



# Uni-Verse

## July-August 2010

“Providing a safe and inviting space for religious freedom”  
UUFBF Vision Statement

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Big Flats**

P.O. Box 103  
Big Flats, NY 14814  
607-562-3017    [www.BigFlatsUU.org](http://www.BigFlatsUU.org)

### **Sunday Services:**

10:30 a.m.  
48 N. Hibbard Road,  
Big Flats, NY.  
Located on the north side  
of Interstate 86 between  
exits 49 and 50.

All are welcome for  
coffee and conversation  
following the service.

### **Children’s Religious Education Classes:**

10:45 a.m. Sunday  
mornings, September  
through June.

### **Summer Service Schedule**

July 18	Elizabeth Brown-Shook, NAAFA/Fat Acceptance
July 25	Tamara Miller, to be announced
August 1	Tamara Miller, to be announced
August 8	Rick Edwards, Without Conscience
August 15	Jody Kessler, Ministry of Song and Spirit
August 22	Elizabeth Brown-Shook, Hymn Sing



Chemung River, Corning, by Jeni Paquette

<b>Local Events</b>	
Monday, July 26 7 PM First Baptist Church of Painted Post	Michael Zimmerman will speak at the First Baptist Church of Painted Post. He is the originator of the <b>Clergy Letter Project</b> . The Clergy Letter Project is an endeavor designed to demonstrate that religion and science can be compatible and to elevate the quality of the debate of this issue. Sponsored by the Jewish Center and Federation of the Twin Tiers and the Southern Tier Faith Communities.
Thursday, August 19 5:30 PM Speer Park Big Flats	<b>Southern Tier Interfaith Coalition annual meeting/picnic.</b> Speer Park, exit 50, just south of Interstate 86 in Big Flats. Bring a dish to pass and place setting. The goal of this event is social – for us to meet others interested in interfaith activities, so please invite people who you think would appreciate this opportunity. A brief business meeting will be held at which time 2010-2011 coordinating committee members will be elected.
Saturday, August 21 9:30 AM to 4 PM Hector, NY	<b>Awakening the Dreamer Symposium</b> , Wisdom's Goldenrod Center for Philosophic Studies, Hector, NY 14841 (site address: 5801 State Route 414 - 10 miles north of Watkins Glen) \$20 adult; \$10 senior/student, scholarships available, delicious vegetarian lunch and snacks included. For anyone unable to attend the October 2009 Awakening the Dreamer in Corning, here is another opportunity close by. Presented by Wisdom's Goldenrod Center for Philosophic Studies and ECCOH (Environmentally Concerned Citizens Of Hector) Register online at <a href="http://AwakeningTheDreamer.org">AwakeningTheDreamer.org</a> For more information or to register, contact Elizabeth Adams, 607-546-2083 or radams414@htva.net
Trinity Episcopal Church N. Main St. Elmira	Trinity Episcopal Church, N. Main Street, Elmira (across from Langdon Plaza) has an <b>Inner Peace Labyrinth</b> – second Thursday of the month at 2 PM, and third Friday of the month at 7pm. Enter from 1 <sup>st</sup> Street parking lot door, and then go down the stairs.
July 24, 1:30 Unirondack	Special meeting of Unirondack members to vote on proposed changes to bylaws.

<b>Fellowship News</b>
At Chemung County RSVP's 37 <sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteer Recognition Reception on May 24, our own <b>Marcia Allen</b> was recognized with the 2009 Impact Certificate of Achievement. "Because of you, the community is protected by highly trained individuals through the American Red Cross, providing a coordinated, timely and efficient response to disasters".
<p><b>Chemung County SPCA Wish List</b></p> <p>IMMEDIATE NEED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baby food – meat only (no veggies please)</li> <li>Canned cat food , Canned dog food</li> <li>Dog Advantage 55 lbs and over</li> <li>Dry cat food, Dry dog food</li> <li>Canned puppy food ("loaf-style", not chunky)</li> <li>Hot dogs – used for enrichment</li> <li>High efficiency laundry detergent</li> <li>Milk replacer for kittens</li> <li>Paper towels, Printer paper, Sam's club gift cards, 9 volt batteries</li> </ul> <p>For a complete wish list, please go to <a href="http://www.chemungspca.org">www.chemungspca.org</a> and click on the <i>Donate</i> tab. (I am more than willing to take donations to the shelter, just let me know. Sara Hurley.)</p>

The following talk on the "Nature of Unbelief" was presented by Michael Deery to the Fellowship on 6/27/10. It is re-printed with his permission and our gratitude.

