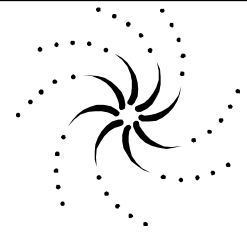


SWWIRL

Fall 2002



President's Column

SWUUSI was a wonderful week for SWUUW! We cleared nearly \$600 on Lunches! It would have been more except the stove caught fire the first day and the cooks were left with two burners to use (instead of 4) and NO oven. There was a lot of menu shuffling, changing, and reconfiguring. Some large cans of food and lots of pre-prepared mixes were not used, but this gives us a head start on food purchases for next year. There was also a change of chefs. Dolores Ruhs of Westside UU Church in Fort Worth had to go to Louisville, KY early in July to be with her sister who was having surgery. Paul McClellan, also of Westside, volunteered to take over for Dolores. He is a retired chef among other things. He and his wife Joy were always upbeat in the face of all the problems that occurred. The food was delicious – attested to by the fact that we served nearly as many lunches on Thursday as we did on Monday! We are deeply indebted to Paul and Joy for all their hours of VERY hard work!

The discussions arranged by the Social Action committee that followed lunch were well attended for a new program. I think this is something we should think about changing to instead of the Plus programs that have been held in the past.

As many of you remember, we voted at the Membership Meeting held at the 2002 Women's Conference to offer a scholarship to the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience. I want to share with you the following two quotes from the 'thank you' letter from Linda McConathy, recipient of DBLE scholarship:

"I am more dedicated ever to promoting and supporting our Unitarian Universalist religion."

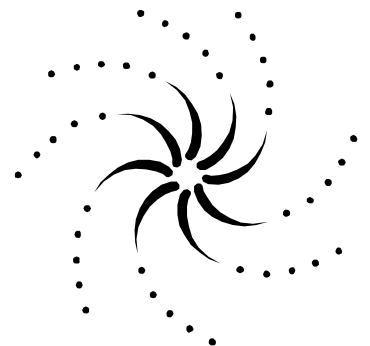
"Please know that SWUUW impacts the lives of many women and their families in our district and now the world through our service projects. I am very proud of all you do for us."

For more about Linda's reaction to attending DBLE, see her article in this newsletter.

Continued on page 3

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Am I a Member of SWU UW?

If you have paid dues in the past year, yes, you are. If you have not, you can become a member by sending annual dues of \$5 to the Treasurer listed at left. Please include your full name, mailing and e-mail addresses, phone number, name of women's group and/or church or fellowship, if applicable.

To determine your current status, please look on your mailing label. If there is a year shown in the upper right hand corner of the mailing label, it is the most recent year in which we have record of your dues (if the year is followed by "NM", you paid the non-member fee and will receive newsletters for 1 year). If no year is shown, we have no record of dues receipt. Any questions, please contact our President listed at left.

MOVING?

Please send your change of address to SWU UW
or your SWWIRL may never find you!

Send changes to: SWU UW@hotmail.com

or to:

Brenda Baldwin
4400 Inwood Rd
Fort Worth, TX 76109

SWWIRL

(SouthWest Women In Religion Letter)

is a quarterly publication of

SWU UW

(SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Women).

LETTER FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

When I filled out a volunteer survey at my first SWU UW conference in Ft. Worth last spring, I thought it might be fun to be the guest editor for an issue of SWWIRL. I had no idea I would be recruited immediately to take on the Fall issue, but I'm glad for the opportunity and experience. Being brand new to SWU UW, I learned that SWWIRL is published 4 times per year, at or about each solstice and equinox.

On the Fall equinox the hours and minutes of daylight equal those of darkness. There is a balance in nature that reminds us to restore balance in our own lives. As an occupational therapist, I have a strong appreciation for the need for balance in our daily lives. A balance of work, self-care, and leisure; a balance of physical, mental, and spiritual health; and a balance of attention to self and others, things and tasks. I am grateful for this occasion in nature that reminds us to seek balance and enjoy all of what life has to offer. It is a fitting time to reconnect and communicate with a community of women with whom we share at least 7 principles and a common set of opportunities for fellowship, service, and spiritual growth.

