

The Messenger

Unity Church in Albany • 21 King Avenue • Albany NY 12206 • 518-453-3603

Birth, Life, Death and Beyond

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus, at Easter his death and resurrection. In the months between we reflect on his life and teachings. Assuming that Jesus hasn't just been "sitting at the right hand of God" since that first Easter what might he be up to today? The more curious among us may even wonder; what had he been doing prior to that birth? In the Gospel of John Jesus is quoted as saying, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58) What might that imply?

In Matthew and Mark's gospels King Herod, and others, speculate whether Jesus might be the reincarnation of a prophet or Elijah or John the Baptist. In the time of Jesus there were many conflicting ideas about reincarnation (a repeating series of lives) and resurrection (a teaching about the rebirth of the righteous.) In Matthew Jesus states that John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated. The author of the Gospel of John disagrees and has John the Baptist state that he is not the reincarnation of Elijah or any other former prophet. The debate continues.

So who was Jesus before he was Jesus? And of equal importance, who were you before you were you? If our lives are a continuous unfolding of Divine Creative Intelligence (God) expressing as both individual minds and forms we must have been something prior to our birth. Unity's Charles Fillmore wrote that he had memories of both the Apostle Paul and Napoleon. Does that mean that he lived as both of those men? The ancient writings of the East remind us that we all share a collective memory of human history as well as our personal histories. Perhaps that is why many people, including Charles, recall both the powerful and perhaps archetypal lives of great figures of the past, as well as more individual or personal memories. So we are left to sort out not only who we (and Jesus and Charles) were before our birth, but also what part of our remembering is personal and what part is "collective memory."

We wonder, what is it to be a timeless "son (or daughter) of God"? A term applied broadly to many people at the time of Jesus. What is it to be born, to live and to "pass on"? And was resurrection just for Jesus and perhaps a few select others? According to Matthew's gospel at the time of Jesus' crucifixion a general resurrection also began: "The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his (Jesus') resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many." (Matthew 27-51-53)



By Rev. Jim Fuller

Who are we that we might live and "fall asleep" and then live again? Jesus points toward a positive future for all this when he says, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes me will also do the things that I do and, in fact, will do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12) This implies that not only will we do greater things than Jesus did during his life on earth, but that he too was moving forward to do greater things. And all of this happens he notes because he "goes to the Father", because of his (and our) connection to God.

Today I am raising many questions but offering no firm answers. Questions like who were we before our birth, who was/is Jesus, and how is it that we exist beyond the seemingly finite boundaries of birth and death can't be answered with ink on paper. However, throughout history men and women have managed to find answers to these questions, answers that felt true beyond any shadow of doubt. Some found answers by studying and meditating on the writings of other great teachers and prophets. Some found answers by learning to prayerfully go within and allowing Universal answers to arise in their minds.

Continued on page 7

Scenes from Christmas Past!

The 2011 Holiday Party was enjoyed by all who attended. Thanks to everyone who helped with the set-up, music and refreshments.



The Misspent Youth Band in Concert

**Saturday, March 10th, 7:00pm
on the “main stage”**

Featuring Unity members: John Reith on vocals; Gary Allocco, guitar and vocals, Joe Coffaro, drums John Daubney, guitar and vocals; with Mark Goldman, keyboards.

Performing in their own soulful, joyful, and often playful style, the music of the 1950's through the present day, Misspent Youth performs songs that are at various times: deeply meaningful, tasteful and rollicking rock and roll, and pretty ballads. Be prepared for a night of familiar and maybe even unfamiliar music that will lift your spirits and bring a smile to your face.

Price of admission can't be beat, just \$5.00 !!!

A portion of the proceeds will go to Unity Church.

Board of Trustees

President	Heather Diddel ('14)	475-9604
Vice Pres.	Sheila Healy ('13)	434-1517
Treasurer	Dottie Frament ('12)	346-7940
Secretary	Leslie Coffaro ('14)	465-3300
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Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

Rene Lechleiter



All of us have personally experienced tragedy, which can be very challenging to face, and then to move through in order to return to any semblance of "normal life" again. One important quality of those who not only survive but eventually grow through such an ordeal is their willingness to still give of themselves as they move through their own time of sorrow. A couple of years past Rene offered us all a great example of someone who gave of herself to this community, while simultaneously experiencing a great loss and the very beginnings of healing. Her sparkling smile and service during those days was proof-positive to us of the existence of a powerful God within us all.

