



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
OF MISSOULA
January 1 Volume 24 Issue 8
*Email and Hardcopy Edition***

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF
MISSOULA BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Chairperson: Barbara Berens
Vice-Chairperson: Sarah Berndt
Treasurer: Mary Nordhagen
Secretary: Magdalen Mar mon
Program: Bonna Graham-Hall, & Barbara Berens
Volunteer Coordinator: Mary Nordhagen

Children’s Religious Education: Rachel Nordhagen
Adult Religious Education: Dove Flannery
Care and Concerns: Greg Grallo
Music: Catherine Tucker
Hospitality: Maggie Marmon & Sarah Berndt
Newsletter Editor: Margery Fels Palmer



JANUARY PROGRAMS -THEME: CREATION

- Jan. 5:** Greg Grallo - speaker, Barbara B. Service Leader
- Jan. 12:** Bill Flanery - speaking on endangered species. Maggie Marmon: Service Leader -
- Jan. 19:** Dave Beck, - Kathy Usher: Service Leader. AND the third Sunday potluck
- Jan. 26:** Sara Berndt – Standing on the Side of Love. Service Leader TBA.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Programs	p. 1
Family Promise	p. 1
UUFM Events	p. 2
Calendar	p. 2
Greg’s talk: “God”	pp. 3-4
Eclectic Readers	p. 4
M.L.King	
Youth art & essay contest	p. 5
Alaska Adventure w/ UU’s	p. 5



Tuesday, January 7 – Family Promise could use your help! They are looking to form a committee of approximately 15 people to help plan a ***fundraising golf scramble in May***. The first committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 1/7/14 at 5:30 pm in the St. Anthony's Parish Life Center. 217 Tremont St, Missoula, MT 59801. If you are interested, please rsvp to FP board member David Tooke, dtooke@gmail.com. The 1/7/14 meeting is important, but not critical. If you are interested in helping out but can't make it to the first meeting, David will be happy to meet with you at a different time.





UUFM EVENTS

Sunday, January 5, Board of Trustees meeting,
9 am, upstairs at the Fellowship House.

Sundays in the library after coffee hour/potluck,
Building Your Own Theology discussion. There
is still the opportunity to join us. Margery Palmer,
mfpalmer@montana.com. Or 251-5418

Monday, January 20, UU Women's Lunch, noon,
MacKenzie River Pizza, 137 W. Front Street. En-
joy good food and good conversation – they have
more than just pizza!

Wednesday, January 22, Greg's Discussion Group,
6 pm at the Fellowship House. Due to the Christ-
mas holiday, we will meet a week early this month.



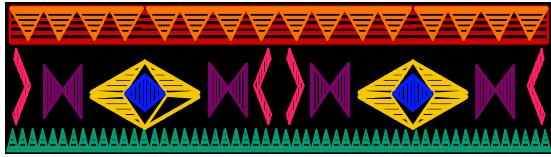
Family Promise - Thanks to all who have helped
with our Family Promise support rotations.

Our next week will be March 16-23. Wednesday
and Thursday will most likely be our days.
If you want more information on what Family
Promise Missoula is, or how you can help,
contact Mary at mnordhagen@live.com.



January 2014

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5 Board Mtg Greg, Barbara	6	7 5:30: Fam.Prom. MTG (see p.2)	8	9	10	11
12 Bill F	13 Eclectic Readers	14	15	16	17	18
19 Dave, Margery Potluck BYOT	20 Women's Lunch MacKinzie River...	21	22 Greg's Group	23	24	25
26 Sara, BYOT	27	28	29	30 WMC NRHS 7:30	31	



God by Greg Gallo

So many of us have been wounded by religion; we come to UU because of its openness, acceptance and non-doctrinal stance. We don't *have* to believe anything. Yet, because we don't *have* to believe anything, we make the mistake that all who walk through the door *don't* believe anything. Or rather, we assume that reason and logic are the same thing as science and that science, reason and logic are unbiased.

