

**THE MEMPHIS
UNITARIAN**

**THE
CHURCH
OF THE
RIVER**

Burton D. Carley, Minister
Home—759-1848 Church—526-8631
Fax—526-8632 e-mail—UURiver@aol.com
www.churchoftheriver.org

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VOLUME 57 NO. 18 EDITOR: MARGARET PARK - Home: 763-0206, e-mail—uuriver@aol.com
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTOR: Cindy Sakaan— Home: 725-7758 e-mail—DRECSakaan@aol.co

January 4, 2010
Administrative Assistant: Margaret Park

SERMON: “The Gospel of Delusion”

I have been pondering what the Harvard study that followed the lives of 268 men for 72 years and the prosperity message of Joel Osteen have in common. Both tell us something about human nature striving for the good life, and the very way we deal with reality.

The Rev. Burton Carley will deliver the sermon at the eleven o'clock service

**Church of the River Calendar
Quotation of the Week**

“I scarcely remember counting upon any Happiness—I look not for it if it be not in the present hour—nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The setting sun will always set me to rights—or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel.” — John Keats

Wednesday, January 6

7:30 p.m. Choir Practice in the Sanctuary

Sunday, January 10

9:30 a.m. The Quest Group will meet in the Beacon Room to consider “The Bible—Down & Dirty”

10:00 a.m. Questions of Faith will continue the study of “Blink”, by Malcolm Gladwell.

High school Class will meet and begin to prepare for youth Sunday.

11:00 a.m. Worship Service in the Sanctuary

Childcare for infants and preschoolers

Middle School meets in their classroom.

River Explorers meet in the Chalice Room and go on to their workshops.

Noon Coffee Hour in the Mississippi River Room.

12:30 p.m. The Lunch Bunch will meet at Dino's Grill, 645 N McLean Ave. Playhouse on the Square will have an open house free to the public this day from 2:00—5:00 p.m. which is fairly close to the restaurant for those who would like to go.

Tuesday, January 12

10:30 a.m. The Alliance will meet at church to carpool to the Ornamental Metal Museum to see the “Re-Make Re-Model” exhibit and then return to the church for lunch in the Mississippi River Room. All are invited.

(Continued on page 2)

Announcements from the Children's Ministry

Welcome to a new calendar year of Children's Ministry! We've made a few changes for 2010.

Sixth grade youth have been promoted to the Middle School. And now that our seventh and eighth grades have completed the *Our Whole Lives* course, the Middle School Adventure Club is comprised of youth in grades 6-8. The Middle School Adventure Club meets on the first Sunday of each month, following the Object Lesson in the sanctuary. They also participate in monthly service projects and “adventures.” They will serve at the St. Johns' Soup Kitchen on Saturday, January 9. For complete details contact advisor, Jeff McDonald at jeffgmcd@comcast.net or give him a call.

On Sunday mornings at 11:00 the Middle School begins a course in world religion entitled, *Neighboring Faiths*, with Martine Starck.

The high school youth group, Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) enjoyed an epic adventure to begin the new year. Part progressive dinner, part ice cream social, part lock-in, this new tradition was made possible by the generous donations of Tim and Ginger Wheat, Lisa Nezwazky, Walid Sakaan, and Katy Spurlock. The YRUU will be planning Youth Sunday on Sunday mornings at 10 for the rest of January and February with advisor Tim Wheat and Youth Sunday consultant, Lisa Nezwazky.

The kindergarten continues *Treasure Hunting* with Brenda Lanier and our River Explorers in grades 1-5 will resume *Toolbox of Faith* workshops following their Chalice Service at 11:00 with Buzz and Holly McCormick and workshop leaders, Christi and Norm Shaw and Richard Lewis.

And the year begins with special events as well: Sunday, January 17 is our annual Unbirthday celebration following the worship service and January 23 is our second family potluck and movie night. Save the dates! Details will follow in next weeks' newsletter.

Happy New Year!

Interested in being a Census Taker? United States Census 2010 is conducting testing and training down here at the Church of the River Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Two sessions this week and then skip to January for the Monday, Wednesday & Friday schedule. Drop in or schedule yourself by calling 1-866-861-2010.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE RIVER



The New Year comes as it always does with its magical quality of a door. Through it we pass in our mind and leave behind what was for the new beginning, for something called the *future*. As a species we seem to be uniquely created to think about the future. Other animals act on their instinctual prompting but I don't think they can actually imagine a future without winter or how they might come to die. Yes, animals can act based on predications about the immediate and local future. Past events and current events provide data for anticipation but this capacity does not require self-awareness or the kind of imagination that can "see" a very different future than one currently inhabited.

