

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ANIMAL MINISTRY NEWSLETTER
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NEW UUAM PRESIDENT -- SPIRIT OF LIFE



WELCOME TO OUR NEW UUAM PRESIDENT

We are so pleased to introduce UUAM members and friends to our new UUAM President!

Rev. Dr. Beth Johnson has served Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Vista California since 2004. Beth received her Master of Divinity from [Claremont School of Theology](#) in 2002, and a Doctor of Ministry degree in 2007 at [Claremont School of Theology](#) with an emphasis in process philosophy and animal rights. Beth's doctoral work looks at how the concept of the interdependent web, so important to Unitarian Universalists, often functions to mute the voices of individual animals. The project looks at how ecofeminist process thought, with its ability to consider the individual in the web as well as ecosystems and species, offers a corrective to what is often interpreted as ecological egalitarianism in the interdependent web.

Seeing in the UU movement profound and prophetic possibilities for individuals to achieve spiritual depth while working to bring compassion, justice, and joy to the wider world, Beth's call to Unitarian Universalist ministry was the result of her desire to link spiritual growth and theology with social justice. She sees in Unitarian Universalism a compelling spiritual, ethical, prophetic faith within which to live, and sees our UU communities as places where people can be both nurtured in their intellectual and spiritual growth, and encouraged to live into the possibilities of our liberal faith, which includes working toward the well being and flourishing of all life.

Along with two other scholars and clergy, Beth helped found Interreligious Voices for Animal Compassion (IVAC), a Southern California organization that has sponsored to conferences on animals and religion for clergy, scholars, laity, and activists. Currently IVAC is working on advancing scholarly work related to animal theology, philosophy and ethics.

Rev. Johnson has also been involved in numerous interfaith and social justice activities including peace actions, immigration rights, marriage equality, as well as animal rights.

Rev. Johnson also has a particular interest in the aesthetics of worship and contemporary worship. She collaborates with others to create inspiring,

experiential worship experiences. Her services and sermons lift up the concerns of all beings as well as human concerns.

Spirit of Life

Dear Friends,

I'm so pleased to be able to serve as President of UU Animal Ministry. It is a privilege and my deepest joy to spend time working with other Unitarian Universalists on behalf of animals. Those beings whose voices are not like our own need us to use our voices to speak for them so that their unique and wonderful voices might finally be heard. Those beings whose bodies are abused and broken need us to use our bodies - our hands, our feet, our heads, our hearts - on their behalf, for indeed, bodies count. I honor each of you who are working in many ways to make the lives of other animals better. I'm in awe of the years of hard work that UFETA/UUAM members and the UFETA/UUAM board have spent bringing compassion to animal rights and advocacy. I am particularly gratified that we are mindful and respectful of the journey that each person must take to greater awareness of the condition of animals - those near and those far.

My journey to animal rights and advocacy was a journey of the heart - a journey toward living in love.

I've always been an "animal lover," having been raised with an amazing German Shepherd named Duke who was my protector, my babysitter, and my friend. My parents got Duke from a shelter when I was two years old and he was six months old. We grew up together. Mama used to put me on the front porch with Duke with a sign pinned to me "Do not touch child. Dog will bite." Once when I wandered off the porch, Mama called for Duke, knowing that wherever I was so he would be. At thirteen years old Duke became ill. Thinking that they were protecting me, my parents had Duke put to sleep while I was at school. It was my first experience of a broken heart.

I didn't realize then that I would later live with a heart broken wide open with love for all animals - those near and known, those faraway and unknown. We had other German Shepherds and I loved them all - each one was unique and smart and loyal and loving. I hadn't made the connection between our dear canine companions and the animals that we ate in our mid-western meat and potato meals. That would take a long time.

Various feline companions influenced my journey of the heart as I grew up, moved out, and "had" cats - as if they could be had. As any cat lover knows, we are theirs as much as they are "ours." Tex was an important teacher on my journey. My relationship with this eighteen pound orange tabby, who was my companion from 1982-1994, began the process that opened my heart to greater awareness of the power of human/animal relationships. Tex was with me through a cross-country move, a divorce, and I just knew that loving him was the purest thing I'd ever

done. I was stunned at how much I loved him. I don't know how it happened really, or just when it happened. At some point, I realized that he was a part of me in some very fundamental way. It was then that I opened to earth-centered spirituality - began to feel a part of everything "not separate at all," as Shug in *The Color Purple* said. Tex developed diabetes and endured daily injections for two years. When he died at fifteen years old, I got a tattoo over my heart - it is a broken heart with paw prints in it. I had no idea at the time that it would become literal.

