



P o n d e r i n g s

The monthly newsletter of the
Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation
—A Welcoming Congregation—

November 2011

Unitarian Universalism is open to the wisdom of all the world's religions... spiritual but non-dogmatic... welcoming, inclusive... embracing the whole human family... the most liberal faith in town. We *welcome* visitors.

-----Coming Services-----

Sundays at 11:15 AM

November 6, 2011 Rev. Lillie Henley
Sophia

Rev. Henley will look at the intuitive, relational wisdom of "Sophia." Wisdom as the feminine characteristic of the Creator began thousands of years ago and became "Reason" with Western philosophers.

November 13, 2011 Rev. Lillie Henley
Is Gay Marriage Plan B?

Rev. Henley will ask, "Is Gay Marriage Plan B?" Why is gay marriage so important? Is there more to the public conundrum than simply two adults who love each other and want to commit their lives to one another?

November 20, 2011 Betty Johnson and
Patti Withers

Bread Communion *Intergenerational*

We celebrate the season of abundance and gratitude with our annual bread communion. **Please bring your favorite bread to be shared with the gathered community.** As we break bread together, we will reflect on connections to Earth and home. Each of us will also have an opportunity to share our blessings with SEARCH, a local community partner, and Guest at Your Table, a long-time UU tradition.

November 27, 2011 Rev. Lillie Henley
Our Indigenous Heritage

November 27 is a Sunday for us to reflect on the indigenous heritage of the United States. While Thanksgiving is the most popular American tradition today, it is grounded in fictional stories of the Puritans and Pilgrims. Rev. Henley believes we need to remember the American Natives who were here long before the stories.

-----Adult Discussion-----

Sundays at 10:00 AM, off the Sanctuary

November 6, 2011 Aaron Tuley
Beyond Climate Change

According to the United Nations, we will reach a global population of 7 billion people as early as October 31 of this year. In an age of dwindling resources and compromised environments, where natural disasters displace millions of people each year, it is difficult to envision how we will accommodate such growth. Aaron Tuley, District Manager of the Climate Reality Project, will provide an in-depth analysis of several challenges facing our planet that have the potential of radically altering life as we know it.

November 13, 2011 David Christian
Deep Time #26 The First Agrarian Societies

Although early agrarian societies left behind no written record, there is evidence of many important new developments during this period. We will explore the life ways of these societies and question whether agriculture gave the early farmers a better life than their ancestors'.

November 20, 2011 Garna Christian
The Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution, which began on November 20, 1910, ranks with the French, Russian, Chinese, and Cuban among the historic social revolutions, and is older than all but the French. At a cost of more than twenty years of civil warfare and a million lives, it produced one of the world's most progressive constitutions. We will read and discuss segments of that document to gain insight into the developing giant to the south.

November 27, 2011 Galina Sheridan and Noel Zinn
The Power of Now

Eckhart Tolle is a German-born Canadian, an enlightened mystic in the tradition of Hindu sages...except he has a wife and a publishing contract and expresses the inexpressible clearly and convincingly. We will read a bit about Tolle, tune in to Tolle TV (internet permitting), and discuss his wisdom.

Reflections from Rev. Lil

There is a poem by Oriah, a poet, author, and mystic who grew up in northern Ontario, Canada. The first stanza of "The Invitation" is:

It doesn't interest me
what you do for a living.
I want to know
what you ache for
and if you dare to dream
of meeting your heart's longing.



What an invitation to relationship! It goes straight to the heart of the meaning of "Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations," our third Unitarian Universalist Principle.

Yet, in contemplation, the poem is more personal and demands more from one another than "mere acceptance." It seems to require compassion and a willingness to *travel with* another in their search for spiritual growth.

This is what brings us to church. It is our need to be with others on this journey we call Life.

Oriah does not shrink from the complexities and demands of relationship.

I want to know
if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it.

I want to know
if you can be with joy
mine or your own
If you can dance with the wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you ...

Yes, she makes it clear there are joys and sorrows which we must share if we are to travel together.

But she does not forget what we must do on our communal journey:

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live
or how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up
after the night of grief and despair
weary and bruised to the bone
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

Once we commit to being together, there is more to our communal, religious life than the spiritual journey. There is the call of those who are in need of food, water, medical attention, clothing, and compassion.

