

**THE MEMPHIS
UNITARIAN**

**THE
CHURCH
OF THE
RIVER**

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January 19, 2010
Administrative Assistant: Margaret Park

SERMON: “Memory and the Pull of the Future”

Memory is a great gift of our passing years. The challenge is to avoid the kind of nostalgia that locks us into the past. Wise interpretation of our memories can become a power for living out our dreams.

The Rev. Brooks Ramsey will deliver the sermon at the eleven o'clock service

Church of the River Calendar Quotation of the Week

“There is no simple choice between the children of light and the children of darkness. Good and evil are not symmetrically distributed along political lines.” Saul Bellow

Wednesday, January 20

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

Thursday, January 21

6:30 p.m. Soup for the Soul—Our Women's Evening Group will meet at the home of Nancy Walton, 6003 Manor Cove. Sue Strong is co-host. Soup from “Simply Southern with a Dash of Kosher Soul” will be prepared by the hosts and the cookbook authors will be there to prepare additional items from the cookbook. Today (19th) is the last day to let Nancy know if you are coming. 685-2499 or msnewright@aol.com

Saturday, January 23

6:00 p.m. Family Supper Club and Movie Night Everyone is invited to this family centric event. Bring food for a pot-luck. The movie will be UP, an inspiring adventure story for all ages from the animated movie group at Disney-Pixar. Contact Cindy Sakaan if you are planning to come.

Sunday, January 24

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 finish the study of “Blink”, by Malcolm Gladwell and decide on the next selection for study.

High school Class will meet 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.

Announcements from the Children's Ministry

Thank you Susan and Rick Crenshaw and Juliet Wischmeyer for helping make our Unbirthday Celebration so festive. Thank you Jeff McDonald and Kim Lloyd for transporting our Middle School Adventure Club to the St. John's Soup Kitchen.

All families are invited to the Church of the River on Saturday, January 23, at 6 o'clock for a potluck dinner and movie in our own Chalice Room Theatre. Come enjoy our new big screen, surround sound, and supper with your COR friends. Free popcorn for the first fifty guests. The movie, *Up*, received several Golden Globe awards last Sunday and will delight both children and adults. Come see!

On Sunday, the YRUU will meet with Tim Wheat and Lisa Nezwarzky at 10 o'clock to continue planning for Youth Sunday.

At 11 o'clock, church school for infants through 8th grade youth continues with childcare in the nursery and pre-school with Mary Park and Elizabeth Turner, *Treasure Hunting* in the kindergarten with Julie Wood, Chalice Service for grades 1-5 with Holly and Buss McCormick, *Toolbox of Faith* workshops with Kristi Bauer and Taryn Spake, and *Neighboring Faiths* for grades 6-8 with Martine Starck.

The *Neighboring Faiths* class has two field trips planned in conjunction with their study of Buddhism and Hinduism. On Sunday, January 24, the class is invited to the Pho Da Temple and Meditation Center from 3 -5 for a prayer and meditation service with explanation. On Sunday, January 31, they will go together to the Hindu Temple for a guided tour. Contact Cindy Sakaan or Martine Starck for more information. Adults are welcome to accompany our Middle School class on these visits.

“The Secret of getting ahead is getting started,”

Agatha Christie 1890-1976

(Continued on page 2)

REFLECTIONS FROM THE RIVER



Midnight, December 21, 1954. That was the exact moment a doomsday cult believed the Earth was going to end in a great flood. When that moment came and went without the fruition of their cherished prophecy, the cult members experienced what is called cognitive dissonance. They felt the disorientation of the obvious gap between their belief about the end of the world and the reality of its continued existence.

The interesting thing is that the cult members did not stay in that confused state for long. Psychologist Leon Festinger in 1957 offered the theory of cognitive dissonance to explain the mental agility of people to escape the tension of two conflicting thoughts. In the case of the cult and its prediction of the apocalypse, the pain of dissonance was overcome by giving a new spin to the failed prophecy. The

cult's leader, Marion Keech, claimed to receive supernatural messages through vibrations that entered her body and caused her to write. After December 22 arrived to the surprise of the cult, so did a new message. Keech told her followers that the cult, by believing, had influenced God to spare the planet.

