
NUUSLETTER

NORTHWOODS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

A Beacon of Light in the Northwoods

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

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June 30,

2003 Coming Sundays

Taking the Pulpit

Sunday, 10 AM, July 13, Rev Sydney Morris

Sunday, 10 AM, July 27, Rabbi Dan Danson, The Jewish Left: What to do when everybody won't play nice.

Sunday, 10 AM, August 10, TBA¹

Sunday, 10 AM, August 24, Rev Sydney Morris

Sunday, 10 AM, September 7

Sunday, 10 AM, September 21

Adult Religious Education

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

The President's Message

We're getting ready to have our new board meet for the first time on July 11th at 9:30 A.M. The new board is made up of myself, Alan VanRaalte, Joan Hauer, and Mark Bruhy. For those of you who don't know we are losing Ruth Erbs as our treasurer. Ruth has served us well for many years as our treasurer and fully intended to serve another term, but she has problems with her eyesight that has now caused her to ask us to find a replacement for her. The nomination committee has discussed who might be a replacement for her and has recommended that the Board fill the vacancy by appointing Tom Sommerfeld. Under our by-laws the Board may fill vacancies until our next annual meeting so this will be one of the first items of business at our next board meeting.

We will also be reviewing all of our committees. Our by-laws provide that the Board will appoint the Fellowship standing committees and appoint such additional committees as the board deems necessary. If anyone is interested in serving on any of our committees

¹ There will be a service at the fellowship and one at Van Riper State Park Michigan, see announcements.

or would like to discontinue participation on one of our committees, please let a board member know so that we can consider who wants to participate in different ways on our committees.

Another item for consideration at this next board meeting will be how we move ahead with the long range planning committee's survey. Doris Eberlein is the committee chair of that committee and will be at the meeting to discuss this with the board.

The board will also be discussing how committees spend money. At the annual meeting there was discussion about having a policy developed in regards to expenditures and the board has agreed to moving forward on dealing with those issues.

In closing let me just apologize for being so business oriented in this communication. We need to remember that we are a community of sharing caring people. We can all benefit from each others support. Be sure to pay extra attention to those in need and give them your support.

Terry Hoyt ▪

Joys & Concerns

Ruth Erbs has provided extraordinary service to the fellowship as our treasurer for many years. She has kept our books flawlessly, provided accurate and current information about our finances, managed our accounts, and kept us from profligacy. While this is precisely what a treasurer is supposed to do, we all know that is not always the case. We have been truly fortunate to have the help of such a consistent and diligent friend. Congratulations Ruth for a job well done. ▪

Paul Braunstein has directed NUUF efforts at the Minocqua Food Pantry for as long as most of our collective memories can fathom. He has raised our consciousness of the needy in our community and provided the opportunity for us to help. Though we think of him as tireless because he has always been on the job, he has agreed to step back a bit and enjoy just helping out at the food pantry as his successor learns the job. Thank you Paul for your many years of leadership of this important community effort. ▪

The membership thanks Patty Buehler for her careful work as our secretary for the past two years. Patty has managed not only to record the work of the board and the annual meeting, she is the first secretary to have minutes published dutifully and in a timely fashion in the NUUsletter.

We participated in the local food pantry last week. Volunteers included Paul Braunstein, Patty Buehler, Jerry Buerer, Alan and Sharon VanRaalte and Tom and Elinore Sommerfeld. ▪

Our distinguished pianist, **Cora Holt**, has also distinguished herself as a member of the Lakeland Thunderbird girls' soccer team that finished the season with a perfect 8-0 record to win the conference title by two games. Cora, along with five of her champion teammates, was named to the Northern Lights all-conference team. She scored 15 goals, and led the team in assists with 12. She had 15 steals, the second highest. "Cora has great ball control and great dribbling skills. A lot of goals came off her corner kicks, and her placement of the ball contributed a lot to her 12 assists...she's a team player...looking to

make the right pass,” said Coach Rhonda Maulson. ▪

The 2003 Northwoods UU Fellowship **Auction** was a big success. Twenty-seven members and friends attended to enjoy camaraderie at its best. "Colonel Jerry Buerer" was an excellent and entertaining auctioneer. He may have found a new career if his voice holds out. Net earnings from the Silent Auction, Service Auction, book sale and donations for food and drink were \$2008.91. Many thanks go to Dick fields for the computer work:: to Colonel Jerry Buerer, for volunteering to be our auctioneer, and Alan VanRaalte who did the computing of the bids and totaling the accounts of the various bidders. Thanks also to the many members and friends who donated for the silent auction and to those who offered service items to bid on, as well as the bidders. Hopefully this will become a yearly event.

