



# CUF Links

The Monthly Newsletter of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship  
A Welcoming Congregation

- a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist association -

March 2010

## SUNDAY SERVICES

held in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30 a.m.

### 3/7 “The Creative Power of Women” – Jan Eisenhard

Special service in celebration of **Women’s History Month**. Jan will be joined by some of the very talented women who are a part of this congregation. These women express their life stories through their music, their art, and their writing, enhancing their own lives and empowering us all. We will also hear some of the writing of the women of Dwight Correctional Center from the anthology **Kites**, published by our own New Day Prison Ministries. Copies of **Kites** will be available after the service for a suggested donation of ten dollars.

### 3/14 “The Journey to Doubt” – Ken Starbuck

Ken will explore the meaning of doubt in our daily lives, and will draw material from two well known Broadway plays – “The Death of A Salesman” by Arthur Miller and “Doubt” by John Patrick Shanley. Shanley wrote in a preface to his play “The beginning of change is the moment of doubt. It is the critical moment when I renew my humanity or become a lie”.

### 3/21 “Earth Spirit, Earth Justice” – Debbie Czarnopys-White

### 3/28 “Empathy: Love is Not Enough” – Cheryl Robinson

What is empathy? How do we come by it – nature or nurture? Can it be academically taught? Does everyone have it? Most importantly, what do we do with it if we have it? Implications for UU lives and actions.

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## OPEN MINDS

meets at 8:45 AM each Sunday in the Commons Area

Watch the weekly bulletins for upcoming March programs, or contact Terry Elliott at [elliott1@wildblue.net](mailto:elliott1@wildblue.net).

# THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE

## Notes from the Sabbatical: February, 2010

Time flies! It's hard to believe that, as I write this, my three-month sabbatical is almost two-thirds complete! Especially since the end of January, it has become a deeply reflective and refreshing experience for me, more so than any recent period of time in my life. I feel particularly grateful to all of you for offering me this "window of time and space."

This month, I have entered the review of my time in ministry, and I've been intrigued by some of what I have found. For instance, in looking over some of my writings from theological school, I encountered one that described my image of the congregation that I hoped someday to serve as like a banyan tree. For any who may not be familiar with the banyan tree, it is like other trees in that it has many branches and many roots, but it is unlike other trees in that it can have many trunks as well. A banyan tree is a community of trees in a single tree; a single tree can span an acre or more. In some parts of the world, animals, birds, and people can all live in the shelter of the banyan tree's branches and canopy. The banyan tree provides different kinds of shelter for different species, and its branches reach out to the glory of the sky while it is firmly rooted in the reality of the earth. It offers shelter to all who enter, but doesn't constrict them. Does that image remind you of our Fellowship?

Also this month, I have been able to return to the study of earlier Unitarians and Universalists in the southern half of Illinois. At the rate that I am going, I should (finally!) be able to return the archive materials that I borrowed during my previous sabbatical. In case you don't know, there have been, at various times since 1840, a total of about 30 Universalist and about 10 Unitarian congregations in "our" half of the state. Their stories remain quite incomplete, but I do expect to be able to add some information about their members and activities to the "Unitarians and Universalists in Southern Illinois" section of our CUF website within a few months (no later than July 1st).

Some of the materials I have been able to find are dry and institutional: many of them, for instance, relate to the sale of church buildings after the congregation has disbanded. Others, however, are very personal, including handwritten notes, some almost 100 years old, sometimes expressing a hope and conviction that a dwindling congregation can be revived. They invariably note the importance of a liberal religious voice in the small, rural villages where the writer resides. Don't we feel something of that, today, here in our community?

On February 21st and 28th, I have visited the UU Fellowship in Mt Vernon, and have led services there. I am also scheduled to lead services there the last two Sundays in March. I will be back with you on Easter Sunday, April 4th!

Please know that I do miss you, and hope that you are doing well, and finding this sabbatical time an opportunity for some form of renewal in your lives as well! I miss you, and I look forward to seeing you in just about a month!

