
NUUSLETTER

NORTHWOODS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

A Beacon of Light in the Northwoods

P.O. Box 253, Minocqua, WI 54548 <http://www.newnorth.net/~beckratz/nuuf/>

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Volume 3, Number 4

May 22,

2000 Coming Sundays

Taking the Pulpit

Sunday, June 4, 10 AM, Rabbi Dan Danson, A Curious Silence: Liberal Faiths and Sexual Values.

Sunday, June 18, 10 AM, Dr. Robert T. Pennock, The Creationist Controversy.
(See Special Supplement at end of NUUSLETTER)

Sunday, July 2, 10 AM, Jerry Buerer, "Whatever happened to Baby Jesus," "Why I am a Christian UU," or "The thoughts of an agnostic."

Sunday, July 16, 10 AM, Reverend Robert Reed, A Pathway to Spiritual Enrichment: serving inner-city kindergarteners.

Sunday, July 30, 10 AM, Reverend Max Gaebler, "Who Are We?"

Adult Religious Education

Sunday, May 28, 10:30 AM

Philosophy & Religion in Modern World, Video Lec 20:

Kant--Reason Limited to Experience

Sunday, June 11, 10:30 AM

P & R in Mod World, Video Lec 21:

Kant--Morality as the Basis of Religion

Sunday, June 25, 10:30 AM

P & R in Mod World, Video Lec 22:

Schleiermacher--Feeling as the Basis of Religion

Sunday, July 9, 10:30 AM

P & R in Mod World, Video Lec 23:

Hegel--A Philosophical History of Religion

Sunday, July 23, 10:30 AM

P & R in Mod World, Video Lec 24:
Marx and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion.
*

Notes from the President:

Congratulations to the Fellowship for choosing Tim Kratz to be your new President! He will do a splendid job. Working with the excellent board of Joan Hauer, Ruth Erbs, Dawn Wasko, and Don Barnes should be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for him, as well as productive for the Fellowship.

* * *

Every year the Kiwanis Club in the Lakeland area has a breakfast at which they honor local churches and other community support groups. This year I attended their gathering at Perkins Restaurant—at 7 AM. It's a nice custom and despite the hour I was happy to attend.

One of the attitudes of the group that caused me to ponder was it's A. acceptance of work as a given. As a service club the members expect to work—that's what they're about. In contrast I belong to B. another large group which may have to give up its only fund-raising event because no one will assume leadership of even one day of the four-day event. This is a philosophically based group which people join for personal benefit, as well as to further a cause. And then there's C. the Fellowship, which people join strictly for personal reasons. In this group members work for the group's common good only to support that common good. They are much more casual about attendance than in either of the other types of groups, and yet many see participation in maintaining the organization as a necessity. IN this kind of a group it would be easy to establish a structure where a few people did most of the work. Then, because the work is attended to, others wouldn't feel the need to volunteer.

A. This is a work organization, and one joins to work.

B. This organization supports a good cause and one joins to enjoy one's self while supporting that cause.

C. This group represents a philosophy/religion and one joins it strictly for one's own benefit.

In my two years as President I have been amazed at the responsibility assumed by committees and individuals in the Fellowship. This is a living and caring community sorting out its needs and arranging to meet them. Yes!

Pat Harrington *

Notes from the President Elect:

It is an honor to be elected president of our fellowship. Previous presidents, Jack

Hafner, Terry Hoyt,

Maryann Fields, Diane Reupert, and Pat Harrington, have done a wonderful job leading our fellowship to where we are today. We owe each of them our gratitude. I suspect that I will soon find out that it is a fun and challenging, but not particularly easy, job.

I believe that our Fellowship is strong and thriving. Together, we have established a liberal religious presence that is making an impact on our community. Over our eleven year history we have been active in fighting racism, promoting women's reproductive health, helping hungry and homeless families find meals and lodging, and many other projects. We have developed an award winning children's religious education program. Individually, our members are extraordinarily active in a wide variety of community affairs, from sitting on school boards to tutoring students to directing the local Salvation Army to promoting the arts.

Yet, like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, we sometimes need to run as fast as we can just to not lose ground. What are some of the challenges that lay ahead for our fellowship? In my opinion, we need to continue to reach out to new members, to make sure our fellowship is one that is truly welcoming of diversity, and to nourish our sense of community.

New members bring ideas, diversity, and new energy. Without new members our fellowship will languish and our ability to be a beacon of light in the northwoods will diminish. Can we continue to attract new members? I suspect that most of us share the belief that there is strength in diversity. Can we enhance the welcoming atmosphere that already exists?

