

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Yellow Springs...



NEWSLETTER *December 2008*

News of the Social Justice Committee: Please Read

Our UUF Social Justice Committee has stepped back the past months and looking at the big picture of social justice activities at the UUF. On our retreats we have come up with a working vision and goals for the next 5 years. We want and invite feedback and your input as we move ahead. We are flexible and will change as we go along and see what fits our fellowship and the community. Give feedback to Denise C., Sylvia C., Ann T., Peter W., Al S., Joan C., Ruth L., Bobbi T., Elizabeth D., Marianne W. Here's our work in progress.

The Mission of the Social Justice Committee:

"To advance human rights and social/environmental justice partnering with those who confront unjust power structures, and mobilizing to challenge oppression using the 7 UU Principles as a guide."

The SoJus Vision for the next 5 years:

To engage the fellowship to actively work for a just fellowship, a just community and a just world.

Goals to carry out the vision:

1. Develop and carry out a long-term service project involving the whole congregation which addresses one of the basic rights of all people. The 3 issues SoJus favors are environmental justice, addressing poverty, and addressing hunger. We will need your input on which one and choose the appropriate local organizations who work with the issue and form partnerships to help address this issue. All 3 issues are current issues, passed resolutions or programs of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

This would be a "hands on" project.

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The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Yellow Springs is published monthly. To submit material for the newsletter please do so by the 15th of each month. Please submit material as **non-formatted text** in your e-mail or as an MS Word attachment in 12 pt New Times Roman with no formatting (bold, italic, etc...). Send material to David K. at: **tau.athanasios@gmail.com**

December 2008 Calendar:

Sunday, December 7

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Forgiveness"

10:00 a.m.: "Yearnings – for the Season and the Future." Member Mary S. will draw out your hopes for the holidays and the new political environment.

Sunday, December 14

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "What is integrity?"

10:00 a.m.: "Ethical Eating" Fellowship members Denise C. and Peter W. will introduce the topic by addressing these questions; 1) What is ethical eating? 2) How do we do it? 3) What is the Unitarian Universalist Association's involvement? Information on our area's food banks and their needs will also be provided. The objective of this Social Action program is to encourage personal action.

Sunday, December 21

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "What is myth?"

10:00 a.m.: "Holiday Stories and Songs", the Fellowship's annual holiday program, produced by Mitzi M., Minister of Music and Celebrations. The latter part of the program will be devoted to singing favorite Christmas carols, by request.

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 23

8:00 p.m.: Christmas Eve Service at the Fellowship, our third annual celebration. Invite extended family and friends to share this service comprising traditional stories, music, and candle-

light. Enjoy hot cider and Christmas cookies afterward.

Sunday, December 28

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Where do I belong?"

10:00 a.m.: "Out of Darkness" This program will begin with a Storycard Theater performance featuring David B. and Hazuki K., the son and daughter-in-law of Charlotte and Rubin B. Bengt G. and Blythe P., with the assistance of the youth of the congregation, will then help guide us out of the Darkness of Winter, toward the Comforting Light of the Coming Year. Bring your drums and noisemakers to help us rise up and burn our regrets and sorrows to ashes while we turn toward our hopes and aspirations.

It's "Souper Sunday". Plan to stay for soup, bread and conversation.

New Year's Eve, Thursday, December 31

9:00 p.m.: Donna C. has graciously consented to host the Fellowship's New Year's Eve party at her home, 129 W. Davis Street, in Yellow Springs. Bring snacks or beverages to share. Plan to enjoy an evening of conversation, ping pong, etc., while we close out the old year and ring in the New Year--2009! Donna's number is 767-9131.

Coming in January, 2009 Sunday, January 4

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Pivotal choices"

10:00 a.m.: Grover C., minister and psychotherapist, will address the topic of ethical issues and the difference between ethics and morality. Grover is the husband of UU Fellowship

2. Develop an advocacy component to address the issue chosen for the UUF Service Project. We will advocate for appropriate legislation to get the resources and mandates to address if not end the suffering caused by this issue (which ever one we chose: environment, hunger, poverty).