Our tradition, Unitarian Universalism, is founded on the idea that reason, thoughtfulness and openness will serve us where dogma, blind faith and rigidity will not. But let us remember that Unitarianism emerged as a deeply felt understanding that there is one God (not the Trinity of the church) and that we all have access to this God. Likewise, Universalism is the idea that all beings are worthy of God's love and will not be eternally punished. In other words, Unitarian Universalism emerges not as a way of removing God from our lives, but rather as a way of finding God in every aspect of our lives, including in those individuals and situations that bring about suffering.

Many times in the past, members of UUFM have expressed their discomfort with not only the word, but with the very idea of God. We choose instead to substitute a different word: Spirit of Life, the Universal or the One. This indicates that we generally agree that there is something unseen that permeates our lives (the unseen here is not just referring to neutrinos!), but the words we choose to describe it are ones that are somewhat removed from the religion of our past.

Why is God such a threatening word to us? Part of the issue is that, as Karen Armstrong in her *A History of God* describes, our "ideas about God were formed in childhood and [do] not keep abreast of [our] growing knowledge in other disciplines." That is, we very deeply feel that God is a "man in the clouds" dictating the events of our daily life. It is no wonder that as we mature and develop abstract thinking; our idea of God becomes irrelevant to our new understanding of how the world works. I believe that many of the television evangelists support this simplistic notion of God in their sermons. We hear pat phrases of consolation such as "God has a plan" and "God works in mysterious ways" as balms against deep

pain and real questions to our understanding of God as being all-powerful, all-knowing and ever-present.

In psychotherapy there is a phenomenon known as transference, whereby we have (according to Merriam-Webster) "the redirection of feelings and desires and especially of those unconsciously retained from childhood toward a new object." When we hold our childhood understanding of God as a person with unlimited power, it is no wonder we are disappointed. Our parents let us down by not being all-knowing, but we often have the benefit of a continued relationship with them so that we learn to re- relate to them as human beings. We don't get this chance with God. We talk to God and God doesn't answer; we look for God and we don't find God; friends and family get sick, die and wars rage on, but God doesn't intervene. Is it really any wonder that so many find this idea of God so unsatisfying and irrelevant? We simply transfer our disillusionments and disappointments on God and because God is not a person with whom we have ongoing communication, we drop the idea altogether.

Many of us define ourselves in opposition to God and declare ourselves atheist and look down on those who hold a belief or understanding of God. Many of us become dogmatic about science and logic in the same way others are about religion. Make no mistake that there has been much harm done in the name of God and in the preservation of religious institutions. And although we see an idea of God as irrelevant in our modern age, many of us still say there is "something." It seems that this "something" indicates a deeper understanding of what God might be, but the word "God" has too many negative associations to be of use anymore.

God does not have to be, according to Karen Armstrong, "a reality 'out there'" and in fact God is not "an objective fact," but rather is "a product of the creative imagination." This is not to say that our experience of God is entirely a construct of human thought, but many of our ways of understanding God are created this way. We use other words like the Universal or Spirit of Life comfortably because we don't have a childhood association with these words.

Perhaps we need to move beyond our childhood notion of God not because we need God, but we need to be free of the power held by the concept. There are many who belong to UUFM who have a visceral reaction to words from the Abrahamic religions; words like "God" or "Jesus" and even "prayer." It is explicitly expressed in our

Six Sources that we utilize “Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.” Because of the harm we have experienced as children and the harm caused in our society by some religious institutions, many of us have a reflexive reaction to anything associated with the churches. But look at the power these words still hold over us! Our distancing ourselves from these words and practices does not cause them to go away, but rather gives them continued sway over our lives.

To reclaim these words is a personal journey of exploration. It is an admission that our childhood understanding *is* incomplete and irrelevant. If we are able to reenter into relationship with these notions, we find that they are not quite so scary. As an ordained Buddhist, I thought that I was beyond the need for these terms, but on my very first visit as a hospice chaplain, a man told me he “wanted to go to God” and asked me to pray for him. This was not the time to engage in a discussion of whether or not I believed in God or whether or not I had a rich and developed prayer life. It was this experience that brought me to the realization that a *belief* in God was not important, but that an *understanding* of God was.

