

Standing
on the
side of LOVE
— and reason.

THE FIRST Unitarian

VOL. 92, FEBRUARY 2010 • THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MINNEAPOLIS

From the Minister

Perhaps the most consistent theme of human experience is change; wherever living things are, change is constantly happening. This is true of relationships, institutions, and nations, as well as of individuals. Some changes are cyclical, like the seasons, and some move in one direction only, like the stages of growth toward maturity, for a person or any biological organism. Sometimes change is expected, like a baby beginning to walk, or hair turning grey as one ages. Some changes are welcome, even long-anticipated, while others come as a surprise, or if not altogether unexpected, still a “revolting development.” But change is a constant, for nothing organic is changeless, and how we deal with change is one of the great challenges of a fully human life. When we cherish something, we are often reluctant to see it change, and there can be great comfort in feeling that certain things don’t change, and can be relied upon to stay the same over time.

During the holiday season just past, the FUS staff tried out a major change in our Upper Assembly Hall meeting space. We rented some chairs—the most inexpensive we could find—and unbolted about two thirds of the pews from the Assembly Hall floor, and stored them temporarily in the Dietrich Room. This experiment allowed us to host the Solstice Celebration, the Christmas Eve Gathering, and our first New Years Eve party, in a flexible space that could accommodate performances, an orientation to face looking out the windows, and fine dining. The pews have now been re-installed, and the chairs returned to the rental company. Members and others who experienced this space without the pews had a variety of responses. Some missed the dignity, formality, and familiarity of the room as they were used to seeing it. Others felt a loss of the architectural intention and integrity underlying the original design of the facility. Some people were enthusiastic about the various possibilities for the use of more adaptable space. Some felt a sense of expansiveness or warmth, while others found the empty space more dark.

Now that we have an idea of what might be possible if we were to consider replacing the pews with more flexible seating on an indefinite basis, we are in a position of thinking about what such a change might mean for our congregation. We are clearly not prepared to make such a move any time soon, but the question is before us. There are many implications to consider: How would the feel of our Sunday mornings be affected? What about weddings, and memorial services? What would be the results of such a change for our rental

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online at: www.firstunitariansociety.org/newsletter/main.html

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Soup Lunch February 21

Please join us!

Proceeds
to support
our Summer
Assemblies
programming



Order of Service
announcements are
due by noon on
Wed. of each week. Please
email your submission(s) to:
info@firstunitariansociety.org

Newsletter submissions are
due by the 7th of each month
and should be sent to:
[newsletter@
firstunitariansociety.org](mailto:newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org)

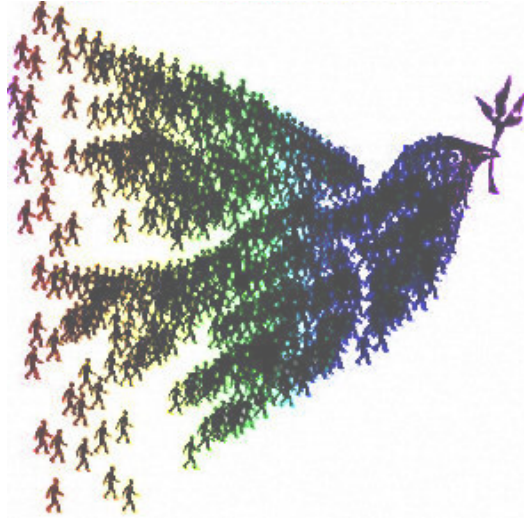
Forum and Assembly Previews

Forums are at 9:30 a.m. in the Lower Assembly Hall.

■2/7/10 FORUM: The FUS Foundation—History, Roles, and Goals

Presenter: Allan Callander

Most FUS members know the Foundation exists, but do you REALLY know what it is, how it functions, how it is different from the Board of Trustees? This is a chance to learn all about it, including a brief history, who is doing what, and what our driving purpose and operation is for FUS. Learn what a huge difference the work of the Foundation and its supporters makes for FUS. Come and share coffee and great conversation with members of the Foundation Board. Allan Callander is the current President of the Foundation Board.



We are each but one person
But if we come together,
we can change the world!

Assemblies are at 10:30 a.m. in the Upper Assembly Hall.