I still hadn't made the connection between my companion animals and "other" animals - those raised for food.

Enter Lil, also known as Little One. It was while journeying with my feline companion, Lil' from October 1995- December 11, 2004, that I was transformed from "animal lover" to animal advocate, defender, and protector. I "got" Lil' when she was six years old. Shortly after that I was diagnosed with cancer and my other kitty Rocket Man died from kidney disease. Lil' was my constant companion and my best friend. For six months, during those long dark chemo nights Lil' would drop her small pink ball on my chest, playing fetch with me until she could tell I was tired. Then she'd move my left arm up so that she could nestle there and sleep too. And so it went, as I healed from chemo, Lil' healed me. We played hide-n-seek, she often initiating the game. We sat companionably for hours watching television or reading (well, she watched tv, I was the one who read). We rejoiced in each other's company - each of us often preferring each other to anyone else. Our ability to communicate with one another, to enter into each other's experience, to see and be seen by each other, taught me the meaning of trans-species relationships. Lil' healed the remnant of the split that existed between me and other animals.

I had considered vegetarianism and moral consumption for some years before I committed myself to those practices. I had heard about the conditions of animals in factory farms and knew about animal testing. Each time I was reminded of these practices, I had a nagging sense of discomfort. The discomfort always faded eventually. No doubt because I donated to some environmental group or humane society and that information was sent to wider mailing lists, one day I received a solicitation from PETA. I must have sent a check for membership to them, (I say "must have" because in looking back I don't recall doing so). One day I received a copy of *Animal Times*, the magazine that PETA sends to its members. I looked at it. I read the accounts of the conditions of factory farming, how animals used in testing products are treated. I looked at the photographs in the magazine.

At the time, it was part of my earth-centered practice to celebrate the seasons and work with them as a spiritual practice. Every year, as winter ended, I thought about the promise of spring, the new beginning and hope that it symbolizes. I thought about what new things—what ideas or concepts—I would like see in my life with the coming of spring. Each spring I created a collage with images and words

that symbolized what I was hoping for. In the spring of 1998, I was looking for pictures to use in my annual collage. I had the idea that I wanted to bring health, beauty, and harmony into my life, perhaps greater clarity to my educational goals. I went through several magazines without finding the inspirational images I was looking for. I picked up *Animal Times*. I sat with the articles and the pictures. I chose pictures of farm animals and animals used for testing. I chose words like “cruelty free,” “beauty,” and “love.”

This was my turning point. I had not intended to focus on animal issues. I had barely allowed the mistreatment of animals into my consciousness.

I felt the love that I had for my Lil’. I saw how responsive she was, how she had her own purposes and desires, how she seemed to want to be with me and enjoyed my company as I enjoyed hers, how she was frightened when put in her carrier to go to the vet. Certainly, what I’d learned about the intelligence of pigs being greater than that of dogs, what I’d read about the fear that cows demonstrate when they are near the slaughterhouse, the social structure that chickens have—certainly, I said to myself, the beings that are used for food and as test subjects must have value as Lil’ had value. Certainly, I said to myself, they were deserving of my love and protection.

And so it was.

And something remarkable happened. Unbelievable as it was to me, I found that I loved Lil’ more. The love that I felt for her was overwhelming at times. And the more I loved the more love I had until I realized that my heart was simply broken open with love for all beings, and that I was held in love.

Lil’ died suddenly, and too soon, at age nine from a rare liver disease. Never more than six and half pounds, this little orange tabby taught me more about Living In Love than I would have ever thought possible.

And so it is for Tex, and in Lil’s memory, that I devote my life to all animals.

I look forward to getting to know your stories of love and transformation.

All love, all peace to all beings,

Beth

UU ANIMAL MINISTRY at GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Assembly 2010 gave UUAM the opportunity to reach the 3,800 + Unitarian Universalists there this year in Minneapolis. Attendees have programming and other activity options, so we cannot reach all of them, but we engaged a good number.



One highlight was Howard Lyman's compelling presentation "Saving The World One Fork at a Time." Howard is a former cattle rancher who chose to tell the truth on Oprah in 1996 and was consequently sued (unsuccessfully), along with Oprah, by the Texas Cattlemen's Association.

UUAM's Reverence for Life congregational outreach program was officially introduced at a gathering led by outgoing UUAM president Rev. LoraKim Joyner and incoming president Rev. Beth Johnson. Both thanked the task force that put it together over the last year: Rev. Russell Elleven; Jennifer Greene, Jim Sannes, Steven Storla, Vicky Talbert, and Dianne Waltner.