Finally, one of the major strengths of our Fellowship is, well, our fellowship. Can we do more to grow our sense of community within the Fellowship?

I believe the answer to each of these questions is yes. I look forward to us working together to meet these challenges. And let's have some fun doing it. Tim Kratz *

Children's RE News

Dawn Holt

Furniture Donations Needed

The children's R.E. committee is planning on major changes downstairs. With the passing of the budget at the annual meeting on May 19, we have been given the funds for the purchase of age appropriate furniture and equipment. However the amount of money allocated will not be enough to buy furniture for a teen area. The fellowship teens would like an area of their own with comfortable furniture such as couch, chairs, end tables, coffee tables, book shelf, etc. If anyone has used furniture (No Junk) they would like to donate please contact Dawn Holt at 543-8168 or holthouse@centurytel.net. In order to meet the

needs of our current youth this is an area that affects the majority of them. By fall 2000, 15 of our 22 youth will be in high school or college.

Thanks

A special thanks to all who helped with the children's R.E. program this year; Annamarie Beckel, Andrea Billings, Pat Buehler, Tom Frost, Dawn Holt, Susan Knight, and Toni Polfus. We appreciate all your time and energy. Enjoy your time during the summer months.

General Assembly

The children's R.E. committee would like to thank all of the members who pledged money to send Cora Holt, Minetta Kobling, Amy Kratz, Claire Polfus, and chaperones to General Assembly in June. We very much appreciated the support. We regret that we are unable to go. Commitments of both adults and children plus the lateness of the \$2000 pledge from the Unitarian Universalist Sunday School Society contributed to our decision not to attend. Once again we congratulate the girls on this great honor. They will now be deciding how to spend their \$500 award.

Summer 2000

There will be no children's R.E. over the summer. The 1900-2000 school year classes ended with the children's program on May 21. Classes will resume in early September. Have a great summer. *

Building Addition Feasibility Committee Report

A questionnaire was sent to all members of the Fellowship on May 3, along with a notification of the recent annual meeting. Slightly more than half of the questionnaires have been returned. The committee members include: Patty Buehler, Bob Dallapiazza, Toni Polfus, and Don Barnes (Chm.). The committee would like to encourage everyone who has not already completed their questionnaire to do so and to send it to Don Barnes (8307 Miner Rd, Minocqua, WI 54548) by June 4. It is important that everyone's ideas and opinions are considered in this feasibility study. The questionnaires already returned represent a diversity of thoughtful responses. The committee is anxious to begin summarizing the Fellowship's responses so that they can be shared with everyone in the next NUUSLETTER. *

Joys & Concerns

Peter Hendry had surgery to replace his hip on May 1st and is recovering nicely. Hendry's hope to arrive at their Wisconsin home soon. We look forward to their speedy return.

Mary Ann Fields will be doing a program at the Marquette Michigan UU Fellowship on June 4th.

Amy Holt will be graduating from Lakeland Union High School on May 28, 2000. She will be attending UW Madison in the fall. She is looking forward to reestablishing a relationship with First Society and their campus youth group. We wish her the best as she continues her education.

Graduating from 8th grade this spring are **Erick Boustead, Melanie Cyra, Cora Holt, Amy Kratz, Claire Polfus, and Sara Winkler**. Sara will be attending high school in Eagle River next fall. The other youth will be attending Lakeland Union High School. Congratulations.

Annamarie Beckel wins best fiction award for 1999 from the Midwest Independent Publishers Association for her historical novel All Gone Widdun. *

Announcements:

Habitat for Humanity broke ground for its third home located in St. Germain on April 13. The partner family is Richard and Stephanie Wells and their four children. Stephanie said the family has moved often, and how important this house was partly because of the stability it will give for her children.

Habitat will be completing its second full year on July 1 and can use your help. There are many committees that need people as well as a couple of committees that need chairpersons. There will be openings on the board. If you would like to get involved in helping to build community, as well as homes, call Brian Kunding at 356-3041 or Lee Zausner at 356-3047. *

On May 27th and June 17th from 9:00 AM until noon there will be a **work party** at the Fellowship to cut up and remove trees in the Memorial Park damaged by past storms and to plant shrubs in front of the building. Bring appropriate equipment. If unable to meet at these times and wish to help in the removal contact Dick Fields. *

On Tuesday, May 30, again our fellowship will be serving hungry and needy friends in the community at the **Food Pantry**. Please call Jerry Woolpy, 356-6276, to volunteer. We need extra help this time because many of our regulars are unavailable.