Yours in the spirit of renewal, Bill Sasso

# **PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

Dear Members and Friends,

A common theme in many previous President's Columns of CUF Links - from me and others throughout the years - is urging members to get involved as much as possible in the workings and activities of our Fellowship. As I wrote in the column from October 2009, CUF is an ever-changing, dynamic, and constantly evolving entity, but nothing happens without commitment from all of us. I would hope these stirring words are forever embedded in our collective psyche as a clarion call to action. On the slight chance that this is not the case, however, allow me to briefly revisit this theme.

We have so many people doing so many good things, and the good work of CUF is felt throughout the southern Illinois region and well beyond - for example, see the related article on the recently-completed, very successful Zambian/AIDS fundraiser in this CUF Links. At the same time, there may be some folks who have been attending the Fellowship for a while and have time, talent, and skills to contribute but are perhaps hesitant to get more involved. CUF is a "Welcoming Congregation" in many respects—including active involvement for everyone. Please feel free to contact any of the various committee chairs, me, or other board members if you have questions or want to discuss where help is needed. If you have been involved in the Fellowship at various levels before, and feel the time is good for deeper commitment, you may want to consider being nominated to serve on the Board of Trustees. Our next congregational meeting will be Sunday May 23. It seems like a long way off, but it will be here before you know it, and one order of business will be to replace several board members, including the president and treasurer. So if you are interested, please talk with Jan Eisenhard, the chair of the Nominating Committee, or me if you have any questions.

The other major piece of business at the congregational meeting will be to approve the Fellowship budget for FY 2011. Jerry Molumby has graciously agreed to again be in charge of our upcoming Stewardship campaign. You will be hearing more about this very soon, as far as our goals for this campaign and where funding goes to support not only our paid staff, building maintenance, tremendous RE program, and other areas, but of course our social action initiatives on many fronts. Despite the continuing generosity of our members and friends, we have been operating at a deficit for several years, and are still paying off the mortgage on the building. So a successful stewardship campaign is as critically important this year as always. If you can help Jerry with stewardship in any shape, manner, or form, please let him know. Thanks to all you members and friends of CUF who do so much to make it the vibrant and vital place it is!

George Feldhamer, President

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## **FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTOR**

It was in February, 2009, that a group of us met with Renee Cogil, Director of Religious Education, from Champaign. The result of that meeting is the 4 main goals of the Religious Education program for the next couple years. The goals are intentionally lacking in detail, as they more of a direction than a recipe when planning and engaging children and youth.

The goals are based on the wishes of what we'd like to see our children learn, value, experience, and do if they were with us from kindergarten through high school. They are: 1) Learn the skills, and gain the

confidence, to think and make decisions for themselves; 2) Know Unitarian Universalist faith and history, and the tenets of other world religions; 3) Feel valued members of the Fellowship's community and that they have ownership in this community; and, 4) Mindfulness of Life (a process). Each of us can make a difference in our children's (meaning the Fellowship's children) experience while they are with us. Keep the above guides in mind, and simply share your talents, creativity, and love.

I spoke last month about a children's version of our UU Principles. The curriculum Rainbow Path offers some ideas about how to put the principles into action. They first state the adult principle, then the children's version, and finally offer what they refer to as a Loving Action.

**Principle 1.** UUA version: The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

*A Children's version: We believe that each and every person is important.*

Loving Action: Respect every person – yourself and others.

**Principle 2.** UUA version: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

*A Children's version: We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.*

Loving Action: Offer fair and kind treatment for all.

**Principle 3.** UUA version: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth for our congregations.

*A Children's version: We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.*

Loving Action: Grow by exploring ideas and values together.

**Principle 4:** UUA version: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

*A Children's version: We believe that each and every person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.*

Loving Action: Yearn to learn throughout life.

**Principle 5:** UUA version: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large.

*A Children's version: We believe that everyone should have a vote about things that concern them.*

Loving Action: Believe in the value of each "voice" (vote) as we work together.

**Principle 6:** UUA version: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

*A Children's version: We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.*

Loving Action: Insist on peace, freedom and justice for all.