▪

Announcements

Elinore Sommerfeld will be our new food pantry leader and Tom Sommerfeld will be our new treasurer. Elinore and Tom have been “itinerant members” here for a while. Now they have moved in permanently and signed the book officially. So we are twice blessed.

The **Social Justice** Committee is sponsoring a meeting of area residents on July 3, 2003 at 12 p.m. noon at the Rhinelander District Library in Rhinelander to learn why and how American citizens across the country are joining with their local governments to protect their civil rights and liberties from the USA Patriot Act. Jerry Woolpy will be speaking along with speakers from other organizations. This meeting is designed for discussion and action. Please plan to attend. (Audrey Williams) ▪

Building & Grounds Committee will meet Wednesday, July 9, 12:00 Noon. ▪

The **Social Justice** Committee will meet on July 14, 2003 at 7 p.m. at the Fellowship. Everyone is welcome to attend. (Audrey Williams) ▪

The **Women and Religion** Committee of the Central Midwest District announce their annual summer gathering at Watervliet, Michigan, August 1-3. Contact Tricia Dean, bizetchantal@yahoo.com or 815 462 9166. Also see www.womenandreligion.org. ▪

The Kewanee UU Fellowship of Houston, and the Marquette UU Fellowship have invited our congregation to join them on **August 10th at the Van Riper State Park in Michigan for an outdoor service** at 10:30 a.m. our time (CDT). [The park is 17 miles west of Ishpeming on US-41.] Rev. Sydney Morris and the Rev. Kayle Rice minister of the Marquette Fellowship will be leading the service. We hope to offer carpools. Paul and Irma are considering going up the day before and would welcome any others to join them. Paul is looking into overnight accommodations in the area. Please contact Mary Ann Fields for directions to the park and mileage. There is a \$5 entrance fee. There is a swimming beach and a bathhouse in the park. We will have a potluck after the service. In case of rain the service will be in the pavilion. Mary Ann's phone number is 385 2975 and e-mail address is: fields@ pikx.com ▪

Children's Religious Education

Andrea Billings

Susan Knight and I are deeply grateful to those of you who contributed to the children's RE program this past year by bringing honored UUs and others to our children through the time machine. It was a successful year and your contribution made it so.

We wish to extend a special thank you to Sydney who has been working wonderfully with our older youth. We cannot thank her enough for her expertise. It takes great willingness, patience, and persistence to pull together our intensely busy older youth.

This next year we plan to run two programs for our children and young youth. The 7th and 8th graders will participate in the Church Across the Street program where they will visit other religions to discover differing faiths. The children in grades 1 through 6 may participate in the art-centered curriculum or the Holidays and Holy Days program; we have not yet decided. We would appreciate your help. Please let Susan know if you are interested in assisting her with the younger children or let me know if you are interested in assisting with the Church Across the Street program. We intend to meet early in August to plan next year. ■

Minutes of Board Meeting

May 1, 2003

Present: Terry Hoyt, Alan Van Raalte, Sharon Van Raalte, Audrey Williams, Doris Eberlein, Sydney Morris, Ruth Erbs, Joe Strauss, Patty Buehler, Joyce Barnes.

Ministers Report: Accepted

Next meeting: Thursday, June 5, 9:30.

Treasurer's report: 3rd Quarter-revenue.....\$30,353
expenses.....\$24,280
March 10-April 30, 2003 revenue.....\$1977.98
expenses..... \$5617.20
bank balance...\$14063.00

There was discussion about the finance committee procedure informing members of their pledge status. Alan moved to approve the report. Patty Buehler seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Evaluation of Minister: The letter of Agreement between the fellowship and Sydney Morris states "An annual review and evaluation process focused on the relationship between the Congregation and the Minister will be conducted each spring before the

annual meeting, initiated by the Board...” Terry Hoyt contacted the Committee on the Ministry, Sydney Morris, and the board members about the relationship between Sydney and the Congregation. All found the relationship to be “fine”.