Recently I read an article about how important the development of imagination is in the young life of a child. As the brain grows and creates pathways for the mapping of the world the ability to imagine how things might be different provides the very basis for human invention and creation. Without a sense of *future* and how it might be different the meaning of being human would be something quite different.

It is precisely because we can see a future that does not include ourselves, or a future substantially different from now, that we devise religion and philosophy and notions about the good life. Our brains were made for "nexting" and so we have the New Year and its rather astonishing impulse to perceive some kind of *later*. To be human is to be on a journey to elsewhere.

But there is a problem in paradise. This wondrous propensity to imagine the future can produce illusions of foresight as well as accurate predictions of what is possible or probable. Imagining the loss of twenty pounds and imagining the return to the body of eighteen years of age is the difference between a positive vision and a delusion. So it is that our great gift, how we can create a New Year which is really a human fiction, is a two edged sword. Our ability to project ourselves forward in time enables us to learn from mistakes without actually making them, and to plan for good outcomes. Yet that same ability is vulnerable to the misperceptions that come from leaving out details that won't really come to pass and also leaving out details that will.

In the end this human imagination that can understand the passing from one year to the next is the impressive gift of our evolution and yet it cannot give us any simple formula or perfect list for finding happiness. From the ancient Hebrew perspective we are fearfully and wonderfully made and it is the combination of these two things that should lead us into 2010 with a humility that accepts both the pains and promises of the days ahead.

bc

(Continued from page 1) **January 12 calendar continued**
7:30 p.m. Choir Practice in the Sanctuary.

Wednesday, January 13

2:00 p.m. The Shakespeare Readers will meet at the Central Library to read Coriolanus. Contact: Gale Mason—725-7924

Thursday, January 14

6:00 p.m. The Board of Trustees will meet in the Beacon Room.

Saturday, January 16

1-3:30 p.m. Writer's Workshop "Turning Memories into Memoirs: "I Couldn't Wait to Get Grown" Tunica Museum, Tunica, MS Contact: Dr. Rachell Anderson—Rander5022@Wildblue.net

The Care Coordinator for January is Mary Jo Miller. You can reach Mary Jo at 327-7930

Manna House

Please remember the Manna House as you are cleaning out your closets. Warm clothes are desperately needed as well as shoes and socks. Gently work and clean scarves, stocking caps, sweats, long pants, long sleeved shirts, gloves and coats are greatly appreciated. As you are running from your house to your car in this cold weather, think of our city's homeless!

Nancy Walton

This famous Unitarian lived from 1924—1975 and was born in Syracuse, NY. He was known as a TV script writer. He studied at Antioch College. Life Highlights include: Being author of over 200 TV plays. Winning 6 Emmy awards for projects such as Patterns. Hosting and creating the series The Twilight and Night Gallery, Narrating documentaries on scientific and nature subjects. Does anyone know the name of this famous individual?

Rod Serling

Thanks

to James & Mary Thompson, Larry Bloch & Jeane Umbreit, Carlisle & Meredith Page, Ellen Klyce, Joel & Gina Cook and David & Betty Blaylock for

gifts to the Endowment Fund, in memory of **Margaret Deininger**.

Thanks also to Larry Bloch & Jeane Umbreit, Carlisle & Meredith Page, Ellen Klyce, Bruce & Ann Smith, Kathryn Coleman and Joel & Gina Cook for gifts to the Emergency Maintenance Fund and David & Betty Blaylock for a gift to the Soup Kitchen all in memory of **Goldene Blinkoff**.

Again thanks to Joel & Gina Cook for a gift to the Music Fund, David & Betty Blaylock for a gift to the Endowment Fund and Carlisle & Meredith Page for a gift to the Emergency Maintenance Fund, all in memory of **Bob Myers**. **Thanks** to Joel & Gina Cook for a gift to the Endowment Fund in honor of **Alice Fleming** and to Carlisle & Meredith Page for a gift to the soup kitchen in memory of Nancy Mullen's mother.

Last of all, thanks to Vava Cook for a gift to the River Ringers in honor of **Holly McCormick's Birthday** on Thursday.

Among Our Members We send our healing thoughts to Ann Nelson who is recovering from knee surgery at Health South, room 223. Her phone number is 729-5235.

Had an email from Kathryn Rice regarding Jim Cherry. Jim was a member in good standing of the Church of the River until he moved to St. Louis where he became a member in good standing of First Church in St. Louis. For those who remember Jim (and if you met him you will remember him) he is now living in an assisted living facility in Christiansburg, VA., telephone (540) 381-1221. Mail to him should be sent to his daughter, Peg Sorrentino, 3002 Stratford Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060. Jim's vision is highly impaired but he is in good health, otherwise and will be 91 in January. His daughter receives his mail and reads it to him. Kathryn is sure he would love to hear from anyone who wishes to share news with him.

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