Every day hundreds of people came by the UUAM booth in the exhibit hall, many to pick up materials and talk with our volunteers. Our exhibit included:

- Books by Unitarian Universalists on compassion for all beings (authors Rev. Gary Kowalski, Howard Lyman, Norm Phelps, Zoe Weil, and Trish Kirk) as well as others, including World Peace Diet by Will Tuttle;
- Resources for animal justice work; including materials on unnecessary suffering, the environment, nutrition and related topics generously supplied by the Christian Vegetarian Association, Compassion Over Killing, Jewish Vegetarians of North America, Mercy for Animals, PETA, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Vegan Outreach and others; and a special section for children and youth with buttons and age-appropriate handouts;
- Signups for UUAM membership, internet discussion group, newsletter, and related activities; and,
- Cookbooks, recipes, handouts and DVD resources offering compassionate choices; and a display of the packages of ingredients referenced in these materials and other tasty options.

Special thanks for the content, appearance, and daily staffing of the exhibit goes to Charlie Talbert, Jennifer Greene and Trish Kirk, who along with nine other volunteers made our booth a standout. It was inspiring to see so many Unitarian Universalists engaged in, and wanting to know more about, our ministry.

UUAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT - Rev. Russell Elleven



Sometimes people just come along at the right time. There have been several times in my life where I can look back and see where some of the decisions I have made were instrumental in becoming the person I am today. My educational choices, my love interests, my career and vocational paths were all influenced by those around me and by those I would seek out and listen to for guidance. My diplomas, my spouse, and my religion have all informed me in ways that continue to enrich me. Yes, special people and ideas seem to come along in our lives when we remain open to the possibilities.

Three years ago I was at the UUA General Assembly in Portland, Oregon. I was walking through the exhibit hall, a place I enjoy very much, and came upon the booth for the Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. I thought to myself, “Hey, I like animals and I like UUs. Maybe this is a group for me?”

I needed to pay by credit card for some reason. I can’t really remember why that was so. UFETA wasn’t set up to accept credit cards. But some guy with a beard said he would take my card and get the money to UFETA. I thought this was a nice gesture so to return that kindness I bought the guy’s book he was selling. A trim, bespectacled, man with a very kind manner representing UFETA said we could make this exchange work and he’d get me on the email list for the group.

Eventually, I started to receive emails from the list and I couldn’t help but wonder if I’d stepped into something that wasn’t going to be very pretty. There was all this talk of slaughterhouses, torture, podcasts to listen to, and books to read that left me overwhelmed. I was a vegetarian but these people were taking things too far, I thought. At some point I reminded myself that I like animals and I like UUs - perhaps I should “listen” to these emails more closely.

I did. And reading those emails sent me to listening to those podcasts and reading those books. Going to subsequent General Assemblies allowed me to put some faces with names. I stopped eating dairy when discussing these issues with a member of the church I serve who affirmed that what was being written about on the email list was true.

My physician could not understand why my Body Mass Index became perfect. My blood pressure became perfect. My cholesterol became 128. I told him about the RAVE diet (ravediet.com) I learned about from our email list. His nose crinkled in a disapproving way but he could not argue with the numbers.

Those numbers are nice but mean little to me now. What means more to me is the knowledge that I have, to the best of my abilities, removed myself from an inhumane system that uses and abuses other beings who want to live just as much as do I. Ice cream, milk chocolate, and cheese can never bring me the comfort it

once did because the veil has been lifted.

That guy with the beard who helped with my credit card was Will Tuttle, author of the World Peace Diet. He has now visited my church in Fort Worth, Texas. That trim guy with glasses was Charlie Talbert who has, with his spouse Vicky, gently guided many of us along this path. Others like Jennifer Greene know more about these issues than I ever will yet continue to patiently feed me and point me to new ideas.

New friends like LoraKim Joyner, Beth Johnson, Trish Kirk, Dianne Waltner, Barb Huning, Patrick Tullo, and Gretchen Ostrander made this past GA the best I have ever attended because of their company. I also got to meet Gary Kowalski! Writing curriculum with some of these folks and Jim Sannes and Steven Storla has been invigorating. Knowing these UUs helps me understand how much is occurring around these issues and, at the same time, how much there is to be done.

I do not often use the word “transformed.” I hear others use that word too often and too lightly sometimes. But what is now the Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry has truly transformed my life. I see things differently. I go about my way in the world differently. I relate to other beings differently.

