
NUUSLETTER

NORTHWOODS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

A Beacon of Light in the Northwoods

P.O. Box 253, Minocqua, WI 54548, <http://nuuf.com>

Terry Hoyt President, 356-3908, Jerry Woolpy, Editor, 356-6276, NUUSLETTER@NUUF.com

Volume 6, Number 8

December 30,

2004 **Coming Sundays**

Taking the Pulpit

Sunday, January 9, 10 AM, Sister Ann Wittman

Sunday, January 23, 10 AM, Jerry Woolpy and Tara Reed, "Bringing in the new year in the Jewish Tradition."

Sunday, February 6, 10 AM, Angela Merkert, Congregational Service Director for the Central Midwest District

Sunday, February 20, 10 AM, Rev Paul Beckel

Sunday, March 6, 10 AM, TBA

Sunday, March 20, 10 AM, Rev Julie Steenberg

Sunday, April 3, 10 AM, Rev Michael Schuler

Adult Religious Education

On alternate Sundays we meet at 10 AM to discuss topics relating religious and ethical issues to current events and considering things that contribute to the spirit and meaning of our group.

Note from the President

We are all hoping that the new year brings better news to the world than we have had in this last year. War, strife, natural disasters and personal losses are hard on all of us. Please remember to join us on January 17th for the healing message of our observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. Our tentative plans are to gather at Torpy Park at 5:00 PM for a candlelight vigil and then to return to the Fellowship for a viewing of one of King's speeches and conversation.

The Board has also set February 19th as the time for a winter retreat where we will come together to brainstorm on the long term plan for our Fellowship. As we keep thinking about how we can be together as a religious community we need to come together in a retreat type setting to share ideas.

This will be the last NUUSLETTER brought to us by Jerry Woolpy as editor (at least

that is the plan as this goes to press). I would personally like to thank Jerry for his many hours and days and expertise in producing the NUUSLETTER. I know what a responsibility it is to see that we have such a means of communication.

And at this time of year when the media and public message is all "happy" and "merry", please remember those who have suffered personal losses and are needing to grieve and have your support. Special condolences go out to Paul Braunstein and to Pat Harrington who have had to suffer the loss of children, and to all who suffer from having lost loved ones. Terry Hoyt

Announcements

Food Pantry News We will be bagging and distributing food this month. Please bring diapers, toiletries, personal care items to the service on **January 9** or to RE on **January 16**. Yes, non-perishable food and cash donations are always welcome as well. I will need 4-5 workers on **Saturday, January 15** for about an hour to get the bags started. I will need 4-5 workers on **Tuesday, January 18** for the morning for distribution. We usually go to lunch afterwards. Please call me at 385-2407 or email me at esommerf@aol.com if you can help or you have questions.

Elinore Sommerfeld

Happy New Year to you all. In an effort to meet the needs of our children, we are making **changes to our children/youth RE programs**. It seems that we have too few children (3) in the Children's RE program so we have decided to have the younger children join the youth whenever the youth have lessons. The youth continue to address the 7 UU principles through music, one principle at a time. The youth group welcomes the younger children to join in these discussions. The Youth Group DOES NOT have a lesson on Sunday, Jan. 9. Susan Knight plans to have a Holiday and Holy Day lesson that Sunday for all of the children and youth of our fellowship. So in addition to Peter, Kim and Mary, all of the older youth not planning on attending the service (Matt, Aaron, Eliot, Avery, Kayla, and Ellie) are welcome to learn about Posadas, a Mexican Christmas Celebration (I believe). Please let Susan know if you DO NOT plan to participate in the lesson. The Youth Group WILL have Mentor Meetings after the service on Jan. 9. See you then. Katie and Rosemary may be able to have a Holiday and Holy Day lesson on March 6 for all of the children and youth since there is no scheduled lesson for the youth on that day.

Andrea Billings

Dick and Mary Ann Fields new email address: dmafields@yahoo.com

Martin Luther King Day: The plan for the January 17th, 5 PM observance is to conduct a half hour candlelight vigil at Torpy Park. No speakers. Just people, candles, and silence. Then all are invited afterwards to go to the Fellowship Building for coffee, hot chocolate, desserts and a video of one of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches. We are asking that people bring a donation for the Lakeland Food Pantry.

Please return your **Guest at Your Table boxes** or donations at the January 9th service.

Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oak Park, Illinois seeks a \$33K+ **office and facilities manager**. Send applications Attn: Personnel/Unity Temple/875 Lake

Street/ Oak Park IL 60304.