3. Continue local service to our community. We will work locally on justice: donating to organizations, building community through fellowship and gatherings, helping one another, and involving youth and their interests. We want to continue to acknowledge/recognise those who work tirelessly for social justice

4. Continue to present better programs addressing current social issues of interest to our fellowship. Bring in good speakers to help us know how we can address the many present challenges of this century. The current Congregational Study/Action Issues (a 4 year process) of the UUA are Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice, and Peacemaking. Some of the Actions of Immediate Witness passed in 2008 at UUA General Assembly were: End Present-day Slavery in the Fields, Extend the Tax Credit for Wind and Solar Power, Oppose a US Attack on Iran, Oppose the Fla. and Calif. "Marriage Protection" initiatives, Raise the Fedl. Minimum Wage to \$10. and Single Payer Health Care. We are looking for people who have 1st hand knowledge of some of these issues and are great speakers. We also want to learn more about the new administration's agenda.

Continue advocacy. We will advocate for ending our dependence on plastic water bottles and plastic bags. We will continue advocating for Oxfam, UUSC, and end to genocide in Darfur, and we have yet to know how this economic crisis will affect members of our congregation and our communities.

So that's how clear we are presently on social justice programming. What do you think?

Joan C., co-chair, Social Justice Committee

A Feast for Others

Did you have a nice Thanksgiving observance – with lots of yummy traditional food? Did you wonder how you could help others who are not so fortunate?

Social Justice Committee is offering a way. On Sunday, Dec. 7 our regular monthly potluck lunch will be replaced by a call to donate to Oxfam, the international program to help the hungry. Millions of people in our country and around the world can not afford meat in their diets – they exist on beans and rice. Sometimes it's even less ... you've seen the photos.

For us, the SocJus committee will provide a simple meal of beans and rice and suggests that you donate to Oxfam the money equivalent to a restaurant meal, so others may eat. If you are inspired to cook and bring along a tasty version of beans and rice, that would be received with thanks. But the money is the thing – if we each share even a few dollars with Oxfam, they will supply food to those who consider beans and rice a feast! Please join us in this worthy project.

Summary of Minutes 9/14/08 UUFYS Board Meeting

Present: Mary D., Debbie D., Martha G., Joan C.,
and Mary S.

Absent: Bengt G. and Jim R.

The meeting began at 12:05 p.m. with chalice lighting, check-in and agenda review.

Old Business

--Personnel: Pat S. is no longer Toby's supervisor; Martha now is. Members discussed the use of Toby's time by members, speakers, etc. Martha will talk with Toby about this and emphasize that financial and board items as well as items needed for visitor follow-up are of the highest priority. Martha will also remind members that requests for Toby's assistance should go through Martha.

--2008 board retreat: Members who attended agreed that this retreat was a very positive event. Joan suggested developing 12-18 month fellowship goals based on the board's vision for the future in three categories: 1) the culture of the fellowship and its people (What do we want to look like?); 2) finances and viability issues; and 3) organization. The goal setting retreat was set for 10/4.

--October board meeting and training opportunity: The board meeting date was changed to October 5th because the board president will be unavailable on the 12th. Several members are interested in attending the October 18th conference, "Big Ideas for Small Congregations" in Wooster; David K. is also interested.

--Review of August board meeting minutes: The minutes of the 8/10/08 board meeting were unanimously approved.

--Treasurer's report: An official treasurer's report was not presented as final data for August was unavailable. Mary S. stated that UUFYS has about \$15,000 in a savings account and about the same amount in certificates of deposit. Another \$8,000 is in AI S.'s fund for the upcoming Rwanda school personnel visit. The remainder of fellowship cash is in stocks. The books have not been closed for July or August and providing up-to-date financial reports will be a priority for next meeting. Members discussed the status (unknown) of the 2007-08 pledge completions and 2008-09 pledges made as well as needed follow-up with members.

--Loan Fund: Mary S. had made changes to the promissory note currently used and will forward the revised text of the note for member review.

--Pledge drive and 2008-2009 Budget: Formal discussion was postponed until the October board meeting after receipt of proposed funding cuts from fellowship committees and data

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is obtained about pledges.