Although everything I have done as editor for this issue has been accomplished by internet and email, I still feel like I have gotten to know a few, and have been introduced to many, members of the SWU UW. I look forward to putting names and email addresses to real faces in the near future. Are you looking for a way to pitch in and get involved with a short-term project? Do you have a few computer skills and a bit of discretionary time? Do you have contacts or ideas for content to share with UU women? Contact Gino Kennedy, President of SWU UW and sign-on to be a guest editor for a future issue of SWWIRL.

Cynthia Reid, Guest Editor, Member and Volunteer RE Coordinator, Red River UU Church, Texoma

President's Column – cont'd from page 1

Your officers are hard at work rewriting our By-laws to update them and more especially to define the relationship of the Women's Conference to SWUW and to establish a relationship between our Social Action Committee and SWUW. If you have suggestions as to how the By-laws should be changed, please send them to me either via e-mail to kennedy@tarleton.edu or to my mailing address: 1350 W. Melissa Dr., Stephenville, TX 76401 by November 4th. The current bylaws are available on SWUW's website www.swuw.org.

All reports from Co-conveners Sue Ann Kendall and Janet van Sickler of the 2003 Women's Conference to be held in Austin TX sound as if they have a wonderful treat in store for us. The dates for it are Feb. 27- Mar. 1, 2003!

Your officers decided that the time had come to prune our computer-generated mailing list, which had not been updated since its inception in 1998. As we cannot be certain that our records are totally accurate, it was decided that all who had paid dues in 2000 and afterwards would remain on the current mailing list. However, it was also decided that a contact would be identified for each congregation and that a packet of newsletters would be sent to them for distribution to those interested in SWUW. To date, contacts have been identified in 80% of our congregations. If you are in any of the following congregations and are willing to serve as SWUW contact, please send your name, phone number, e-mail and regular mailing addresses to me. If you know of someone in one of congregations listed below who you think would be willing to be our contact, please send me their name e-mail address or phone number and I will contact them as ask them if they will serve our group in this way.

Congregations in which we do not currently have a local contact are:

ARKANSAS: River Valley UU Church in Fort Smith

LOUISIANA: U Church of Baton Rouge - - UU Fellowship of Lafayette

MEXICO: U Fellowship in Guadalajara

OKLAHOMA: Hope U Church in Tulsa

TEXAS: Arlington UU Church - - UU Fellowship of Austin - -

All Souls UU Church in Brownsville - - UU Church of Corpus Christi

UU Fellowship of Houston - - Huntsville UU Fellowship

Timberland UU Fellowship in Lufkin - - UU Church of Midland

Comal County UU Society in New Braunfels - - Community UU Church of San Antonio

UU Fellowship of Tyler - - UU Church of Victoria

Your officers will have a retreat in Fort Worth on Sunday November 10th following the November Fall Conference. Contact any one of us if you have something you would like us to consider at that meeting.

Blessed be,

Gino Kennedy

ON-LINE NEWSLETTER FOR UU WOMEN

Online copies of this issue of SWWIRL, as well as archived issues, are available at www.swuw.org/newsletters/. To receive notification of current SWUW issues, please subscribe to our yahoo e-mail list at SWUW-subscribe@yahoo.com or unsubscribe at SWUW-unsubscribe@yahoo.com.

SEVEN DAYS IN JULY

By Scottie Johnson

Every summer about 30 Southwest Unitarian Universalists, selected by their home congregations for their leadership abilities or potential, gather for seven days that offer the possibility of changing their lives and the futures of their churches. The Dwight Brown Leadership Experience (DBLE), held the first week after the Fourth of July on the campus of Austin College in Sherman, Texas, has proven to be one of the most successful and important programs provided by our District and the UUA.

Our leadership school was established by the Rev. Dwight Brown, SWUUC District Executive from 1988 through 1992, and was subsequently renamed in his honor. Today it is in the capable hands of our current SWUUC District Executive, the Rev. Bob Hill and the lay members of the district's Leadership Development Committee.

The primary purpose of DBLE is to teach and reinforce leadership skills and knowledge so that the participants may return home to serve their own congregations more effectively. However, when talking about DBLE, graduates often first mention the profound personal spiritual renewal that many of them experienced.