I like animals and I like UUs. And all of this happened because some people came along at the right time. They spoke to my head and they spoke to my heart. I am different because of it and I am most grateful to this transformative organization.

Rev. Russell Elleven

Editor's Note: Please read more about Russell at:

<http://humaneeducation.org/users/view/revruss>

We are so fortunate that Russell is a motivating force in UU Animal Ministry!

UU ANIMAL MINISTRY CHAPTER NEWS

Please welcome three new UU Animal Ministry Chapters: UUAM of Columbia, S.C., Tennessee Valley UUC Animal Ministry, and 'Creature Connections' of UU Congregation of Columbia, MD.

UUAM of Columbia

Since our group of concerned UU animal lovers started meeting in early June, 2010, we have accomplished several things!

We have officially become a UUAM chapter, UUAM of Columbia, and created the following mission statement: "The UUAM of Columbia seeks to advocate for the rights of all sentient creatures through education, legislation and other peaceful means. Specifically, we seek to exclude all forms of exploitation and neglect of

and cruelty to animals."

We've followed through on our plan to provide pet food donations to Meals on Wheels' pet owners.

We strive to continually serve as a resource site for UU members with animal related questions and information.

We've prioritized our next immediate goals in order to focus our energies productively toward

- 1) helping to end cockfighting in South Carolina, and
- 2) creating and enacting an educational curriculum designed to help people better understand and appreciate the animals with whom we share our world.

Marilyn Miss, Chapter Representative

TVUUC Animal Ministry

On August 23rd, the newly-organized Tennessee Valley UU Church's UUAM chapter (TVUUC Animal Ministry) held its first meeting. Fourteen people were present, with several others expressing interest in attending future meetings and events. Discussion was lively, ideas were coming forth in profusion! There was a wonderful energy in the room. The scope of our goals and activities will be "big picture issues affecting animals ... and also local issues that arise and are relevant to animals and environment". We expect to be doing humane education in various formats and some hands-on volunteer work, too.

We have several wonderful children in the group and may introduce their efforts for animals to the religious education of our church. Do we sound excited? We are!

Clara Landau, Chapter Representative

'Creature Connections' of UU Congregation of Columbia, MD.

newly formed UU Animal Ministry chapter, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia (UUC) 'Creature Connection', has several events scheduled in the next few months as well as some ongoing activities planned! I'm working very closely with our Director of Lifespan Growth and Learning - LGL (i.e. religious education) and our minister, who has just returned from 6 months maternity/sabbatical leave, and we have formally scheduled the following events:

- An "animal-focus" Sunday service (NOT a "Blessing of the Animals", which we are planning to do eventually!) with 'Creature Connection' input and involvement - on August 22nd.

- A showing of "The Emotional World of Farm Animals" - on September 17th -

followed that next Sunday - September 26th - by a visit to a nearby farm animal sanctuary.

- A "Saint Francis Day" animal service for our 'Children's Chapel' service - October 10th.

- A "Dog Bite Prevention Class" for our 5-7 year olds conducted by a local animal rescue group - November 14th.

Ongoing activities will be:

- Our children will be making colorful bandanas for the same rescue group to put on their black cats and dogs so that they show better when their pictures are taken for the website and pet adoption picture board.

- Maintaining that pet adoption picture board at our Interfaith Center with the help of our youth.

- Collecting used print cartridges and aluminum cans at our Interfaith Center to benefit the county-run animal shelter.

We are still exploring the following: pet food collection for the local food bank to distribute to needy families; providing pet loss grief counseling services to our congregation; adult education classes and forums on a wide variety of animal welfare issues.

We are also in contact with HSUS and its 'Faith Outreach' program for additional ways we can involve our community.

Finally, I like to say how extremely thankful we are for the support and encouragement we have received from our church community! And, thanks to UUAM for your continuing support!

Blessings to all the creatures!

Flo Wagner, Chapter Representative

UUAM of UU Church of Concord, N.H.

On May 1, the Concord (NH) UU Church held a presentation on The World Peace Diet which was created as a powerpoint by a local yoga/meditation instructor. About 40 people were in attendance, and included both congregants and the general public. The presentation was followed by a vegan lasagne dinner thanks to VegFund, which provided financial assistance for the food. The vegan dinner also included sweet potato/corn soup, homemade bread, baba ganouj, Caesar salad, fresh fruit, blueberry cobbler, and award-winning carrot cake donated by Cafe Indigo, a local vegan cafe. Local vegans also brought many wonderful dishes and desserts to share, too numerous to mention. But it was a feast!