◆2/7/10 ASSEMBLY: “Signs of Spring”

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

It can be easy to despair, or become cynical, when contemplating the plethora of issues that confront us as individuals, as American citizens, and as inhabitants of planet Earth in the 21st century. Yet hope and creativity are of far more use to the world, as well as much more fulfilling ways to live. As winter’s grip becomes really tiresome, perhaps it’s time for some stories about people who are making a difference in the world, because they believe it’s possible. New members will be received at this assembly, and 25 year membership anniversaries will be celebrated.

■2/14/10 FORUM: “Love Songs: The Good, The Sad, The Sentimental, and The Funny”

Facilitator: Robin Nelson



It’s Valentine’s Day and love is in the air! Let’s sing some sweet love songs (and a few sad ones). The definition of love will be expanded to include love of humankind and nature but the feeling is the same. But—love is not always serious, so we will include a few funny ones as well. Robin Nelson has been calling dances and leading songs in the Twin Cities Area for over 20 years. Her infectious talent makes singing with her a pleasure.

◆2/14/10 ASSEMBLY: “Cultivating Love”

Speaker: Mary Bohman, Ministerial Intern

As Unitarian Universalists let us pause on this Sunday—Valentine’s Day to contemplate universal love—the ways we cultivate it in our own lives and “Stand on the Side of Love.” This is a powerful claim that can surely



help transform our own lives and perhaps even the world. But how do we cultivate it—really integrate it into our way of living and being? As UUs we tend to focus on actions and ideas and less on the inner place of intention. That inner place of intention is a critical aspect of cultivating love: to ground love in our hearts not just our heads and hands. The Buddhist practice of Loving-Kindness cultivates love of self, love of others, and love of enemies. How could this translate to a “Universal Love?”

Forum and Assembly Previews

Forums are at 9:30 a.m. in the Lower Assembly Hall.

■2/21/10 FORUM: “Community Health Workers in north Minneapolis”

Presenter: Donn Vargas
from the North Point CHW program in north Minneapolis

From North Point’s website, www.northpointhealth.org: “As frontline workers working inside communities, CHWs are well-positioned to monitor and influence the socioeconomic conditions in the home while serving as a conduit to healthcare access. Traditional healthcare services offered in clinics and hospital settings are not typically equipped to address such factors as quality housing, employment issues, educational resources or access to health insurance, all of which can directly or indirectly impact an individual’s health and well being.” We will be taking a social justice offering for the CHW program at North Point during our assembly that morning.

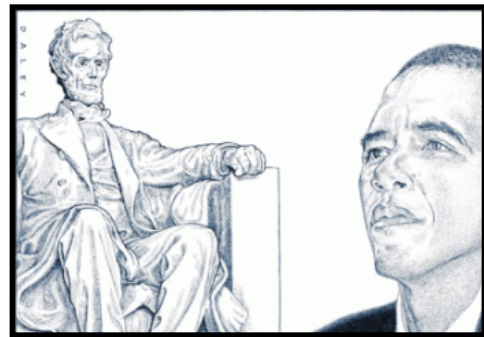


Assemblies are at 10:30 a.m. in the Upper Assembly Hall.

◆2/21/10 ASSEMBLY: “The Politics of Tragedy”

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

Barak Obama’s acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize was necessarily shadowed by his call for additional troops to go to war in Afghanistan. This week we remember another renowned, and also reluctant, war time president of 150 years ago. There appears to be a certain similarity in the world view and understanding of human nature expressed by these two commanders in chief in their most public statements. How does the sense of tragedy that they share help us to understand ourselves, and measure the integrity of their leadership?



■2/28/10 FORUM: Movie Chat

Movie Chat

Discussion Host: Deb Magnuson
Deb will choose a current thought-provoking movie to discuss. We will go see the movie on Wednesday evening, February 24. Meet inside the theater twenty minutes before the movie begins. Watch the February *Unitarian FLASH* and the orders of service for the exact movie, time, and location. Bring a friend or come alone and meet a friend! If you have a movie suggestion (needs to be showing in theaters on February 24), talk to Deb!



◆2/28/10 ASSEMBLY: Music Sunday: “Standing on the Side of Love: Letters and the Language of the Heart”

Performers: The FUS Chorus and Orchestra

Dr. Jeffrey Stirling and the FUS Chorus and Orchestra will present various works that deal with love and the tender intimacy of letters. One of the pieces titled “Last Letter Home” is written by an army soldier named Jesse Owens serving in the Iraq war. The orchestra will present “Letter from Home” by another wonderful American composer, Aaron Copland. Come join us for a morning celebrating the beautiful language of love expressed through letters written from the heart.