Budget for 2003-2004: The Finance Committee submitted a proposed budget, totaling \$39,090. Pledges and estimated midyear pledges, Sunday donations and fundraiser revenues fell over \$5700 short of budget requests from committees and other expenses. The finance committee recommended allocating excess funds from previous years to make up for the shortfall. This would essentially eliminate the excess. Alan Van Raalte suggested compromising by reducing the committee budgets for next year to this year’s level if the budget requests were over this year’s. This reduced the budget by \$2962. The board agreed to the compromise. There was discussion about the annual meeting procedure to approve the budget. The Social Justice Committee budget and the issue about contributing to charitable organizations were discussed. We agreed that the congregation needs to have a policy about charitable giving. We discussed the Publicity Committee budget. We agreed that the committee budget requests should be sent with the other information to members prior to the annual meeting.

Food Pantry: Paul Braunstein is currently our representative to the Food Pantry. The Sommerfelds are willing to take Paul’s place in the future.

Building Use: Joyce Barnes requested the use of the building for a concert performed by violinist, Robert Schubert, in late June. This could possibly be a fundraiser for the fellowship, with donations requested for dinner and performance. Joyce asked for help in making ethnic dishes. Patty Buehler moved to approve the use of the building for the concert and dinner, Alan Van Raalte seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Minutes of the February board meeting: Alan moved to approve the minutes. Ruth seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Minutes of the March meeting: Alan moved to approve the minutes. Ruth seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Long Range Planning Committee: Doris Eberlein requested \$250 to send out 112 questionnaires to members, associate members and some friends. She wasn’t sure of the exact cost of the printing. Doris recognized Jim Williams and Jerry Woolpy for their help in writing and distributing the questionnaires. Alan moved to approve \$300 for the committee. Ruth seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation: Audrey reported on the results of the questionnaire about the Welcoming Congregation curriculum. Thirty-one people wanted to participate. After coffee hour on service Sundays was the most popular time. Still to be decided was how often to meet, once or twice a month. Alan moved to proceed with the Welcoming Congregation plans. Ruth seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Membership Committee: Sharon reported that we have 51 voting members. Two new members joined in the last year.

Finance and Building and Grounds submitted minutes of their last meetings.

The Central Midwest District sent a reminder about Two Midwest Leadership School sessions this summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Buehler

Secretary Patty Buehler left at 12:35. PM. The Meeting continued.

Board appointed Sharon VanRaalte acting, non-voting secretary.

The following agenda was adopted for May 31 Annual Meeting:

- 1) Call to order:
 - 2) Determine the presence of a Quorum:
 - 3) Approval of minutes:
 - 4) Treasure's Report:
 - 5) Minister's Report: If she would like to give one.
 - 6) Committee Reports:
 - 7) Proposed Budget of 2003 – 2004
 - 7.1) Discussion of excess funds
 - 8) Nominating Committee recommendations for open positions:
Board Positions
Treasurer: Ruth Erbs
Secretary: Mark Bruhy
Board Member at Large: Joan Hauer
Memorial Park Committee Members
Three-Year Term: Jim Williams
Remainder of term vacated by Tom Graber, One-Year:
Barbara Beutler
 - 9) Election of the following positions:
Board Positions
Treasurer:
Secretary:
Board Member at Large:
Memorial Park Committee Members:
Three-Year Term:
One-Year Term:
 - 10) Appointment of the Nominating Committee:
 - 11) Discuss contribution to outside organizations:
Alan VanRaalte made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ruth Erbs.
- Meeting adjourned at 1: 05 P.M.
Respectfully submitted
Sharon VanRaalte ▪

Unapproved Minutes of Annual Meeting

May 31, 2003

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 10:08 AM.

Present: Terry and Terri Hoyt, Patty Buehler, Alan and Sharon Van Raalte, Joan Hauer, Ruth and Harley Erbs, Charmaine Winters, Dan Rondello, Jerry Woolpy, Joe and Bev Strauss, Rick and Julie Wambach, Tim Kratz, Don Barnes, Dick and Mary Ann Fields, Doris and Art Eberlein, Barb Beutler, Mark and Katie Bruhy, Susan Knight, Sydney Morris, Diane and Ron Reupert, Paul and Irma Braunstein, Jack and Joan Hafner, and Wenda Sheard.. President, Terry Hoyt declared we have a quorum.

