The President’s Column by Bruce Swiecicki

Are We Under the Influence?

Do you believe in “Providence,” the idea that a higher power sustains us and influences each of our destinies? It is, of course, one of the great unknowns that we are all faced with in this life. What some people might call “purely coincidental events,” others see as a sign that their God is working in their lives and they need to “stay tuned” in order to more clearly perceive the direction that their lives should be headed.

Based on the information that I have reviewed over the years, as well as personal experience, my own opinion has been that we don’t function as if we were tethered to a puppeteer’s strings, simply acting on ideas that have been placed in our heads by a higher power. I prefer to think that the choices I make in life are solely the product of my own thoughts and desires. In other words, I have “free will.” As an aside, an interesting book to read is “Free Will” by Sam Harris. He makes a compelling case that our “free will” really isn’t so free and is in large part shaped by our gender, economic status, where and when we happened to be born, and other factors that together help form the boundaries of our real-world experience and consciousness. Taken together, those random circumstances have the effect of steering us to the choices that we make.

However, there’s another side of the coin. A close friend of mine is a devout Christian and he recently described an experience that he had. Almost a year after his epileptic brother died by suicide, he visited the mausoleum where his brother’s ashes were kept. Later that day, while he was stuck in traffic and sitting in his vehicle, he noticed a young man walking erratically down the sidewalk. Realizing that the man was bleeding profusely, he pulled over and offered his help. After receiving instructions from an emergency medical technician over the phone, he applied compression and helped stop the bleeding. The ambulance came and took the young man to the hospital for further treatment. My friend later discovered that the young man had attempted to kill himself.

My friend had recently been part of a small study group whose topic was “keeping your antennae up” and listening for God’s messages. After my friend told me the story, he became emotional as he said that those events took place on his deceased brother’s birthday. He asked me if I thought it was purely coincidental, or perhaps a message intended for him. Of course I have no way of knowing the answer to that question, but I do know that his brother would have been proud of him, as am I. So I’d like to offer a toast: To the young man whose life was saved, that he is appreciative and thankful for the actions of my buddy, who may have been functioning “under the influence” that day.

~Bruce
The following are some of the highlights from the Board of Trustees meeting July 16th:

- Suburban Landscaping was chosen to build the patio in our backyard. Work was scheduled to begin in late July.

- We are preparing to update our rental schedule for the church and classrooms. Dorea is researching rental rates for comparable spaces in the area.

- There has been discussion about the church lending financial support to those members who are pursuing educational opportunities in line with the church’s mission. Since the approved budget has allocated monies to the Committee on Ministry for that purpose, the Board feels that any decisions made to support members should be made by the Committee on Ministry.

SOUTH SUBURBAN PADS is gearing up for its 24th Emergency Shelter Season which will operate between October 1, 2013 and April 30, 2014. PADS in in urgent need of volunteers to staff the shelters and volunteer cook teams to provide meals for the guests.

Four hours, once each month, is all it takes to help keep these shelters open. It could be the best four hours you spend each month! Please contact Dawn Thrasher, Community Resource Coordinator, 708-754-4357 ext 107, or dawn@sspads.org to register for volunteer opportunities. Training is provided every 2nd Saturday:

9:30am Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 667 West 8th Street, Chicago Heights, IL

2:00pm Our Savior Lutheran Church, 8607 South Naragansett Ave, Burbank, IL
(The session is conducted in Kaufmann Hall, the small brick building in front of the Our Savior main church building).

RESPOND NOW has requested that through the middle of August we donate school supplies instead of food. This would be things like pens, pencils, notebooks, folders, crayons, backpacks, paper, etc. Thank you for contributing these things. Respond Now always has a big family gathering during August when these things are given out.

Want to help those less fortunate in the South Suburban area? Consider volunteering your time to serve at a PADS Homeless Shelter!

- On any given night approximately 800,000 people are homeless in the US.
- Children are reported to be 39% of those who are homeless.
- 36% of those who are homeless are families with children.
- 7% are unaccompanied minors.
- 20-25% of those who are homeless have a serious mental health issue.
- 38% of people who are homeless are reported to have a substance abuse issue, are dependent upon alcohol, and 26% report using other substances.
- 46% of those who are homeless have chronic health conditions.
FORUM will not be meeting in August but will resume in September.

Needed: Director of Membership at Third Unitarian Church

Third Unitarian Church seeks a dynamic, inspired UU leader to assume its Director of Membership position. This is a part-time 12 hour per week position. Previous experience in non-profit management is preferred. Send inquiries to Reverend Brian Covell at MinisterThirdChurch@gmail.com.

This position will start on August 19, 2013.

Visit Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, and Black Hills of South Dakota in August!

Enjoy 7 days and 6 nights for $660! (price per person, based on double occupancy)

Dates: Sunday, August 11 - Saturday, August 17th 2013
Depart time: 8 a.m. from Park Forest Village Hall, 350 Victory Dr.
Fee: $660 per person ($200 due upon signing)
Program # 246510-1

Register at Park Forest Recreation & Parks Department, 350 Victory Drive, Park Forest (Village Hall) or call 708-748-2005 to register over the phone with a credit card.

