
NUUSLETTER

NORTHWOODS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

A Beacon of Light in the Northwoods

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2004 Coming Sundays

Taking the Pulpit

Sunday, June 13, 10 AM, Rev Sydney Morris. UU Identity: Religious Education Sunday. A luncheon discussion follows on Issues in Education.

Sunday, June 27, 10 AM, Laura Ericson (of For the Birds fame), "A Bobolink for a Chorister." This line from Emily Dickinson suggests a talk about how birds can bring a spiritual dimension to our lives, and why they feature so prominently in spiritual writing and stories ranging from the Bible to Native American beliefs and teachings.

Sunday, July 13, 10 AM, Rev. Max Gabler.

Sunday, July 25, 10 AM, Rossanor Geiser, "Healing Body, Mind and Spirit"

Sunday, August 8, 10 AM, Rev. Barbara Kellett.

Sunday, August 22, 10 AM Sharon VanRaalte & Julie Wambach, "Congregational History."

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.

There will be a Special Adult RE Class on Saturday, July 3, from 10 AM to noon called **THE FAITH OF THE AMERICAN FOUNDING FATHERS AND THOMAS JEFFERSON'S BIBLE**. The instructor will be Bill LaFountain, a UU who retired after related careers in university ministry, social service, and family therapy. Bill often teaches at his local Institute for Learning in Retirement and facilitates forums at the DuPage UU Church in Naperville, Il. The class will focus on Enlightenment influences and the resulting changes in religious and political thinking as manifested in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and "Jefferson's Bible," and the continuing debate on the appropriate influence of traditional religion in our national life. "Some Americans have inherited extravagant hopes about what religion, specifically Christianity, may accomplish in solving social problems through moral instruction. Others have a different legacy, one that suggests partisan religion in the hands of a purported majority can become a dangerous form of intellectual and political tyranny." (Professors Kramick & Moore) This promises

to be a stimulating way to celebrate our Independence Day. A potluck will follow. This program, like most others at the Fellowship, is open to the public. Bring a friend or neighbor. Call Elinore Sommerfeld at 385-2407 with questions.

Announcements

June 4th **Auction**, 6:00 PM – Fellowship Building: So far we have 21 separate items to be auctioned off at the Service Auction. If you have items to donate to the Silent Auction they can be brought to the Fellowship building after 3:00 PM on Friday the 4th, this would include good useful items and books. Donated to date for the Service auction are dinners (lamb, Chinese, Mexican, Spanish, fish, (Faith, Hope and Trust), French, ethnic dinner of your choice and a southwestern style brunch. Also canoe trip with picnic lunch, guided fly fishing trip, Mah Jong lessons, pontoon ride and fishing, poem of your choice, teeth cleaning and exam, hot tub party, lessons for either knitting, crocheting, rug braiding or sewing, an evening of art work, art decorated shirts, and special fruit drinks. Come and join the fun and walk away with one or more of these wonderful items. If you are unable to attend you may select someone to bid for you.

Our Treasurer reminds all committee chairs to **submit any payment requests** to him, Tom Sommerfeld, as soon as practical so they may be paid before the end of the fiscal year on June 30. And, **if you shop at Trigs**, don't forget to turn in your receipt for their Trigs Supports Local Churches and Schools program.

Audrey Williams alerts us to a terrific **forum on the health care system** set to take place on July 10th. This is a huge discussion of the health care situation in this country, with workers, politicians and health care providers doing the talking and all of us doing the discussing. More details will be forthcoming. Please mark your calendars for that date and plan to attend and bring your neighbors, friends, co-workers and boss. We need your thoughts and ideas at this forum. The time and place of this Price County Democratic Party sponsored presentation will be announced later.

Joys & Concerns

The congregation joins together in wishing **Sharon VanRaalte** a speedy recovery from lyme disease.

UU congregations have been enthusiastic supporters of **Fair Trade** for years. In 2000, Equal Exchange and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee launched the UUSC Coffee Project. Since then, over 490 churches have participated --- nearly half of the denomination! Last year, UUs purchased over 20 tons of fairly traded coffee through the program, spreading the word about Fair Trade and making a difference for small coffee farmers and their families. This year, we're hoping to reach over 500 congregations by the time of the UU General Assembly at the end of June. That's just 10 more congregations! **WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Help us reach 500! Is there a UU congregation that you know of that hasn't heard about the UUSC Coffee Project? Let them know about the project and how they can get involved!