From the Minister

continued from page 1

income? How would we pay for the chairs we would need, and exactly what kind of chairs would we select? How would we store or dispose of the pews? There are no doubt other questions as well.

As we move forward into a new century, everyone in leadership at FUS, both staff and volunteers, hopes that we will be able to preserve the best of our more than a century old heritage, while embracing with enthusiasm the opportunities for bringing our ministry and message to upcoming generations. To accomplish that will surely mean adapting to some changes, while being judicious about what changes will actually serve us best. The staff has done what we could to help us all envision what this particular possibility might look like; now it is your turn. As you may know, we are asking for input from all who use, or are familiar with, our building. If you have access to a computer, **please take a moment to fill out the simple survey form at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YPW66XW>**. If you want to participate but computers aren't your thing, you can pick up a paper copy of the survey form from the office, or call us and we will mail you one. It is truly important that we hear from as many people as possible, so that we can make an informed decision about what to do next.

The question is not whether FUS will change; it's a living institution, so changes are inevitable. Yet we have the ability to decide some things about what kinds of changes, and when, and how. As much as possible, we would prefer to embrace our changes together as we grow ever more fully into our mission as a humanist congregation, and avoid the pain of "revolting" developments." You can help in that effort by sharing your own ideas responsibly, and listening carefully to your friends and fellow members as we think through our plans, and our future as a community unfolds.

Kendyl Gibbons, Senior Minister



From the Intern

It's hard to believe, but as you read this my internship at First Unitarian Society is half over. I am busy learning, leading, exploring, and growing... soaking up all I can. One particularly gratifying area I've been experimenting with is what the wider world calls small group ministry, better known at FUS as Discovery Groups. It is an interesting concept because its core goal is to help people feel more connected to each other within the larger framework of congregational life. In this model a small subgroup spends quality time reflecting and listening to each other and going deeper around a specific topic. The hope is that as individual relationships grow and new connections are formed the quality of life for the entire congregation improves. This past fall a group of six of us explored Qigong meditation. I've been practicing Qigong for over eight years; it is an ancient form of meditation that emerged out of Traditional Chinese Medicine. We practiced simple movements and visualizations that are meant to increase one's energy level, reduce stress, and promote healing. Together we struggled to learn technique, shared aspects of our lives; found moments of peace together.

If you would like to get to know some new people at FUS I invite you to join one of the Discovery Groups starting in February. It's not too late! I will be leading a group that meets on the first and third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. We will read the book, *Faith*, written by Buddhist meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg. In the book Salzberg shares stories of her personal struggles and successes while initially learning Buddhist meditation. Her struggles in that process provide a structure to explore the idea of faith from a Buddhist perspective. She writes, "Faith does not require a belief system and is not necessarily connected to a deity or God, though it doesn't deny one. This faith is not a commodity we either have or don't have—it is an inner quality that unfolds as we learn to trust our own deepest experience." This perspective on faith with its emphasis on experience holds particular relevance for humanists. I hope you will join me in an exploration of what faith could mean in our lives as we seek to understand how cultivating an inner experience of faith has the potential to help us become more fully human and alive.

Mary Bohman, Ministerial Intern

Discovery Groups

These groups will meet February–June. For full descriptions of these groups and to sign up, visit the Ask Me table in the Lower Assembly Hall.

Soul Work; anti-racist theologies in dialogue

Led by Carol Koepp, FUS Social Action Coordinator

Faith Through Buddhist Eyes

Led by Mary Bohman, FUS Ministerial Intern.

Making a Difference

Led by Sheila Callander

Exploring Earth-Centered Spirituality

Led by Dr. Christa Landon and other members of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, a UU-related organization for nearly 25 years.

Heart to Heart

Led by Gary Blegsted

Sermon Focus

Led by Kendyl Gibbons



In addition to the Spring Session Discovery Groups, other **interest groups** are also forming or underway, including:

Interest Group: Come Knit with Us!

Led by Jean Christensen and Jean Toll

Interest Group: The Real Book Club

Led by Paul Boschert

Interest Group: Jazz Lovers Unite!