When service is our prayer, it is empty if we are not seeking, as Jung would say, a deeper, more meaningful existence than the superficiality of our culture. Nor would spiritual growth alone be enough, for without both, *something is missing*.

For *pondering* – see you in church, Rev. Lil

[You can find Oriah's complete poem at www.oriahmountaindreamer.com.]

Lunch Bunch



Join your Thoreau friends, new and old, for lunch at Casa Ole on Sunday, November 6, after the coffee hour. The restaurant is nearby at 12203 Murphy Rd, on the right just north of Airport. The menu includes lots of Tex-Mex favorites and includes some soups and salads. They will have tables reserved for us at 1:00 PM.



Ponderings

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Sunday Morning Schedule

10:00-1:00	Nursery Care
10:00-11:00	Adult Discus'n
11:15-12:15	Worship Svc
11:35-12:15	Children's RE

Thoughts from Our Board President

Garna Christian

There may be three of his Depression-born relatives who remember him. Maybe that many younger ones would recall his name.

He was big for his age, husky like a future football lineman. He probably wouldn't have been very good at it, though, as he was kind of slow, physically. He was also much too good-natured to deliberately hurt anybody. We were cousins of the same age, but I don't know his birthday or the date he died. We only saw each other a few times a year, when my family left Houston to visit my mother's kinfolks in that little East Texas town. They all lived close together, within sight of the refineries where many of the husbands worked, and my dad referred to the area as "Capitol Hill." Dad had been born in a small central Texas town but had lived in cities for so long that he maintained a kind of pained superiority to that community.

Actually, my cousin didn't live in the town proper. His family's house stood on the outskirts, separate from the others. This was probably due to the fact that my cousin's father was not comfortable with the people into which he married. My brother and I heard wondrous stories of how he migrated from an aristocratic Richmond, Virginia family and set out to become an artist. True to form, on one visit he showed us a drawing that he made on a window shade facing the street. He was always doing unusual things like that, which added to his aura. But the probable source for his demeanor was that he was drunk most of the time. His daughter, another cousin, bore a large birthmark on her arm, which tee-totaling relatives attributed to his insobriety. His wife, a woefully patient woman, was forever pulling him out of beer joints, where one bottle would send him into a stupor.

My cousin and I enjoyed each other's company, even if we never wrote or called each other, as would be the case today. We faked wrestling, pretending that we were the popular combatants of that time, and walked the rural roads as explorers of exotic places. Then one night my mother got a telephone call, when that could only mean bad news. My cousin had been diagnosed with a serious ailment that was never explained to the children. The next time we visited, he was thinner but lying comfortably in **bed**, talking and laughing as usual, and watching a new television set that I greatly envied. He spoke nothing of his illness, and possibly did not know of it. Too soon, however, he suffered a relapse and was returned to the hospital, when that usually meant death.

Grownups, who had hovered around the periphery of our lives, took over and made the rules. We children were not allowed to enter the ward but heard gray-faced adults describe his pain. One said he repeatedly bit through tongue depressors placed in his mouth. Several said they prayed for him to live until they saw him and then prayed for him to die. I never saw him alive again.

At the funeral the preacher said my cousin was in a better place and someone said that everything happens for a purpose. He wasn't yet fifteen years old. I thought he was in a good enough place before he got sick, and I never figured out the purpose.

Program Council News

The Thoreau Program Council (the heads of committees and other groups, chaired by our board VP) met on October 5. Highlights from the meeting include:

- The annual Service Auction that had been scheduled for Fall 2011 has been tentatively rescheduled for February 11, 2012, with a Valentine theme planned.
- Our Youth will now meet monthly (as well as during RE on Sunday mornings). Deirdre Hammons, Jon Yingst and Tamara Veneruso are sponsors.
- Rev. Lil is continuing to offer Wonderful Wednesdays each month on the second and fourth Wednesdays during lunchtime.
- There will be a Parents Group meeting one Sunday each month.
- Our pianist Vicki Moore is no longer with us. We are in search for a new pianist.
- On December 4, we will have a Christmas program with sing-along, and a housewarming party after the service for SEARCH, the homeless center. We'll also have a Christmas tree that we decorate that Sunday with mittens, scarves, and hats for SEARCH.
- We have asked our generous landlord, Art Pratt, about more signage for the sanctuary restrooms.
- We may be building a new podium. Funds for the project are already in our budget, and Jim Milo and Michael Jones will work on it.
- The Membership Committee is focusing on a "Path to Membership." The board will discuss the plan before it will be implemented.
- The Worship Committee reports that Rev. Lil is now using a head-mounted microphone. The projector system is going more smoothly each week.

