

"The Prophetic Voice," Summer, 2008

Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sundays, 10:30 am

The living tradition we share draws from many sources, including "words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love." Some of our speakers have embraced "The Prophetic Voice" as their theme.

June 29: Rev. Francesca Hughes

"Prophetic Voices: Unitarian Universalist Blind Spots"

A primary definition of "prophet" is one who speaks from divine inspiration, or who is an inspired teacher or leader. The prophet calls the people to account for their way of life and may predict future events.

Quite often God tells the prophet what the people are doing wrong, and the prophet then has the unhappy task of calling this to their attention. His words are rarely well-received. Our denomination generally prefers to celebrate prophets of religious and intellectual freedom, of scientific promise and educational potential.

Nowadays wonderful prophets of every stripe are easily found in our book stores. Sometimes their words have deep spirituality and offer rich paths for self-knowledge.

It will be the focus of this talk to encourage us to look more closely at the functions of reason and subjectivity in Unitarian Universalism and to compare our ideas with recent thought in process philosophy and the study of consciousness. New ideas may open up and we may have an opportunity to see a little more clearly.

Francesca Hughes is an ordained UU minister and a member of the UU Church of Sarasota. Raised in Reform Judaism, she has studied, practiced and loved Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Sufism and Christianity as well as the work of Joseph Campbell in myth and metaphor. She has taught classes in Buddhism, world religions, feminist theology, meditation, and spirituality in film. Francesca is a chaplain at Tidewell Hospice and Palliative Care. She is a graduate of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and New College of Florida.

Host: Bill Orcutt

July 6: Jody Lynn McBrien, Ph. D.

"Independence for Interdependents: What Does July 4th Mean to You?"

Jody Lynn McBrien has been a member of our congregation since moving to Sarasota in 2005. She received her Ph.D. from Emory University, where she was awarded the Emory University Humanitarian Award

for her work with refugees. She is currently an assistant professor at the University of South Florida.

Host: Sue Sherman

July 13: Rev. Kathleen Korb

"Living Religiously: How are our contemplative and active lives related?"

(Prior to the service, at 9:30, Rev. Korb will lead a discussion on the same topic in the Forum.)

Rev. Kathleen Korb has been minister in Naples for seven years. She is a native of Florida, having been born and raised in St. Petersburg. She has served churches in Sharon, Massachusetts, New London, Connecticut and New Orleans. She has three grown children and enjoys light reading and ballroom dancing.

Hosts: Jim Chastain, Mary Lou Keller

July 20: John S. Hatcher, Ph.D.

"The Ascent of Society -- a Bahá'í Roadmap"

Dr. Hatcher's talk will be based on his recent book [The Ascent of Society: The Social Imperative in Personal Salvation](#). It will examine how Bahá'í scripture reveals a framework for the advancement of individual fulfillment of purpose through the advancement of society.

The Bahá'í faith, founded a century and a half ago, is today among the fastest-growing of the world's religions. With more than five million followers, it surpasses every religion but Christianity in its geographic reach.

John S. Hatcher has given more than a hundred talks on the Bahá'í Faith in various public forums during his almost five decades as a Bahá'í. He is Professor Emeritus in English literature at the University of South Florida in Tampa where he has taught for thirty-nine years and served as Director of Graduate Studies for four years, specializing in medieval English literature and creative writing. Dr. Hatcher has published twenty-one books. He presently lives on a small farm in Plant City, Florida, with his wife Lucia.

Host: Sue Sherman

July 27: Rev. Susanne Nazian

"The Great Mystery"

Rev. Susanne Nazian became the first minister of the UU Congregation of Venice in 2001. She holds the M.Div. degree from Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago. She is co-author of "Living the Second Half", a curriculum on aging and spiritual issues.

Host: Dorothy Conlon

August 3: Rev. Dr. E. Bonnie Devlin

“Thoreau’s Nature – Our Response”

In keeping with the theme of great leaders and exemplars, Rev. Devlin will speak about one of her favorites – Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau’s influences have been world-wide, from his days to the present, influencing other great leaders such as Gandhi, Rev. Martin Luther King and the modern ecology movement. Along with Emerson, he is perhaps our greatest Unitarian Universalist ambassador for civil disobedience and the importance of right relations with nature.