**Principle 7:** UUA: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

*A Children's version: We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things.*

Loving Action: Value our connections to nature.

Maybe you and your children can think of other "Loving Actions" such as those above. It's the loving spirit of the principles, after all, that we really want our children to learn.

Sincerely, Roy Sumner

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## **UU WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS**

The Carbondale Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is proud to recognize Margaret Fuller's 200th Birthday Celebration by nominating two women as Agents of Change. Both women are longstanding members of this congregation, and both have had an impact on lives far beyond this Fellowship.

Lois Hayward has been the catalyst and spark for this Fellowship's New Day Prison Ministry. This effort started with Lois writing to one inmate; soon she was writing to numerous inmates and had encouraged others in the Fellowship to join her. From this beginning, Lois has sponsored several writing contests for both male and female prisoners resulting in anthologies of their writing. Over the years, this prison ministry has also included visits, collections of toiletries and school supplies. From this work, Lois has become involved in prison reform at both the state and the national level. Through her work, Lois has been a change agent for our Fellowship, and has provided compassion and a sense of dignity and connection to many who have been imprisoned.

Carla Feldhamer has been the driving force behind our Fellowship's partnership with Ranchod Hospice and Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Kabwe, Zambia, and in Hospice of Southern Illinois. Since 2003, our Fellowship and Hospice of Southern Illinois have raised funds and collected medical and school supplies for those impacted by HIV/AIDS who are served by the Zambian Hospice. These supplies are delivered during annual trips to Zambia by Fellowship members and local hospice staff. Presently, the Partnership is collecting books, and will be setting up a literacy center in the fall of 2010.

The Partnership received a \$5000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, which was used to build a workshop at Ranchod for women impacted by HIV/AIDS, allowing them to increase production and sales of handmade crafts. The proceeds have been used to start a piggery, which provides food for many. Carla also serves on the UU Global AIDS Coalition, which encourages other congregations to become involved in addressing HIV/AIDS.

In addition, Carla has coordinated several events that focused on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Southern Illinois. Through Carla's efforts, and with the support of many others from this Fellowship and Hospice of Southern Illinois, hope and change has been provided to many impacted by HIV/AIDS both locally and in Zambia.

# **GRANT APPLIED FOR TO BUILD A LIBRARY/RESOURCE ROOM FOR OUR ZAMBIAN PARTNERS** by Carla Feldhamer

The Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation is again taking grant applications for projects meant to enhance the quality of life of women. Mary Chidgey, founder of Ranchhod Hospice and Orphan Care, recently wrote to me with the following information. "In 2008, during a process of distribution of donated mosquito nets, it was noted that out of 35 women receiving a net, only 5 of the women could sign her name on the receipt. It was an established fact that a high percentage of the women involved in home based care in the community were unable to write a report or read basic material. This situation was discussed with community members and the coordinators of the Home Based Care. It was decided that literacy classes would be offered to women three mornings a week. Two of the male home based caregivers volunteered to teach the women; they are paid a very small allowance and materials were supplied. The women attend regularly, and are happy to have the opportunity of learning to read and write. Women of the Central Province in Zambia are offered few similar opportunities, despite the fact that women cannot be empowered when they are illiterate. Examples of this are availing health care, ensuring that they have a voice in the distribution of assets when they lose their husband through, death, divorce or desertion, or insourcing education for their children. Literacy classes were begun in the summer of 2009, but they lack sufficient reading materials."

I have put together a grant application with the approval of the CUF Board of Trustees and want to share with you some of its contents. Final decisions on grant recipients will be announced in June.

**Please give a 50-word summary of the project:** This project establishes a Library/Resource Room (LRR) to serve the community of Ranchhod HIV/AIDS Hospice and Orphan Care Center in Kabwe, Zambia. The projects include staff and volunteer training, a paid directorship, furnishings, and books. The LRR will support literacy development of women and orphaned children as essential for greater empowerment.