Summer Cook Outs - There will be cook-outs after our Fellowship services on June 18th, July 16th and Aug. 13th. Plan to bring whatever you would like to grill and a dish to pass. (Coffee, lemonade, plates, napkins and silverware will be provided.) Any questions call the Fields, 385-2975. *

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the UU Fellowship was held Friday, May 19, 2000, at the

Fellowship Hall, called to order by President Pat Harrington at 7 p.m. President Harrington distributed to each attending member a packet containing the committee reports from fiscal year 1999.

Members present for the meeting and potluck dinner preceding it were: Pat Harrington, Irma Braunstein, Terri Hoyt, Joan Hauer, Dawn Holt, Art Eberlein, Joan and Jack Hafner, Katy and Mark Bruhy, Annamarie Beckel, Tim Kratz, Mary Ann and Dick Fields, Ruth and Harley Erbs, Bev and Joe Strauss, Joyce and Don Barnes, Dan Rondello, Diane Reupert, Mollie West, Patty Buehler, Jerry Woolpy, and Jerry Beurer.

Minutes of the 1999 Annual Meeting were reviewed and accepted. Motion made by Jerry Beurer, seconded by Joyce Barnes.

Treasurer Ruth Erbs made her report. She estimated a \$4,000 surplus for the fiscal year 1999-2000, and asked for suggestions regarding its use. Discussion followed, about possibility that some expenses may not have been submitted prior to this meeting which could reduce the surplus amount; consideration was given to committee budget requests which had not been fully funded; a suggestion was made that the surplus could be used for mortgage reduction; another was made that the money be put in reserve for emergent use. A motion was made at this point to authorize the UU Fellowship Board of Directors to designate surplus funds to committees or to hold it in reserve, or use it for mortgage reduction. Jerry Woolpy amended the motion with suggestions for a Reserve Fund, which could be used for depreciation, trips for youth, or carried over from year to year.

The Treasurer's report was accepted as written. Motion by Joe Strauss, amended by Jerry Woolpy, seconded by Don Barnes.

The Finance Committee's budget recommendation for Fiscal Year 2000-2001 was presented, totaling \$27,500. All committees received their requested amounts except for Children's RE (furniture purchase costs), Publicity, and Memorial Garden Committees. There was discussion about the Program Committee's budget, following Mary Ann Fields statements regarding the possibility of hiring a Student Minister. It was only recently that the Central Midwest District sent information about the costs, (\$666.00 per service) minimum number of services (6), additional duties (extra pay). The Long-Range Planning Committee had previously expressed interest in obtaining a Student Minister for 3-4 services a year, but the membership at the Annual Meeting did not reach a consensus on the issue of Student Minister for the 2000-2001 Fiscal Year. It was suggested that this be further explored for next year. For the present, members are encouraged to volunteer to present programs for Sunday services. The budget was accepted as presented.

Publicity in local newspapers was discussed. Ruth Erbs is presently responsible for putting adds in three local newspapers. It costs \$18 per week. She would like to have some help from other members with publicity. Carol Miller wants to donate \$300 to UU

Fellowships for underwriting and radio station matches. Ruth would like to publicize our Children's RE program to attract new youth.

Bev Strauss reported the birth of Dawn McCusker and Myrle Wasko's baby, Solomon Robert Wasko on May 18, at the McCusker-Wasko home, and that parents and child are doing fine.

Dawn Holt requested that a system be set up for the ongoing taping of Sunday services so that those unable to be present, such as Children's RE staff and others, may have the opportunity to hear the sermons. Dick Fields offered to tape during the summers and Harley Erbs offered to take over for the remaining months.

President Pat Harrington introduced the question as to whether the congregation wished to respond to the recent full-page anti-gay ad bought and paid for by a local cleric. After discussion, the group decided that an article would be written by Jerry Beurer assisted by Pat Harrington for publication, and that our Fellowship's newspaper ads will state that our Fellowship welcomes diversity.

Nominations for officers for Fiscal Year 2000-2001 were announced: Tim Kratz, President; Joan Hauer-Board Member at Large; Annamarie Beckel, Nancy Junkerman, and Joe Strauss, Nominating Committee. Motion to accept nominations was made by Jerry Woolpy, and seconded by Mary Ann Fields.

Flowers will be sent to the Myrle W. and Dawn McC. Members acknowledged the good work done by President Pat Harrington over the past two years. Members expressed appreciation for all the contributions of Marie and George Adams, who recently left the fellowship.