The DBLE curriculum is intensive, challenging, interesting, and lots of fun! Since the major purpose of DBLE is the improvement of our district's Unitarian Universalist congregations, a significant part of each day is devoted to learning about the dynamics of organizational life and the impact different styles of leadership have on working relationships within a congregation. A rich mixture of lectures and small group exercises are featured in this part of DBLE, led by the Rev. Bob Hill.

A second major component is worship. Since the Sunday worship experience is the focal point of any church community, one of the most challenging and exciting parts of DBLE is the creation of daily innovative worship services by the participants for the participants. There are also lectures and discussions about the theory of worship and the many ways in which our shared values may be highlighted in these times of celebration.

Everything that we are and do has roots, and we can grow more vigorously, both individually and institutionally, if we know something about these roots, thus UU history and tradition is an integral part of DBLE every year. New knowledge and deeper insights into our denomination's rich and interesting history, both ancient and recent, are gained from innovative and compelling presentations and discussions.

Noted UU clergy from outside the district are brought in each year to lead the sessions on UU history and tradition and on the nature and function of worship in UU congregations.

For many participants "Credo" is one of the most personally significant parts of DBLE. These small groups that meet each evening during the week, are each facilitated by a trained staff member. Participants have the opportunity to examine and discuss their own personal beliefs about religion and spirituality in a supportive, non-judgmental setting.

Although DBLE-ites work hard and intensely all day, there are also many opportunities to socialize and get to know attendees from other churches around the district. Many people form close and lasting friendships with others in their DBLE class.

Austin College, home of DBLE for the past several years, offers a small, friendly and well-equipped setting for our leadership school. During the week, many of the activities are held in The Jordan Family Language House, a modern self-contained living facility with a complete bathroom between every two bedrooms, a kitchen and "party room", and several comfortable meeting and lounge areas, all surrounding a lovely outdoor courtyard. Most meals are taken together in the college's cafeteria where the food is really quite good, by school cafeteria standards! One of the highlights of the week for many people is a mid-week late afternoon and evening trip to Austin College's Lake Campus on Lake Texoma.

Each UU society in the District is eligible to select two or more present or potential leaders (lay or professional) to send to Dwight Brown Leadership Experience each year. A significant percentage of SWUUC congregation leaders, current and in the recent past, are graduates of DBLE, and you could be, too!

All women who are active leaders in their congregations, or who wish to be, are urged to discuss the possibility of attending DBLE next summer with their minister or congregational leaders. For more information contact the SWUUC District Office at 817-446-0099 or 1-800-793-7062.

Scottie Johnson is a 1998 graduate of Dwight Brown Leadership Experience and a member of the SWUUC Leadership Development Committee. She has served on the staff of DBLE as camp manager and, for the past two years, as dean of the school.

Dwight Brown Leadership Experience 2002:

Why You Should Go in 2003!

Before I attended the week long Dwight Brown Leadership Experience (DBLE) held at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, every summer, I had heard from UUs about how powerful the experience had been for them. But I always thought it was for others because I did not feel I was “leadership” material. After encouragement from church friends and my minister, I screwed up my courage and went. Just as they said, it truly is a “life changing” week.

My appreciation and love for the UU religion were deepened and strengthened. The leadership of the staff was awesome as demonstrated by their constant support and attention to every detail of our week – we even had to schedule in a nightly party after starting the day bright and early and working hard! I treasure the new friendships I made, especially with people from churches close to mine in north Texas because we have already begun to network to support each other.

Of the many things I learned personally, I believe my increased confidence and feeling of potential worth to the UU community are most significant. We all took the Myers-Briggs Type (“personality”) Indicator, and I was relieved to learn that I was not the only introvert at DBLE! Our small group which planned a worship service for everyone was composed of introverts plus one lone extrovert (he was very brave!). The altar cover was a quilt a member of our group had made, and she gave a homily using the quilt as a metaphor. That simple concept helped me realize I am most comfortable at my church being the back of the quilt and the stitches that hold the front, stuffing and back together. Although many others are at ease and enjoy being the beautiful front side presented for all to see, we would not have a whole without the other elements. I had found my place at the table, and it gave me much comfort and a feeling of value.

I heartily encourage you to consider going to DBLE. SWUUV has a scholarship for which you can apply, and there is also scholarship assistance from the SW UU Conference. For those who cannot go for a week, there are now weekend modules offered. If you still have doubts, just talk to a DBLE graduate!