Deepening Our *UU* Identity

Rev. Lillie

On Saturday, November 12, 9:00 to Noon, the Membership Committee and Rev. Lillie will be offering a "Deepening Our UU Identity" seminar. Newcomers and congregants alike are welcome. There will be a DVD on Unitarian and Universalist history from the early centuries up to the twentieth century. Afterwards, we will share our spiritual journeys.

This class will be part of the "Path to Membership," a new program which provides a way for us to be more deeply committed to Thoreau and Unitarian Universalism. Brunch will be served. If interested, talk with Rev. Lil or a member of the Membership Committee (Cassey Crouch, Gene Reed, Michael Jones, Kay Tarson, Irv Smith and Kat Sanders).

Regular Meetings

Visitors to meetings are always welcome. Contact persons listed will be happy to answer any questions.

The **ADG planning session** is held on the second Saturday, November 12, at 10:00 AM at the Town Center Starbucks. Tony Veneruso tonyveneruso@gmail.com

The **Board Meeting** is held on the second Wednesday, November 9 at 7:00. Garna Christian gchristian2@comcast.net

The **Cinema Circle** will meet on the fourth Friday, November 25, at 6:00 at TUUC for a potluck dinner and movie. Manuel Quintana mequint@gmail.com

The **CRS (Can't Remember 'Stuff') Group** will meet on the third Friday, November 18, at 6:30 at the Black Walnut Café. Janice Milo jtm2711@hotmail.com

The **Choir** currently sings two Sundays each month and practices two Tuesday nights. Contact Michael Crouch for more information. Michael.crouch46@gmail.com

The **Committee on Ministry** meets on varying dates. Johanna DeYoung joeydeyoung@gmail.com

The **Ethnic Dining Group** meets alternate months on the third Saturday. Mike McInerney mkmci@swbell.net

The **Finance Committee** meets on the second Tuesday, November 8, at 7:00. Irv Smith hiv@aol.com

The **Membership Committee** meets at 6:00 on the first Wednesday, November 2. Cassey Crouch casseyster@gmail.com

The **Men's Group** meets on the first Thursday, November 3 and December 1, at 7:00. J. Hampton jhampton@windstream.net

The **Program Council** meets on the first Wednesday, November 2, at 7:00. Val and Davis Tolman davaltolman@gmail.com

The **Religious Education Committee** meets on the third Wednesday, November 16, at 6:00. Charles Germany germany@backspace.bz

The **Social Action Committee** meets on varying dates as needed. Valerie Tolman davaltolman@gmail.com

The **Walkers in the Park** walk each Saturday at 9:00 AM at Oyster Creek Park (or at First Colony Mall if the weather is bad). Janice Milo jtm2711@hotmail.com

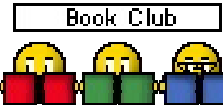
The **Women's Book Club** meets on the second Monday, November 14, at 7:00 at the home of Patty Masters. Janice Milo jtm2711@hotmail.com

The **Worship Committee** will meet on the second Thursday, November 10, at 7:00. John Vindekilde jvindekilde@gmail.com

Day After Thanksgiving Potluck and Cinema Circle

Janice Milo, Manuel Quintana

We'll hold our traditional Thanksgiving leftovers potluck on Friday, November 25, at 6:00 PM. Bring your leftover food from Thanksgiving to share, and join your Thoreau friends for the feast and then a Cinema Circle feature, *Pieces of April*. It's an independent film with great critical reviews, a nice Thanksgiving story, and appropriate content. Bring the kids and any leftover relatives, as well!



