

God (and Variations on the Theme)

BY JANE RZEPKA, SENIOR MINISTER, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



Do you believe in God?

I don't know how often you get asked. Maybe never. But every couple of months somebody asks me if I believe in God. They might ask in exactly that way, "Do you believe in God?" Or maybe, "You do believe in God, don't you?" Or, from a child perhaps, "Is there really a God?"

How do you answer? I know that some of you figure, "There's an easy question. The answer is 'Yes.'" Or

"The answer is 'No.'" No problem. Another clump of you no doubt respond with something like, "It depends on what you mean by God." You want your questioner to name the terms before you make a commitment. And then another batch of you probably goes right ahead and defines your own terms—your own conception of what might be sacred from your own perspective. You say something like, "Well, I do believe in some spirit out there, or something bigger than ourselves, or that there is some larger purpose to our lives." Maybe you call that God, maybe you don't.

When somebody asks me, "Do you believe in God?" I immediately feel uneasy. Not because I feel defensive about my belief system, not even because I can't figure out why, in any given case, they might be asking. I feel uneasy because when someone asks, "Do you believe in God," I don't know what they're talking about!

They know. They know what the word "God" means, or they wouldn't ask the question in that way. And not only do they know what the word God means, they seem to understand a common definition of the word, a definition that they think I must be familiar with. But I'm not. And I'm a minister. It's weird.

So, one day, I'm standing in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles, a long line, to accomplish a routine but not-able-to-be-done-online task, and I'm reading some God-related book or other and the guy ahead of me in line asks, "Do you believe in God?" And as usual, I have no idea what he means.

When someone uses the word "God" there in the Department of Motor Vehicles—or in church or in a serious discussion in your living room—when someone says the word "God" to me I see in my mind's eye a menu. And on that menu is a list of gods. In Sunday school I was taught, and our Unitarian Universalist congregations still teach, that god has many faces. So all those many faces occur to me there at the DMV in the driver's license line. "Oh dear," I wonder, "does this man mean God as love, or God as punisher, or God as nature, or God as benefactor? Is his God a Presbyterian Sunday school God, a Roman Catholic God, a Quaker God? Is he talking about the Rainbow Serpent, or Allah, or the Goddess, or Yahweh, or God the Father, or the ground of all being? Is it the God who blesses sick babies or the God who sends violent tropical storms?" I don't know.

But those aren't the kinds of questions one can ask there in the DMV (the line's not that long). The truth is, there are a lot of gods out there I don't believe in.

And so I say to the man in line, "I believe in big mysteries. I believe in depth of feeling—feelings so deep within the spirit that the connection, or the bliss, or the peace, stay with us forever. And I believe in a goodness, a goodness created by our



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Never lose a holy
curiosity.

—Albert Einstein

A monthly for religious liberals

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love and our care.”

He says, “Fine.” That was all there was to it, and I went back to my book.

No, as it turned out, my companion in the line had not wanted to engage in a spirited discussion of Richard Dawkins’s, Sam Harris’s, or Daniel Dennett’s books that challenge conventional conceptions of God. Nor did he want to recommend the many anthologies of spiritual readings available, or compendia of gods and goddesses from everywhere on earth. He didn’t even want to tell me what he thought, and he certainly had no interest in listening to further observations from me!

But still, the God question is a good one, even in its short and stark form, and ideally, we should all be able to blurt out a quick response. I, for one, did not have an answer at the ready—I found it hard to synthesize my own world-view in a cogent and succinct way at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Oddly, once we get started on articulating our views on gods, it’s not so bad. One can think about hundreds of gods, gods around which whole civilizations developed, and quite readily cross them off our personal lists—I, for one, am just not going to relate, for example, to a caribou god. Closer to home, for me at least, it’s just as easy to cross off a vengeful god who punishes with earthquakes and AIDS and shootings, or a god who only loves the Baptists, or a god who would hear me if I were to pray for good weather for a wedding. Once we’ve narrowed it down this far, we are within the range of what most Unitarian Universalists might believe.

We can carve up Unitarian Universalist views in a number of ways. In my mind, whether we use the word “God” or not doesn’t matter much. It’s a word I virtually never use, what with all the confusion around it. What I’m about to say applies to atheists as much as is

does to theists and agnostics.

Each of us believes something about the nature of life and the cosmos—some call whatever that is “God,” some describe it in other ways. That’s more semantics than religion. But there are some theological categories that may be helpful. I’m going to remind you of three such categories here—obviously I could suggest a hundred or a thousand—no two Unitarian Universalists have exactly the same perspective.