For more information, check these websites:

<http://swuuc.org/> -scroll down to District leadership School (DBLE)

<http://www.SWUUV.org/> -click on “About SWUUV”

In UU Friendship,

Linda McConathy

Westside UU Church, Fort Worth, Texas

FALL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

November 8-10, 2002 Fall Leadership Conference First Jefferson UU Church, Fort Worth TX.
Contact Sherry Latham at skltal@earthlink.net or 817-294-2806

What UU Women are Doing in Denton:

The Denton UU Women's Group has chosen "Finding the Sacred in Our Lives" for its theme this year. At our first meeting, we were asked to think of a time when we had a feeling of the sacred, and we shared these with the group. What most of these experiences had in common was a feeling of intensity, of being taken out of everyday life and linked to something larger and more inclusive. We then discussed possible topics for our work on this theme and scheduled four programs, with more to be filled in at our next meeting. The subjects we picked are: "Finding the Sacred in Food"; "Finding the Sacred in Pets and Animals"; "Finding the Sacred in Creative and Psychic Activities" and "Finding the Sacred in Patterns, Numbers and Fractals." Other topics we are considering are: Plants and Gardening; Music; Storytelling; Personal Rituals; Home; Friendship; and Parenting. Our programs will include a special altar for the theme, creative activities such as art and journaling, sharing and music.

Eleven

by Sandra Cisneros

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two and one.

And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't.

You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today.

And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid and that's the part of you that's still ten.

Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mother's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five.

And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like you're three, and that's okay.

That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you.

And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

from *Woman Hollering Creek*

What UU Women are Doing in Texoma...

The women's group at Red River UU Church, now at our new home in Denison, TX, has been very active during its first year. Under the leadership of Vivienne Pitts, the group meets on the 2nd Wed. of each month. The evening begins with a potluck dinner that is always a crowd-pleaser. Programs generally involve check-in, discussion, activity, and closing. Topics have ranged from goddesses to fetishes, book reviews to poetry, racism to chanting. We all enjoy exploring various spiritual practices and broadening our horizons about local and world issues. A notable gathering was a "come as your favorite goddess" party where a feast for goddesses was prepared and many came in costume. All came in a spirit of adventure.

...What are UU women doing in your area? Write to us and we'll spread the word!

2003 SWUW Women's Conference

February 29 – March 2, 2003

Women of Wonder

Prepare to Renew Your Mind, Body and Spirit!

Submitted by: Sue Ann Kendall, co-chair

Preparations are well under way for the 2003 SWUW District Women's Conference! Keep February 29-March 2 open on your calendars, so you can make the trip to Austin, Texas for a wonderful weekend with the fascinating and fun women of our District. The theme is "Becoming Wonder Women: Weaving Wonder in Our Lives." The conference will be held at the absolutely gorgeous Renaissance Hotel in the Arboretum area in north Austin--a center of shopping, dining and scenic Hill Country views.

Of course, you may never leave the conference facility, because there will be entertaining and enlightening activities going on all weekend, from the moving opening ceremony to our enriching closing. Workshop topics range from hands-on activities, such as creating "spirit dolls," to a range of intriguing movement sessions, to a variety of opportunities to learn about ourselves as wonder-ful women. There will be something for everyone--maidens will love the special activities and ritual being planned just for them. For details, please visit our Web pages at

<http://www.liveoakuu.org/swuuw.htm>

The registration books will go out in early November--they will be made available to churches at the Fall District Conference, and will also go out to SWUW members. It will also be linked on our Web pages, for those who do not receive it any other way, or you may request a copy by writing to: SWUW 2003, Live Oak UU Church, 12310 Ranch Road 620 North, Suite 104, Austin, TX, 78750-1100. You can phone (512) 219-9008 to request a registration book, but please speak clearly and spell your name and address, so we can find you!

THE GODDESS SEVEN-UP

By Shann Shubert

The Un-Goddess.
The hip, rebellious, not really a goddess,
goddess.
She,
Not nearly as glamorous or mysterious
As an "Un" suggests.
Full of fun,
waiting to be birthed,
again and again.

Ever cynical of things "in"
(though sometimes longing to fit).
Ever reflective.
Lover of art, music, any beauty.
Weeping for life, fragile life,
children and grown-up children alike.
She, too,
fragile like the rest.
Awed by the earth.
Product of her time.
Student of history,
failing to be bound by it.
Failing to befriend
ancient traditions.

