

Hello, friends,

I hope Spring is showing at least a few signs of coming to your part of the country soon! Here in south west Nova Scotia, where we've had a reasonably easy winter compared with many other places, the signs can be seen in these few photos from my garden.



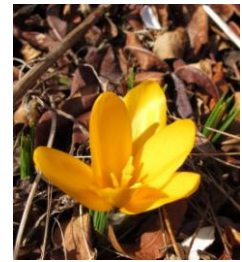
February 27



March 6



March 6



March 8

*Now to your contributions – and this time I'm going to allow myself some comments, in the hopes of encouraging you to do the same!*

**from Bunty Albert**

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I'm reading *Secret Daughter* by *shilpi somaya gowda* to lead at my book club in April. I picked it not because it's a current bestseller, but because the author volunteered for Child Haven at one of their Indian orphanages 20 years ago. (My son interned at the home in Chittagong, Bangladesh in 2000.)

For those of you independents who don't know, Unitarians are strong supporters of Child Haven, there are fundraising dinners around the country each year, and the founders, Bonnie and Fred Cappuccino are based near Ottawa and involved with Ottawa church; Fred is a Unitarian minister. See more at

<http://www.childhaven.ca>

I'll do a book report in a couple of months!

Bunty

*If you're ever wondering about where to donate money most effectively, **Child Haven** is a strong contender for top of the list! On the next page are some excerpts from the Child Haven website – check the site for more about this wonderful endeavour.*

## **Child Haven: Our Story**

Inspired by the ideals and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Child Haven International is a registered charity founded in 1985. We assist children and women in 4 countries, who are in need of food, education, health care, shelter and clothing, emotional and moral support.

Child Haven has five homes in India, one in Nepal, one in Tibet and one in Bangladesh. Our homes accept children who are disabled, parentless, or from socially disadvantaged situations - and who are destitute, i.e. do not receive even one good meal a day.

Girls and boys are treated equally, and without regard to race, caste, colour, religion or culture. Living is simple and meals are vegetarian. We try not to Westernize the children, but rather attempt to raise them according to the highest ideals of their own cultures. We respect the heritage of each child, whether Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, secular or other.

### **Creating Self-sufficiency**

Destitute children from birth to six years of age are referred to us by local social welfare agencies. Child Haven Homes provide full care through high school (Tenth Standard), and then provide vocational training so that each child can enter the local society as a self-sufficient adult.

### **Women's Programs**

Another aspect of Child Haven's Gandhian philosophy is our commitment to improving the condition of women through direct employment, education, medical aid, legal aid, and training opportunities.

*"Let me light my lamp, says the star, and never debate if it will dispel the dark"*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

**from Noreen Smith**

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**Fort St. John**

Not too much going on for me that would be any different from February. Still in a deep freeze and hoping for spring. Still studying away so not much time for reading or movies.

..... Though I did see The Kings Speech. What a delight that was. I find very few movies that I enjoy, but this one was fantastic. The acting superb, the story line quite accurate. When I do get a chance to read I love reading about the Royal families of Scotland and England - especially from the 13th to eighteen century. The plots, treason, intrigue and the role of the church (and its atrocities) are fascinating!

Noreen

*Is it available on DVD yet? I really want to see this one!*

**from Kim Rogers**

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Whitehorse, Yukon

Greetings from Whitehorse!

Well, it's looking like this winter is going to be a particularly long one in the Yukon, with -20c in the forecast for the rest of this first week of March! Lots of sun, and we even have the odd bird chirping out there now, but it's still bitterly cold.

With no UU congregation in these parts, one of my challenges thesedays has been trying to figure out a way to guide my 3 year-old daughter's spiritual development. Christian kids usually start out with children's bible stories, and/or Sunday school taught by whichever denomination they attend with their parents...But what is a Unitarian parent to do, with no weekly services to depend on?

With some recent help from an Education Coordinator at a UU congregation in Ontario, I was able to find some excellent books for parents and children that are available for purchase on the UUA.org website. I am definitely going to check some of these out, and just wanted to pass that tidbit along to anyone else out there who has children they want to educate spiritually, but with no local UU group to help them.



Lately I've just been doing a simple bedtime ritual that I share with my daughter, in which we both thank the 'Great Spirit' for anything that comes to mind for that particular day. So far I haven't wanted to assign any particular gender to this 'Spirit' if I can help it, and sometimes she asks me which gender it is. But it's rather hard to explain to a 3yr old that it's neither a boy, nor a girl! Hmm. This could get complicated.... But it's a start.

(Ideas or thoughts on this subject are most welcome).

I hope Spring is 'springing' up for at least some of you out there!?

Cheers for now,  
Kim

*Thanks for the suggestion of the book resources on the UUA website, Kim (<http://www.uuabookstore.org/>). Here's a sampling of the kind of books available:*

## **Tending the Flame: The Art of Unitarian Universalist Parenting**

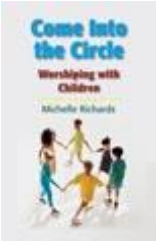
Author: **Michelle Richards** Publisher: Skinner House Books Date: 3/26/10  
Pages: 200 Size: 5.5 X 8.5 Binding Information: Paperback In Stock



*Sharing our personal religious and spiritual beliefs with our children is not indoctrination. It is offering the wisdom and insight that they eagerly seek from us-just as they look to us for guidance when choosing between right and wrong courses of action. If we are vague and ambiguous when our children ask us theological questions, we lose our opportunity to have a positive influence on them in this area. Eventually, they'll stop asking us religious questions and look for answers elsewhere.*

from Tending the Flame

In this first-of-its-kind guide to Unitarian Universalist parenting, mother and experienced religious educator Michelle Richards encourages a practical and proactive approach to raising Unitarian Universalist children. Includes information about developmental stages, suggestions for incorporating spiritual practices into family life, teaching the Principles in age-appropriate ways, answering difficult questions on religious matters and dealing with religious disagreements.