Of course making such adjustments to your beliefs leaves its psychic fatigue. So Festinger proposed a second theory to explain a better psychological coping mechanism people commonly use. Instead of going through the pain, embarrassment and work of adjusting beliefs to reality, one can simply refuse to digest any information that might contradict what one thinks he or she knows. The name of this process is selective exposure. In order to avoid the discomfort of addressing contradictions to core beliefs, a person will screen in a cunning way what messages are allowed in. Think of it as a spam filter except it is calibrated to refuse any fact, information, truth or theory that challenges beliefs or world view. Selective exposure is an equal opportunity defensive mechanism and works well across all ideological, party and denominational lines.

This explains so much. Why there is so little effective dialogue between people who hold conflicting beliefs whether those beliefs are political, religious, cultural or racial. Why the truth does not always win the field: contradicting information prompts the deaf ear rather than the open one. Why advertising and propaganda can work. Why opinions are accepted as facts when those opinions support what one believes to be true. Why a new tribalism infects our nation as people narrow their media choices to those outlets reinforcing core beliefs. As it turns out, paying attention to what challenges our world view is not on the list of things we employ the power of choosing.

This causes difficulty for a democracy, for any kind of authentic relationships across our belief barriers, and for growing our souls in relationship to what is real. This all strikes me as challenging to our covenant to seek the truth with love. Being open to what is true is as complicated and difficult as love itself so often turns out to be. Like in love the first step toward overcoming selective exposure and cognitive dissonance is to know yourself. Just one more reason to get up in the morning and look into the mirror saying, "I might be wrong." bc

(Continued from page 1) **January 24 calendar continued**

12:30 p.m. The Lunch Bunch will meet at Patrick's, 4972 Park Ave.

Wednesday, January 27

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

Thursday, January 28

7:00 p.m. River Readers will meet at the home of Tuck Dickerson, 461 N Mendenhall. We will be discussing *Duel* by Thomas Fleming.

Auction Party Reprise

If you missed the opportunity to bid on the party offered by Roy Bell, Walid Sakaan and Jim Spake at last year's auction, it's not too late to enjoy an evening of eclectic art, food, libations and music.

On Friday, January 29, the fun begins at 6 p.m. at 820 South Willet which is just South of Central Ave.

You will be treated to a tour of a cavernous studio housing art and antiques, a poetry reading, interesting and delicious food and beverage tastings and special music. Contact Roy at roy.bell@earthlink.net to get on the guest list. It will be an unforgettable evening! Admission is a contribution to the COR in the amount that you feel comfortable giving.

Choir Outreach

The Awesome Little Choir of the Church of the River will be performing a concert/lecture at 2:30 p.m. on January 31 at Town Village at Audubon Park.

Town Village is doing a January series of concerts on "Music in Church Services". We will be doing "Spirituals and Their Hidden Meaning" All are welcome. Town Village is on the corner of Park & Cherry Road in front of Harding Academy.

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

Thanks

to Rick & Susan Crenshaw for gifts to the Emergency Maintenance Fund in memory of **Goldene Blinkoff**, the Music Fund in

memory of **Bob Myers** and the Endowment Fund in memory of **Margaret Deininger**.

Thanks to Leo & June Blackwell for a gift to the Endowment Fund in memory of **Margaret Deininger**.

Thanks to Betsy Mandel-Carley and Ron & Paula Turner for a gift to the Music Fund in memory of **Bob Myers** and **Margaret Deininger**.

Thanks to Joan Terrell for a gift to the Music Fund in memory of **Margaret Deininger**.

Thanks to Tim and Ginger Wheat for a gift to the Memorial Garden Fund in memory of **Bob Myers, Margaret Deininger** and **Goldene Blinkoff**.

And thanks to Karen Shea for a gift to the Endowment Fund in memory of **Caroline Hope Turns**.

Among Our Members



A warm welcome to Tiffany C. Johnson who

signed the membership book on January 17, 2010. Tiffany is an attorney who enjoys dance, teaching & service as well as hanging out with her three nephews. She is interested in the inner city schools, housing, education and literacy.

Library Computer There is now a computer with WiFi connection in the library. It uses the TV mounted on the wall as a monitor. Just turn on the computer (button on front of tower) and set the TV input to RGB with the TV remote. A shelf under the TV holds a wireless keyboard and mouse.

THE MEMPHIS UNITARIAN

Prayers for Peace is pleased to announce that our first event of the year coincides with a Prayers for World Peace conducted by Buddhists since 1989. While the gathering offers 10 days of Prayers for World Peace we have a chance to participate on Sunday, January 24th from 3-5 p.m.