Lover of women and their embrace.
Lover of men and their embrace.
Earth is heaven. Momentarily.
With each brief collision of you and her.
Gods. Goddesses.
All Human.
All Divine.
She,
among
Them.



**Notable News: The Newsletter of the Notable
American Unitarians Project**

The Diverse Legacies of Unitarian Women

Do you know what the astrophysicist who discovered the chemical composition of the universe, the singer / songwriter who pursued social justice with a guitar and a melody, the advocate for immigrant workers who won a Nobel Peace Prize, and a founder of the NAACP all have in common?

These remarkable personalities are only a small part of the group of Unitarian women who made significant and lasting contributions to our science and culture in the quarter-century 1936-1961. The list of such women featured in the Notable American Unitarians Project includes:

Blanche Ames Ames: Artist & Women's Rights Activist

Emily Greene Balch: Nobel Peace Laureate

Mary Blanshard: Fighter for Social Justice

Ida M. Cannon: Pioneer Medical Social Worker

Bernice Brown Cronkhite: Radcliffe College Graduate Dean

Emily Taft Douglas: US Representative, Illinois

Abigail Adams Eliot: Nursery School Movement Pioneer

Martha May Eliot: Social Pediatrician, Children's Bureau Chief

Sophia Lyon Fahs: Liberal Religious Educator

Cecila Payne-Gaposchkin: Astronomer and Astrophysicist

Clara Cook Helvie: Unitarian Ministry Pioneer

Margaret Laurence: The First Lady of Canadian Literature

Dorothea Livesay: Canadian Creator of Literary Culture

Maurine Neuberger: US Senator from Oregon

Aurelia Henry Reinhardt: Mills College President

Malvina Reynolds: Songwriter / Singer / Activist

Lillian Steichen Sandburg: Woman of a Million Names

May Sarton: A Poet

Martha Sharp Cogan: Unitarian Service Committee Pioneer

Caroline Veatch: Philanthropist

Their photo-illustrated biographies, along with those of more than 70 other exemplars of the Unitarian Renaissance of the twentieth century, are available at <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians> .

-Newsletter Editor / Webmaster Chuck Howe chowe@fas.harvard.edu
-Director Herb Vetter D.D. hfvetter@post.harvard.edu

WomenKin:

CALL FOR ORIGINAL WRITING

WomenKin is the literary journal sponsored by the Community of UU Women of the UU Church in Eugene. Published twice a year, it features words, stories, poetry, and thoughts from UU women and men eager to express what womenhood means to them and the ways in which we can foster kinship among ourselves.

If you have an original previously unpublished piece of writing you wish to submit for possible inclusion, please submit it to: bhipps5@juno.com, or mail it to: Bonnie Phipps, 2820 Miramonti, Eugene, OR 97405. By submitting your work, you grant us permission to publish it. Writers retain all copyrights to their accepted work.

DEADLINE: February 15, 2003

SCHEDULED PUBLICATION:

April 2003

LENGTH: Approx. 1 page or less (page format is 7" wide x 8.5" tall, including margins.)

IMPORTANT: When you submit your piece, please be sure to include the following information:

1. Your name and address
2. The name and city of your UU church
3. Your email address

If you would like to subscribe to WomenKin, please send a donation to cover mailing costs (suggest \$3.00 per copy, \$6 per year) to:

C.U.U.W. – WomenKin
c/o Bonnie Phipps
2820 Miramonti Dr.
Eugene, OR 97405

Book Review of

Exploring the Labyrinth: A Guide for Healing and Spiritual Growth.

Published in 2000 by Broadway Books.

Author: **Melissa Gayle West-** West Coast psychotherapist and leader of labyrinth workshops, Director of Harmony Hill Retreat Center.

Reviewer: **Cynthia Reid-** occupational therapist, health educator, college professor, religious educator, explorer of creative arts and crafts.

Part One: *MEETING THE LABYRINTH*

An intriguing explanation of the labyrinth from a historical, sacred, and metaphysical perspective is provided. In addition, a compelling introduction to the spiritual and intra-personal opportunities presented by the labyrinth is described. Selected concepts that I found particularly interesting relate to design principles that affect the use of the labyrinth.

