

In the depths of winter it's so tempting to stay in bed a little longer in the mornings, to burrow into warm comforters or blankets, to deny the cold and darkness. It's not only the cold and darkness that may bother some of us, but also the continued economic crisis and the uncertainty and anxiety it brings to all.

Religious educators play a variety of roles and do a variety of tasks, one of which is listening deeply to children and youth and their parents. In addition to caring for your own families you also provide an invaluable resource, yourself, to families in your congregations. To be that caring presence remember to take care of yourself. Here is a reminder of how you can do that.

### **Nurturing Yourself As You Nurture Others**

- 1. Sabbath time:** In the same way you help families create balance in their lives, create balance in your life. Find at least ½ hour each day to nurture yourself---sit quietly, walk in nature, read sacred scriptures. Carve out four hours for one day (or even the whole day!) just to regenerate your best Self. This is not time for projects for the congregation, this is not goal oriented time...you don't have to produce anything to make it worthwhile. Enjoy the moments.
- 2. Delegate, delegate, delegate...**lead, encourage, provide a vision but allow others to share their gifts to contribute to the ministry. This is a gift you give yourself and your ministry. Plant a seed and let it grow.
- 4. Extend boundaries:** Say No to all requests until you have enough time, space, money etc. Get in the habit of saying No until you find your self comfortable with it. In the process, you will discover what has the highest priority for you. Your energy will be focused directly on what provides the most effective results. Make sure you have two consecutive days off like other professionals.
- 5. Limit your office hours:** Your time is valuable, limit the days of the week you have office hours. Make all appointments on one day. Try this for one week. This will allow you to be totally focused on the appointments, when you know that is what you have chosen to do with your time. Choose how you spend your time. This creates a reserve of time and energy in your life.
- 6. Build a support circle outside your congregations:** Look for people that see you as a person beyond being a religious educator. Look to attract a support circle that is, that restores, energizes and encourages you.
- 7. Pamper yourself:** Take a weekend retreat, go hiking,, fishing, scuba diving. This "vacation" must be in another town where you are unreachable and fully let go of your responsibilities for more than 48 hours. Let it go, it will be there when you get back and you will have recharged your batteries. Find out what restores you and schedule it into your life.
- 8. Exercise:** Incorporate into your weekly schedule, a half hour of exercise, three times a week. Find a fun personal trainer. Choose an enjoyable physical movement. What have you always wanted to try if you only had time? Make time for two-stepping or hiking or rollerblading. Go for it, your heart will thank you.
- 9. Make time for healthy meals:** Reduce your commitments so you have time for a healthy meal. If you find yourself booked at meal time, have a dinner meeting and choose a healthy meal at home or at a restaurant..
- 10. Make time for your personal spirituality:** Allow yourself to be a life long learner, allow time for spiritual study. Be the student. Seek out spiritual leaders/teachers that inspire you and ask to be taught anew. Refresh your enthusiasm, gain a new perspective or enhance your wealth of knowledge.

As leaders within congregations religious educators need to have a good understanding of the the present economic crisis as it makes its impact on our communities. I encourage all of you as much as possible to meet in your cluster groups or offer support to each other in various ways. Share your own uncertainty as congregations ponder ways to act.

Read some of Parker Palmer's thoughts

[http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2008/repossessing\\_virtue-palmer/palmer-deeper\\_knowing.shtml](http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2008/repossessing_virtue-palmer/palmer-deeper_knowing.shtml)

From a process theologian

<http://www.processandfaith.org/askcobb/2008/10-Financial%20Crisis.shtml>

Definitely Christian comments

<http://www.canadianchristianity.com/nationalupdates/081218crisis.html>

From the UUA

<http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/sermons/submissions/124436.shtml>

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/interconnections/124064.shtml>

[http://www.uua.org/documents/congservices/stewardship/giving\\_tough\\_economy.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/congservices/stewardship/giving_tough_economy.pdf)

From The Alban Institute

<http://albanroundtable.org/?tag=economy>

<http://frugaldad.com/2008/06/16/75-tips-to-survive-a-down-economy/>

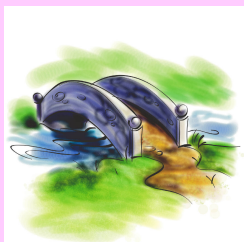
From This I Believe—an inspiring essay from a young boy

