

## **A Word About Our Windows**

In the summer of 2005 a committee was formed to plan for the church building's centennial celebration in 2006. After we discussed various physical church improvements, I suggested a project that I had been dreaming about for some time: replacing the clerestory windows in the social room with new stained glass windows celebrating UU inclusiveness.

Like good Unitarians, we formed a special stained glass window committee and met during the following winter to decide exactly what we wanted the windows to say about us. Each window was to represent one of nine religious or spiritual traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Judaism, Native American Religions, Paganism and Unitarian Universalism.

The committee chose the symbol and primary colors of each window and, after looking at preliminary sketches, decided to use a circle motif not only to tie together the various religious symbols, but also to symbolize inclusiveness, symmetry and the cycles of many religions.

Steven Hall suggested that the colors used in the windows representing other religions be used as the colors of the leaves in the Unitarian Universalist window's tree of life.

To retain some of the old, the outer three stained glass bands of the former windows would be preserved with the new designs to be set in the window centers.

To me, every window has its own story, its own problems and its own shining moment. When asked, "Which is your favorite?" I can only laugh because they are all "my favorite!"

On a bright, November day, as each window was unveiled, I also saw these windows for the first time. After all the labor, the sore fingers and the broken glass, I am very happy that I was able to do this for the church. I have completed other stained glass projects before, but none that have meant as much personally to me.

To all who helped with their suggestions, labor and ladders, thank you! I am so proud to be part of this CUC family.

**Pam Lopatin**



## BUDDHISM

Founded by Siddhartha Gautama, a fifth century BCE prince in northern India who reached the state of enlightenment and became the Buddha (enlightened one) after a lifetime of searching, its Four Noble Truths explain that life is suffering, that suffering is caused by craving and aversion, that suffering can be overcome and that the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the end of suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of Perfect Understanding, Perfect Thought, Perfect Speech, Perfect Action, Perfect Livelihood, Perfect Effort, Perfect Mindfulness and Perfect Concentration. Buddhists practice a moral code called the Five Precepts: avoid killing or harming living beings, avoid stealing, avoid sexual misconduct, avoid lying and avoid alcohol and other intoxicants.

Local customs and culture have led to many different Buddhist sects.

Buddhists do not worship the Buddha as a god; rather they learn how to better themselves from his teachings and the teachings of the bodhisattvas (saints). Many adherents conceive of Buddhism more as a philosophy of life than as a religion.

The lotus, one of Buddhism's most recognized symbols, sits in a circle (symbolizing the wheel of life) at the center of the window. Rising from its roots in the mud, supported by a stem growing up through the water, the heavily scented flower (partially opened, symbolizing the beginning of realized potential) blooms, a powerful metaphor of the progress of the soul from the primeval mud of materialism through the waters of experience into the bright sunshine of enlightenment. At the base of the flower, a pearl stands for wisdom.

This progression from darkness to light is represented in this window by the murky glass at the bottom and the clear turquoise at the top. The pink lotus is considered to be the supreme lotus and is associated with the enlightenment of the great Buddha himself.

*Window donated by the Blue Lotus Temple and the Ten Directions Zen Community.*



## CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is divided into three major branches: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Each (especially Protestantism) has many divergent sects.

The Christian faith centers on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in first century Palestine . Uniting all Christians is the belief that Jesus is part of a triune Deity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) who lived among men and who, through his death on the cross, gave mankind salvation (victory over sin and death).

The cross is the definitive symbol of Christianity, representing the intersection of the Divine with the human.

In this window, a white background emphasizes the centrality of the cross. This unique cross, with its thin upright stake and wide crossbar, is a copy of one made by Andrew Kuby, a former church member and architect. The multi-colored browns of the bark-textured glass capture the starkness, simplicity and dignity of Kuby's cross. Surrounding the cross are the traditional colors and style (greens, reds, violets and yellows in thick, textured art glass) of the grand, Christian-inspired stained glass windows of our originally Congregational sanctuary.

*Window donated by the Penny Mather Memorial Fund.*



## HINDUISM

Hinduism first appears in India circa 1500 BCE, its founder unknown. Hindus worship many deities, chief among those being Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti, all being recognized as forms of the same Supreme Being, Brahman. The many Hindu sects are commonly united by a belief in the existence of Brahman, the nonpareil one of truth/consciousness/bliss which possesses and is the essence of these qualities, the authority of the Vedas (the oldest Hindu sacred texts), the existence of an enduring soul that passes from one body to another at death, and the moral law of cause and effect (karma) that determines ones

destiny both in this life and the next. The ultimate goal of all Hindus is release (moksha) from the cycle of rebirth (samsara).