**FIRST ISSUE: LITERACY NEEDS OF ADULT** Described by Mary Chidgey above.

**Goal #1: Provide essential reading materials through an organized circulation system at the LRR for Ranchhod adults...including those in literacy classes, those who are caregivers for loved ones, and those who are patients in the Hospice.**

**SECOND ISSUE: LITERACY NEEDS OF CHILDREN** Using rote methods, orphans are taught very basic early literacy skills in their day care classes. Their teachers lack enticing children's books. By being engaged with enticing literature, children will be better inspired to become readers.

**Goal #2: Provide essential reading materials through an organized circulation system at the LRR for Ranchhod teachers to use with their day care classes, for social workers to use with the day care graduates who come for follow-up HIV/AIDS testing on Saturdays, and for volunteers to use with children.**

**THIRD ISSUE: TEACHING SKILLS NEEDED BY ADULTS** The teachers and social workers and volunteers also lack training in how to use books to enrich the learning experience of the children. Their teachers need skills in how to present the world of books to them.

**Goal #3: Increase and enhance methods teachers, social workers, and volunteers use when reading books to children. The adults will identify specific literacy skills they can teach in ways that are fun, enriching, and intellectually stimulating. The training sessions will be videotaped so they can be used to train others in the future.**

Main Activities for all three goals: Convert an empty space in a building in Kabwe into the LRR; process new books; organize books into simplified library system; establish collection list; establish circulation routine; establish evaluation instrument and procedure; train LRR Director and volunteers on LRR maintenance; conduct and videotape workshops with teachers, social workers and volunteers.

Carla and her sister, Mimi Gingold, who is a librarian/literacy specialist, are planning to visit Kabwe in September of 2010. If the grant is received, we will plan to train the volunteers and teachers in use of the library.

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## **NEXT ZAMBIAN RANCHHOD HOSPICE TRIP**

Fellowship member, Debbie Czarnopys-White, and Allida Plumer, nurse at Hospice of Southern Illinois will be traveling to Kabwe, Zambia, in May of this year. This will be Debbie's third trip to visit our Partners at Ranchhod Hospice and Orphan Care. Members of the fellowship will be kept updated on any items Debbie would like to take to assist our Zambian friends.

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## **AFRICAN AIDS FUNDRAISER A GRAND SUCCESS**

Emma's Revolution (Pat Humphries and Sandy O.) came to CUF and left with a new set of fans!!

Their music filled the room with laughter, commitment to justice, compassion, and love. Their personalities delighted us...they attended supper club at the Banerjee home, hiked the hills of Southern Illinois, and stayed with Gina Paul...our hostess with the mostest! She even took them to a Mardi Gras Party after the concert. They supported and admired our partnership with Ranchhod AIDS hospice and Orphan Care in Kabwe, Zambia, and adopted one of the orphans through the school fees program while they were here.

The Silent Auction was our most successful ever! Over \$6000.00 will be sent to Zambia. Bidding wars were ongoing. Dr. Jeff Kellogg is now the "proud owner" of a **Very Expensive** Zambian Rattle that he plans to bring to the next men's retreat. Rob Corricini is thrilled with his Warthog - but the happiest person there was Elena Sasso, who now has a beaded blue hippo hanging in her room.

**THANK YOU ONE AND ALL...YOU ARE AMAZING!!!!**

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## **STEWARDSHIP CORNER**

Has this happened to you? The phone rings and the voice on the other end thanks you for our past support of XYZ charitable corporation and asks if they can count on you for \$40 this year. You haven't supported this organization in the past, and know the greatest percentage of any donation will go to pay the company hired to make the calls.

Even with being on the “Do not call” list and waiting until the 4<sup>th</sup> ring, they still get through. I tell the caller that I make a decision at the beginning of the year as to which charities I will support and could they send me information to consider next year. I also ask them to remove my name from their list. They hang up quickly, without asking for a mailing address.

Over the years, I have developed a plan for donating. It is my Stewardship plan. I decide what things are most important to me. I am reminded at tax time just where my donations went the previous year, which is the foundation for my next Stewardship plan. I do build in room for unforeseen needs arising.