Of the 5 universal shapes (circle, square, triangle, cross and spiral) the spiral, which exists repeatedly in nature, is the basic shape of a labyrinth. Sacred geometry consists of shapes that can be seen, understood, and recreated but not quantified. The labyrinth is an example of sacred geometry because there is no mathematical formula that adequately describes a spiral or consequently a labyrinth.

There are 2 basic forms for a traditional labyrinth; the Cretan and Chartres labyrinths. The Cretan labyrinth is the oldest known form and is an elaboration on the spiral. It has a seven circuit, one way path to and from the center. The Chartes labyrinth is an elaboration of the Cretan, established within the Christian tradition. It consists of a cross in which 4 quadrants with eleven concentric paths lead to and from the center.

One of the many powerful lessons to be learned from the labyrinth is that staying on the path is essential to finding the center, or achieving your goal. At times the path may take you father from the center, rather than closer to it; but the path is one way and guaranteed. There are no choices, except to walk the path or not. There is no wrong way to walk, no tricks or dead ends. Furthermore, reaching a destination is not equal to finishing the journey. Rather, one must walk back out of the labyrinth as if to re-enter life, only to repeatedly return to the path with new intentions.

Part Two: *MAKING THE LABYRINTH*

You do not have to be an artist to enjoy these clearly articulated instructions for understanding, replicating, and creating labyrinths. Readers are guided toward an appreciation of all aspects of the labyrinth, beyond walking a labyrinth; opportunities include designing, locating, consecrating and dedicating a labyrinth, as well as the personal benefits to be gained from construction, simple routine maintenance, or even redesign and make-over of an existing labyrinth.

A small-scale project called a “Finger Labyrinth” is described revealing how the power of the labyrinth can be experienced in the absence of a full-body walk. Small replicas of a labyrinth created on paper, wood, stone, or other available materials can be traced with the finger to achieve the same or similar benefits as if walking a full-scale labyrinth. This option is especially useful for those without access to a full-scale labyrinth, for those for whom personal mobility is a challenge, and for use during inclement weather or when you simply do not have time to do the walk.

Part Three: *PLAYING AND HEALING WITH THE LABYRINTH*

It is stressed that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to walk a labyrinth, but suggestions are provided to assist the novice in achieving a satisfying outcome. If the labyrinth is to be used as a tool for insight and/or problem solving, then walking with “intention” is the key to success. A person who intends to benefit from the walk and who is open-minded to all the possibilities of entering a sacred space will most likely achieve a result, whether expected or serendipitous. Walking the labyrinth may be an avenue to getting in touch with one’s creativity, intuition, and dreams.

Who should read this book? Maybe you. Are you interested in establishing a routine for spiritual growth? Do you enjoy exploring alternatives to prayer and other forms of spiritual practice? Is your experience of the sacred especially strong when connections to nature are provided? Can you appreciate the idea of a mystical reality? *Exploring the Labyrinth* maybe just what you have been looking for.

This information was provided by Keith Kron, a member of the Family Matters Task Force, who co-led a workshop on intergenerational books at GA 2002 in Quebec.

Twenty Random Suggestions and Reminders for Intergenerational Book Discussions

-Family Matters Task Force

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children loved to be listened to. 2. So do adults. 3. Direct questions are less likely to be effective. There is safety in talking about the characters. 4. Sharing works better than competition. 5. Reflections works better than performance. 6. Acceptance works better than judgment. 7. Exploration is a better goal than mastery in a discussion. 8. Adults should respond authentically to the discussion, improving the odds of being viewed as people. 9. Choose an appropriate reading level for the group. 10. Intergenerational does not necessarily mean children of all ages at all times. It could mean 4th and 5th graders and adults. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Set a standard meeting time and length (e.g., the last Sunday of the month for 2 hours) 12. Allow for ample time to read (and perhaps find) book. 13. Mandatory attendance will never happen. Get over it. 14. Decide early about hosting (if not at church), food, and expectations for group. 15. Ask the children/youth what they would like to read. 16. Keep it simple. 17. Avoid rules. But set clear expectations. 18. Avoid written agendas. This should be fun and easy. 19. Rotate responsibilities. 20. Have fun! |
|---|---|