My name is Michael. Despite my best efforts, I have been religiously sober for 17 years, 10 months, and 11 days. I was raised Unitarian Universalist, and although the church has many good qualities, I have spent my life searching for a different religion. This is not because I do not believe in the seven tenants of the church, but because I never found much comfort in them. I learned at an early age that comfort mostly comes from lies, like when a little kid hides under a blanket to protect themselves from monsters and other dangers of the night, and the UU tenants are not lies. There is no commandment from on high telling us the perfect way to live. There is no condemnation of some ethnicity or culture to make us feel superior. There is not even an omniscient being to watch over and guide us. With no lies I was never really comfortable with Unitarian Universalism as a religion. So as I said, I spend my childhood looking for a religion, or more specifically a lie, that I could believe in.

Unfortunately for young Michael, the UU lifestyle had already prevented this course of action. This is because the main thing that I learned as a growing UU is doubt. I doubt everything. I doubt you, I doubt that chair, I doubt me, etc.. This obviously made believing in a religion, or lie, very difficult. When I realized that the whole lying for comfort thing was not going to work, I fell further into doubt and turned to philosophy for help. I needed to find something that I could not doubt. I am sure many of you are familiar with Rene Descartes' philosophical statement "I think, therefore I am." This satisfied me for a while, and I felt comfortable with the idea that no matter what, I exist. However, after further research I stumbled upon Soren Kierkegaard's critique of Descartes' famous statement, which pointed out, correctly in my opinion, that the statement pre-supposes the existence of "I", which defeats the point. So in the end, the main idea I took away from philosophy was that no theory can be empirically proven, which of course only bolstered my all-consuming doubt. I delved into science next, hoping that the scientific method could provide answers, but I swiftly discovered that even science was cursed with only finding trends and patterns, never able to prove any theory, as was the case in philosophy. So I returned to doubt. And I am still doubting. I have run across a quote from a Mr. Stig Dagerman that I think sums up my rationale nicely.

*"I am lacking in faith and therefore cannot be happy, for a man who risks fearing that his life is a senseless path toward certain death cannot be happy. My upbringing provided me with neither a God nor a fixed place on the earth from which I could attract the attention of a God. Nor did I inherit the well-disguised fury of the skeptic, or rationalist tricks, nor the passionate lack of guile of the atheist. Thus, I do not dare to throw stones at those who believe in things that inspire me with doubt, nor at those who cultivate their doubt as if that doesn't also engulf them in darkness. The stone is for me, for I am positively certain of one thing: the human being's need for consolation is impossible to satisfy."*

This may seem nihilistic, but I cannot help but agree with Mr. Dagerman's view of the human condition. So after all of that I am left with doubt and a lot of technically useless ideas. However, the impracticality of thought experiments such as philosophy, religion, and life hardly discourages me from continuing my search for something to believe in. Next, I am moving on to study perception through psychology and neuroscience. I am interested in perception because of the idea that we cannot know anything for what it truly is, only our perception of it, I feel that if these perceptions could be manipulated, there would be many practical and interesting applications. Now despite the title of this talk, I am the wrong person to come to for answers, because I do not believe in them. The only advice I can give you is do not take that monster-proof blanket off your head, because once you do you cannot put it back on again.

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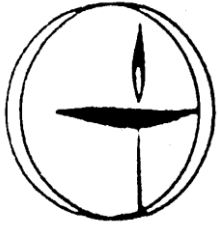
### **Please Use the New District Address**

This is just a gentle reminder to please send all chalice lighter contributions, fair share checks and all other mailings for the St. Lawrence District to...

**St. Lawrence District  
PO Box 1045  
Buffalo, NY 14240-1045**



*Address correction requested*



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
PO Box 103  
Big Flats, NY 14814

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