But let’s take the label “theism” for openers. The technical, academic term. Some of you are theists, and strictly speaking, if you are a theist, you believe four things about God:

When we are paying attention, miraculous moments happen in each of our lives. Some of you call that “God.”

Your god is personal. For example you can imagine your god, you can communicate with your god. Second: God merits worship and adoration because God is good and all-powerful. Third: God is separate from our world—above us, or beyond us somehow. And fourth: God is active in our world, here and now. If you call yourself a theist, that’s what religionists would expect you to believe.

A second traditional category in religion is pantheism. The label has never caught on in our popular culture, though I think the spirit of it has. If you believe that everything that exists is a part of a whole, a unity, and if you believe that this all-inclusive unity is in some sense divine, then you are a pantheist. For example, Matthew Fox—the Dominican priest who founded the “Creation Spirituality” movement some years back—Matthew Fox seems to think this way. He says:

I can pick up a blade of grass and experience its twenty-billion-year history and its color, shape, and form. We can feel awe when we experience the planet, or a dog, or a friend. Anything that has ‘being’ is holy.... I heard Beethoven for the first time when I was in high school, and it made my soul leap. And there was...Shakespeare.... I think that most people’s basic experience of God is like Einstein’s—the awe of the universe, the experience of the cosmos as our home, and God dwelling there.... We must learn to be entranced again by the presence of God in all things.

If you tend to think that way—of connection and unity and awe all around you—you may be a pantheist.

Or you may fit into a third category, you may be a Deist. Deists believe that there had to be something, God let’s say, that got the universe started in the first place. A Deist will say that the cosmos is just too complex to have happened by chance. But this God is not around to supervise our day-to-day lives. Deists believe then in an “absentee God.”

Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Thomas Paine were Deists. Tom Paine wrote:

I believe in one God, ... and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy... But, lest it be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall ... declare the things I do not believe:...I do not believe in the creed professed by the [Jews], by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.... Do we want to contemplate [God’s] power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation.

Within Unitarian Universalism, you can be, of course, a theist, a pantheist, or a Deist, or you can take any other religious position that pleases your heart and satisfies your mind, including atheism. In *A History of God*, the author, Karen Armstrong tells us that the statement “I believe in God” has no objective meaning at all, that each generation has to create the image of God that works for it. Unitarian Universalists are unified in that we are our own theologians, and the choice is ours, not once and for all, but throughout our lives.

Of course, you may not like being analytical about the experience of God, and categories don't appeal to you. For you, simple experience may say it all. When we are paying attention, miraculous moments happen in each of our lives. Some of you call that “God.”

Perhaps the concept of God does not interest you much, but you know what you do and do not believe. Or maybe your beliefs are growing and changing all the time, and it helps to attach theological labels to them along the way. Maybe you simply have a feeling of God and don't go much for talking it through. But wherever you are,



whatever you believe, know that each of us has the same assignment: to name the source of our blessings, the foundation of all that is good, the ground of our being. So when the mysteries are close at hand—and the miracles, whether you believe in God or not—you know you have a grounded religion ready for the telling.

■

The Kingdom of Greatness

BY JOHN PARKER MANWELL, CO-MINISTER
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND



When we think of Martin Luther King, Jr., we think first of the Montgomery bus boycott. We think of Selma and we think of Birmingham, and the terrible struggle for the right to vote. And Dr. King did lead his people through all of that.

But when he died, he was in Memphis, supporting the city's sanitation workers. They had jobs. But the pay was not enough to live on, and the city would not recognize their union. Their struggle was for decent pay. But it was for more than that. It was for dignity. And they had asked him to help.

“Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus.”

A few weeks before, when their struggle was getting under way, a trash compactor truck was driving with its five-man crew when they ran into torrential rains. They were forbidden to park their truck and seek shelter, thanks to residents' complaints about Black garbage collectors' supposed “picnics” in their White neighborhoods. So on this day, those who could not squeeze into the cab had let go of their handholds and footrests on the outside of the truck and climbed into the inside, with the trash. Somehow, a freak accident started the compactor, and two of them were crushed to death and dismembered.

Now, sanitation workers had no insurance and no death benefits. They were at the bottom of the city's job ladder. So the city made an exception and granted the two widows each \$500.