District Assembly Workshop Presenter Proposal Form: For those interested in presenting a workshop in April will be able to respond by the deadline of January 5. The theme for the 2005 District Assembly, to be held in Arlington Heights, IL is: **Creating Beloved Community: The Challenge and The Promise.** For the form contact Carol Hosmer at 708-236-0831 or [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#) Questions: contact Dori Davenport [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#)

Joys & Concerns

I sent my first NUUsletter on March 4th, 1998, and from then to now at six week intervals for a total of fifty-seven issues. In the course I learned a lot about format, editing, email, UU relations, ministers, presidents, secretaries, and an appreciative membership. It was lots of fun! Thanks for the opportunity. Jerry Woolpy

Dear Friends: It is with great sorrow to let you know of the **death of our beloved son Kenneth** on December 22. Ken died of a massive heart attack while in a Florida hospital being treated for his colitis condition. He was 50 years of age. We will have a memorial service for Ken and also for our grandson Eric who was killed in an auto accident in October on his way back to college. This will be in May or June. Life Goes ON.

Paul and Irma Braunstein

Minutes of NUUF Board Meeting, November 19, 2004

In attendance: Terry Hoyt, Joan Hauer, Tom Somerfeld, Alan VanRaalte, Sharon VanRaalte and Mark Bruhy

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Terry Hoyt at 9:00 a.m..

Approval of October Board Meeting Notes: Alan VanRaalte moved that the October Board meeting notes be approved, Tom seconded and the motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Tom Somerfeld distributed the budget summary, which covers expenditures and receipts through October of 2004 (filed with these notes). The Board reviewed the summary and had no questions for the Treasurer; the report was accepted as presented. In a related matter Terry asked Tom if the Finance Committee had met, and Tom said he they had not. Tom noted he would be in touch with the Committee membership, and it was acknowledged by the Board that a meeting is somewhat critical considering the need to begin preparation for next year's budget. Additionally, Terry mentioned that a Fellowship member had asked about the possibility of a gift of stock to meet their annual Fellowship contribution. He shared the process with the member, and noted that it was a relatively easy process.

Committee Reports:

Building Expansion Committee: Terry noted that the Committee had submitted a written report which mentions that on December 16th, in Wausau, the North Central Technical College architectural design students will present their proposal for building expansion to the Committee. Dick Fields will announce this presentation to the Fellowship at the next service Sunday.

Membership Committee: Regarding membership, it was noted that Jim and Cindy Rusak have requested that their membership status be changed from “friends” to “associate” members. Additionally, Julie and Rick Wambach have requested that their membership status be changed from “active” to “associate” members.

Social Justice Committee: It was noted that the Committee does not currently have a chairperson. With Martin Luther King Day approaching, Terry said that he would contact the committee membership and suggest a committee meeting to begin planning for an event.

Pastoral Care Committee: It was mentioned that a Pastoral Care Committee has not yet been formed, though several people have expressed an interest and will be considered for committee membership.

Program Committee: the committee has met informally and come up with several program topics, and the Board will encourage the Fellowship to suggest other potential programs. Additionally, Program Committee member Mary Ann Fields has asked the Board if a student minister is being considered since this would have bearing on developing future services. The Board acknowledged the issue must be addressed, and Terry said he would be in touch with the Committee and assist in determining how to proceed with this issue. Additionally, the retreat planned for February 6th, coordinated by the Long Range Planning Committee and the Board, may have some bearing on this issue.

Music Committee: the Music Committee is planning the holiday service, scheduled for Saturday December 18th. The service will be followed by a pot luck dinner.

Buildings and Grounds Committee: the Committee has reported that Island City Dray will soon be presenting a proposal for driveway improvements.

Other Business: following the November 28th service, there will be a brief business meeting that will address the issue of (1) authorization for the Board to designate members who can perform marriages and (2) the Fellowship’s endowment policy (a policy must be in place prior to the end of the calendar year).

Angela Merkert Visit: Terry noted that he contacted Angela Merkert, Central Midwest District, regarding a report of her August visit, and she noted that the report will soon be prepared and submitted to the Board.

Winter Retreat: Saturday February 19th was suggested as a tentative date for a winter retreat that will address the Long Range Planning Committee’s interest in addressing future Fellowship direction. Terry said that he would contact Angela Merkert and ask her if she would be interested in facilitating such a session, or she would recommend someone who would be interested.

Building Use Requests: The only new building use request was by a representative of a Wicca group that would like to use the Fellowship for meetings. Terry will prepare a response that outlines building use and policy, though he noted that through his discussion with the group’s representative, there appears to be no potential conflicts with Fellowship policies.

Howard Young Medical Center Library: Terry has purchased a book for the library of Howard Young Medical Center. The book includes selected readings about religions of the world.

Next Meeting: The next Board meeting is scheduled for Friday January 7th at 9:00 a.m.
The Meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m. Respectfully submitted,
Mark Bruhy, Secretary

Empires prefer a baby and the cross to the adult Jesus

From Constantine to Bush, power has needed to stifle a revolutionary message

By Giles Fraser--reprinted without permission from The Guardian, 12/24/04

Every Sunday in church, Christians recite the Nicene Creed. "Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and was made man; was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried; and the third day rose again according to the Scriptures." It's the official summary of the Christian faith but, astonishingly, it jumps straight from birth to death, apparently indifferent to what happened in between.