Approval of Agenda: There was no opposition to the agenda.

Approval of last year's annual meeting minutes: Irma Braunstein moved to approve the minutes. Diane Reupert seconded the motion. Wenda Sheard offered a correction to the minutes. The minutes were approved as corrected.

Proxies: Sharon VanRaalte has been designated proxi for Audrey Williams. Wenda Sheard has been designated proxi for Richard Thieret.

Treasurer's report: Doris Eberlein moved to place Treasurer's report on file. Art Eberlein seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Minister's report: Sydney Morris highlighted her many accomplishments in a written report.

Banner: Doris Eberlein unveiled a beautiful banner that she made for General Assembly. Dick Fields and Jerry Woolpy were thanked for there help in the project.

Committee reports: Written reports were submitted by most committees. In addition to the written reports, committee representatives made the following comments.

Membership: Sharon VanRaalte announced the addition of two new members, Dana Stowitts and Quentin Gabor. Sharon offered a correction to the written report, including Doris Eberlein as a member of the committee.

Program: Jerry Woolpy requested titles and topics of services for the NUUsletter.

Publicity: Jerry Woolpy estimated the number of NUUsletters sent by mail to be 20, and those sent by email to be 70-75. Jerry reported greater success publicizing events thru emails than through newspaper ads. Other free advertizing includes notices in the Lakeland Times and WXPR announcements. Jerry will contact the Chamber of Commerce as another publicity source. Doris Eberlein recommended asking visitors how they heard about us.

Children's RE: Susan Knight reported that the past year there have been 5 children, from 3rd to 7th grade, in the RE program. The children learned about important people from the past who influenced UUism. The annual children's program will be given tomorrow. Kayla Norris will be a paid childcare provider for summer services. Next year the children will be separated into two groups. Andrea Billings will teach the "Church across the Street" curriculum for the older children, and Susan will teach either "Holidays and Holy Days or and art-centered curriculum for the younger children. Susan asked for help next year from the rest of the fellowship. There was discussion of some ideas to improve RE.

Long Range Planning Committee: Doris Eberlein reported that 112 individuals were mailed surveys, and 76 surveys were returned. The committee hopes to have a plan for growth by October 1, 2003.

Building and Grounds: There was discussion about a chair rail for the sanctuary.

Committee on the Ministry: Tim Kratz asked that any issues about the relationship between

the minister and the congregation be brought to the committee. Members of this committee are Tim Kratz, Joe Strauss and Julie Wambach.

Social Activities and Hospitality: Bev Strauss reported that the budget request for this committee increased due to the purchase of coffee from the UUSC. This committee has organized Friday night movies the second Friday of the month.

Memorial Garden: Don Barnes and Mark Bruhy are the current members. They have maintained the garden this past year, acquired 3 new benches, and 2 new plaques. There was discussion about Dr. Kates Hospice developing a garden next door. Dick Fields has a copy of the written procedure policies concerning the memorial garden, and will give it to those who want one. Doris Eberlein stated that the membership committee would like a copy to be included in new member folders.

Finance Committee: Patty Buehler summarized the duties of the committee, including notices to members about their pledge status, securing budget request from the committees, and organizing the annual fund drive.