The Nyingma Monlam Chemo has been held annually in Bodhgaya since 1989. Currently over 1600 monasteries are registered and the ceremonies are attended by thousands all over the world. This gathering offers 10 days of prayers for World Peace and the liberation of all sentient beings.

January 16-25, 2010 there will be sessions from 7-9 p.m. each night. The night sessions will be held at Pho Da Temple right next to Perma Karpo Meditation Center. To get to Pho Da Temple from I-40, take exit 8A/Austin Peay Hwy/Jackson Ave. onto Jackson Ave. Bear left to follow TN-14N 1.2 miles. Take ramp toward Raleigh Millington Rd. and continue on Raleigh Millington to stop light (1 mile) and take a left on Yale Rd. Yale becomes Frayser Raleigh. Look on left for Red Roofed Vietnamese Temple (just past Sonic Drive in and a strip of woods). There will be chanting in English and the offering of candles, flowers and lights. Everyone is most welcome to attend any evening to join in or observe.

January 24, 2010 from 3-5 p.m. we will be holding a special welcoming of members of the greater religious community of Memphis. The practices will be the same as the nightly service but with an in depth explanation.

Pema Karpo Meditation Center will be open for practice during the day. Center phone is 901 377-4834.

Shady Grove Honors Us

Last Friday afternoon was a very special moment for a number of us who attended the official recognition of our being adopters of Shady Grove Elementary School. It was an honors program combined with our ceremony so the audience was comprised of students, parents and officials from Memphis City Schools. We were serenaded, we had a poem written and performed for us spelling out Church of the River and Reverend Carley was presented with a beautiful framed drawing by one of the very talented first grade students. Look for the drawing in the Mississippi River Room along with the cards made especially for us in art classes.

We have barely begun our relationship with these darling children and already they have touched our hearts. In the coming months we will be telling you of things that are needed by the school and how we can help fill those needs. The first will be a repeat of an old favorite in the church, "undie Sunday" when everyone is asked to bring some new underwear and socks in children's sizes. You'll be notified well in advance of this project.

Visiting Shady Grove is witnessing the diversity of children in an environment that is happy and healthy. It is hoped that many of you will find some way that you can contribute to the lives of these kids. As Reverend Carley said, when he accepted the certificate of adoption, "*we also thank you, Shady Grove, for allowing us to practice our faith.*"

Dee Billmeier

UUSC/UUA Joint Relief for Haiti

Last week those on the Newsletter list received an email asking for donations to help the stricken population of Haiti recover from a devastating earthquake.

What is UUSC doing? Emergency aid agencies are trying to deliver aid to Haiti, but the airport is bottlenecked and there is not enough heavy equipment to clear the roads of debris. Because of this, aid is taking a long time to reach those in desperate need.

Meanwhile, survivors on the streets are working together: digging out bodies, constructing makeshift camps and seeking water and food. UUSC is doing the following:

- Our Programs Director is providing training to medical teams providing emergency response on the ground.
- We are working with groups on the ground to get support to impromptu groups at the neighborhood level engaged in search and rescue efforts and setting up shelters, etc.
- We are working with national peasant organizations to help them provide aid to groups in the city.
- We are sending an assessment mission as soon as possible without burdening current on-the-ground aid efforts.

Once we have done the assessment, we will be able to develop our fundamental mission: reaching out to survivors who are on the margins of the relief and recovery efforts.

Haiti has a vibrant grassroots movement with a vision of empowering people. UUSC will work closely with partners in this grassroots movement to reach those survivors at greatest risk of being overlooked.

Donations to the relief fund can be made through our website (www.uusc.org/haitiearthquake) Checks should be made payable to UUSC/UUA Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund and mailed to UUSC, P.O. Box 84401, Boston, MA 02284-4001

WKNO is broadcasting a documentary and panel discussion on one of the most important issues facing our community: the high rate of infant mortality in Memphis. Memphis has the largest rate of infant mortality per capita in the country, rivaling rates of those in third-world countries. In 2005 11 out of every 1,000 babies born in our community died within the first year of life.

Beyond Babyland is a new documentary by award-winning filmmakers Craig Leake and David Appleby that journeys into the heart of some of these communities in the area to explore the reasons why we have this legacy. WKNO will broadcast this film, followed by a panel discussion presenting the issue and exploring what we need to do to end this problem.

Here are the dates and times that this documentary and panel discussion will air.

Monday, January 18, 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 19, 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 20, 8:00 p.m. and midnight

Friday, January 22, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 23, 4:00 p.m.