About the discussion—helping it along

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the children/youth to take the lead in the discussion 2. Ask about the characters—who they liked and disliked and why 3. Avoid yes/no questions 4. Ask if the author should have changed something about the story—and how 5. Give the book a score/ranking/thumbs up or down 6. Ask what part of the story were the best and why—also for the worst 7. Think about acting out a scene from the book | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. When in doubt, ask “why?” 9. Write a letter to the author 10. Dress up like a character 11. There are 3 kinds of questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact—which help define the story Interpretation—e.g., why would/did a character do something Evaluation—Thinking about something in light of values, morals, life experience 12. Do art activities that would go with book |
|---|---|

The Family Matters Task Force is working to support the needs all kinds of families. The Intergenerational Book Discussion Group Project is one way. For more information about the Family Matters Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Association, please visit www.uua.org/families

This is an example of book discussion guides available from the Family Matters Task Force of the UUA. Given the state of world affairs, this book may be particularly timely during the coming days. Available at <http://www.uua.org/families/index.html>

Intergenerational Book Discussion Guide

Sitti's Secrets

Naomi Shihab Rye, author

Nancy Carpenter, illustrator

C, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1994

Ages 5 and up

Summary

A Palestinian-American girl tells of loving and visiting her grandmother who lives in the West Bank. Her visit and return to the United States prompts her to write the president to ask for peace.

Setting the stage before reading:

Tell the families/readers that this book will explore the relationship between a granddaughter and grandmother, though it could be about any 2 people who are separated by a long distance. Also mention that much of the story is set in the West Bank in Palestine in the Middle East and check to see if folks have heard of the West Bank on the news and why it has made the news. You might also encourage them to pay attention the similarities and differences between the granddaughter and grandmother as well as the places where they live.

Discussion/Activities

- You may want to have this discussion while sampling some of the food and drink mentioned in the book: lemonade with mint, lentils, apricots, walnuts, flat bread, cucumbers, yogurt
- Question: If you were the president and you received Mona's letter about her grandmother and the West Bank, what would you write to her when you wrote back?
- Activity: Draw a picture and tell a story about a favorite older person in your life that you know or knew as a child. It could be a grandparent or some other special person, known as an elder. (You might wish while people are drawing to play some music from the Middle East if you can find it.)
- Questions: What are some good games to play where you don't have to talk in the same language? What makes these games (or any games) fun to play?
- Question: Would you want to live where Sitti lives? Why or why not?
- Questions: What kind of grandparent would you like to be? What makes for a good grandparent? Is being a good grandparent different from being a good parent?
- Activity: Think of a question. Now see if you can act it out without saying anything?
- Question: What would you like to ask Mona or Sitti if you could ask them any question?

Notes regarding questions:

- You can have the option of asking families to answer the questions in small groups, having the adults in one group with you and the children in others, or have one large group—depending on the size and wishes of your group. Don't be afraid to ask the group if they have a preference.
- Give each question the time it needs and allow for thinking and trusting time. You need not get through every question.
- You might also wish to ask the group if they have any questions they would like the group to talk about as well.
- You might also choose to write a letter to the president with some of your hopes and concerns. This could be done as a group or as individuals.

SWWIRL – SouthWest Women In Religion Letter

A quarterly publication of SWU UW – SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Women

Representing women of the SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Conference

SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Women (SWU UW) is an organization that supports women, discusses women's issues, explores feminist theology, promotes friendships and celebrates the diversities of our individual spiritual paths.

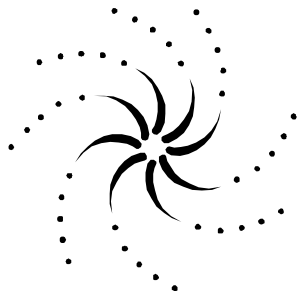
In addition to our annual conference, SWU UW sponsors workshops at Southwest Conference events and Lunches Plus at SouthWest UU Summer Institute (SWU USI). SWU UW is actively supporting social service projects including a Village Banking Group (Microbanking), the Heifer Project and the Chalice Lighter program.

SWU UW also has a library of videos, cassettes and a few books of particular interest to women. These are available to ALL members. Please check the SWU UC website (www.swuuc.org) or the SWU UW website for a list of materials and instructions for borrowing.

For more information on SWU UW, please view our website at www.swuuw.org .

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