The central image of this window, the Omkar symbol (the 'Om' calligraph) is not only a written symbol but is the eternal syllable, the primordial sound by which the world was created. "Om" is said or sung before and after all prayers. The 'Om' calligraph consists of four parts which represent the four states of human awareness: the ordinary (or waking) state, the state of deep sleep, the dream state and absolute consciousness (the awakened state).

The circles of the window represent sound waves emanating from the eternal syllable, and as they move further away from the Omkar, they open up into light, transparent glass, symbolizing the path from darkness to enlightenment. The popular colors of Hindu art, rich reds, oranges and purples, are used in this window.

*Window donated by Rob and Sherri Balboa and Diane Martzel, in memory of our beautiful mothers, who taught us about love and compassion.*

*Helen A. Quade*

*Sharon McGucken Balboa*

*Linda-Lou Berns*



## HUMANISM

Humanism is a philosophy of life that considers the welfare of humankind, rather than the welfare of supposed God or Gods, to be of primary importance.

Humanists maintain that there is no evidence that a supernatural power ever existed to need or want anything from people, to communicate with them or to interfere with the laws of nature to assist or harm anyone. With a focus on human efforts to meet human needs, Humanists believe that those efforts are most effective when they involve both compassion and the scientific method (a reliance on evidence, reason and free inquiry).

Humanism holds that people can find purpose in life and maximize their long-term happiness by developing their talents and using those talents for the service of humanity. This approach will lead to a deeper and longer-lasting satisfaction than a hedonistic pursuit of material or sensual pleasures.

While service to others is a major focus of Humanism, recreation and relaxation are not ignored, as they are necessary for long-term health and happiness. The key is moderation in all things.

Humanists consider the universe to be the result of an extremely long and complex evolution under the immutable laws of nature and view this natural world as wondrous and precious, offering limitless opportunities for exploration, fascination, creativity and joy.

Representing the primary tenet of Humanism, that through human effort mankind is served, the human hand, set in a clear field, is the focus of this window. The hand's multiple shades of antique glass portray the many races of humanity. It attempts to hold or control science, which is shown as an elusive floating atom. The colors of the atom represent the spectrum of potential available to humanity through our efforts.

The grid-like industrial glass background on which the central image rests, symbolizes today's scientific world.

*Window donated by Jill Hartman.*



## ISLAM

Muslims believe that in the seventh century the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and delivered a message from Allah, that Allah was the one true God. Muhammad dedicated the rest of his life to spreading this message of monotheism in a polytheistic world. His teachings are recorded in the Qur'an, the holy scripture of Islam.

The word 'Islam' means 'submission' and reflects the religion's central tenet of submitting to the will of God. At the center of Islam are the Five Pillars of Islam: confession of faith (shahadah), five daily prayers (salah), fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm), charity or alms tax (zakat) and a pilgrimage to Mecca during one's lifetime (hajj).

In this window the crescent (new) moon surrounds and holds the magnificent architecture of Islamic devotion, the mosques and minarets of its cities and towns. While symbols are disallowed in this religion, the crescent moon is the image most clearly identified with Islam. Legend says it was incorporated into Islam in 1453 when the Turks of the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople and adopted the star and crescent of that city's flag as their own. Originally signifying the waxing moon, it is associated with special acts of devotion to God.

We have specifically chosen not to include a star in this window. Often seen in conjunction with the crescent moon, the use of the star has become politicized and many faithful Muslims feel that it does not truly represent Islam.

*Window donated by Fusan Atay Borelli, Kerry Julian and Turkish friends of our church.*



## JUDAISM

As one of the oldest religions of the world, Judaism's core belief in one God was almost unique at its founding. According to Jewish scripture, God revealed himself as the one God to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, and covenanted with him, promising to take special care of the Jews in return for their obedience to his commandments.

Modern Jewish identity is formed by a complex phenomenon involving both a religion and a nation living out a tension between those who advocate a strict adherence to ancient law and tradition and those who prefer a more liberal attitude toward those same laws and traditions.

Dominating this window is the Star of David, recognized as the symbol of Judaism and Jewish identity since the Middle Ages. The number seven is significant in Judaism, and the seven parts of the star (six points and a center) represent, among other things, the creation story. In 1948, the newly established modern state of Israel chose the Star of David on a blue and white field as its flag. Accordingly, blue and white glass is used in the window. A mosaic circle represents the mortar and rock of the Second Temple, its surviving wall being one of Judaism's most sacred sites. The bold primary colors and vivid blues were favorites of the artist Marc Chagall, a Russian born Jew of the 19th century.

