

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NOTES

As unreal as it may seem to me, we are indeed in December. I look back at the last four months with the teachers and students in the religious education program with joy. The sense of discovery that has been experienced by all of us has helped to make our time together each Sunday morning truly unique and precious. We will be completing our Caring for the Earth curriculum this month with a service project within the community. In January we will begin our next unit on communities, diversity and tolerance. We will finish the unit with an explanation and exploration of the Welcoming Congregation program.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the incredible individuals that have given their time, effort, energy and enthusiasm toward making our RE program work this fall. There were many hours of planning and discussing by the RE Committee; Nancy Boutilier, Edie Fuchsman, Kim Peters and L.D. Moore spent much time with me at the end of the summer to put our program together. Thank you for helping me find my feet and providing your support. Our instructors this fall have been instrumental in making this program work for our children and youth. Cindy Frantz, Kim Peters, Laura Huth, Andy Frantz, Carrie Langan, Nancy Boutilier and Mary McKee have all spent time with the classes this fall, teaching and leading the children through the world of garbage, recycling, and our planet through their words, songs and activities. Thank you for sharing your time and talents. You are all wonderful. I also need to thank the parents for bringing your children to be with us each Sunday. Each child in our fellowship is unique and amazing, and together our children and youth are an engaging, thoughtful and incredibly fun. I know that we have all learned much from one another.

At this time of year we all have special ways of celebrating the holidays. The RE classes will be sharing some of those ways with all of you at our holiday service on December 17th. We hope that all the members of the fellowship will be able to join us. As I look at the ways my family celebrates this time of year, it is always with a grateful attitude, noting what we have in our lives and the people that make it special for us. I thank the individuals that I have had the pleasure to work with these past few months for being special and making a difference in my life. I wish you all a special holiday season, filled with special times and the people that make a difference in your life.

Shelly Rasmussen, IDRE

Sunday, December 10, 2006

HOLIDAY HELPING HANDS

FELLOWSHIP FORUM – 9:30 AM

Laura Huth, Forum Leader

Oberlin Community Services (OCS) has recast its “adopt a family” program as “Holiday Helping Hands.” As in past years, OUUF will contribute for the holiday expenses of two Oberlin families selected by OCS. Laura, a long-time OUUF member and co-coordinator of this year’s OUUF “Holiday Helping Hands” contribution, will describe the program. All are welcome.

TRUE HOSPITALITY = REAL CARING

MORNING SERVICE – 11:00 AM

OUUF Membership Team

The Fellowship's Membership Team was deeply impressed by the video of the Rev. Gail Geisenhainer's sermon, "We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest," delivered at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly on Sunday, June 25, 2006. They want to share the arresting story she tells with the entire congregation. The GA service lasted over an hour and a half. We will show the 1/2 hour of Rev. Geisenhainer's sermon as the homily portion of our normal service. All are welcome.

PHOTO EXHIBIT

A new photographic exhibit at Kendal entitled "An Eclectic Retrospective" displays photographs by Eleanor Helper. It features her photographs from 1986 to 2002, all of which were taken with film cameras. The exhibit is in the Community Gallery located in the Heiser Community Building. From the main entrance you pass the reception desk and immediately turn right and follow the hall. If you get to the clinic or the Cardinal Shop you have gone too far. If you get to the swimming pool you have gone way too far.

SILENT AUCTION

Attention: We need volunteers to join the Silent Auction Committee. The Board has not set a date, but we need organizational time. Hopefully, we can have the silent auction in early February. It will be fun to plan and do, so---join the fun!!! Call Jo Huber 774-2062 or sign up at the Fellowship on Sunday mornings.

LIVING THE LIVING TRADITION

On last spring's OUUF program survey, 95% of you said it is important to have programming on social justice issues of current interest. But the Program Committee needs your help. What social justice issues would you like to know more about? Do you have expertise, experience or other resources that would be helpful in bringing about such programming? If so, please contact Barbara Fuchsman, or another member of the Program Committee.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

The following members of our Fellowship have another reason to celebrate during this holiday season: Their Birthdays!!!! Some even do it on the same day!!! Harvey Culbert, Ernie Eddy, Barbara Fuchsman, Stephanie Gibson, Joel Harris and Joan Webster. We would rather have you all arrive than Santa, any day.

The new year is coming. Was your birthday included in THE CHALICE this year? If not, please contact me so you can be added.

Darlene Krato drkrato@oberlin.net or 774-6316 or see me in church.