Please note - Name, address, home phone number, emergency number, and signed waiver will be required from each person registering for the trip.

Convener Council News

The Convener Council is happy to have Jessica Carter join us as our new Congregation Ministry Convener. Jessica is active planning a congregational survey you will be asked to complete in August to help select two main goals we can work together to achieve. Jessica has a big job, as Congregation Ministry includes everything we do for ourselves and each other as a community: Sunday Services, Care and Concern, social events, etc. Jessica is busy meeting with committees, teams, and individuals who do the many tasks that keep our church going. If you have any ideas or might like to help, please contact Jessica.

Building and Grounds Convener, Marti Blaise also has a big job. Laurene Lambertino Urquizo, Dorea LaPorte, Carol Hechenberger, Nancy Irons and other members have been working very hard to clean up and beautify our church and grounds. Please call Dorea, Laurene, or Marti if you can help.

Andy Stevens is our Website Convener and works with Diane O’Connor to keep our website current. Andy welcomes help.

Environment Convener Jeff Green oversees Green Sanctuary, recycling, and other environmental projects. Please call Jeff if you have any ideas regarding the environment or would like to help.

The position of Community Ministry Convener is currently vacant. Community Ministry includes all community outreach activities, such as church members volunteering with PADS to serve the homeless, Social Issues Movies, and partnerships with other organizations. Please talk with Darlene Obejda if you have any ideas and would like to help.

Convener Council members meet, usually the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Please check the church calendar. Everyone is invited. ~Darlene Obejda
Religious Education has taken to the great outdoors this summer. We tended to our Native American garden. If you have a chance, go out back and have a look. The garden is a small but complete representation of the Three Sisters planting strategy. You’ll see the bean stalk growing up the corn and the squash shading the ground, retarding weed growth.

I want to thank all the kids who helped pick up trash along Sycamore Avenue. Your contribution to beautifying our church surroundings is much appreciated.

We’ve also hung our bat house and are hoping to have some move-ins next year. Bats are very cautious when it comes to taking up residence anywhere, so it takes a while for them to feel comfortable with new surroundings.

The coming year in children’s RE is centered on UU values and how they inform our everyday actions. As part of this focus, we’ll be exploring what the phrase “service is our prayer” means. We’re also planning to attend a Native American powwow in September.

I want to make a pitch for the survey that’s coming out in August. It would be very useful to know what adult educational opportunities would help promote spiritual growth here at UUCC. I’ve been researching some online resources that seem promising and, combined with the talents in our community, we can develop a wonderful program list.

Have a great August. See you at Ingathering. ~Dan

OPEN YOUR HEART AND HOME to a German, French, Chinese, Norwegian or Brazilian high school exchange student for the coming 2013-2014 school year

Caring host families (with or without children) are needed to provide food, a bed and a loving home for the one or two semesters starting in late August. EMF students have medical insurance, spending money for their personal expenses and expect to share their host family’s daily life including household responsibilities. They speak English, are well-screened and eager to experience life in America. Their stay here is sponsored and supervised by EMF (Educational Merit Foundation), a non-profit, educational exchange program. For more information on EMF students, please call Marie-Claude Dijoud now at 1-800-467-8363 or visit our web site at www.emfusa.org.

Thank you very much for your help! These students are anxious to learn that a home has been found for them. Your contribution to this cause is most appreciated. Please help us make their dream come true!

Kind regards,
Marie-Claude Dijoud Program Director
6526 Lakecrest Drive - Sachse, TX 75048
1-800-467-8363
Rainbow Cafe is a social event that provides a safe and welcoming environment for single or partnered gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender adults and their allies, by creating a space where they are able to socialize outside of the usual bars.

The Cafe is open every 3rd Saturday of the month from 6:30-10:30 pm.

More info: Dave Matteson 708-672-8837 or 708-408-1421.

RAINBOW CAFE will NOT be meeting this summer, but will resume in September.

Choir Rehearsals

If you are interested in joining us for choir practice on Sunday mornings, please contact Bev Feldt.

bevfeldt@gmail.com.

Sacred Communication Workshops

August 17

11am - 12:30pm

These Transformative Workshops will help you in identifying and dissolving mental and emotional blockages, learning to use your authentic voice, defining authentic friendships, and more. For more information, call Rev. Henrietta Byrd at 312-593-4732 or call Diane at 708-481-5339.

A Moment in Balance

Yoga Classes by Karen Nielsen

Monday and Thurs

9:30am – 11am

Wednesday evenings

7:30pm – 9pm

No reservations needed. Drop in fee is $10 per class and the 6th one is FREE. Call (708) 755-3577 for information.

Drum Circle

3rd Friday of each month: 7-9pm

Come enjoy the soothing therapeutic effect of our open drum circle. Drumming is fun and good for you. The circle is "zero level," requiring no experience. Please bring a drum if you have one. We will have a small selection of community drums. A $10 love offering is requested.