Led by Barbara Weatherhead

Membership

We will be holding two more orientation sessions this year. Please let me know if you plan to attend, as we will provide a light lunch. The sessions will be held after service at noon on March 21 and May 23.

You can become a member anytime you wish. Contact me, Teresa West, membership director. We recommend attending the orientations and then joining us for the New Member discovery group, which is held once a month after service. These groups are a great way to meet others and to learn from Kendyl, our minister.

In between the orientations, we would love to meet you at the Minister's Tea in the Upper Assembly Hall after service on Sundays. Look for us by the wall opposite the window wall. The minister, a board member and the membership director are available to meet you and answer any questions, regardless if this is your first visit or your twentieth. You can also stop by the Ask Me table downstairs after service any week to learn more about us.

Sign Up for Heritage Suppers April 25 at 5:00 p.m.

These are a great way for both long time members and those new to the faith to find out more about our heritage and explore how it applies to their life. Several stories are explored together and there is time for pondering deeper questions about the subject matter after each story. Soup dinner and dessert are woven into the time together. The stories covered are different than the ones in October and don't depend on your attendance at the first one. Sign up at the Ask Me table in the Lower Assembly Hall throughout the month of February. We will contact you with the host for the night at a later date.

Happy February Birthdays!

Clara Asp	Barbara McKernan
Roberta Beach	Pat Morris
Marian Behrend	Tony Perpich
Barbara Belew	Le Schreurs
Lilly Bubser	Matt Schwalbach
Yleen Joselyn	Ronald Staff
Briana Libby	Marshall Thompson
Robert McCoy	Luc Willett

Teresa West, Membership Coordinator

Religious Education

Here is a peek at my marriage. I am not the romantic one. Cory does the romantic thing and I tend to look at the practical side of things. So, the UUA's push to reorganize Valentine's Day as a day of social action is right up my alley. I will be taking all of the kids Sunday, February 14, and talking about the saying that is on the side of our building, "Standing on the Side of Love." I think all of the kids will say that they stand on the side of love vs. hate, but what does that look like in practical terms? How does Standing on the Side of Love play out for kids in everyday life? A major issue that I will be talking about is the issue of bullying. It is documented that if one person stands up for someone being bullied the bully usually backs down. How about opening your lunch table up to kids who "aren't in the group"? I hope to investigate with the kids all kinds of ways that love can be practically put into action.

But not to ignore Cory, there will be lots of romantic love swishing around FUS too. Mostly in the form of cakes! The senior high will be hosting a favorite fundraiser Sunday, February 14th—the **HOMEMADE CAKE AUCTION!** Fabulous cakes will be baked by marvelous FUS bakers and then auctioned off that day in Social Hour. Perfect. Bid on a wonderful, fun cake and take it to someone who you think needs a pick me up or that you just want to spread some love to. How about your neighbor? The book group? Your family? Someone you want to get to know better? Your favorite babysitter? The person who grooms your dog? The person who cuts your hair? I'm sure that there are just any number of people that you know who could use some thoughtfulness at this time of year.

Valentine's Day Homemade Cake Auction

Sunday, February 14—during Social Hour

Auctioneer: Rev. Kendyl Gibbons

Proceeds will support
the Senior High trips to Boston
and General Assembly

Wanted: 30 volunteer bakers
contact Richard Seurer at
612-788-0054 or
martha2joe@aol.com
to sign up.

Lasagna and Bingo!

Friday, February 20
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Lower Assembly Hall

\$15 per family, \$7 singles

Prizes will be awarded!

Tickets available
during Social Hour
or from Jan Devor

Sponsored by the RE Committee



And they say the way to the heart is through food, so the Religious Education wants to serve you a fun lasagna dinner (with salad, bread and dessert) and then top it off with BINGO! This will be a great evening of food and fun so mark February 20th on your calendars. We start at 6:00 p.m. with dinner and then play BINGO until 8:30. Fun prizes accompany the gaming. We will be taking reservations in social hour in the beginning of February. The price is \$15.00 per family and \$7.00 for singles. This is a really fun evening, so be sure to be there!

So, bring on February: social action, romance, food and games. What a month! Gotta love it! (Get it? Gotta LOVE it!) Who says I'm not romantic?

