed for ages 3 through 8 to experience age-appropriate activities such as yoga, storytelling, and music. Similar to our current schedule, Children's Celebration will begin after the children participate in the first part of the service and then follow a church leader upstairs. Older children up to age 11 may either remain in the Celebration of Life or attend Children's Celebration, as their parents or caregivers feel appropriate.

4. Why are we doing this?

The UUA and UU congregations across the Association have grappled with concern for the health of Unitarian Universalism in our country. Successful ways to address these concerns, and to sustain and grow our faith include engaging in activities together across age lines, giving our children an awareness of the value of Unitarian Universalism, providing adults with regular opportunities for exploration of the spirit in a context of reason, and providing children and youth with regular opportunities to participate in worship. The goal of this endeavor is to create a strong foundation for First Unitarian Church to thrive in a changing world.

5. Where did this idea come from?

In the spring of 2010, the Religious Education Ministry invited Nancy Combs Morgan, Heartland District Director of Faith Development, to lead a seminar at First Unitarian, in which over thirty church members representing all Ministries and age groups participated. Inspired by that seminar, a Multigenerational Task Team began to investigate ways for First U to better include our youth and children in the life of the church.

As children and youth began to participate in the Celebration of Life for up to 30 minutes each week, Religious Education teachers found that the reduction in class time made it impossible to complete the curriculum.

Religious Exploration also provides adults important opportunities for sustaining our faith. However, adults with children find it difficult to attend first hour when their children have no programming available.

Worship Ministry, Religious Education Ministry, the Committee on Ministry, and Ministry Council all began to discuss these issues. Ministry Council created the UU Evolve Task Team, and charged it to investigate how best to meet the needs of the congregation on Sunday Mornings. UU Evolve studied other congregations and talked with a cross-section of our congregation in group settings and in one-on-one sessions. In February 2012, UU Evolve reported to Ministry Council, which accepted its recommendations to broaden our worship opportunities for children youth and our religious exploration opportunities for adults.

6. Do other churches have similar schedules?

Yes. Most churches have a dedicated hour in which adults, youth, and children engage in religious education at the same time. Several leading Unitarian Universalist congregations have successfully moved to this model. Desiring for First Unitarian to thrive and prosper in coming years, Ministry Council chooses to follow these good examples of success.

7. Do children really like the Celebration of Life?

Children have been open to and accepting of being part of the Celebration of Life. Attention and behavior have improved as children learn what is expected in the sanctuary. When the Religious Education classes have moved from the sanctuary to the classrooms, the children have been focused and ready to begin the curriculum with very little transition time required. As this new Exploration Hour schedule becomes familiar, children will come to expect full inclusion and will increase their appreciation for the Celebration of Life as well as the ongoing interactions with other generations. Soon our children will participate even more actively in the service of worship and celebration, sharing their talents and gifts with the church community.

Continues next page

8. How will this new schedule affect youth?

By participating in the Celebration of Life every week, youth will become more involved in the life of the congregation and more connected to Unitarian Universalism, in preparation for bridging to adulthood. Youth will develop familiarity with church activities and appreciation for their value. Youth will have increasing opportunities to know individual congregation members of many generations, while maintaining peer-group time together during the Exploration Hour and youth groups. Each of these benefits improves the potential for our active, committed UU youth to continue to benefit from our community as active, committed UU adults.

9. Do parents really want this? Will they get what they need from the Celebration of Life?

Several parents have expressed excitement about the new schedule. These parents appreciate the fact that the church cares enough about children to include them in the Celebration of Life. They value having family activity together at church, in a very important hour of weekly life. They appreciate the opportunity to guide their children in participation in the Celebration of Life. They see this new schedule as an opportunity to provide children with experiences that promote inclusion as well as the chance to grow up enjoying participation in Celebration of Life.

10. How can I help my child or youth adapt to this new schedule?

In a positive manner, communicate to the child or youth that the new schedule will enable them to develop deeper, richer connections to each other and our UU faith. Explain that the Religious Exploration hour provides more time to spend with friends learning, working, and socializing. Discuss the concept of “beloved community” and the value of joining together in the Celebration of Life, where we seek to nurture our community and learn to transform our world.

11. What happens during the break between Exploration Hour and the Celebration of Life?

This unscheduled time is a valuable opportunity to forge connections through casual interaction while shifting our focus from exploration to celebration. The thirty-minute break allows time for parents and caregivers to pick up children from their classes, make restroom stops, possibly stop by the social hall for a brief snack, and settle into the sanctuary for Celebration of Life. This time allows for casual meet-and-greet between members of the congregation as well as a time of welcome and information for visitors. It provides enough time for people with responsibilities in the Celebration of Life to attend an Exploration class without having to leave early for preparation duties. This break also allows for “soft” endings of the various class times, meaning that, if an activity or discussion requires a few more minutes to complete those last burning comments or questions, the class can accomplish this while still honoring the start time for Celebration of Life. This thirty-minute break provides a valuable time of community building.

12. Will we still have Coffee Hour after the Celebration of Life?

Yes, absolutely! The church community will continue to gather for coffee and fellowship in the social hall after each Celebration of Life. Coffee Hour might even become a bit less hectic and more enjoyable for some members, who will have the ability to finish their tasks during the thirty-minute break before the Celebration of Life.

13. Are we “dumbing down” the Celebration of Life?

No. Consider that children who attend the Celebration of Life regularly have more experience with worship than an adult visitor who has never before been to a church. Notice that long-time members of different faith paths experience worship very differently. Multigenerational worship challenges us to become aware of these and other congregational diversities that we would sometimes rather not notice, and to devise creative worship services that touch the hearts and intellects of members, friends, and visitors of all ages, diverse faith paths, and a wide range of experience levels.

14. What’s in it for me?

Everyone can benefit from this new schedule. An inclusive, nurturing community that gathers together across all age generations for Celebration of Life can increase connections for each of us with other members and friends. Small group exploration of that transcending mystery and wonder that moves us to a renewal of the spirit, bearing in mind always the guidance of reason and the results of science, offers opportunities for stimulating exchanges of ideas.

15. Is this new schedule permanent?

Ministry Council has committed to a minimum of two years for the new schedule, to provide enough time for members to become accustomed to it and appreciate its benefits. After two years, Ministry Council will evaluate the schedule.

16. What can I do to help this new Sunday schedule succeed?

As the new schedule comes into effect, two essential elements will promote its success: commitment and patience. Commit to attend the Religious Exploration Hour, and perhaps to lead a class. Talk with Member Ministry about task sign-ups that have openings. Time, patience, and dedication on the part of all members and friends will iron out the rougher spots and allow us to celebrate the successes. A positive attitude and a “can do” approach usually provides the impetus to transform a new idea into the realm of regular practice. Keep in mind our common goal of an inclusive, nurturing community that values both reason and spirit, and that will thrive in a changing world.