SHAMANIC DRUMMING JOURNEYERS meet on the first Friday of the month, Dec. 1, at the common room at 95 E. Vine Street. Drumming is a time honored technique for reaching altered states. Please contact Carol Wilde (774-9089 or <cwildeflower@aol.com>) for more information.

CLL NOTES

The wheel of the year is turning and taking us with it. At my birdfeeder, the red-bellied woodpecker's red-orange cap is vivid in the pre-dusk afternoon. The beginning of December was once a time of penitence and fasting to prepare for the approaching holy season. Now many of us are about to be caught up in a whirl of preparations and parties. There are some good reasons for people to party at this darkest time of the year. The dark can be an invitation to rest and contemplation, or can promote depression. The pre-holiday rush can pull us away from becoming self-absorbed, but it is also often stressful. Needed rest and contemplation—who has time, with so much going on? It's not easy to find space for an important holiday preparation right now at the beginning of the season—getting our spirits ready for the ending of the old year and the beginning of the new, getting our spirits ready for the dark cold of January.

A wonderful sermon by the Rev. Mary Grigolia is posted on the Fellowship's Website, "It's OK To Be Happy," delivered on December 12, 1999. According to Mary, "In our market-driven economy, the tacit belief is that we can buy happiness. ... We are especially vulnerable in this season as we prepare for the Winter Holidays. With unrealistic expectations ... we run from store to store, we max out our lines of credit, we worry that we haven't done enough, or bought enough to earn the happiness we yearn for. We feel anxious or depressed, so we eat too much or drink too much or just withdraw. We buy into the belief that we SHOULD feel joyful and happy at this time of year. And if we don't feel joyful, we feel like failures."

Many of us find the holidays more stressful than rewarding. If we live alone, do we become lonely, wishing for a different family? If we cannot afford to buy any of the latest marvels advertised around us, do we become miserable? With all the hype and glitter of the commercial holiday, it is important to take time to remember what this celebration is really about. After all, getting things is not the point. Happiness comes from inside, often unexpectedly. Isn't sharing, loving, and giving of yourself the real meaning of the holiday?

It takes work, but in the end it's very rewarding to build or to be part of a community of friends, who may or may not also be family, where we can open up our hearts. If sadness or loneliness are banished for the moment, our comfort, our joy are all the more intense. The Rev. Gail Geisenhainer talks about being part of a UU community like this in her sermon, "We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest," that we will be watching on video on December 10.

For the northern peoples, the winter solstice has always been a special, joyful time for asserting that light and warmth are still with us and will return in full strength. Even for us urban and suburban folks, the end of the old year and the beginning of the new is a time to settle old fights, to resolve to do better. It is the time of year for renewal, a reminder that babies hold our hopes for the future. The evergreen promises continuing life under the snow.

The wheel of the year turns and takes us with it. Whatever our theologies, however we celebrate, whether we even notice, we will be carried along with Earth's changes. Pain, difficulty, and struggle will continue; the cold has arrived. Therefore, on Christmas Eve, in the words of our children's new chalice lighting, let us "gather in love and life together" to celebrate.

Barbara Fuchsman, Commissioned Lay Leader

Sunday, December 17, 2006

**BECOMING A RADICALLY
INCLUSIVE CONGREGATION**

FELLOWSHIP FORUM – 9:30 AM

Karina Leppik, Forum Leader

How do we include under-represented groups in our congregation? It's more than just saying hello at coffee hour. Come participate in a conversation about how we can become a congregation that is radically open and welcoming to all newcomers, particularly younger people. All are welcome.

HOLIDAYS IN OUR HOMES

MORNING SERVICE – 11:00 AM

Shelly Rasmussen and the RE program

The Sunday School's Holiday Celebration will be led by members of the fall Religious Education program. All are welcome.

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

A few thoughts on the Guest At Your Table program...

Giving is a joy in this world. Giving opens our hearts to those around us. Giving frees us from the hold that money and possessions can have on our spirits. Giving counteracts the gospel of greed preached by our corporate media. Giving joys. Giving opens. Giving frees. Giving is a countercultural act. Please join me in giving generously to support the work of this congregation.

Our fellowship kicked off our Guest at Your Table effort during the Bread Service on November 19. The donation boxes that were taken home should be returned to Shelly Rasmussen by December 31. Thank you for your support of this program.

FRONT DOOR PLEASE

With a few exceptions, all people are asked to enter through the front doors of the Oberlin Early Childhood Center. The two back doors to OECC will no longer be propped open. This will help with the efficiency of heating and cooling systems. The only time the other back door will be open is when we need access to the storage locker to get and put back chairs and other furniture used for our services.