Nominating Committee Report: Doris Eberlein moved to accept the nominating committee's recommendations for treasurer (Ruth Erbs), secretary (Mark Bruhy), and board member-at-large (Joan Hauer). Paul Braunstein seconded the motion. Tim Kratz moved that nominations be closed and that we accept the slate by acclamation.. Jerry Woolpy seconded the motion. The motion carried. Wenda Sheard moved to accept the nominating committee's recommendations for memorial garden members (Jim Williams-3 year term and Barb Beutler-1 year term), to close the nominations and accept the slate by acclamation. Tim Kratz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Budget 2003-2004: Tim Kratz introduced the budget making the motion to move \$1000 from Board Discretionary Fund to Minister's salary. Dick Fields expressed a desire to increase the Building Reserve by \$500. Ruth Erbs reported that the building reserve now has \$3091. Doris Eberlein suggested that the Long Range Planning Committee could come up with a plan including line items for the building reserve. Patty Buehler reported that \$1400 had been pledged since the budget report was distributed. Tim Kratz moved to put the \$1400 into the Board Discretionary Fund. Don Barnes seconded the motion. The motion carried. Joe Strauss stated he hoped the board would consider supporting a paid RE director. Wenda Sheard moved to move \$400 from the board Discretionary Fund to Meeting Fund. Paul Braunstein seconded the motion. The motion carried with two members opposed. Terry Hoyt asked for a vote on the budget. The budget was adopted. Mary Ann Fields moved that excess funds we may have from this fiscal year be spent or saved at the discretion of the board. Doris Eberlein seconded the motion. The motion carried with 2 members opposed.

Nominating Committee: Tim Kratz, Joe Strauss, and Jerry Woolpy volunteered to be on the nominating committee. Terry asked for a vote. These three were voted to be the new nominating committee.

Contributions to Outside Organizations: Wenda Sheard moved to thank Jim Williams for his letter and to agree to adopt the letter as an expression of our sentiments. Jerry Woolpy seconded the motion. Terry Hoyt informed us that there are legal issues we, as a

501C3 organization, need to consider. After further discussion, the motion did not carry. Mary Ann Fields moved to have the board develop a policy about contributing to outside organizations, and to come back to the congregation to vote on the policy. Jerry Woolpy seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Adjournment: Wenda Sheard moved to adjourn. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Buehler

Success

According to the Ralph Waldo Emerson, is:

To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people, and the affection of children.

To earn the appreciation of honest critics, to endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition.

To know even one life has breathed easier because you lived.

This is to have succeeded.

(Taken from *Girlosophy: a soul survival kit*, Anthea Paul, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest Australia, 2000, page 66.) ■

Art Work Of The Month

For Members and Friends

Sharon VanRaalte

Many UU Churches have art exhibits including the church in Rockford where I was a member. I always enjoyed the many different mediums they had on display and I thought perhaps N.U.U.F. members and friends would enjoy it also. I went to the Board to see what they thought of the idea. The Board was receptive and provided some guidelines.

Artwork of the month exhibit will begin in July 2003.

- 1) The piece must fit the area on which it is to be displayed. Wall hangings no larger than approximately 24”X27” will be displayed to the right of the hallway door. Sculptures and other freestanding pieces will be displayed on the piano or organ.
- 2) A 3X5 card with a brief description about the artist or subject should accompany the piece.
- 3) It can be either something you created or something you would like to share with the congregation.
- 4) The space can be used to provide a forum for local artists that attend the fellowship. Original works of art can be for sale with the proceeds going to the artist but prices should not be shown on the piece.
- 5) A photograph will be taken of the piece and placed in a safety deposit box while it is in the fellowship for insurance purposes.
- 6) The artwork should be pre-approved before it is displayed.
- 7) No one can display an article in consecutive months or more than three times a year.
- 8) There will be a sign up sheet in the kitchen for those who are interested in displaying their works of art. ▪

9 hours until UU

(a mostly unrhymed sonnet)

By Jacqueline Jankowski

May 2003

On Wednesday nights a strange pack
makes their way
Through woods sprouting within us and
without
To this oasis nestled in the trees
To safety, candle glow and fellowship.
We gather here, sit, cuddle, contemplate,
10

And bare our souls to poetry and tea
And let the silence put our minds to rest
And pass a moment in a quiet world
Where work, and families, loves and
 hopes and fears,
Are presently forgotten for an hour
And we all drown in comfort and sweet
 words
And lose the weight that keeps us here on
 earth
So we may fly away from our own lives:
This is the way that each of us survives.

Note: Jackie wrote this poem about our group of Unitarian-Universalist students and other students living at Conserve School this school year 2002-2003 and worshipping together on Wednesday nights with guidance from Rev. Sydney Morris. We present this framed poem, some of our favorite Chai Tea, and some honey to Sydney on June 1, 2003 in appreciation for her visits to our group during this school year. Thanks, Sydney! ▪

Attendance Trends at the Fellowship

In response to a question that was asked at the annual meeting, the Membership Committee has been recording attendance since October 20, 2002 for the purpose of determining trends for both the winter and the summer months.