Dances of Universal Peace...

...are Circle, Meditative, Prayerful dances to the mantras from all World Religions. They originated with Murshid Samuel Lewis, a Sufi teacher, in San Francisco in the late 1960's. We meet at UUCC. Nancy Pfalscraft, a certified D.U.P. teacher, is our primary leader.

For more info: Pat Segner 748-2217

Next Dances of UP: Sept. 21, 2-4PM

Free Movie & Discussion

“Today We Saw the Face of God”

Saturday, August 24, 2013

6:00 p.m. Vegetarian pot luck (optional)

7:00 Movie: “Today We Saw the Face of God”

This documentary film that takes a surprisingly hopeful look into the power of human connection in the face of unimaginable suffering, as seen through the eyes of medical mission volunteers in Haiti at the time of tragedy of the earthquake in January, 2010. 65 minutes. 2013

8:30 p.m. Discussion

Questions and Answers Session with Director/Producer Mercedes Kane, in person!

Free coffee and tea.
Optional: Bring a vegetarian pot luck dish or snack to share.
Join in the lively discussion. Invite friends! Optional donations welcome.

Have you got a nice thing to say about someone at church? Do you want to give them a thumbs up for something they did or said? Send your comment to Diane (diane@uuccpf.org) and she’ll post it on our Facebook page. Let’s let everyone know how terrific we are.

~Dan
This is your opportunity to get on the soapbox and share your thoughts with UUCC members and friends. We will run an article every month written by a member or friend of our congregation. The article could be a personal statement and it should be in good taste and related to one of our seven principles. If you are interested, send your name to Bruce at swicengineer@sbcglobal.net. We will randomly pick a name at the beginning of each month. Articles should be received by the 15th of each month and will be reviewed for appropriateness of content and edited where necessary.
There is an exciting event coming up that has me in its grips. I will be attending the Chicago Climate Leaders training group next week in Chicago. No Al Gore though. On Facebook we have a closed group to get to know each other before we arrive at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place. I am stretched by being in this writing position looking for things that might be of more interest around the home.

On the Chicago Climate Leaders Training Group facebook page I found just the thing that would fit into a green home use. To backtrack a little, my wife and I were weeding out our front bushes that a few growths of poison ivy in them. We got out the poison ivy spray purchased from a store, placed old towels around on the other plants to protect them from the killing poison. The plant has since withered away from the doses I administered to it.

In handling this commercial product, I have to be careful that I don’t get it on myself for fear of what it might do to me. This recipe below is all natural ingredients that won’t hurt us if it gets on our skin, and yet kills plants.

Reading through all the facebook suggestions of green ideas and living I came across a young woman that had a natural recipe for killing weeds. It was so simple that you kind of take the palm of your hand to your head and go why didn’t I think of that. Why could be simpler than this. Its like we actually go backwards to move ahead. I’m sure this was used a hundred years ago before chemicals are good for your life.

I have found other recipes that vary from this in the amounts but have the same basic ingredients. This kills everything, so only targeting your victim plants are important.


**Non-toxic weed killer spray:**

1 lb. Table Salt  
1 gallon White Vinegar  
Liquid dish detergent

Dissolve the salt in the vinegar, then add 8 drops of liquid dish detergent. Store in a labeled spray bottle. Should anyone try this little gem, please tell me how it worked.  
Yours in love, Jeff Green

**Another idea!! Poor boiling water over weeds!**

When you boil potatoes or pasta during the gardening season, repurpose the boiling water by draining the pot directly onto the weeds that like to invade your yard. A splash of scalding water will shrivel even the toughest weeds in a couple of days.
"Sacred Communication Within You"

Join us on August 23rd and 24th for this life changing event.

The hours are
6:30pm to 11:00pm on Friday.
9:30am to 6:00 pm. on Saturday.
The fee is $135.00
Dress comfortably and prepare to Surrender, Uncover and Transform.

On Friday and Saturday August 23rd and 24th,
The Reverend Henrietta Byrd of Transformative Talk will facilitate a 2-day workshop:
“Sacred Communication Within You”

This workshop has been created for you to gain techniques and experience in listening to and acting upon what LIFE is saying to you. We will begin on Friday by identifying the unconscious blockages within. We continue the next day, Saturday, with techniques of dissolving false believes and developing practices that support our visions for ourselves. For more info: Call Rev. Henrietta Byrd at 312-593-4732.
Church Information
70 Sycamore Drive
Park Forest, IL  60466
PHONE:  708-481-5339
E-Mail:  diane@uuccpf.org
Web:  www.uuccpf.org

Office Administrator
Diane O’Connor
Office Hours:
M, W, F 10:30am - 3:30pm

(Please note from time to time some office hours vary)

Newsletter deadline is always the 20th of every month
*You can help save a tree and a stamp by simply picking up your newsletter or receiving it electronically via email.

Visit us on the web @ www.uuccpf.org