DECEMBER KENDAL GATHERING

STORIES OF THE FLAMING CHALICE

Wednesday, December 20, 4:15 p.m.

Whittier Lounge, Kendal at Oberlin

Barbara Fuchsman, service leader

As the Winter Solstice draws near, it seems appropriate to celebrate the UU symbol of fire, the Flaming Chalice. Do you know the story of the Flaming Chalice? Which story? The Chalice became a Unitarian religious symbol during World War II, and already today a number of different stories cluster around its origins. We will compare official and less official stories and ponder their meaning for our Unitarian Universalist faith. Barbara is UU Commissioned Lay Leader for the Oberlin Fellowship. All are welcome.

HELP NEEDED

Please sign up to bring food for the Social (Half-)Hour, or to bring flowers for the sanctuary, on Sunday morning. Sign-up sheets are posted in the lobby.

NOTES FROM L.D. MOORE, OUUF CHAIRPERSON

UU's will often speak of such famous personalities from the 19th Century as Emerson, Thoreau, Channing and Parker, and more recently the Rev. A. Powell Davies, the Rev. William Sinkford, the Rev. William Schultz, Moderator Denise Davidoff, and Moderator Gini Courter, all powerful personalities with significant contributions to Unitarian Universalism.

But did you ever hear of Lucile Shuck Longview? It was not until I was reading With Purpose and Principle, Edited by Edward A. Frost, did I learn of this woman, who with a group of women UU's developed The Women and Religion Resolution that was adopted at the 1977 General Assembly. This resolution and others were based on the concern that the then principles of the Association did not affirm women as women. Also it was believed that the principles did not indicate a respect for the wholeness of life and for the earth. These challenging testimonies, among others, led to the development of our current Principles and Purposes. I found this fascinating stuff to read, history that to my way of thinking reinforces the notion of Unitarian Universalism being a living, a non-creedal, a forward thinking faith -- a faith ever evolving as do our own persons, our world views and faiths.

Other things to read could be A Chosen Faith, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church as well as On This We Agree, a paper by Jim Casebolt. You can get Jim Casebolt's paper by going to our very own website, www.ouuf.org. You can get the other books on line at Beacon Press or the UUA Bookstore.

MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Congregational Record will soon be made available for review by ministers looking for positions. The Ministerial Search Committee is now getting ready to respond to ministers who contact us with an interest in doing ministry with us. The earliest we would receive a contact is probably January. We have no idea of how much time it will take to be contacted by one or more ministers that could become candidates, let alone knowing when we finally find someone to call.

The Ministerial Search Committee, along with very valuable work from the Virginia Erdy and the Finance Committee, have developed a plan that will provide salary as well as proportionate benefits for a minister.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 6, at 7:15PM at Kendal. The specific agenda for this meeting is yet not set beyond the standard reading of the minutes of the last meeting, and reports from the treasurer, CLL, Interim DRE, and other committees. Other agenda items could include policies and procedures, how to document and archive bylaw amendments, personnel policies, evaluation of Interim DRE, Search Committee statuses, website. The Board meetings are open to all. Contact L.D. Moore regarding the agenda.

A QUOTE AND A MINI STORY, THINGS TO PONDER

In his book The Almost Church, Michael Durall quotes UU Minister Victor Carpenter, "Small miracles occur at church every Sunday."

Durall, in a later paragraph, related a story about William Ellery Channing. Channing was on his way to the Federal Street Church (now the Arlington Street Church) in Boston when he came upon a parishioner who said he didn't like the sermon topic that had been announced and was not going to church that day. Channing never again announced the sermon title or topic. Of course there are good reasons to publish services and forum topics such as attracting visitors. It is true that our forums are topical and intended to elicit discussion. But I hope that we come together as community, to listen and be listened to, to be affirmed for who we are as individuals and who we are as a community, to be moved and challenged... even to be together for the small, and not so small, miracles that can and do happen "every Sunday."

Sunday, December 24, 2006

**POTLUCK BREAKFAST AND
SPIRITUAL GIFT EXCHANGE**

FELLOWSHIP FORUM -- 9:30 AM

Kelly Harris, Organizer

In place of the forum we will have a time of fun and fellowship. Please bring a dish to share, your own place setting and a wrapped gift. The gift may be some-thing bought or something you own that is of spiritual significance to you. Please include a note to tell why this gift is spiritually significant to you. All are welcome.