Against this backdrop, a preacher among the striking workers suggested a

slogan for their organizing efforts: I AM A MAN. The mayor, a highly regarded White liberal, refused to bargain with them, and they decided to strike. “This was a strike that *we* called,” a long-time trash collector would remember later. “Labor didn't call it. *We* called it.” The mayor hired strikebreakers, but couldn't find enough, and the strike dragged on.

Many among Dr. King's supporters had urged him not to get involved. It would be a no win situation. It would distract attention from civil rights. It would cost him support among his liberal but all too comfortable White allies.

But King insisted. He saw that the right to vote is not enough if a person can't get a decent job or place to live. Already, against such protests, he had insisted on opposing the war in Vietnam. He saw the war as diverting enormous sums that could otherwise have been used to fight poverty. He pointed out that it meant drafting and killing thousands of poor young Black men, who did not have middle class deferments as college students. Now, just as he had opposed the war, he insisted on standing up for these sanitation workers. Yes, they had jobs. But they could not support their families. And they did not have dignity. In the public eye, they were invisible. He insisted. And it cost him his life.

In his sermon at the cathedral, Dr. King spoke of Rip van Winkle. We all know that Rip slept for twenty years. But the real point, King said, is that when he had climbed the mountain where he went to sleep, he had passed a sign with a picture of King George III of England. As he climbed back down, this same sign bore the strange new likeness of George Washington. Rip

had slept through a great revolution. You and I, King warned, risk doing the same. Those of us comfortable in our segregated enclaves and middle class lives, we are in danger of sleeping through a great revolution, a revolution of perspective, in which the world has become “geographically one.” What we risk sleeping through is the realization that now we are all in this life together. One world. One people. As Dr. King famously said in that sermon:

We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

For several months, against vociferous opposition among his supporters, Black and White, he had been planning a poor people’s march on Washington. The march would bring together all the poor and oppressed of our nation, including Native Americans, Appalachian Whites, and the urban poor, whatever their color and ethnicity. If they would pledge non-violence, he invited them to come to Washington, led by mule-drawn caravans from places like Marks, Mississippi, the poorest county in the country, to insist on their oneness as a human family, and their dignity as human beings. To insist we are all in this life together and no one must be invisible.

Today, this may seem a platitude. But how many of us really think it’s possible to end poverty? Didn’t Jesus once say that “you always have the poor with you”? (Mk.14:7) Wasn’t the “war on poverty” a failure? But Jesus was not suggesting that we should give up on the poor. His whole ministry was about justice for the poor in every sense of the word. Poverty begins with having less than others. But it’s also

about oppression. It’s about being looked down on. It’s about lack of respect. It’s about not being allowed to live out one’s full humanity.

That’s a hard thing for those of us who can take for granted a roof over our heads and food on the table and middle class *respect*. Yes, we’re ready to stand up for the right to vote, and for non-discrimination in the workplace. We’re ready to stand up for civil marriage. It doesn’t cost us anything, and we can be proud we did the right thing.

But standing up for the poor is not so easy. We know that if we’re going to help, it will cost us. There are all those appeals that come to our mailboxes. There’s no end to them. Do we really want to pay more taxes so the

Standing up for the poor is not so easy. But freedom is indivisible, and Dr. King knew it.

government can help them? We’ve seen what a mess government can make of helping people. And it’s all so complicated. People aren’t just poor. They’re illiterate. They’re addicted. They don’t even have good work habits. They keep on having babies, and the cycle continues. Let’s be honest: who wants them living in our neighborhoods? Can you tell me these thoughts don’t float through the heads of even the most well-intentioned of those of us who are the “haves”?

Standing up for the poor is not so easy. But freedom is indivisible, and Dr. King knew it. And he insisted. At the National Cathedral, he recalled what people had said about his similar insistence on opposing the war in Vietnam:

One day a newsman came to me and said, “Dr. King, don’t you think you’re going to have to stop, now, opposing the war and move more in line with the administration’s policy? ... It has hurt the budget of your or-

ganization, and people who once respected you have lost respect for you.”

I looked at him and I had to say, “Sir, I’m sorry you don’t know me. I’m not a consensus leader. I do not determine what is right and wrong by looking at the budget of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. I’ve not taken a sort of Gallup Poll.” Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus....

There comes a time when [we] must take the position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but [we] must do it because conscience tells [us] it is right. I believe today that there is a need for all people of goodwill to come with a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “We ain’t goin’ to study war no more.”