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99478226>

### Coming Events

February 10	DRE cluster in Concord, NH
February 27-March 1	Maine youth con in Bangor, ME
March 7	Youth Advisor Training in Augusta, ME
March 8	Maine YAC meeting in Auburn, ME
March 10	DRE cluster in southern NH
March 28	Southern VT cluster in Chester
April 2-4	<b><u>Pastoral Care for Religious Educators (PDF)</u></b> Xavier Center, Morristown, NJ
April 14- 15	<b>Renaissance Philosophy of RE Module</b> Walker Center, 144 Hancock St., Newton, MA
May 1-2	Annual district conference in Conway, NH
May 9	Youth Advisor training in Kennebunk, ME
May 29-31	Maine spring youth con in Saco, ME
August 20- 22	<b>Renaissance Worship Module</b> Second Congregational Society of Concord, Concord, NH

Please publicize the district's annual conference to your graduating seniors and pass on this information about the essay contest for seniors.



## Bridging

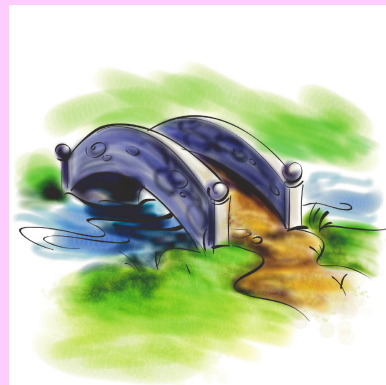
Some people call it graduating senior recognition, some call it a circle of life ritual, and many call it bridging. Bridging in Unitarian Universalist congregations is commonly accepted to mean an observance and celebration of high school seniors transitioning from their youth groups into young adulthood. The bridging ceremony may include brief reflections from the seniors, the minister, the DRE, the youth advisor, the youth and the parents. A gift may be given, a ritual repeated, candles lighted, and special music provided or sung. Bridging is a bittersweet moment for the congregation as they bid farewell to children they may have mentored or taught in religious education classes while hoping these youth will continue as UUs and return from time to time.

Northern New England District UUs who attend the annual conference in May have the opportunity to witness bridging of high school seniors in the district's first district wide bridging ceremony. Any graduating seniors can participate/bridge. Congregations can provide the names of those seniors unable to attend. These names will be read aloud.

Essay contest!! The district program committee invites seniors to write and submit an essay on, "*What does Unitarian Universalism mean to you as you transition from being a youth to a young adult?*" Youth writing an essay should consider how congregational support and leadership has strengthened their development; who have been significant mentors and how the mentors made a difference in their faith formation; youth's own contributions and participation in their congregations or youth groups; youth's understanding of the UU faith and how it can be put into practice. A panel will judge the essays and award a scholarship of \$50 to the best one. All essays will be acknowledged and possibly be published in some manner. Essays should be no more than two pages and submitted by March 1, 2009 to the district office.

Let's hope many of us can witness this event as a sign of support, caring and encouragement to the district's graduating seniors.

*Building bridges, between our divisions  
If I reach out to you, will you reach out to me?  
With all of our voices and all of our visions  
Friends we can make such sweet harmony.*



# Save The Date

## March 7, 2009

### Youth Advisor Training

What is it? A training to inform congregations and prepare adults interested in mentoring youth as advisors in your congregation or at youth conferences, in serving on the Youth Adult Committee and/or advocating for and supporting youth ministry in the Northern New England District (this is not the UUA Basic Youth Advisor Training)

Where will it be held? The UU Community Church of Augusta, ME (there will be another training held in the southern part of Maine in late spring)

When? March 7 from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Who should attend? DREs, ministers, parents, adults interested in becoming youth advisors

Topics? Content for youth groups, safety issues, structure of youth groups in a congregation, youth-adult relations, expectations of youth advisors, attending conferences

What to bring? Bring you own lunch and a \$10 donation for the church  
Snacks and drinks will be provided

Please complete the registration form below and return to Benette Sherman at UU District Office, 10 Ferry St. #318, Concord, NH or fax to 603-226-3011

You can also email the information to me at [bsherman@uua.org](mailto:bsherman@uua.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact person and phone #s \_\_\_\_\_

Any medical concerns or allergies we should be aware of? \_\_\_\_\_

Position in your congregation \_\_\_\_\_