**IN CELEBRATION OF
CHRISTMAS EVE**

MORNING SERVICE -- 11:00 AM

Barbara Fuchsman, Kathleen Berzin

This holiday service will feature the Fellowship's Intergenerational Choir. While honoring the life and work of Jesus, we will celebrate the winter solstice and the promise of coming light by bringing light into darkness. All are welcome.

THE OUF CARING COMMITTEE

invites members and friends to notify them of significant life events in the personal lives of members & friends, such as hospitalizations, serious illness, assistance in getting medical help, important accomplishments, birthdays, etc. We can be reached at (440) 935-3812.

OCS FOOD DRIVE! Please help the RE kids in collecting food for the Oberlin Food pantry between now and December 17. OCS would appreciate "meals in a can," tuna, peanut butter, jam, spaghetti sauce, pasta, fruit juices, and baking mixes. Items of personal hygiene and laundry detergent are also helpful. Please look for the OCS marked box on Sunday morning! MANY THANKS for helping curb hunger locally. Any questions? Contact Kim Peters.

OOUF

5211 Hillgrove Drive, Lorain
OH 44074

COVENANT GROUP

Looking for companionship? Would you like to connect with friends, discuss issues of the day, larger life issues? In this small discussion group, build shared understanding, provide and receive support.

Right now, one group is meeting each month on the second and fourth Tuesday afternoons at 1:15 p.m. The group will gather only once in December. New members are warmly welcomed. We would like to start a group to meet on Sunday evening, but are still looking for people to fill out the group. If you would like to meet Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. or would like more information, please contact coordinator Barbara Fuchsman (774-1804). All are welcome!

Next meeting date is Tuesday, December 19 at 1:15 pm, at Kendal at Oberlin.

MISSION

The Oberlin Unitarian Universalist Fellowship mission is to promote religious freedom with responsibility, to support each other with compassion, and to serve peace with justice.

COVENANT

We, the members and friends of the Oberlin Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, covenant to live together in our quest for truth, social justice and environmental responsibility. In this spirit of caring fellowship, we offer our combined gifts and resources.

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Mail: MPO Box 0354, Oberlin OH 44074-0354. Phone: (440) 935-3812. Email: webmaster@ouuf.org. Website: www.ouuf.org. Interim RE Director: Shelly Rasmussen. Chair: L.D. Moore. Vice Chair: Eleanor Helper. Secretary: Margaret Medina. Treasurer:

Virginia Erdy. Editor: Dave Burwasser. Webmaster: Cal Frye

Sunday, December 31, 2006

REMEMBRANCES

MORNING SERVICE – 11:00 AM

Lisette & David Burwasser

Minor Christmas customs of the British Isles give us a hint of how Yule was celebrated in much older days. Join us for a meditative journey to an earlier day, and share with us your stories of the Solstice holidays. All are welcome.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Did you know that the sharing of Joys, Concerns and Appreciations was rated one of the most important facets of our Sunday service, according to the June 2006 survey by the Program Committee? As a small UU fellowship, we sometimes feel that we struggle financially and in other ways, yet our size gives us the opportunity for intimacy and interpersonal sharing that may be lacking in larger congregations.

We are a caring fellowship. Every Sunday, we set aside time to express our caring and support for each other through the sharing of our Joys, Concerns and Appreciations. Sometimes, in our desire to express this caring spirit, we inadvertently cross certain boundaries. COM, in consensus with OUUF Leadership, would like to make the following recommendation: before you share concerns regarding another member, please try to remember to ask that person's permission first. "May I light a candle for you on Sunday?" is a simple and caring way to seek permission and avoid violating confidentiality.

In addition, it is rarely necessary to share medical details in front of the Fellowship.

Whenever possible, try to limit your sharing to one or two sentences. For example: "I have a concern for the health of Jane Doe. She is not able to attend services but welcomes your calls or visits."

Limiting your sharing to one or two sentences allows others to feel free to share. It takes courage for some members to speak in front of the Fellowship. Some may wait until everyone else has spoken while they try to get up the nerve to speak. We do not want these less-vocal members to feel that the time has been used up. Lighting a candle for joys and concerns unspoken is not always the closure that quieter members want or need.

Finally, we would add that the children are active participants in Joys and Concerns during the intergenerational services. For those members who are less comfortable with intergenerational Joys and Concerns, there are generally 3 services during each month which provide an adult-centered atmosphere for sharing.

Sincerely,
Carol Wilde, writing for the COM