"Many years ago, I would often have very in-depth spiritual conversations with one of my co-workers. That person was Vonda Mason who was attending Unity at the time. She asked me if I had ever attended Unity Church. My reply was no and she said, "well, you sound like you *have* been to Unity, and you need to come to our church here in Albany." After many such requests I finally took her up on the offer. I came and I found a community of like-minded people where I could carry on deep spiritual discussions without someone looking glassy-eyed at me. At the time, Arthur Wells was the minister. Here, one of the deepest longings of my heart was satisfied—I had found my Spiritual community and my heart was very happy.

Naturally, my heart then really opened, and I wanted to give something back to this community. I had a desire to share my energy in a way that affirmed this happiness I was experiencing. I really can't remember my first service to this community, I just know that I began in several different areas. I assisted Don Raux on the Retreat Committee, and enlisted congregants to share their talents by offering workshops at the retreat which took place at the Abode of the Message. It was a very rewarding experience to gather everyone together, and then enjoy the creativity and offerings of my fellow "spiritual seekers."

Each avenue of service I choose speaks to my Heart and fills me with happiness. If I don't feel drawn to a particu-

lar area of service by love and gratitude, I allow others to fill that role. That way my energy is better spent doing the things which come from my heart. I taught Spiritual Education to the children when we didn't actually have a curriculum. In one class we taught the children the Native American custom of using a talking stick. They also created one which they brought home to use with their families. The idea behind the talking stick is to promote respectful listening. Only the person holding the stick can speak, so the listeners really hear and honor the person who is speaking. Then the stick is passed to the next person and so on. Seeing the joy on the children's faces while making these sticks so filled my Heart!

I also participated in the *Unity Players* under our director Vicki Wolfe. We would present plays at Easter and Christmas. It was a growth experience for me and I found that it was the *child within me* that came out to play and explore the dialogue. I could feel Spirit moving through me at these times and through the members of the group and the congregation. Those were some of the best times of my life in Unity.

I also was able to express myself, in song, as a member of the 4th Sunday Singers. I might not be having a great day, but once I arrived at church and started singing the words of the beautiful songs Phyllis Pulver would prepare, my energy would shift into bliss

I ushered for awhile and still do on occasion when I'm needed. I was the Teller Minister and still serve on the second Sunday of the month, and fill-in when needed. I also call in the Daily Word so that people can call the church and hear it read. I love the week I am calling in, as the Daily Word always seems appropriate for what I am experiencing at that moment.

I served for awhile on the Beautification Committee with Maurine Paishone. We had a great time and, in Maurine, I was able to watch a very creative artist at work. I also offered the opening prayers during a *Sunday in the Park* service a few years back with Carole Fults. It was a sacred honor for me to offer prayers in this way. I also served in the bookstore for a short time.

For me, service comes from the Heart. There is no prompting from other people. If I my Heart feels called and wants to serve in any capacity, I pay attention and follow that call which usually brings me great joy and contentment. I feel expanded and open when that type of love and sharing flows freely from me. It serves God, it serves me and it serves the whole community and beyond. "



February



March



Book Club News

Life After Life by Dr Raymond Moody is the book club reading for February and March.

In *Life After Life*, Raymond Moody investigates more than one hundred case studies of people who experienced “clinical death” and were subsequently revived. First published in 1975, this classic exploration of life after death started a revolution in popular attitudes about the afterlife and established Dr. Moody as the world’s leading authority in the field of Near Death Experiences. Rev. Jim will lead a discussion on this book on Sunday, March 25th. Copies are available in the bookstore.