## Come Into the Circle: Worshiping with Children

Author: **Michelle Richards**

Availability: In Stock

Price: **\$15.00**



## The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children, Second Edition

Author: **Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar**

Availability: In Stock

Price: **\$10.00**



## Sunday and Every Day: My Little Book of Unitarian Universalism

Edited by: **Patricia Frevert**

Availability: In Stock

Price: **\$5.00**

*Some of you may want to do as Kim did and talk to a Religious Educator in one of our Canadian congregations – even if you're far distant, email (perhaps followed up with phone conversations) can be wonderfully helpful.*

*You'll find a list of congregations at the Canadian Unitarian Council website (<http://www.cuc.ca/congregations/index.htm>) and when you go to a congregation's website it will usually give you contact information for the person who co-ordinates Religious Education/Exploration there. Tell them you're not near a congregation but interested in helping your child's spiritual development. It might be the beginning of a great link to a UU community!*

**from Janet Vickers**

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Life has been busy for me - having joined the choir at First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo, the Sunday Services Committee there and the Lay Chaplaincy Committee too. Also I am deep into rehearsal's for the Gabriola Players production of The Odd Couple (female version) written by Neil Simon. We will be performing March 24 - 27. I am also on the editorial committee for the CUC Chapbook slated to be published for the 50th Anniversary ACM in Toronto.

We do not have pets here but we feed the birds and have a lovely selection of visitors to our bird feeders. I attach a grainy photo that we have tried to take through the window.

Janet

*Northern Flicker*



*Janet, I've noticed how many UUs are involved with local theatre groups. I have a feeling that some of our needs for spiritual community may be met in this way – it's probably no accident that theatre and worship services (or other ceremonies) have much in common! I'd be interested to hear other people's comments on this.*

**from Suzanne Hansen**

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### **Thunder Bay, Ontario**

Greetings from Thunder Bay where all is well. The adventure of our lives goes on with homeschool, horse riding lessons, skiing and the continuing challenges of balancing what we want to do with what we need to do. Sometimes we just have to do some housework . . . sigh.

I've had the pleasure of attending a Youth Advisor Training in Winnipeg earlier in February and look forward to participating in the Renaissance Module in advance of the Annual Conference in Toronto this year. Gathering with UU's from across the country always inspires me and renews my commitment to Unitarian Universalism. Who of this group will be attending and can we arrange to meet and put faces to names?

I've attached an article I wrote while I was president at Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship a couple years. I still don't have the tattoo but I have had it designed. If I get it done before the ACM in Toronto, you'll know who I am!

Enjoy the lengthening days and I hope that you welcome the turn of the season with health and peace.

Suzanne

## I Believe

*Suzanne Hansen*

I've wanted a tattoo for years, since I was 18 actually. I don't have one because I hadn't yet found or designed one that I felt I could live with forever. A tattoo is a big commitment; if I'm going to ink my skin, it had better represent something I'm sure about. Also, if I really believe in what the tattoo represents, I should be prepared to reveal it, to literally wear my heart on my sleeve. In the past, circumstances made it simply better to choose to wait on the tattoo but now that I've got to the point that I'm not particularly concerned about being 'appropriate', I've begun seriously thinking about my tattoo plans again.

What I want is an art nouveau banner ribbon on my left upper arm with a word that will stand both as a notice to others and a reminder to myself of something I ground myself in. There are many words I could use; many things that I truly believe. I believe in justice, love, joy and beauty. I believe in singing, dancing and jumping around like a maniac with my girls. I believe in living with less and eating lower down on the food chain. I believe in laughter. I believe in opening my heart and my door to strangers. I believe in generosity and I believe that 'no' is sometimes the right answer however difficult. I believe in people, good food and drink, recycling, exercise and music. I believe that everyone has access to truth but none of us can claim to know truth ultimately. I believe in plans, maps, compasses, lists and a willingness to set them aside when they prove not useful. I believe in the power of education, democracy, and beautiful, properly fitted underwear. I believe in all this and more. My arms aren't long enough. And what would I do about my ongoing process of evaluation and revision? I could quickly have a real mess on my hands or more accurately, arms.

So, what single word could I have marked permanently on my skin? This word is to me both roots and wings; proven useful every day and I believe its power will not diminish no matter how faded the ink it is written in may become. **Courage**. Say it as the French would; it has greater flair and better reveals its link to the heart. Cour-age is "*the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear or difficulty*" (Webster's).

It takes courage to critically evaluate belief, speak it in honesty and then give it life through action. It takes courage to see and accept what might be revealed when we look deeply inward. In the midst of challenge, it requires courage to understand what we truly risk by not stepping into our fear. It takes courage to risk real life and love. **Courage**: I can live with that.

*Suzanne, thank you so much for contributing what I hope will be one of many such statements. We all profit by knowing and pondering the beliefs of others – and you have expressed yours beautifully.*

*Now over to the rest of you – and if you don't feel sure of what you believe, let us know what you're wondering about, which can be just as nurturing for our minds and spirits!*

**Happy Coming-of-Spring to you all!**

*Anne*