This was King’s position in standing against the war, and it was his position in standing against poverty. He had looked out from that mountaintop, and seen the Promised Land. He knew that in the Promised Land, there is no oppression, and there is no war, and there is no poverty. He knew that in the Promised Land, no one is invisible, and all of us are sisters and brothers and children of God.

There is nothing new about poverty, Dr. King said. What is new is that we now have the ability to get rid of it. The real question, he said, is whether we have the will. And that’s the question facing you and me, these forty years later. We may never quite reach the Promised Land. But will we even lift our eyes to look out and see it? Will we understand what the kingdom of greatness demands of us? Will we work for it, keep standing up for it, so that we can get a little closer in our time?

Let us build that land. Let us pick up the work which Dr. King left unfinished. ■

Winter Online Classes



Go to www.clfuu.org/learn to find out more about our online classes, or to register for these and other upcoming courses. Most classes carry a \$40 registration fee.

Ancient Roots: The Feminine Face of Western Religion **Part II—Women and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity**

This second part of the Ancient Roots curriculum addresses women in early Jewish and Christian story and history, looking again at some elements and characters we may know well—or may not know as well as we think! Starting with Eve and the lesser-known Lilith in the Hebrew Bible, we'll look also at the roles and relevance of some famous matriarchs in early Judaism. Then moving on to Christianity, we'll consider the Gnostic gospel of Mary Magdalene—which presents a very different early Christian woman with very different significance than has come down in popular understanding. Finally we'll move into early European history by exploring different roles for women in the early Irish church.

Taught by the **Rev. Elizabeth Lerner**, UU minister and scholar of the history of women in religion, this course begins January 5th and runs for four weeks.

Religion and Ecology: A Shared Fate, A Shared Task

How are the world's religions responding to environmental concerns? Is the environment a religious issue? John Henry Newman has stated that people will die for a dogma who will not stir for a conclusion. What if, then, environmentalism was discussed in religious rather than scientific language?

Would the 2/3 of the world's population who belong to a religion then pay more attention, be willing to make changes? In this course we'll explore the spiritual aspects of the environmental crisis and how the world's religions are working separately and together toward saving this sacred space called Earth, from the Hindu concept of *ahimsa* (do no harm) and the ethics of Buddhism, to the shareable wisdom of Islam, from the Protestant work ethic, Thoreau's *Walden*, the *ruach* or "breath" of Judaism, to the Mennonite philosophy of living more with less. We'll look at the resources that these religions bring to the discussion of what is being called "deep ecology," the religious and ethical dimensions of viewing the earth as sacred.

Taught by **Peg Shaffer**, one of our most popular online teachers, this course begins January 12th and runs six weeks.

The Soul of Nature: A Journey into the Poetry of Mary Oliver

Mary Oliver has been lovingly called "the poet laureate of Unitarian Universalism." Through keen observation of the natural world, Oliver finds delight, sorrow, mystery and paradox. Her poems are deceptively simple, containing rich layers of meaning that are illuminated in unexpected ways when we discuss them with like-minded readers. In this six-session class, we will find a safe container for our reflections on the spiritual and personal meanings of Oliver's poems, using her themes as pathways into a spiritual practice of close observation of nature. There will be optional weekly writing exercises for those who wish to try their hand at poetry. The class will be based on Oliver's *New and Selected Poems, Volume 2*, which is widely available.

Taught by the **Rev. Amanda Aikman**, UU minister and playwright, this course begins February 9th and runs six weeks. ■



The CLF Invites GA Delegates

Would you like to represent the Church of the Larger Fellowship at General Assembly this year? The CLF is entitled to have 22 delegates at the General Assembly in Salt Lake City, Utah from June 24 to 28, 2009. You'll be able to attend workshops, concerts, programs, and worship services galore, while meeting Unitarian Universalists from near and far. And, of course, as a delegate you will be able to vote during plenary sessions. You can meet our minister, the Rev. Jane Rzepka, and the CLF staff, too.

Our delegates are asked to attend the CLF Worship Service and to work a minimum of three hours in the CLF booth. We also ask that you write a short report of your experience at General Assembly. CLF delegates vote their conscience in plenary sessions. If you'd like to participate in GA 2009, call the CLF at 617-948-6166 and speak to Lorraine, or e-mail us at ldennis@clfuu.org to indicate your interest. Visit the UUA's General Assembly website at www.uua.org/ga for details. ■

From Your (Guest) Minister



BY JOHN T. CRESTWELL, JR., MINISTER, DAVIES MEMORIAL UU CHURCH, CAMP SPRINGS, MARYLAND

(During her sabbatical, our senior minister, Jane Rzepka, has invited a few of the ministers who serve on our CLF board of directors to share this space.)