Meeting adjourned. Minutes submitted by Don and Joyce Barnes.*

NUU Views

Question: Some religions, Judaism for example, measure their success by the number of families whose children continue practicing their religion. How do Unitarian Universalists, being a more intentional community, feel about the importance of passing the practice on to the next generation? And, how should they feel about this? (We would like additional points of view on this question. Please send your thoughts for the next NUUSLETTER, July 2.)

Answer from Dick Fields: It is atypical, outside of the northeast, for a present day Unitarian Universalist to have been raised a UU. Most of us came from somewhere else after struggling to find a religion that has meaning and is compatible with our concepts of what religion is all about. It is refreshing and uplifting to belong to a religion that

encourages you to build your own theology and to be welcomed within the denomination regardless of you own particular religious beliefs.

As we did not accept the religion of our parents why should we expect our children to accept our religion? What we try to do is expose our children to our religion and teach them to respect the beliefs of others. If we teach our children the principles of our faith, set good examples to them by how we live our lives and help them find their own values and beliefs, then we will have built a foundation for our children that will lead them to be caring and productive adults. It is more important that our children find a religion that is as meaningful to them as being a UU is to us and less important as to the religious path they choose, even if is not Unitarian Universalism.

Answer from Terry Hoyt: Children need to be taught by their parents. This includes religious beliefs. What happens frequently with UUs is that children do not continue with those beliefs. Much of that is attributable to the attitude that they should be able to decide for themselves what they want to believe, or, if they want to believe. Other religions certainly do not approach the subject that way and many are most successful in teaching their children the value system they want them to have.

Some religions teach continuity of belief by birthright. Judaism is an example of this, but so are many Native American beliefs. In parts of the world children believe they are born Muslim. UU's have never held this view and if they're children are not taught, they frequently end up never participating in a religious community.

I think it is very important to pass along to your children your value system, your moral system and a thorough understanding of the importance of belonging to a religious community that supports your beliefs. And how should children feel about this? They need to feel loved. They'll recognize the wisdom later on in life. *

Special Supplement

The Creation Controversy

Jerry Woolpy after Robert T. Pennock

Creationists demand that their beliefs about the origin of the earth and life--including especially human beings--be introduced in public school science classes as a respectable alternative to the explanations of geology and biology.

Will medical schools be asked to teach prospective obstetricians how Eve's disobedience led to the pain of childbirth? Will agriculture classes have to explain the sweat

of farmers in part by the curse God put upon the land when He expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden? Will psychologists need to include Eve's temptation by the serpent to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in balanced treatment with Piaget, Kohlberg, and Gilligan's studies of the moral development of children?

Most Creationists are Evangelicals who believe the Bible cannot be wrong, although they recognize wide variations of translation and allow that biblical language may be figurative as in the parables. Many hold that every part of the Bible is equally inspired, that biblical writers were directed by God in their choice of words, though they used their own style. Others hold that God gave the thoughts to the writers, but permitted them, perhaps years later, to express these in their own words as they remembered them.

Why are they so concerned with the creation story? Because according to a recent book by Robert T. Pennock on which this article is based, they hold that all biblical doctrines of theology are founded on the biblical story of creation. If this is damaged, the structure of all their beliefs are called into question. For example, some Evangelicals think that to accept that there was death before the Fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden would be to obviate the need for Christ's sacrifice. This is because Jesus' crucifixion atoned for the sin that Adam brought into the world for which death was the punishment. It is through Christ alone that one may be saved from sin and thus from death. So for this particular group of Evangelicals, if there was death before Adam's disobedience, then this would undermine the meaning of Christ's own death and resurrection.

Needless to say, many creationists disagree on this and lots of other particulars of the argument but they agree that the biblical story of the separate creation of the earth and every kind of living thing and not biological evolution is what actually must have happened on earth. However, this is not the view of the vast majority of Christians.

Instead, the vast majority of Christians and Jews--who believe in God and regard the Bible highly--and most other educated persons in the western world, atheists and theists alike, support the procedures of modern science and regard its findings as good approximations of the truth about the natural world. These informed people, religious and not religious, accept the values of contemporary science. Namely, that everyone may share in the benefits of science irrespective of whether they believe in science. Scientific knowledge is not validated by appeals to authority or sacred texts, but rather by evidence. Hypotheses must be testable and they must be tested with the resulting data made publicly accessible in reports. These reports must include methods by which data was obtained and the data in support of all conclusions. Observations and experiments must be repeatable by independent observers. Moreover, scientists are expected to reject theories when the evidence is against them, even if they desperately want to believe and they are expected to accept theories when the evidence supports them even if they would rather not.