Women's Book Club

Janice Milo

The Women's Book Club will meet on Monday, November 14 at 7:00 PM. Our hostess is Patty Masters. We will be reviewing *State of Wonder* by Ann Patchett. In *State of Wonder*, Dr. Marina Singh, a research scientist with a Minnesota pharmaceutical company, embarks on an odyssey into the insect-infested Amazon jungle in hopes of finding her former mentor, as well as answers to several troubling questions about a friend's death, the state of her company's future, and her own past. Please RSVP to Patty and let her know you're coming.



CRS Women's Group

Janice Milo

Our next CRS Women's Group meeting is Friday, November 18, 6:30 PM, at the Black Walnut Café at First Colony. Join us for dinner, or coffee and dessert, or a glass of wine.



High School Youth Group

Our High School Youth Group will meet on Sunday, November 13, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM at TUUC. We will be discussing *Animal Rights*. All high schoolers are welcome to join. For more info, please contact Deirdre Hammons, Youth Advisor at 832-452-4905 or dfhammons@gmail.com. Our Youth are also invited to attend the Houston Area Youth and Advisors on Sunday November 6, 2:00 to 4:00 PM at First UU.



Committee of the Month

Val Tolman

Each month we are highlighting one of the committees that helps keep Thoreau thriving. We hope this will give everyone an idea of exactly what is going on behind the scenes and maybe encourage people to join a committee that sounds interesting to them.

This month's committee is the Religious Education Committee. The REC is committed to a program that teaches our children and youth UU principles in a safe, supporting, and loving environment. Help us shape our congregation's future every third Wednesday at 6:00 PM. If you are interested, contact Charles Germany, RE Committee Chair, at germany@backspace.bz.

Yellow Dog Howlers Backyard Concert and Barbecue

Val Tolman

We hope you will join us Saturday, November 5, for the Yellow Dog Howlers Backyard Concert and Barbecue. There will be entertainment and dinner. Good friends and good times! The music begins at 3:30 and food will be served starting at 4:30. The location is 4002 Alexis Tate Circle in Missouri City. This is a fundraiser for the Thoreau operating budget: suggested donation is \$20. Bring your lawn chairs! Hope to see all ya'll there!



Taste of Sugar Land

Joe Sullivan

How would you like to contribute to doing good in the world, have fun, and have others prepare and serve your Sunday dinner – all at the same time? Then *Taste of Sugar Land* is the event for you! Benefiting two of Thoreau's community partners, Fort Bend Family Promise and East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry, *Taste of Sugar Land* features food from more than 20 of our best local restaurants, live and silent auctions, and continuous entertainment.

The date is Sunday, November 13, from 4:00-8:00 PM at Safari Texas. Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased at the door or through one of our community partners. Contact Joe Sullivan if you have questions.

Bioneers Conference

Ann May (Emerson UU)

The 8th Annual Texas Beaming Bioneers Conference is a two-day conference on "Issues That Matter: Environment & Nature, Health & Spirit, Social Justice and the Arts." This event will take place November 11-12 at the Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church. Attend the conference to experience a worldclass line-up of inspiring local speakers, each outstanding in their field, who will talk about innovative ideas and solutions to challenges that face all Houstonians' access to fresh local food and water, supporting our youth, recycling and energy for the future, and how to nurture our spirit and mind through community. For more information, www.blackwoodland.org/bioneers/.



Art Wall

Elaine Hickey

Just a Reminder! We will be putting up a Holiday Celebration collection on the Art Wall on Saturday, November 12. Please bring what you have craft- or art-wise to share for the Season. Tamara Veneruso will be displaying a new selection of her work starting in January. Questions and/or suggestions? Please contact Elaine Hickey at 979-234-2340 or elainehickey@att.net.



Volunteer of the Month

Val Tolman

The Volunteer of the Month for November is Manuel Quintana. Spiritual, witty, earnest, insightful, and determined describe Manuel Quintana. Manuel capably and graciously runs our Cinema Circle, the monthly Friday night at the movies. Having been a UU for many years, he chooses movies that spark interests ranging from religious to political to historical to humorous. He also led the series of Sunday Dialogues on Spirituality based upon ideas of Cafh, a path of spiritual unfolding.

Christmas Card Social Action Project



Plan Ahead! As all of those free holiday cards arrive with charity pleas, please save them and bring them to TUUC. We plan to use those that are appropriate and deliver them with homemade cookies to SEARCH in December. Bring the cards to TUUC and place them in the Social Action folder on the cabinet behind the administrator's desk. This will be an intergenerational Social Action Project, so plan to come with your children and grandchildren when the date arrives to package up the cookies.