I was looking through a book on the universe with my children some time ago, and it is amazing what the Hubble Telescope is finding. This is an instrument the size of a school bus in space and it is revealing just how diverse and eclectic our universe is. We now see that our galaxy is one little speck among trillions of specks in the universe, each galaxy different and amazing. Like the lines on the zebra's back or the human fingerprint; no two galaxies appear to be exactly alike.

Then there are the varying solar systems and planets, the many stars in these galaxies, each with differing dimensions. We can see from a macrocosmic perspective that we live in an expansive and diverse universe. But you don't have to go to space to learn the lesson. When you look back here on earth at the millions of species, seen and unseen, you find a great multiplicity of things. You see the varying types of animals, insects, trees, plants, and sea creatures; there's fresh water and salt water, blue water, green water; there are tropical and arctic climates. Then look at the people of our planet—all types with varying languages and customs. There is much to celebrate. Life is a beautiful assortment.

We rob ourselves of the richness of life when we don't see the beauty in our

differences and we are not in harmony with the universe or nature. It's true, we don't tend to openly reach out to those who are different, whether we are referring to another's religion, race, or sexual orientation—we don't tend to do well in dealing with those who walk and talk differently. But when we choose homogenous segregation, the full complex ecology of who we can be does not thrive. I believe we are called to a higher purpose as human beings and as Unitarian Universalists than to simply clump with those we see as being "like us." If we could just somehow see life from amongst the stars we would see a panoramic view of the universe that is essentially pluralistic and eclectic.

“[People] hate each other because they fear each other, and they fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they are often separated from each other.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is imperative that we grasp the universal lesson so we can grow to appreciate and respect each other even more. Then, perhaps, we can begin to build a world where justice for all is the order of the day. We can build a world where people use their intelligence, not their unharnessed tribal instincts to solve problems. We can build a world where we treat people as we wish to be treated; a world where the words from Rumi we so often quote: “Come, come, whoever you are,” really mean what they say. We can build a world where people will not live distant and in fear of each other, but rather in community where every human is treated as a sister

or a brother. We can build a world without the “us against them” mentality, but rather a world that embraces the “we are together” reality. We can build a world of mutual respect and love when humans “listen more, read more, and think more,” as Maya Angelou suggests.

We must find a way to love one another not *despite* our differences but *because* of our differences. As the late Rev. David Eaton said: “May we have faith to accept this mystery and build upon its everlasting truth.” ■

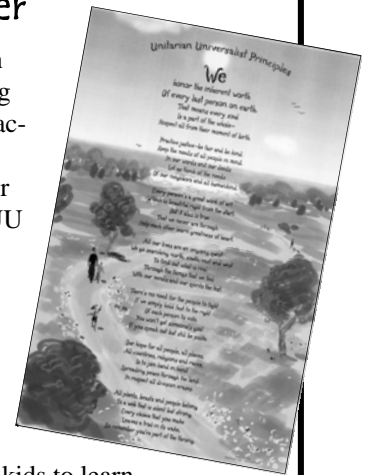
Principles Poetry Poster

Want an engaging and attractive reminder of our UU Principles for your wall? Looking for a fun

way for kids to learn what our Principles really mean? The CLF offers a bright, colorful and clever 11” x 17” poster featuring our UU Principles in limerick form. For example:

*All plants, beasts and people
belong
To a web that is silent but strong.
Every choice that you make
Leaves a trail in its wake,
So remember you're part of the
throng.*

You can purchase the poster for \$10, including postage, shipping and handling, by going to www.clfuu.org and clicking on the CLF Shop, or call 617-948-6150. ■



REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Usually this column is geared toward kids, but we have a tradition of ushering in the new year with a reminder of what the CLF has to offer in the way of religious education resources for children and adults. We have such a lot of great material that it's easy to miss something!