Jan Devor, Director of Religious Education

Music Notes



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Building Steward: Cirilo Vail Hernandez

Office Hours: Mon.–Fri. 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.;

Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Main phone number: 612-377-6608

The FUS Chorus and Orchestra would like to present the program, “Standing on the Side of Love: Letters and the Language of the Heart.”

How often have we expressed and poured out our deepest feelings through the long lost art of letter writing...

real letters written with our very own handwriting? Remember how often we’d say, “Why that’s my mother’s handwriting” when we’d receive a letter in the mail from her? I’ve saved all the letters I’ve ever received from my parents and family when I was away from home. I cherish them to this day.



On Sunday, February 28th, Dr. Jeffrey Stirling and the FUS Chorus and Orchestra will present various works that deal with love and the tender intimacy of letters. One of the pieces titled “Last Letter Home” is written by an army soldier named Jesse Owens serving in the Iraq war. It was his request that if he died while serving his country, he would want his wife to open the letter he wrote should such an event occur. He died as his tank overturned and was the only man to not survive the tragedy. The music is beautifully written by Lee Hoiby, one of America’s finest opera and song composers. This poignant realization of the soldier’s words is truly beautiful. It is dedicated to “the fallen in Iraq.”

The orchestra will present “Letter from Home” by another wonderful American composer, Aaron Copland. “The piece possesses moments of subtle beauty and portrays the melancholy and pleasant nostalgia that one might feel receiving a distant communication from one’s own family.” Come join us for a morning celebrating the beautiful language of love expressed through letters written from the heart.

See you on Sundays!

Barb Brooks

Barbara Brooks, Music Director

The First Unitarian is published once a month. The deadline for submission of items is the 7th of the previous month. Items submitted may be edited for style, content, and to fit the space available. Submissions may be left in Morgan’s mailbox in the FUS office, or made by mail, fax (612-377-2151) or email (preferred) to newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org.



This newsletter is printed on post-consumer recycled paper with soy-based inks.

Social Action

Let's congratulate ourselves on our strong response to requests for contributions to the Currie Avenue Partnership and to our annual collection for two local food shelves.

- The Currie Avenue plan partners the downtown faith communities with the downtown business community to, very quickly, take 150 hard-core homeless folks off the streets and into housing with the social service supports they need to stabilize their lives. Our goal for Currie Avenue was \$1000 and we almost tripled that!
- We collected \$2000 for the food shelves at Masjid An-Nur mosque in north Minneapolis and Sabathini Community Center in south Minneapolis. We will hold the money until March when food shelf contributions will be matched by another nonprofit organization. As our speaker from Sabathini, Sondra Richardson, said at our forum on December 20, food shelves are able to magnify the worth of cash contributions when purchasing food from the nonprofit food distribution organizations. They will each get \$1000 from FUS. Happy shopping to them as they try to meet the growing needs of our low-income communities.

NEWS FLASH!

There is a need for men's and women's long underwear for those who are on the streets during this frigid weather. They can use a range of sizes but it's better to err on the side of too large rather than too small. Bring them to the SAC table during social hour or to the FUS office and we will get them to the Dignity Center where they will be distributed.



FUS members continually show an interest in positively impacting the troubled areas of the world. In the December 24 issue of *The New York Times*, Nicholas Kristoff shared website addresses for “organizations I’ve encountered that tackle global poverty in innovative ways.” Here they are:

- Acumen Fund, www.acumenfund.org, brings venture capital sensibility to aid work.
- Afghan Institute of Learning, www.creatinghope.org, is an aid group run by women.
- Developments in Literacy, www.dil.org, builds terrific modern schools in Pakistan, particularly for girls.
- Deworm the World, www.dewormtheworld.org tackles a problem most Americans don't even think about: intestinal worms.
- SOIL, www.oursoil.org, is bringing dry, composting toilets to Haiti.
- Sustainable Health Ventures, www.sheinnovates.com is a new effort to help women and girls in poor countries to manage menstruation so that they miss less school and work.
- The Worldwide Fistula Fund, www.wfmic.org, and the Fistula Foundation, www.fistulafoundation.org are dedicated to correcting a childbirth injury that is one of the worst things that can happen to a person: an internal injury that leaves a girl or young woman incontinent.

Kristoff added in the December 31 issue of *The New York Times* that an important companion to micro-lending is micro-savings programs. Some informal banks in West Africa actually charge people who deposit money with them! CARE, Oxfam and the Gates Foundation all are looking into ways to promote financial services for the poor. A website, www.matchesavings.org, lets donors match a poor person's savings to increase the incentive to build a savings habit.