Life After Life — A Documentary Film

Sunday, Feb 26 12:30-1:30 (free)

This is a documentary film on Near Death Experiences (NDE). Each of the six people featured in the film were pronounced dead and later revived. Each gives a first person account of his or her death and afterlife experience. The six include a former military assassin, a nurse, a Soviet dissident and the medical school professor who initially inspired this NDE research. While the people are diverse their “afterlife” experiences show a remarkable continuity. Dr Raymond Moody, author of the book *Life After Life*, ties the film together with his commentary. The film is surprising, inspiring and very comforting.

The Next Newsletter —

Articles for the April/May edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, March 20th. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

Listen to Sunday Services & Music



You can now listen to or download our Sunday messages on our website.

Just go to www.unitychurchinalbany.org and click on “listen”. New talks are added weekly. And don’t forget our website’s “music” page.

“The Mastery of Love” with Barry Schwartzbach

Thursdays 6:30 – 8:30 PM

Now through March 8th

The Mastery of Love, written by Don Miguel Ruiz, is all about relationship... with each other and with ourselves. It builds beautifully on his earlier book *The Four Agreements* and brings the practice of awareness right to where we live.

Barry Schwartzbach first encountered Don Miguel Ruiz, author of *The Four Agreements* and *The Mastery of Love*, at the Omega Institute eight years ago. Since then he has studied with Don Miguel and other master Toltec teachers. Making regular pilgrimages to sacred sites in Mexico and Peru, and practicing the teachings in his daily life, Barry has established a deep connection with them.

Matters of Life & Death

with Rev Jim Fuller

Wednesdays at 7:15

February 1st through March 28th

We typically think of life as progressing from birth to death; and in the case of Jesus on to resurrection. But what if that apparently linear path is only an appearance? What if our

ideas about life and death are only our ideas? In the Gospel of Mark Jesus tells his disciples, "Remember, by trying to save your own life, you're going to lose it; but by losing your life because of this good news, you're going to save it." (Mark 8:35) Through reading, meditation and interactive exercises we will explore our current ideas about life and death, and with the support of the class perhaps lose some of these and save ourselves.

This class will use the book *No Death No Fear* by Thich Nhat Hanh as a teaching text. We encourage you to purchase and read the book prior to the class.

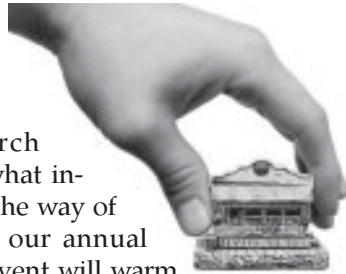
Small Business Fair

Sunday, February

5, 10:00 AM –

1:30 PM

Did you wish to know more about your church commUnity? Come see what individuals have to offer in the way of services and products at our annual Small Business Fair. The event will warm you on this cold winter day ... Sunday, February 5th. A snow date is planned for February 12th.



If you have a small business and would like to share information about it, please consider participating in the Small Business Fair in the Fellowship Hall between both services and after the 11 o'clock service. This is a fabulous, well-attended, and successful event for all involved.

If you are interested in participating, please contact either Diane Teutschman or Bonnie Kriss. Diane can be reached at 280-4311 or at minimom45@aol.com. Bonnie may be reached at 373-2135 or at tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com.

"Happy" (documentary film)

Saturday, February 11th at 7:00 PM

Join us as we celebrate World Happy Day with a free showing of the film *Happy*. Yes, this is a movie about happiness. Award winning director Roko Belic teamed up with producer Tom Shadyac to create this documentary about what makes people happy and how we can increase happiness in our own lives. Happy people live healthier and longer lives. They are more likely to care for the environment and to find creative solutions to problems. Increasing happiness benefits us as individuals and communities in many ways. Happiness is a goal worth sharing.

The film will be shown on the "big screens" in our sanctuary. This is a free showing.

Unity Church Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 4 at 12:20 PM

This year's Unity Church Annual Meeting will include brief reports from Reverend Jim and members of the church board. It will also include an election for two trustees to serve on the board. Only church members may serve on the board or vote for trustees. The meeting itself is open to members and non-members alike.



Sunday March 18th 12:30 PM

Bring a dish to share, catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Family and friends are always welcome at our pot luck lunches. No need to sign up in advance.