*Window donated by Congregation Tikkun Olam.*



## NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY

The circle is an important symbol to Native Americans because it represents the sun, the moon, the cycles of the seasons and the cycle of life to death to rebirth. Also represented by the circle is the medicine wheel, an ancient and powerful symbol of the universe. The medicine wheel, with its four directions depicted by four crystals, shows the many different ways in which all things are interconnected. North is white/fire, symbolizing wisdom and fulfillment. East is yellow/earth and symbolizes spirit and devotion to service. South is red/air, symbolizing emotion, kindness, love and the senses. West is black/water and symbolizes the physical in power and protection.

In the center of the wheel is a turtle carrying 13 moons on its back, depicting the months (cycles) of the Native American year. Central to the creation myths of many Native American tribes is a variation of this story: A divine woman falls from the heavens and is caught by birds as she plummets toward the vast waters below. Growing tired with their burden, the birds call a giant turtle to the water's surface. Then they call other animals to dive under the water and bring up pieces of earth to place on the back of the turtle. Soon the earth forms and the birds place the woman on the earth and mankind spreads. The turtle carries the earth on its back to this day.

The central circular image rests on a background of earth tones, reminding us of our UU principals which emphasize the interdependent web of which we are a part and our duty to love and protect the earth.

*Window donated by the Green Sanctuary Committee, Steven and Stacy Hall, Alan and Andy Myers and Caron and Steve Wenzel.*



## PAGAN

The word 'Pagan', in the original Latin, means 'country dweller'. With the advent of monotheism, it came to mean one who practices polytheism. Today, it usually refers to those who practice an earth-based religion. Many modern Pagans find a belief kinship with the Unitarian Universalist principal emphasizing 'the interdependent web of which we are a part.'

With a striking Goddess as its central image, this window reminds us of our beginnings, paying homage to early 'mother' religions and emphasizing our connection to nature, the earth and the universe. Also representing fertility, the Goddess has been worshipped as 'Mother Goddess' for thousands of years, the spiral in her belly being one of the oldest symbols of human spirituality. Standing in front of the earth (which floats on a star studded black universe), she protects it from harm while holding a globe of unakite above her head, a rock said to carry Goddess energy, balancing the physical and emotional bodies.

*Window donated by Tom and Joan Skiba.*



## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

Unitarian Universalism originates from two offshoots of Christianity: Unitarianism, which rejects the trinity and embraces the unity (oneness) of God; and Universalism, which holds that God will save everyone and no one will suffer eternal punishment. Unitarian churches first appeared in Romania and Poland in the 16th century. In the New World, Unitarianism found a home in many New England Congregational Churches in the late 1700's. Unitarians banded together in the American Unitarian Association (AUA) in 1825. In 1793, Universalism became a protestant denomination in the United States, eventually being called the Universalist Church of America (UCA).

Over the years, the AUA and the UCA evolved into liberal, inclusive religions that shared much in common. In 1961 they merged, forming the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), of which this church is a member.

Although the UUA has its origins in Christianity, it no longer considers itself a Christian denomination.

This window joins the flaming chalice of our Unitarian Universalist tradition with the tree of life, the long-time symbol of this Congregational Unitarian Church. The brightly burning chalice springs from the trunk of our tree, showing that we are grounded in our Unitarian Universalist faith and reminding us of our inner energy. Our tree roots grow deep, symbolizing that our church is here to stay. All of the glass colors used in the other eight windows can be found in the leaves of our tree, suggesting that all faiths are honored in our religion and that we can respect and learn from everyone.

*Window donated by Dan and Pat Larsen*

On behalf of our members, I want to thank Pam for creating our new windows, everyone who financially sponsored them, our Centennial Committee (chaired by Jim Hecht, who also managed the Centennial Celebrations), Andy Gabrielson our carpenter, Dave Dreyer who installed the windows, Sue Richards who photographed them, Don Metivier who printed this brochure, and everyone else who had a part in making them a reality for us.

Their meaning for the church is profound; they are beautiful works of art in which we delight; they balance the century-old Christian windows in our sanctuary; they represent our full spiritual transition from Congregational to Universalist to Unitarian Universalist; they portray many of the sources of the “living Tradition” of the Unitarian Universalist Association; in two instances, Buddhist and Jewish, they represent groups that share our house of worship; they remind us and those from the communities we serve of our spirit of inclusiveness; and they provide a point of pride and direction to us as we move forward from our congregation's history to a larger vision of spiritual and social leadership for our communities, each other and our world.

**Dan Larsen**