Happy Days

Happy Birthdays in November to:

- 2 Barbara Schwalbe
- 20 Irv Smith
- 21 Brianna Burleigh
- 25 Don Levit
- 26 Alicia Zubay

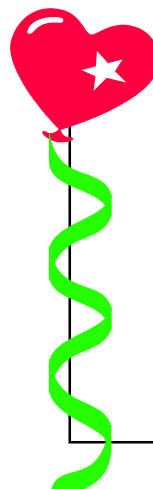


Plate Collection for Charity

Val Tolman, Social Action Chair

For the past several years Thoreau has been donating all the cash collected when we pass the plate on the last Sunday of the month to one of the charities that we support. Each year the Social Action Committee selects four charities to support and we rotate through those. Our plate cash in November will support the East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry.

TUUC has been supporting the East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry for a long time. Not only do we contribute food to their food pantry with our collection each week, but we also donate to their Supply Our Students program and their Thanksgiving program. We have also provided workers at the food pantry to help sort food.

In addition to all of these programs, the Human Needs Ministry has a limited program that helps Fort Bend residents with certain monetary needs. For example, people who are down on their luck can apply for funds to pay for medications, utilities, or rent on a short-term basis.

Most of the people served by the Human Needs Ministry are people who have been living paycheck to paycheck and then something happens to break that delicate balance. This is something that could easily happen to any of us or one of our loved ones. So when the basket comes around on the last Sunday of November, think about those folks who need our help and drop your cash in the collection basket for the Human Needs Ministry.



'Tis the Season

Val Tolman, Social Action Chair

Thoreau is going to be making a huge effort this holiday season to help provide Christmas presents to underprivileged children in our area. We are partnering with the Street Lords, a Harley Davidson motorcycle club, to adopt a low-income apartment complex for the holidays.

We will be collecting toys, and the motorcycle club will roar into the complex to deliver the presents on their Harleys. Thoreau members are welcome to go along to help deliver the presents in the projects (we can just go in our boring ol' cars), and we are also welcome to help the club members at their "wrapping party" the Friday before.

We will be collecting toys at Thoreau for four Sundays but you can start watching the sales now. We will collect toy vehicles (trucks, trains, motorcycles) on November 20, stuffed animals on November 27, sports equipment on December 4, and have a free-for-all day on December 11 for you to bring whatever your favorite toy is.

This collection will overlap with the collection of household items for SEARCH, so it is a lot to ask – but Thoreau has a tradition of generosity and will rise to the occasion!

Scholarships and Volunteers

Michael Lee

The Harris County Libertarian Party is offering scholarship awards for schools, boy and girl scouts, church youth groups, etc. through an essay contest open to high school juniors and seniors. Adult volunteers are needed as leaders/sponsors before November 8. If interested, contact Michael Lee at mlee952@yahoo.com.

Foundation for Contemporary Theology

Jane Smith

Topic: "Science, Faith and the Unfinished Universe"

Speaker: John Haught

When: Friday, November 4 at 7:30 PM & Saturday, November 5 at 9:00 AM.

Where: St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Fondren Hall, 5501 Main, Houston

For more information visit www.contemporarytheology.org.

SEARCHing for that Christmas Spirit?

Val Tolman, Social Action Chair

You are invited to a housewarming party after the service on Sunday, December 4, for homeless clients of SEARCH who are transitioning to their own homes. SEARCH is a Houston program that serves the homeless, and as we approach the holiday season snug with our families in our homes, it is a good time to think about people who are less fortunate.

Musings

Patti Withers, Director of
Religious Education, CRE/ML



LREDA FALL CONFERENCE

I recently returned from Portland, OR, this year's site of the annual conference held by the Liberal Religious Educator's Association, the professional organization of Ministers and Directors of Religious Education and Youth Advisors. The overall theme was Sustainability – of ourselves as individuals and professionals, as an organization with dwindling financial resources, and as people living on a planet with finite resources.