Town Meeting

Sunday, April 22nd 12:45-1:45

Town Meetings are your opportunity to learn more about what's happening at Unity Church, ask questions of our minister and board, and to offer your suggestions or comments. The purpose of Town Meetings is to promote good communication within our church community and keep in touch with the energy and direction of the group. Town Meetings are open to anyone who attends Unity Church.

..... Future Events:

Unity Church Fall Retreat

October 5-6, 2012

John Welshons will lead this year's retreat which will focus on meditation and insight. Cost for the retreat, including lodging and four meals, is \$175.

“Super Seniors” Honored

By John Daubney

On Sunday, Dec. 4th, 2011 our congregation honored 10 of our seniors who have given so much to Unity of Albany and have been so instrumental in bringing our church to where it is today. They have been great examples of Love in Action for all of us which is what we all strive to be. The love that we all consciously give out through our service to each other is what will enable Unity in Albany to continue to grow and serve those who've been praying, searching and hoping for a place to belong. It was an exciting day for them and for all present. It would not be going overboard to say that love just filled the room.

This event was collaboration between the Unity Cares Committee and Rev. Jim Fuller.

Isabel Mills — Isabel came to Unity in 1984 when we were on Madison Avenue and some of the ways she served this community was through serving on the Board of Trustees, hospitality, in the bookstore, WE Care Committee, and Reading and recording the Daily Word for those who would call to listen to the Daily Word. Isabel had this to say about service and I'm sure everyone here would agree with her sentiments, *“I never considered recognition; I gave because it was in my heart.”*

Paul Barnard — Paul first came to Unity Church in the early 1980s when services were held at the home of Peg White on South Manning Boulevard. One of Paul's earliest service commitments was helping to run the bookstore when Unity moved into rented space at the Albany Women's Club on Madison Avenue. Today, along with Sandesh Naik and Patricia-Hunt-Perry, Paul has been helping to facilitate the *One Year to Live* Program. He also provided free spiritual counseling to many of our congregants who needed such services over the years. Paul's persistent spiritual searching has kept him a vital part of our church community.

Nancy Remick — First came to Unity Church in 1984 and was the first paid employee of the church raking in the grand sum of \$10 a month for making the candles for the new-comer packets and for making the weekly bank deposits. Nancy was also instrumental in creating a Course in Miracles study group which I believe is still alive and well today, and



for helping to create the We Care Committee which is the forerunner of today's Unity Cares Committee. Remembering those in our church community who were going through difficult times has always been a concern of Nancy's. (Nancy was unable to attend)

Jean Robinson — Came to Unity in 1985, kind of through the back door, by attend-

ing a Unity retreat at Unity Village with her friend of 40 years, Gwen White. She then began attending Unity Services about the time Unity began renting space at the Women's Building on Madison Avenue. Jean has ushered and counted money from the Sunday offerings and served on the Board of Trustees. She continued to attend retreats and continue her education at Unity Village and eventually completed the requirements to become a licensed Unity Teacher and then a Prayer Chaplain which Jean still performs today.

Audrey Madison — Came to Unity when it was a small study group meeting in the home of Peg White. At times there were as little as 6 people attending. Through her work, and legal assistance from her husband, Sam Madison and many others, Audrey was instrumental in helping this small group transform from a small study group into an incorporated Unity Church in the spring of 1985. Later, during the challenging times that hit this church in 2001 and 2002 Audrey was someone who stood tall and through her very presence every Sunday helped the rest of us stay centered and united in the truth of our spiritual journeys, and in our commitment to this community.

She has served on the board of Trustees, the We Care Committee, and in numerous ways given service to this community.

Gwendolyn White — with her friend Jean Robinson, Gwen joined Unity in 1985 after attending two retreats at Unity Village and deciding Unity church was just what they were looking for. Gwen began service by helping out with hospitality and in the nursery, and through her efforts had a speaker put in the nursery so whoever worked could hear the service. She also ushered and counted money, and a few years back hosted a Circles of Gratitude group in her home. This group evolved into a book discussion group that continued for many years.