RE FOR CHILDREN

If you'd like to have complete lesson plans designed for UU families or for small, mixed-aged groups of children, already prepared and ready to go, week by week, what you want is **CLiF Notes: A Curriculum for Families and Small Groups**. This year we are focusing on religious rituals and practices, both UU and from other religions, but the curriculum also features material on our UU Principles, people of note from Unitarian and/or Universalist history and celebrations of various holidays. If you are not a CLF member, you can subscribe to **RE Express Plus** for \$129/year, and have these lesson plans delivered to your email inbox each month, along with this column, the month's issue of **KidTalk**, and access to the **RE Index of Online Resources** (see below). If you are a CLF member, you can subscribe to RE Express for free. To receive **RE Express Plus** contact Beth Murray at bmurray@clfuu.org.

If you're not looking for a complete curriculum, but want a fun way to explore UUism and religions around the world with your kid(s), the place to look might be **KidTalk**. Designed for children to explore by themselves or with adults (or for adults to mine for gems to use with kids), each month's **KidTalk** includes information and activities about UUism, world religions, spiritual practice and more.



Or, if you just like to find some cool stuff that you might be able to use, the Resources

section of the Religious Education home page on www.clfuu.org has some great "**printables**," including posters with the UU principles and a whole UU alphabet coloring book. That section also provides a **music** section with the tunes of some songs that work well with children.

Oh, and don't miss **Between Sundays**. You can see general listings by age or topic, or even search on a particular word to find lesson plans that answer a variety of important religious questions that children often have.

Want more? As mentioned above, we have an **RE Index** of all of the CLF's online resources that you can search by topic and age. Very handy if you're planning a lesson on a certain topic, or if you're just wondering if the CLF has anything great to offer for Martin Luther King Day (we do—as well as some holidays you might not even have heard of).

To go exploring, hop on over to www.clfuu.org and click on the Religious Education menu.



So what can you search for in the Index? It includes material from **KidTalk** and from **uu&me!**, the CLF's magazine for kids ages 6-10. Published as a print magazine for several years, **uu&me!** is now included as an insert in the *UU World* magazine. But you can find all of their stories, activities and more online for easy access. But wait, there's more! The RE Index also includes material from **RE Connections**. Published quarterly (or thereabouts) for a number of years, **RE Connections**

was designed as a way to share ideas and CLF resources.

RE FOR ADULTS

Of course, religious education is not just for children. The CLF is all about learning and growth for adults as well. Would you like to chat about issues that are raised in *Quest*? Or maybe there are other topics that draw your interest that you wish you could mull over with company. What you want is our **Quest Forums** and **Discussion Forums**. Once you go through the quick and free registration process at our Online Learning Center (www.uurgl.com/learn), you'll be able to sign up and join the email-based conversation with UUs around the world.

While you're at the Online Learning Center, have a look at our broad offering of **Online Courses**. Taught by a variety of experts, primarily UU ministers and laypeople, these classes offer the chance, for a modest fee, to take email based courses on topics from humanism to religion and ecology. You can find more information about how online classes work at www.clfuu.org/learn.

What else? Well, gee, there are email lists called **Shared Interest Groups**, which allow people who share a common life experience or theology to have sustained conversation, on topics ranging from a support group for people who want to increase their fitness level to UU Christians. **Covenant Groups** provide more structured conversation and reflection in an intimate group led by a trained facilitator. And, of course, there's the **CLF Library**, full of enough great books and curricula to keep you going for years (www.clfuu.org/library).

To go exploring, hop on over to www.clfuu.org and click on the Religious Education menu (or the Community menu for Shared Interest Groups and Covenant Groups). You might just have wonderful surprises in store. ■



One Wish

If you had but one wish
What would it be?

Take your time thinking about it.
So much is at stake—
an end to all suffering,
a stop to all violence,
a solution to poverty and all of its ills.

Would you wish for love?
For forgiveness or for healing?

Would you wish the world joy?
Or the wisdom to change?

Would you wish to understand everything?
Or to know less than you do?

Take your time thinking about it.
So much is at stake.
For a wish is a thought,
and a thought is an idea.

An idea leads to commitment.
And a commitment cries out for action.

A wish can be a dangerous thing,
something daring.

And it need not be witnessed by the stars
to come true.

Let us be glad that we are not given just one wish in our lives,
but many.

Let us be grateful not for wishful thinking,
but for the discipline of the thoughtful wishing
that can lead to change.

What would your wish be?

by *Lisa Friedman*, minister, UU Fellowship of Mankato, Minnesota. Published by Skinner House, 2002, in *How We Are Called: A Meditation Anthology*, edited by Mary Benard and Kirstie Anderson, this volume is available from the UUA bookstore or through the CLF Library (www.clfuu.org/library or 617-948-6150).



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