In contrast to science, religion may be based on faith, specific membership in a group, the authority of specialists, and the personal commitment of individuals. In this regard “creation-science” is religion and not science and as such its “findings” do not belong in science classrooms. In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional a Louisiana Act for Balanced Treatment of Creation-Science and Evolution in public schools, on the grounds that the Act impermissibly promoted religion, and that comprehensive science education would be undermined if schools were forbidden to teach evolution without at the same time teaching creation-science.

Nonetheless, in 1999 the Kansas State Board of Education voted to remove most references to evolution from state education standards. In February, a charter school in Rochester, New York announced that creationism would be taught as an alternate theory to evolution. In March, the New York Times published a survey by the People for the American Way Foundation, the liberal civil rights group that commissioned the poll, which was conducted by DYG Inc., the polling and research firm in Danbury, Conn. The survey involved extensive interviews with 1,500 people drawn representatively from all segments of society across the country. It showed that 30 percent of Americans believe that creationism should be taught as a scientific theory, either with or without evolution in the curriculum. At the other end of the spectrum, 20 percent believe that evolution should be taught in science class without any mention of creationism.

Robert T. Pennock, college teacher and philosopher of science, provides a thorough discussion of these issues in his 1999 book, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (ISBN 0-262-16180) that has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and PEN award.

Of the values of public education Pennock writes the following in the final chapter of his book:

Our public school system serves several important purposes. One major function is to serve the individual by compensating for the contingencies of birth... No child in a democratic society should be deprived of the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge and necessary skills...

A second major function of public education, more pertinent to the question at hand, is to serve society. Individuals in a democratic society do not simply have a right to acquire a basic education; ideally they have a responsibility to do so... They must learn the basic facts about the world in which we live and learn how to acquire other facts about the world that may be needed. They must learn their political duties and the civic values that will allow them to live in a pluralistic democracy. A form of government that invests power in the people can only work when those people have an understanding of their civic duties and have the requisite abilities to acquire and process the information needed to

make informed decisions as those duties require... As citizen, the individual must subordinate allegiance to private values and agendas to public values and principles, and make decisions based upon unbiased knowledge...

We must not think that the democratic ideal starts and stops with the right to vote... We cannot vote for example, to determine the truth or falsity of matters of empirical fact. Nor may we vote away certain values that we assume as fundamental in our political system, such as the value of including the widest possible range of freedom for individuals to hold, express, and act upon their conceptions of what constitutes a worthy and valuable life. We take for granted the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Furthermore, we agree not to legislate a specific view of what constitutes happiness, but only the prerequisites for the pursuit thereof. Ours is a political philosophy that recognizes the importance of individuals' search for a meaningful life informed by their ethical values. Government shall not institute or promote a particular conception of the good life; instead, it upholds a general conception of the political good, seeking to protect the liberty of individuals to seek the good life after their own lights.

For many people, one of the most important sources of meaningfulness is their religious faith... Religious beliefs are profoundly individual and private and to have the government promote a specific set [for example, Creationism] would undermine the public values that allow for unified democratic action and that protect our freedom to practice those private beliefs...

The failure in the secondary schools to adequately teach the key biological and geological findings and central explanatory theories such as evolution leaves students ignorant of basic public knowledge and unprepared for higher education. Moreover, students who enter university who have learned science from the Bible or creationist materials often have serious misconceptions about a whole range of facts related to evolution. They regularly misunderstand the mechanism of evolution, thinking that the theory says that organisms evolved entirely by chance. Some think that the theory says that humans evolved from the monkeys they see in the zoo, leading them to ask why there are still monkeys around. The Bible is not a science textbook and the mistakes that result from thinking that it is are sometimes even more absurd than this... A professor of physiology... wrote of his shock the first time he taught a course on his subject when a student announced that she knew female human skeletons that he had displayed for a class exercise. Males, she said, had one fewer pair of ribs than females. Her belief, of course, had come from the Genesis account of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. Nor was she alone in her belief; five more students in the same class expressed the same view... [The professor, now experienced] has come to expect that at least 10 percent of students will tell him that males and females differ in rib count.

Dr. Pennock, will be at the Fellowship addressing these issues on Sunday, June 18, at

10 AM.

Next NUUSLETTER Deadline, Sunday, July 2, 2000.

Northwoods UU Fellowship Newsletter
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