Rev. Bonnie Devlin has been a UU Parish Minister for over 18 years, currently serving the Manatee UU Fellowship in Bradenton. She is also a Music Therapist, Educator, and World Percussionist who has recently completed a major UU CD project called “The Drum and The Chalice.” Her life and work is devoted to promoting multicultural awareness and social justice through music, the arts and spirituality. Host: Klaus Obermeit

August 10: Brock Leach, Student Minister

“Truth and Consequences”

Truth is an essential but elusive concept, and proclaiming it inevitably has consequences for good or ill. We all grow up learning how to couch our “true feelings” about others in ways that are truthful but not hurtful. But how do we stand up for our most deeply felt personal truths about the significant issues of our time—how do we “proclaim truth to power”-- but do so in a way that reaches the most minds and alienates the fewest hearts. That’s some of our most challenging spiritual work, but it’s essential if we’re to have a prophetic voice that actually heals the world. We’ll look to recent examples from near and far as well as our own UU tradition for guidance.

Our student minister, Brock Leach, is studying theology at the University of Chicago, hoping to graduate in 2011 and work in community ministry following his ordination right here in his home church.

Brock worked for PepsiCo for 24 years including as President and CEO of two of the company’s divisions-- Frito-Lay North America and Tropicana Products. During the past 20 years, he and his wife, Julie, have been members of UU churches in Dallas, Texas, Framingham, Massachusetts, and Sarasota. They both have MBA’s from the University of Chicago, where both their children will be studying this fall. Host: Bill Orcutt

August 17: Dominic Martia, Ph. D.

"Prophesying the Void and Filling the Void"

A number of nineteenth century writers and thinkers warned that the coming era would bring a sense of personal emptiness to individuals. While this did occur,

we have some good examples of people who found ways of escaping the personal void. This message will cover three of those examples.

Dominic Martia, Ph.D. retired from Roosevelt University in Chicago in 2000, when he and his wife Roberta moved to Sarasota. They joined the church about four years ago. At Roosevelt, Dominic was Vice President for Student Services and Professor of English and Humanities. Since his retirement he has been an adjunct professor at Barry University, Manatee Community College and The University of South Florida. His articles, essays, stories and poems have been published in over fifty U.S. and Canadian publications.

August 24: Barbara G. Walker

“Silencing the Female Voice”

Followers of the Judeo-Christian god worked assiduously to silence the opposition from other deities, notably the female ones. The resultant sexism remains in many modern religious organizations. Can ruthless, violent religions embrace the female and find wisdom?

Barbara G. Walker is the author of 22 books and numerous articles. Her Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets was named Book of the Year by the London Times. She has also been recognized by feminist and humanist organizations. She has worked as a journalist, a professional knitwear designer, dance teacher, artist, and leader of women's spirituality groups. She is a member of the UU Congregation of Venice, for whom she has given many sermons. She is also listed in “Who's Who in Hell” (a list of folks who hew to no religious creed.) Hosts: Jim Chastain, Mary Lou Keller

August 31: Rev. Karen Wolfson

"Is New Thought Relevant in Today's World?"

The daily news reports can seem overwhelmingly discouraging. We often feel helpless despite our passionate desire to make a difference. In addition to rolling up our sleeves and doing the work - is there something more we can bring to the table? UU's have much in common with New Thought, and some distinct differences. Come, hear a local partner in our liberal faith community share some insights on the power and relevance of a spiritual perspective in the midst of the daunting challenges of today's world.

Rev. Karen Wolfson is the founder and pastor of the Center for Spiritual Awakening in Sarasota, (www.centerforspiritualawakening.com) a New Thought spiritual community affiliated with Religious Science International. She is a member of G.A.I.N. (Gulfcoast Affirming Interfaith Network of welcoming congregations) and for the past five years has been a speaker at the World AIDS Day Service of Remembrance, here in Sarasota. Host: Dorothy Conlon