For timely news about social justice action at FUS subscribe to the SAC Flash, an electronic newsletter published on the first and third Fridays of every month. To get on the list, email Carol at sac@firstunitariansociety.org.

Carol Koeppe
Social Justice Coordinator

Don't Miss Forum on February 21— Community Health Workers in north Minneapolis.

Lizz Hutchinson, FUS Board member and recent graduate of the UMN school of public health notes that, “many community clinics in MN have started creating this position and using these people as outreach workers and building links into communities, particularly immigrant/refugee and traditionally under served communities experiencing significant health disparities.” Learn more about this important effort and see the description on page 3 of this newsletter.

Announcements

Nominate Fellow Members

Notice regarding Board of Trustees Nominations: According to the FUS By-Laws members may nominate candidates for the Board and the three at-large members of the nominating committee to be elected at the next annual meeting of the members, as follows: (a) Nominations must be in writing; (b) The writing must be signed by three or more voting members and by the candidate who thereby indicates his or her consent thereto; and (c) The writing must be delivered to the Secretary at least 35 days before the annual meeting. The nomination must accompany the notice of the meeting (per FUS By-Laws Section 3.5 Nominations by Members). The Annual Meeting is Wednesday, May 12, 2010; Bruce Nelson is FUS Board of Trustees Secretary. Inquiries may be directed to Barbara Weatherhead, chair of the Nominations Committee at barbweather@comcast.net.



The Alliance

The Holiday Temptations and Gifts Sale December 13 made almost \$1,700 which the Alliance will be granting to FUS needs. Thanks to all the bakers, crafters, and purchasers for another successful project. Appreciation to Jan Sigmund and Gretchen Clemence for taking leadership of the event!

On February 3 Professor Barbara Frey will address the Alliance on "How Human Rights Advocates Are Changing the World." The talk begins at 11:00 a.m. with opportunity for questions and then lunch from the Wedge at noon followed by a short business meeting. Luncheon tickets for \$8 go on sale at 10:45 a.m.

Art in the Gallery

Jane Gilgun's photography show will continue until February 7. Beginning February 14 the featured artist will be Mary Guzowski, whose exhibit is entirely acrylic paintings. Mary is an associate professor of Architecture at the University of Minnesota's College of Design. She is a member of the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis.



Women's Awareness Group

The February meeting of the Women's Awareness Group will be held on Monday, February 8, at the home of Mibs Pearson. Carole Rydberg is the cohost. FUS women are invited to join us at 6:30 p.m. for a potluck supper followed by a discussion of the timely topic: "What is Love Anyway?" Please call Mibs or Carole to RSVP and for directions.



Celebrity Doodles!

Your brush with Fame... have you had one? Who do you know that is famous (even a little)? We're looking for connections to celebrities, politicians, etc. for our "Celebrity Doodle" auction items for the upcoming "Spring into Action Service Auction." If you know someone who you could ask to provide a doodle for us to put up for auction, contact Sheila Callander 952-212-4450. She will send you a packet that explains what we are looking for, how it will support our fundraiser and the paper for the doodle. Last year we auctioned off a doodle from Al Franken and Mark Ritchie & Pete Seeger! It was great fun and brought in over \$1,500.

Movie with Friends

Calling all movie buffs! Deb Magnuson will choose a current thought-provoking movie to see at 7:00 p.m. (check local listings for exact time, or watch for updates) on Wednesday, February 24. Meet inside the theater twenty minutes before the movie begins. Watch the February *Unitarian FLASH* and the orders of service for the exact movie, time, and location. Bring a friend or come alone and meet a friend! Movie to be discussed at the next Forum, 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 28. If you have a movie suggestion (needs to be showing in theaters on 2/24), talk to Deb!

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February 2010

February 3:
Alliance Meets

February 14
Cake Auction

February 20
Lasagna and Bingo Night

February 21
Soup Lunch

February 24
Movie with Friends

February 28
Music Sunday



Board of Trustees

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For an up-to-date listing of events at FUS, check the calendar online at the FUS website.

1. Go to www.firstunitariansociety.org
2. Click on "Calendar" on the left menu bar.

If you do not have access to the web, contact the FUS Office at 612-377-6608 for event information.