For more information on the project, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/info/coffeeproject.html> and <http://www.equalexchange.com/interfaith/uuscproject.html>

We worked at the **food pantry** this past week. Thanks to Patty Buehler, Steve Carlberg, Ruth and Harley Erbs, Maryann Fields, Tim Kratz, Connie Lefevre, Tom Sommerfeld, Bev and Joe Strauss and Alan VanRaalte for their efforts. We prepared and distributed nearly 130 bags of food. It seems that every time we work, the number is higher. A year ago, we assisted about 80 families and individuals. So, the support of the fellowship and the community in general is greatly appreciated. We collected 9 packages of diapers at the annual meeting. Those of us who worked on Tuesday saw how much the diapers were appreciated. I encourage members of the fellowship to continue to bring me diapers. All sizes are needed, as we are now helping families with newborns as well as older babies. The food pantry also needs travel/trial size toiletries, such as shampoo, soap and deodorant. So, as you travel this summer, please collect your hotel samples for the food pantry. Those in need in the community will appreciate it. Elinore Sommerfeld

Kudos

To **Kayla Norris** for being named Student of the Month from the eighth grade at Lac du Flambeau School.

To **Clare Polfus** who was named valedictorian of her graduating class at Lakeland Union High School. Clare played the violin and participated in three sports--cross country, Nordic skiing, and soccer--while achieving a 4.0 grade point average. She will attend Middlebury College to major in English or a foreign language. Clare is also an All-State Scholar nominee.

To **Minetta Koblings** who will represent Lakeland Union High School at the Badger Girls Conference this summer at UW Oshkosh.

To **Melanie Cyra** for finishing third in the high jump at the Wisconsin Rapids Regional to go on the Eau Claire North Sectional.

Our High School Grads

The graduates from our fellowship this year will be: Melanie Cyra, Cora Holt, Amy Kratz, Emerson Morris, Claire Polfus, and Erick Boustead. Each was invited to respond to the following: Looking back on the past years in the Northwoods and at the NUUF what do you think about it? What was the best? What would you change if you had to do it all over again? Where do you go from here? What are your plans for next year and the future? Cora responded as follows:

“Growing up with the fellowship offered me a community in which I always felt I was accepted. I was able to search freely for my beliefs in an environment where questions were welcomed and where I was encouraged to find my own personal set of values. This freedom has helped me to learn and grow. By undergoing the religious education classes I gained both a better insight into my own beliefs and a better understanding for those of others. I really enjoyed visiting churches of all different faiths; now, I am able to

understand more fully my friends and talk with them about differences in religious beliefs and opinions. Although I still am not completely set on what I believe and don't know if I ever will be. I do know that being a part of the fellowship has helped me to explore my own faith. As I continue on to college, I will take these teachings and experiences with me. I am going to the University of Wisconsin-Madison next year, where I plan on majoring in biochemistry and molecular biology. I hope to graduate with a focus in genetics, and one day go on to pursue a career dealing with genetic therapy and stem cell research. I don't know all of the activities I will be involved in, but I do know that along with sports and music, my personal search for my own set of beliefs will remain a part of my life as I move on to college.”

UUA Commits to Marriage Equality

According to the Boston Globe,

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/05/10/unitarians_prepare_to_marry_gays/
"At a time when many of the major religious denominations of the United States are riven by divisive debates over homosexuality, a small Boston-based denomination...is preparing to supply ministers to officiate at large numbers of weddings of same-sex couples." In the article, UUA President Sinkford is quoted as saying, "We have been hard at work on this for 30 or 35 years. This issue is one which actually helps to bring us together, and helps us to understand our religious identity, rather than tearing us apart." The Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie, Senior Minister of Arlington Street Church, who will marry her partner on May 20th, was quoted as saying about the coming events, "It's just exquisite to be alive right now...we've worked really long and hard for this."

For a summary of the struggle to achieve marriage equality in Massachusetts, go to <http://www.uua.org/news/2004/freedomtomarry/massachusetts.html>

Unitarian group denied tax exempt status

The church operates in every state, with more than 5,000 members in Texas alone. But according to the office of Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, a Denison Unitarian church isn't really a religious organization -- at least for tax purposes. The reason: the organization "does not have one system of belief." The denials of the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church in Denison and the North Texas Church of Freethought in Carrollton, as well as an earlier denial for the Ethical Culture Fellowship of Austin, were ordered because these organizations do not mandate belief in a supreme being.