Nicene Christianity is the religion of Christmas and Easter, the celebration of a Jesus who is either too young or too much in agony to shock us with his revolutionary rhetoric. The adult Christ who calls his followers to renounce wealth, power and violence is passed over in favour of the gurgling baby and the screaming victim. As such, Nicene Christianity is easily conscripted into a religion of convenience, with believers worshipping a gagged and glorified saviour who has nothing to say about how we use our money or whether or not we go to war.

Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire with the conversion of the emperor Constantine in 312, after which the church began to backpedal on the more radical demands of the adult Christ. The Nicene Creed was composed in 325 under the sponsorship of Constantine. It was Constantine who decided that December 25 was to be the date on which Christians were to celebrate the birth of Christ and it was Constantine who ordered the building of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Christmas - a festival completely unknown to the early church - was invented by the Roman emperor. And from Constantine onwards, the radical Christ worshipped by the early church would be pushed to the margins of Christian history to be replaced with the infinitely more accommodating religion of the baby and the cross.

The adult Jesus described his mission as being to "preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed". He insisted that the social outcast be loved and cared for, and that the rich have less chance of getting into heaven than a camel has of getting through the eye of a needle. Jesus set out to destroy the imprisoning obligations of debt, speaking instead of forgiveness and the redistribution of wealth. He was accused of blasphemy for attacking the religious authorities as self-serving and hypocritical.

In contrast, the Nicene religion of the baby and the cross gives us Christianity without the politics. The Posh and Becks nativity scene is the perfect tableau into which to place this Nicene baby, for like the much-lauded celebrity, this Christ is there to be gazed upon and adored - but not to be heard or heeded. In a similar vein, modern evangelical choruses

offer wave upon wave of praise to the name of Jesus, but offer little political or economic content to trouble his adoring fans.

Yet despite the silence of the baby, it should be perfectly obvious to anyone who has actually read the Christmas stories that the gospel regards the incarnation as challenging the existing order. The pregnant Mary anticipates Christ's birth with some fiery political theology: God "has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly, he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty", she blazes. Born among farm labourers, yet worshipped by kings, Christ announces an astonishing reversal of political authority. The local imperial stooge, King Herod, is so threatened by rumours of his birth that he sends troops to Bethlehem to find the child and kill him. Herod recognised that to claim Jesus is lord and king is to say that Caesar isn't. Christ's birth is not a silent night - it's the beginning of a revolution that threatened to undermine the whole basis of Roman power.

Little wonder, then, that influential US Christian commentator Jim Wallis created a storm earlier in the year when he penned an attack upon "Bush's theology of empire", helpfully illustrated with a picture of Bush made up to look like the emperor Constantine. "Once there was Rome, now there is a new Rome," argued Wallis.

Constantine was converted to Christianity by a vision that came to him on the eve of the battle of Milvian Bridge: "He saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'By this sign, conquer' ". Soon the cross would morph from being a hated symbol of Roman brutality into the universally recognisable logo of the Holy Roman Empire. Within a century, St Augustine would develop the novel idea of just war, trimming the church's originally pacifist message to the needs of the imperial war machine.

Like Constantine, George Bush has borrowed the language of Christianity to support and justify his military ambition. And just like that of Constantine, the Christianity of this new Rome offers another carefully edited version of the Bible. Once again, the religion that speaks of forgiving enemies and turning the other cheek is pressed into military service.

The story of Christmas, properly understood, asserts that God is not best imagined as an all-powerful despot but as a vulnerable and pathetic child. It's a statement about the nature of divine power. But in the hands of conservative theologians, the Nicene religion of the baby and the cross is a way of distracting attention away from the teachings of Christ. It's a form of religion that concentrates on things like belief in the virgin birth while ignoring the fact that the gospels are much more concerned about the treatment of the poor and the forgiveness of enemies.

Bush may have claimed that "Jesus Christ changed my life", but Jesus doesn't seem to have changed his politics. As the carol reminds us: "And man at war with man hears not the love song that they bring, O hush the noise ye men of strife and hear the angels sing."

· The Rev Dr Giles Fraser is vicar of Putney and lecturer in philosophy at Wadham College, Oxford

Getting the NUUsletter

In addition to the usual Microsoft Word format, the NUUsletter is available in Adobe PDF format that is readable by any computer, Mac or PC. If you do not have an Adobe Reader you can download one free at

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

With this software the NUUsletter will be formatted as it is in Microsoft Word and the Word program will not be required.

Place
Stamp
Here

Previous NUUsletters and the congregation directory are available at nuuf.com. Click on "Members Only." The user name is NUUF. But you need to remember the secret password. If you have forgotten it, contact Jerry Woolpy, jerryw@earlham.edu

Next NUUsletter Deadline, Sunday, February 6, 2004

NUUsletter
Northwoods UU Fellowship
P.O. Box 253
Minocqua WI 54548-0253

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