Until more information is available, winter months have been arbitrarily defined as October through May and summer months as June through November as most of the snowbirds return in late May or early June and leave by the first of November. While there are not yet attendance records for summer months, there is enough information for winter months to begin limited analysis.

The total attendance for service Sundays from October 20, 2002 through May 25, 2003 was 627. This includes the attendance for the Winter Solstice program (54) and excludes Sundays, January 19 and April 20, 2003 for which attendances were not recorded. The average attendance for this period (16 services with recorded attendance) was 39.2. The median was 39. Also during this period, we averaged 3 guests per week.

The total attendance for Religious Education during the same period was 121 with an average of 12.1 and a median of 12. There were only 10 RE Sundays for which attendances were recorded.

Sharon VanRaalte, Chair
Membership Committee

Anniversaries

Joe and Bev. Strauss	07-01
Rick and Julie Wambach	07-02
Dick and Mary Ann Fields	07-07
Art and Doris Eberlein	07-11
Paul and Irma Braunstein	07-12
Charles and Janice Reed	07-19
Quentin Gabor and Dana Stowitts	07-26
Bob and Toni Lieppert Polfus	07-30
Nancy and Perry Junkerman	08-01
Jack and Joan Hafner	08-18
Tim Kratz and Annamarie Beckle	08-27

Birthdays

Terri Hoyt	07-02
Mary Ann Fields	07-07
Audrey Willams	07-18
Randy Wendt	07-22
Tom Sommerfeld	07-22
Harley Erbs	07-29
Elinore Sommerfeld	08-02
Susan Knight	08-04
Janice Reed	08-04
Joan Hauer	08-07
Candace Zahn Cain	08-07
Jerry Woolpy	08-14
Eliot Frost	08-26

NUU Views

Question: In her book, Beyond belief: the secret gospel of Thomas, Elaine Pagels writes, "Most of us, sooner or later, find at critical points in our life, we must strike out on our own to make a path where none exists." In discussing this with Bill Moyers (<http://www.pbs.org/now/society/pagels.html>) Pagels said that in times of personal crisis, "many of us have to try to bushwhack...on the spiritual level...spiritual exploration takes many forms. It often engages many traditions." Pagels makes a distinction between faith and belief. "Faith is a quality of relationship," which can be verified or betrayed in

experience. In contrast to belief, which has no verification, but is “supposed to be taken on somebody else’s word.” Faith “requires practice and experience and intuition.” The gospel of Thomas and some other spiritual sources, “talk not about believing in God, but about a human capacity...something each of us has...to experience a connection with God...” Does this distinction between faith and belief help us to understand Unitarian Universalism and why so many UUs reject their past religious experience rather than incorporate it?

Answer from Alan VanRaaltes: The short answer to this question is, yes. However, to flesh out the answer I went delving into my trusty New World Dictionary (although its latest copyright date of 1979 might call into question the moniker “New”) to review the precise meanings of the words faith and belief. In it I found that the synonym for belief is: “faith [that] implies complete, unquestioning acceptance of something even in the absence of proof and especially of something not supported by reason.” Not much help there.

In fact, it was this definition of faith that prompted me to leave the religion of my youth in the first place. That I was to have faith in the Nicene Creed carried with it the implication, whether the practitioners realized it or not, that I was required to believe that THEY knew the exact nature of God, creation and the universe and that I was supposed to accept THEIR definitions and THEIR omniscience “even in the absence of proof and especially of something not supported by reason.”

I find little of what I learned in that fundamentalist Christian church germane to any real religious discussion or relevant to today’s world. I don’t believe that the universe was created in six days. I don’t believe that Jonah was swallowed by “a great fish” and lived. I don’t believe that the Jews brought the holocaust on themselves by rejecting Jesus. I don’t believe that homosexuality is an abomination and I don’t believe that Mohandas Gandhi will go to hell simply because he wasn’t a Christian or that Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson will go to heaven simply because they are. Nor do I have faith that the people who held these beliefs and tried to inculcate me with them really knew what religion is about.