We owe it to our friends and family that are steeped in Judeo-Christian traditions to develop our understanding of God so that this and other words don't immediately raise our defenses. We will be able to more fully embody our Seven Principles when we are able to see the world from another perspective; it may not be the perspective that we choose to live from, but it is one that we can learn to comprehend. We won't have to translate whenever someone uses the word “God” to make it more palatable to us; we will have a new understanding that can exist on its own.

Ultimately one's relationship to God is just that, a relationship. My understanding and experience of God will be different from yours and that is OK. In fact, that is wonderful because it keeps the possibilities open and prevents me from latching on to any one idea of God. It allows my understanding to develop and change and for all of us to live in the world more peacefully.

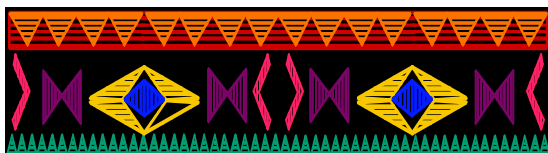


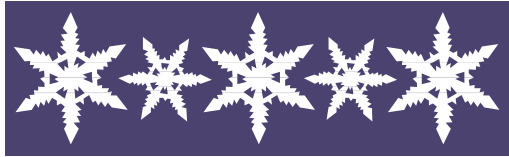
ECLECTIC READERS

Monday, January 13, 7 pm, Eclectic Readers, our UUFM book club, meets at the home of Barbara Berens, 606 Simons Drive to discuss *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* by Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson. From barnesandnoble.com: “Temple Grandin's *Animals in Translation* speaks in the clear voice of a woman who emerged from the other side of autism, bringing with her an extraordinary message about how animals think and feel. Temple's professional training as an animal scientist and her history as a person with autism have given her a perspective like that of no other expert in the field. Standing at the intersection of autism and animals, she offers unparalleled observations and groundbreaking ideas about both.

February's book will be *Benjamin Franklin, An American Life* by Walter Isaacson, and for March everyone is invited to read a book they think might be good for a future selection and come to the discussion prepared to talk about why (or why not) it should be included in the schedule. If there is a book you've read that you are wanting to discuss with others, here's your chance!

All are welcome. No need to commit to coming every month! We generally meet the second Monday evening of the month, unless there is a conflict.





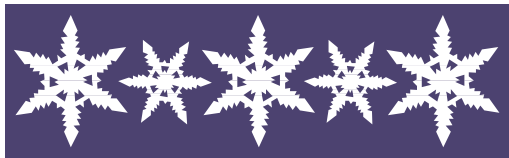
COMMUNITY EVENT

Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Art & Essay Contest

All students in **Preschool-12th grade** are welcome to participate in this year's **Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Art and Essay Contest** presented by the MLK Day Planning Committee, the University of Montana Excellence fund, and the Missoulian.

Students are asked to submit one entry of original 2-D art on an 8 1/2 x 11 inch piece of paper or a writing, 250 words or less, in response to the quote, "If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving."

Entries are due by January 6, 2014. Send entries to MLK Essay/Art Contest, Missoulian, PO Box 8029, Missoula, MT 59801. Questions? Contact Debby Florence at 541-6891 or debby@ncbimissoula.org



ALASKA ADVENTURE

WhaleCoast Alaska 2014 Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2014** is for you! Four Alaska UU fellowships invite you to experience our eco-cultural and spiritual program next summer! See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Sitka with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, seals, and sea otters. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships – our tour is the best way to visit Alaska! Programs led by Dave Frey, a member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and an expert in Alaska travel. To find out more about your Alaskan trip of a lifetime, visit www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org, or call 907-322-4966. We would love to share our Alaska with you!



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
OF MISSOULA
102 McLOED AVE
MISSOULA, MT 59801**