I once heard a recommendation to “save 10% of your income for when you won’t be working and give 10% away to feel like you have “given back to society.” While I was turned off as a young adult by the obligation of tithing, this recommendation now sounded good to me. I worked at it over the years, and feel like I am adequately giving back to society for all the blessings I have received.

As the Fellowship’s Stewardship campaign gets under way, the Board will provide information about the needs of the Fellowship for the coming year. Members of the Fellowship will then be asked to make a pledge, so that a budget can be constructed. Members will be provided an informational meeting to describe these needs. Members will also be invited to take part in a small group cottage meeting to complete their pledge. We encourage everyone to participate, with the long term members sharing and modeling stewardship, and the newer members getting the total organizational picture.

The most critical question for each member is “What is the value of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship in my life?” The member then converts this into a specific dollar amount that becomes their pledge. When all of these are added together, that will represent the collective value we place on the Fellowship.

The Unitarian Universalist Association has developed a ‘Fair Share Giving Guide’. It outlines 4 giving levels, and suggests giving from 2% to 10% of income. If everyone were to give 2% of their income, the UUA indicates that congregations will be able to support themselves. The Fair Share Giving Guide’s levels are Supporter, Sustainer, Visionary and Full Tithe. It presents an opportunity for members to match their giving to their relationship to the Fellowship. More detail will be provided in the coming months.

As you do your taxes this year, look at the charitable deductions section. Does this reflect your values? What combination of organizations does? What amount does? Where does the Fellowship fit in? We will visit this question again in the near future.

Jerry Molumby, Stewardship Chair

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## **FELLOWSHIP ART SERIES**

The Program Committee is organizing a monthly series of art shows, tentatively called the Fellowship Art Series. To start things off, the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship will be hosting a show by local artist Tim Shepherd on Wednesday, March 24 at 7 p.m. Tim is a senior in the art department at SIU, specializing in glass. He has been on demonstration trips with the SIU mobile glass shop, demonstrating for 10 days in July, 2008, at the Springfield State Fair, and 11 days in May, 2009, at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Gallery in Wausau, WI. He also went to Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State in July, 2009, for a 3 week intensive class by Tom Rowney, head of the Canberra Glass Center in Australia. At SIUC, he has also attended and participated in demonstrations by Elio Quarisa, Sean Alberts, Boyd Sugiki, Hank Adam and more. Mark your calendars and plan to attend!

# CUF MONTHLY MEETINGS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

**SUICIDE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP:** *This group meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Fellowship, at 7:30 pm.* Judy Ashby, MS, LCPC, facilitator. This group, serving those who have lost a loved one to suicide, is open to parents, children, spouses, partners, siblings, grandparents, relatives, friends, co-workers, and others. This supportive experience will offer safe and understanding conversation about loss and healing as participants open their hearts to grief and growth. **Meets next on Mar. 9.** For more information, contact Bill Sasso at 529-2439 or [bsasso@juno.com](mailto:bsasso@juno.com).

**MINDFULNESS MEDITATION** *This group meets every Saturday in the Fellowship Commons from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.* If there are other activities scheduled in the Commons, we meet in the RE area. For more information, contact Joy Price at 457-2405 or [joyfully2356@yahoo.com](mailto:joyfully2356@yahoo.com).

**BUDDHISM STUDY & PRACTICE GROUP** *This group meets on the first and third Sundays in the Fellowship Commons at 7:30 PM.* **Meets this month on Mar. 7 and Mar. 21.** Meditation, Chanting, Study, Discussion in a free flowing format. Everyone welcome. For more info, visit [www.shawnee-dharma.org](http://www.shawnee-dharma.org) or contact Judy Carter at 529-3110.

**DREAMWORKS.** *This group meets the first Sunday of each month in 06 (RE wing) at 12:00.*  
**Meets next on Mar. 7.** Using Jeremy Taylor's technique, we share and discuss our dreams in a respectful, safe, and comfortable environment. For more information, contact Nillofur at [cadfael07@yahoo.com](mailto:cadfael07@yahoo.com) or Janet at [jea49@Care2.com](mailto:jea49@Care2.com).