Super Seniors continued . . .

Pat Jarvis - Began attending Unity with her husband Bill Jarvis in the 1980s at the Women's Building on Madison Avenue. Pat took part in many activities and served as an usher, money counter, and in hospitality among her many contributions. In the 1990s, Pat was honored by the church for her many years of service. A little known fact is that Pat and her husband, Bill Jarvis, were married by the well known Unity minister and writer, Eric Butterworth at his church in New York City.

Florence Frazier - Came to Unity in the mid-1980s. She had been invited by her friend Isabel Mills on a bring-a-friend Sunday. She was actually indoctrinated into Unity thinking through Unity's Wee Wisdom Children's magazine as a child. As a member, Florence offered herself in service as an Usher, member of the choir, hospitality committee, and remembers fondly the Wednesday Night classes with pastor Arthur Wells.

Art and Bettie Rogers - Art and Bettie have always been a team. They joined Unity in the early 1990s. They loved to help with hospitality at the Coffee House and Open Mic nights... When we first began holding these events Art and Bette were such a help. They would step in and handle the refreshments which was a huge help and a relief for Deb Burger, Gary Allocco, and John Daubney. They were responsible for re-energizing the development of our beautiful church gardens. Art and Bette were also church greeters. (Art and Bette, because of illness, were unable to attend)

Food Pantry

During the cold winter months we continue to give for the benefit others. Thank you for your generous donation!



Week #1

February 6 & March 6: WOMEN'S WEEK! Needed are feminine pads, tampons, washes, shampoo, conditioner, tooth brushes & toothpaste, deodorants & soap.

Week #2

February 13 & March 13: MEN'S WEEK! Needed are shaving creme, razors, deodorants, shampoo & soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste.

Week #3

February 20 & March 20: BABY WEEK! Disposable diapers, baby wipes, lotions & shampoos.

Week #4

February 27 & March 27: HOUSEHOLD WEEK! Toilet Paper, laundry soap, paper towels, household cleansers.



Birth, Life, Death and Beyond. . . continued.

I believe that each of these questions is worthy of prayerful pondering. I sometimes wonder if any other questions are truly worthy of our deep consideration. Life here on earth is brief, very brief for some. If we feel as John has Thomas (who he resents) say, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5) then how will we make sense of this life or prepare for the life that is to follow it? If life is continuous, without beginning or end, we must begin to find ways to understand *and experience* our lives from a more expansive perspective; otherwise we will be living "half a life" or even less. And so we ask, who was Jesus before he was born? Who was I before my birth? If Jesus and I are both "in God" where do our lives intersect? And who are we as we move beyond this lifetime?

May these questions stir your deep memories and also your willingness to touch that which goes beyond personal memory. May you feel and know your timeless connection with your Creator, with our teacher Jesus, and with all of our spiritual family. Amen.

Thank you from Rev. Jim & Kay

We wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, our Albany family, for this year's very generous Christmas gift. Please know that we appreciate both your gift and all the love and support that it represents. This year we use our gift toward a summer trip. In August we will be revisiting a trip we took many years ago down part of the West coast; a truly memorable journey. Thank you for your generosity and for continuing to make us feel at home here in Albany.

*Love and blessings to all,
Rev. Jim & Kay*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Our Spiritual Home



A place to worship, grow spiritually, feel loved and accepted — is no small matter. In our spiritual family, we know there are many paths that lead to God. We believe that Spirit led you here. Our desire is to share Christ's love with genuine heartfelt warmth. We are a gathering of all kinds of people with various backgrounds, life-styles, and life-stories. Growing together we worship, we serve, we laugh, we cry, we learn, and we reach out to our world with life-transforming truth. We aspire to live as Christ and be receptive to Spirit as it calls us to Life. Our name says it all; we are a Unity of believers celebrating and participating in inclusive worship. If you've been praying, searching and hoping for a place to belong, we say again — *Welcome Home!*

Our Worship Schedule

Two services every Sunday at
9:00 AM & 11 AM.

Childcare is available at 11 a.m.

Wednesday night prayer at 6:30 p.m.