Ironically, as it was mistrust of faith that led me to Unitarian Universalism, it is faith that keeps me here. But it is the faith of others: their faith in me that I will respect their religious beliefs and not try to impose my own onto them; their faith in me to follow a religious path of my own investigation and definition that is as valid as any other; their belief that no one is better qualified to determine my path of religious investigation than me. Unlike my previous religious experience, others do not question my faith and belief structure; rather, I am trusted to practice my faith by questioning it and the underlying beliefs myself. I am trusted to pursue truth wherever it takes me and apply those truths to alter my beliefs where necessary and - I hope - in considered application of reason and proof. In the spirit of Thomas, by exercising my own intuition, I experience my own connection with God, however I define the term.

This, I believe, is the “quality of relationship” with faith that Pagels was talking about.

Answer from Wenda Sheard: Truth be told, until today I’ve never had to distinguish between faith and belief. As a UU, I’ve felt free to believe whatever I want within the context of our principles and purposes.

Next comes a dirty little secret: I've also felt free to reject a principle or purpose but I've fully realized that with a rejection would come my voluntary ejection from UUism. Many born UUs, exercising this ultimate freedom of belief, have left the UU fold over the years.

Perhaps, just perhaps, UUism needs to be upfront and evangelic about the fact that we need a shared hard-core belief to survive and grow as a denomination. We need to tell people that our principles and purposes need no verification and are "supposed to be taken on our word."

Our denomination is broken if we skip the belief part and emphasize the faith part alone. Faith, which "requires practice and experience and intuition," is empty without a shared belief under-girding the faith.

I encourage new UUs to accept our principles and purposes without question. I also encourage new UUs to keep the faith elements of their former religious traditions. We all benefit from sharing practices, experiences, and intuitions. The belief-innocent babies we save from discarded bathwater flourish under our principles and purposes.

Answer from Jerry Buerer: Quite frankly, I don't buy Pagels' distinction between "faith" and "belief" so my answer to the question is no, I don't think this distinction does anything at all to help us understand Unitarian Universalism nor to explain why so many UUs reject their past religious experience rather than incorporate it. In fact, since I'm in a cantankerous mood, I'll quibble with the notion that so many reject their past religious experience. Rather, I think that while many do indeed reject parts of their early religious experience, many also simply revise and re-shape those experiences and then do incorporate, so while we may change affiliation, in many cases there are more holdover elements than we sometimes care to admit.

To me, a person's faith pretty much consists of the sum total of his or her beliefs. Some beliefs can be verified or proven, some can't. It's that simple.

Again, I don't understand Pagels' notion of faith being "a quality of relationship." I get the feeling that part of what theologians are paid to do is obfuscate, since by doing so they create work for other theologians, and in the case, I believe Prof. Pagels has succeeded.

Place Stamp Here

Answer from Dick Fields: I do not see the same distinction between faith and belief as expressed by Pagels. To me these two words are similar as one could say they believe there is a God or could say they have faith their is a God. The statement by Pagels that faith can be verified or betrayed by experience to me does not make sense.

My religious background is Methodist. I have rejected those teachings and beliefs that appear illogical or unfeasible. If any beliefs were questioned we were told we had to have faith, as the basis of the belief is the Bible, which is the true word of God. That requires a lot of faith or is that belief?

The question for the next NUUSLETTER is: Rev. Nels Oas, in his pulpit essay, "Emerson on Ethics, Ecology, and the Ego," June 29, encourages us to read Forrest Church, "Emerson's Shadow" (UU World, March/April, 2003, pages 29-31). Here Church

writes, “Emerson’s shadow blocks us from becoming who we might be, should we ever decide to grow up.” Emerson, Church writes, “was the quintessential adolescent sage...chafed at every form of servitude...sovereign individualism and self-reliance does not address today’s need for interdependence... If we are ever do grow up, the anti-institutionalists who gravitate to our institutions must take a little of their precious Emersonian freedom and invest it more generously. Only then will we bond together in redemptive community. Until we, as Unitarian Universalists, come out from under Emerson’s shadow, we will not mature as a movement.” Why is this “Oas-Church caveat” so noteworthy and what does this mean to our faith? Send answers to jerryw@earlham.edu by August 10th. ■

Getting the NUUSLETTER

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Next NUUSLETTER Deadline, Sunday, August 10th, 2003

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