**HUMANIST ROUND TABLE.** **Humanist Round Table is on furlough effective December 31, 2009, pending its restructuring and reorganization should sufficient interest and support evolve. If you are willing to take leadership in this endeavor, please contact David Christensen at [davechris@mchsi.com](mailto:davechris@mchsi.com).**

**PSI SYMPOSIUM.** *This group meets the second Sunday of the Month in Room 06 at Noon.* **Meets next on Mar 14.** We start at noon with light refreshments. Please bring a dish to share. For more info, contact Mary Campbell at 521-0851 or [mpurple1999@yahoo.com](mailto:mpurple1999@yahoo.com).

**ROUNDTABLE READERS.** *This group meets on the fourth Sunday of the month after the Sunday Service at Noon.* **Meets this month on Mar. 28.** This month's book to be discussed will be the historical novel March, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006. From Louisa May Alcott's classic Little Women, author Geraldine Brooks has taken the character of the absent father, Mr. March, who has gone off to war in the dark first year of the Civil War as a chaplain in the Union Army. His experiences will utterly change his marriage and challenge his most ardently held beliefs. March adds adult resonance to Alcott's optimistic children's novel. Reviews call it "stunning," "haunting," "richly imagined...meticulously researched and well-crafted," and "a hugely successful novel, both for the history it reframes and the all-too-human lives it captures." "March is a beautifully wrought story about how war dashes ideals, unhinges moral certainties and drives a wedge of bitter experience and unspeakable memories between husband and wife." --L.A. Times Book Review. All interested are welcome! For more info contact Janet Levie at [jmlevie@verizon.net](mailto:jmlevie@verizon.net).

**SCIENCE IN SOCIETY.** *This group meets some Fridays of the Month in the Fellowship Commons at 5:00 PM.* Contact Gina Paul at 351-1064 or [gpaul@siumed.edu](mailto:gpaul@siumed.edu) if you have questions.

**VIDEO CIRCLE** *This group meets on the third Friday of each month in the Fellowship Commons at 7:15 PM.* **Meets next on Mar. 19.** Movie this month TBA – watch weekly bulletins. All are welcome! Free movie and free popcorn! Contact Amy Weber at [amyweber1@msn.com](mailto:amyweber1@msn.com) with questions.

**UNITARIAN FOLK ORCHESTRA** practices at 10:00 a.m. Saturdays, at the Fellowship. For info contact Charles Maxwell at [cmaxwell@siu.edu](mailto:cmaxwell@siu.edu).

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## **MEMBER NEWS...**

### **Our Newest CUF Members:**

Please welcome Doug & Erin Troue, and their three children, who joined the Fellowship at the beginning of February.

### **Recent New Member Richard Norman has shared the following information so that we might get to know him better:**

I was born in Williamson County, IL, in 1939, but moved to Carbondale in 6th grade, where I attended University School and SIU eventually. I have lived in Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, mostly for work, and mostly with the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. I have a degree in Economics from SIU, and worked mostly in human resources management. I currently drive a school bus with West Bus Service, primarily for CCHS students. I was brought to CUF by Astrid Mosely. I had attended Unitarian Services in the Washington, DC and Chicago areas, so I was not unfamiliar with UU services.

I have 2 children and 4 grand-children, all in northern and southern Virginia. Mostly I like to read and travel. My last vacation was a family vacation in Virginia Beach. I have one cat, who is now getting acquainted with Astrid's cats.

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## **Dispatch from Arabia**

### **Part Seven**

by Joseph Robbie

Before I get into this month's dispatch, I'd like to pause to give thanks and offer a brief editorial on the subject of charity. Hence, this will be a bit longer than usual. Forgive me. My thanks are directed toward my UU Covenant Group: Bob Camp, Sally Elms, Roberta Blankenship, Laurie McGregor, Ken and Kathy Starbuck, Tom and Cheryl Robinson. About a week before Christmas, I received a 'care package' here in Riyadh from these fine folks. The thought, even more than the contents, made me weep. But the contents were pretty darn good too: both sweet and salty munchies (including home-made gingerbread men); a Sierra Club calendar for 2010; a Saluki t-shirt; music CD's; Slim Jims; etc. It contained no prohibited items, of which there are plenty, to get me in trouble. Yet the best part was the personal notes and cards expressing support and friendship for me. You cannot imagine how much this gesture pleased and comforted me. I am a man without a family working a difficult job in a stressful place. That package not only made my day; I'm still now riding that wave of joy. Thanks a lot guys.