Both the lower court and the Texas Supreme Court have ruled against these denials. In one opinion, an appeals court said the comptroller's test "fails to include the whole range of belief systems that may, in our diverse and pluralistic society, merit the First Amendment protection." The comptroller vows to continue the legal fight to the US Supreme Court, if necessary. "Otherwise, any wannabe cult who dresses up and parades down Sixth Street on Halloween will be applying for an exemption," the comptroller said.

The Red River Unitarian Universalist Church is the 50-member congregation whose

tax application was rejected. They have held services in Denison for seven years. According to one of its leaders the group includes "hard-core atheists" as well as "New Agey-type people." All agree the lack of a single creed is a hallmark of UUism.

NUU Views

Question: "One of our Covenants: *To live in harmony with the natural world*, and one of our Missions: *Promoting protection of the environment for the long-term benefit of everyone* is challenged by E.O. Wilson, in his recent book, *The Future of Life*. Wilson, a world renowned biologist who coined the term biodiversity, asserts that the bottleneck of human overpopulation and wasteful consumption could drive half the Earth's species to extinction this century. He contends that an estimated \$28 billion is needed to protect the world's top 25 ecosystems. As good NUUs how should we stand on this issue and what should we do about it?" (Incidentally, Wilson, one of the Concerned Scientists who questions the Bush Administration's treatment of science, goes on to compare this \$28 billion to the \$87 billion appropriated to reconstruct Iraq.)

Answer from Elinore Sommerfeld: To borrow a couple of clichés, we need to think globally, but act locally. The "easy" part is activities such as educational forums, petitions to elected officials, involvement in appropriate local projects. The harder part is, not just to talk the talk, but to walk the talk. We need to take a close look on an on-going basis at how we as individuals and families use our resources and what our priorities really are. We need to be asking ourselves questions such as: What kind of a car am I driving? Do I own a gas guzzling SUV and if so, are there viable alternatives? What are my driving habits? Can I combine errands and make only one trip? What kind of foods do I purchase at the store and in the restaurant? Am I buying chickens fed on antibiotics? Or endangered swordfish? Do I really need this latest electronic gizmo or another new piece of clothing? Is my house energy efficient? Do I recycle all I can? Tom and I recently decided to use gravel instead of blacktop to fix our driveway. That decision was significantly driven by environmental considerations. These are not abstract issues to be considered once in awhile at a meeting. These are concrete questions we all answer, one way or another, every day. We can't change the entire world, but we can change our corner of it.

Answer from Marie Adams: Our covenant, *"To Live In Harmony With The Natural World"*, and the Mission statement, *"Promoting protection of the environment for the long-term benefit of everyone"* is a very serious responsibility for each of us as individuals. We can devote many hours to discussion about the environment on a national level, but the ball falls in our own back yards. We must each work in our own lives to reduce lawn mowing and fertilizing, travel, overuse of non-recycled raw materials, development of vacant land, materialism, disposable products, etc., etc. We will have mining as long as we demand more construction materials and industrial pollution as we buy all of the goods that seem necessary for a comfortable life. Every person will have to decide to live a simple life in order to "Live in harmony with the natural world" and carefully evaluate what we really need and what we could live without.

Answer from Jerry Woolpy: Wilson asks us to focus on the human impact on the

biosphere particularly as it reduces and limits the variety of habitats available to other living things. Most of what we do in this regard has impact at a distance beyond our immediate perspective. Adjustments we may make in our behavior will require a leap of imagination and intellect beyond what is normally expected for reinforcement of our action. The costs may never seem to get us tangible results. Success will require global participation. No species besides ourselves could except the challenge. No people have ever taken this broad a responsibility for the earth. Nothing we could do would so assure our continued existence. But to do this will require more faith and less selfishness than governments have ever been able to instill. This is a deep spiritual commitment that UUs seem ready to accept. Let's vote for it.

The **question for the next NUUsletter** is "The Texas Comptroller challenges the tax exempt status of UUs. This is clearly unequal treatment under the law. But should any churches actually be tax exempt? Why or why not?" Send answers by Sunday, July 11, to jerryw@earlham.edu. ▪

Getting the NUUsletter

In addition to the usual Microsoft Word format, the NUUsletter is now 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. Let me know if you want it sent to you in PDF format, jerryw@earlham.edu.

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 me.

Next NUUsletter Deadline, Sunday, July 11, 2004

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