To help stretch members' professional expense dollars, several trainings were held before and during the conference, including a New DRE Workshop, the newly revamped Ministry with Youth Renaissance Module, and Mentor Training for new and experienced mentors in the UUA's Religious Education Credentialing Program. As an experienced mentor, I attended the latter session. I also co-facilitated the New DRE Workshop. Our Southwestern Conference LREDA Chapter, with 13 members at the conference, took the opportunity to gather for a Chapter meeting and shared meal.

Another aspect of Sustainability played out in the deliberate use of resources found in Portland. Our downtown LEED-certified hotel was within walking distance of First UU Portland, which hosted a Storytelling program Friday night (open to the public) and worship Sunday morning with Senior Minister (and former UUA President) Rev. Bill Sinkford. Our conference speakers came from the Portland area. Both spoke on the importance of language and culture, how to preserve them, and the ramifications of their loss. For meals, we were encouraged to take advantage of Portland's 'foodie' culture. I've never before seen so many food trucks (looking like trailer parks ringing parking lots) or coffee shops in such a concentrated area.

Portland was chosen for this conference because of its city-wide, long-term, conscious efforts towards an environmentally green way of life. To those of us from drought-stricken areas, it was also welcomingly green in other ways.

UU PARENTING GROUP

Sometimes children will create opportunities for parents to encourage spiritual enrichment. And sometimes parents must orchestrate these 'teachable moments.' Either way, making the most of such times is the focus of our meeting on November 6 from 10:00-11:00 in the RE Wing. Childcare is provided. This is an open group; all are invited.

In faith,
Patti

NOVEMBER CLASS TOPICS

11/20 – Intergenerational Bread Communion The entire congregation stays together for worship. Childcare is provided for ages 0-3 in the RE Wing.

Childcare: Professional childcare is provided in the RE Wing every Sunday for children of all ages from 10:00 until 11:15 and after RE until 1:00.

Nursery Care: Professional childcare is provided in the RE Wing for children ages 0-3 from 10:00-1:00.



Moral Tales: (PreK – Grade 4)

- 11/06 – **“In Another’s Shoes”** The children continue their lesson on Empathy, hear an ancient story from Israel, and practice looking at real life from multiple perspectives.
- 11/13 – **“Forgiveness”** The class hears a story from the Middle East and experiences writing in sand.
- 11/27 – **“Community Building”** The classes meet together for games and craft activities.



Building Bridges: (Grades 5-12)

- 11/06 – **“Visit to a Hindu Temple”** The youth visit the Hindu Mandir in Stafford. Please meet early at the church for a 10:25 departure.
- 11/13 – **“Christianity 1”**– This first workshop on Christianity focuses on the life of Jesus and prepares the youth for their 12/11 visit to a Christian church.
- 11/27 – **“Community Building”** The classes meet together for games and craft activities. The youth have the choice of staying in the worship service.

Coming Events

November 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 6:00 Memb Com 7:00 Prog Cncl	3 7:00 Men's Grp	4	5 9:00 Walkers 3:30 Backyard Concert & BBQ Fundraiser @Tolmans'
6 10:00 Adult Disc 10:00 Parents Gp 11:15 Svc & RE 1:00 Lunch Bunch @ Casa Ole	7 7:00 Wm Book @ Patty M's	8 7:00 Fin Com	9 Wonderful Wed Noon Brn Bag + Bible Study 7:00 Board Mtg	10 7:00 Wor Com	11 District Fall Conf Foun Cont Theol	12 9:00 Walkers 9:00 UU Identity Seminar 10:00 ADG Plng @ FC Starbucks Bioneers Conf
13 10:00 Adult Disc 11:15 Service & Relig Educ 4:00 Youth Gp 4:00 Taste of TX	14	15	16 6:00 RE Com	17	18 6:30 CRS @ Black Walnut	19 9:00 Walkers
20 10:00 Ad Disc 11:15 Service <i>Intergenerational</i> Bring bread!	21	22	23 Wonderful Wed Noon Brn Bag + Bible Study 7:00 Board Mtg	24	25 Newsletter Ddln 6:00 Potluck and Cinema Cir	26 9:00 Walkers
27 10:00 Ad Disc 11:15 Service & Relig Educ Plate Collection for Charity	28	29 Newsletter Mailout	30	1 7:00 Men's Grp	2	3 9:00 Walkers

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