Which brings up the subject of charity and help for others in need. It's all well and good to help the hopeless in Africa, and the prisoners in the USA, and the AIDS victims, and any of the multitude of other noble and deserving causes. (It's also nice to deduct these contributions from our taxes.) But charity should really

begin close to home. What about that single mom down the street, holding down two minimum wage jobs while trying to do her best for her kids? What about that combat veteran you see stumbling about town because he has an alcohol problem? What about that girl from the north-east side of town who's hustling on the streets because her family threw her out? What about that relative whom you really don't like, but they are in a serious jam?

This reminds me of a song from the musical "Hair". It's called "Easy to be Cruel" and contains the words:

Especially people who care about strangers

Who care about evil and social injustice.

Do you only care about the bleeding crowd?

How about a needing friend – I need a friend.

I think I've made my point, which I feel is supported by the Unitarian philosophy which we all share and strive to live by.

Now, on to the main event: a description of a western expatriate's free-time activities here in the most conservative country in the world. A night on the town, local style, consists of two choices: eating and shopping. Few other options are available as they are either religiously 'haram' (forbidden) or are proscribed by the government due to their unease at group gatherings.

Eating out can truly be a delight. There are all kinds of restaurants around, from scrumptious high-end affairs in plush surroundings, to hole-in-the-wall joints where you can stuff yourself full of very authentic ethnic dishes for about \$3.50. Of course, if you're a single male, you'll be prohibited from entering the family section, unless you tag along with a married couple. The food here is great; however, forget about ordering sausage, bacon, ham, pepperoni, wine, or beer. Tipping is not generally done.

The other thing you can legally do is shop. Saudi Arabia has a plethora of modern malls and supermarkets. The fantastic thing about it is that you can get stuff from all over the world, tax free! Of course, you have to time your shopping spree around the 30-minute prayer times, which occur five times daily. If you're not done shopping, you will either be locked in the store, which isn't too bad as you can continue shopping, or be kicked out for the duration of the prayer, often 40 minutes in total, and then let back in again to find your half-filled shopping cart, if you're lucky. You had better like what you buy because returns are not a concept here.

Malling is one activity where flirting between the sexes might take place, although it is dangerous and had better be done with the utmost discretion. In addition to the 'matawaa', the infamous religious police, recognizable by their long beards, short white thoubas, and a manic look in their eyes, also roaming about are the mall's security men. One guy in my company ran into a British woman he used to work with while shopping. Without much thought, he gave her a friendly hug. They were both fired, and gone on the next plane out. Another hot issue here is that all the clerks are men, including those working in lingerie shops. Imagine the embarrassment of a local woman, who is not even allowed to show her hair or her arm, being asked her measurements, breast size, or panty preference by some a Pakistani male?

So, everything's an adventure here – even going out to get some milk or a pair of socks. I'll wind this up now, as it's becoming much too long and I don't want to bore you. But tune in next month for the single man's guide to embassy parties.

**CUF LINKS HARD COPIES** are available at the Fellowship on the visitor table.  
**Deadline for April CUF Links: Saturday, March 27.** Please honor this deadline.  
Send your articles to Cheryl Robinson at [cherrob1@msn.com](mailto:cherrob1@msn.com) or to Melanie Bray at  
[cufvolunteers@verizon.net](mailto:cufvolunteers@verizon.net) **on or before Saturday, March 27.**

Thanks! – Cheryl Robinson, Editor

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The Rev. William Sasso, Minister

An inspirational thought:

*“Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth  
find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”*

*- Rachel Carson*