A vegan Social Hour was provided the following morning for about 175

congregants with leftovers plus jam-dot cookies and chocolate sheet cake. The feedback was that the food raised the standard and the organizers had "set the bar" for Social Hour, so folks were pretty impressed - it was QUITE a spread! These events were organized by congregants Elinor Yeaton and Louisa Dell'Amico. A couple weeks later, the Community Plate raised \$250 for VegFund!

Louisa and Elinor both received a postcard which said,

On October 29, Michael Greger, M.D. will be giving a presentation at the Concord UU Church on "The Latest in Human Nutrition 2010", followed by a vegan dinner. Dr. Greger has scoured the world's scholarly literature on clinical nutrition and developed this brand-new talk of the latest in cutting-edge research. Focusing on studies published just over the last year in peer-reviewed scientific nutrition journals, Dr. Greger offers practical advice on how best to feed ourselves and our families to prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic disease In an engaging interactive quiz show format.

A founding member of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, Michael Greger, MD, is a physician, author, and internationally recognized speaker on nutrition, food safety, and public health issues. He has lectured at the Conference on World Affairs, the International Bird Flu Summit, the National Institutes of Health, testified before Congress, and was invited as an expert witness in the defense of Oprah Winfrey in the infamous "meat defamation" trial. He is a graduate of Cornell University School of Agriculture and Tufts University School of Medicine. Currently Dr. Greger serves as the Director of Public Health and Animal Agriculture at The Humane Society of the United States.

Louisa is very pleased to have confirmed Dr. Greger's presentation, and is currently working up a vegan menu and planning publicity for this event, which promises to be memorable! She has decided to charge a \$10 registration fee for this event, rather than rely on VegFund which is receiving an increasing number of requests for assistance.

Louisa Dell'Amico, Chapter Representative

REVERENCE FOR LIFE



The Reverence for Life task force is putting finishing touches on the manual for the UU Animal Ministry's new Reverence for Life (RFL) Program. This covenantal program will guide individuals and congregations as they explore their relationships with other beings and mold a multispecies ethic that is consistent with their faith. The Reverence for Life team has begun the selection process for pilot congregations. Congregations that enter into the program will embark on a covenantal process to create an open, nurturing environment in which to clarify the human relationship with other animals, deepen spiritual

growth, and make change more possible, expanding the Unitarian Universalist vision of anti-oppression, justice and compassion to include all beings. Look for program information and content at the UU Animal Ministry website this fall.

THE MEATLESS MONDAY MOVEMENT FINDS A HOME IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND

Congratulations to UUAM member and Reverence for Life Core Team member, Dianne Waltner, for bridging the First UU Church in Wichita, Kansas with Meatless Mondays! The Meatless Monday website featured them on their homepage in June: www.meatlessmonday.com/mm-changes-hearts-health-in-kansas-community/



Meatless Mondays Changes Hearts & Health in Kansas Community

The Meatless Monday movement has found a home in America's heartland. [The First Universalist Church of Wichita](#), Kansas is spreading healthy, responsible eating through monthly Meatless Monday potlucks, readings and discussion. This community in the middle of beef country is changing diets and minds one delicious bite at a time.

First Universalist started hosting Meatless Monday potlucks to coincide with the church's decision to educate members about ethical eating. At first some in the congregation were skeptical about meatless meals, but potluck organizer Dianne Waltner notes that "once they attend, people are usually quite impressed with the quality and variety of the food. More than one person has told me that our potlucks are the best of any meals served in church."

The church offers more than just samples of hearty meatless food! After they eat, participants share in a selected presentation, video or discussion topic. Most recently, Meatless Monday potluckers have been reading [The World Peace Diet](#) by Will Tuttle.

Discussion combined with dining teaches participants about the benefits of going meatless and provides additional, delicious incentive. Ms. Waltner reports that this two-pronged approach has convinced many to cut back:

"I have heard from several regular omnivore attendees that, even though they don't think they'll ever be vegetarian, they are eating less meat and trying more meat substitutes and other protein alternatives. Once they get past the idea that meat has to be the main course, it opens up a whole new range of food. And I think that's an important part of these potlucks."

Read more at: www.examiner.com/vegetarian-in-wichita/june-s-meatless-monday-at-the-first-unitarian-universalist-church-of-wichita

UUAM MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP: To renew your UUAM membership or to join to support our efforts, please use our membership application:

<http://www25.uua.org/ufeta/join.htm>

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