--Congregational Survey: Members reviewed items from Building & Grounds, Religious Education and Social Justice. The RE Committee is excited about their vision, particularly having one Sunday per month to present services. Debbie raised concerns about the status of the children's RE program, which is one of the essential pillars on which our fellowship stands. Members discussed these concerns and noted recent changes in the children's RE program. Mary D. will invite David K. and Blythe P. to the October board meeting to present the RE Committee's vision for the future.

--Coordinating Council: For the next CC meeting, Jim R. will be asked to
1) remind committee chairs to submit their meeting agendas and minutes to the board; and
2) ask chairs to submit a short article to the newsletter about their activities on a quarterly basis. Chairs will also be asked to undertake a vision and goal-setting exercise with their committees and report the outcomes to the board and fellowship as a whole.

--B&G: Mary D. obtained the Yellow Springs Tree Committee policy regarding maintenance of memorial plantings and replacement of dead ones. This policy was discussed briefly as it applies to our garden. Mary will draft a UUFYS policy for review.

--Use of the defibrillator: Peter W. has agreed to organize training classes.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie D., Secretary

Death of Paul Newman

Beloved actor, humanitarian and race-car driver Paul Newman died September 26, 2008 after battling cancer. Newman is noted as a Unitarian Universalist on the UUA website, which lists him among several other famous UUs (including Christopher Reeve, Pete Seeger and Kurt Vonnegut.) A UUA-distributed songbook, *Singing for the Green*, includes this verse set to the tune of 'Give Me That Old-Time Religion':

“Well, it don't take much acumen
to rejoice in being human –
Especially when you know Paul Newman
is a Unitarian too.”

The New York Times quoted Newman as saying, "We are such spendthrifts with our lives. The trick of living is to slip on and off the planet with the least fuss you can muster. I'm not running for sainthood. I just happen to think that in life we need to be a little like the farmer who puts back into the soil what he takes out."

Announcements

Senior Citizens' Day

All area senior citizens are invited to the 29th annual event given by the Yellow Springs school system. It's Wednesday, Dec. 10, beginning at 10 a.m. Held in the high school gymnasium, the day begins with coffee and donuts. Entertainment will be provided by the McKinney band and orchestra and by the Mills Lawn kindergarten. For reservations, call YSHS by Dec. 5 at 767-7224.

Wanna Know More?

Would you like to be more involved in Fellowship actions but think you lack the skills? The solution is to accept one of the training opportunities coming up. The Heartland District will hold its annual general meeting and training workshop next April in Muncie, Ind., which is a short distance away. Details on this and other seminars are available at www.heartlanduu.org. The UU district east of us, Ohio-Meadville, is holding a one-day workshop on "Nonviolent Communication" on Saturday, April 18, in Kirtland, Ohio. Find details at www.ohiomeadville.org. The UUF policy has been to pay the cost of registration for training and the attendee pays for travel, room and meals. To cut expenses, home hospitality is available through the hosting church. For more information, talk with Judy W.

Looking for Unusual Holiday Gifts?

Books for the thinking person are offered by the bookstore at uua.org and through Beacon Press. Gifts featuring UU symbols are available at uniuniques.com. Catalogs for these and the Heifer Project may be borrowed from the shelf in the meetinghouse parlor.



Thank You!

We've received thanks from the Beaver Creek Wetlands Association for our donation of \$309.73; information on their projects is at www.beavercreekwetlands.org. We also received appreciation from Lottie and Leonard B. (Bengt's parents) for a donation to their school for girls in Honduras. One of the students, Riccy I. A., wrote, in part: "El Barro Concepcion Sur, Santa Barbara, Sept 9, 2008: Hello, I feel so good in being able to greet you and give you thanks because thanks to you I have a better life, also I want to tell you that I am a Christian person. I go to the church, I give thanks to God that he put people so fine as you, in contact with me. I wish that I could get to know you better.... My family and I are making an effort so that I will be able to continue forward because I want to have a career that pleases me. Since I was 7 years old the career of 'medicine' has been my focus....Many blessings in your lives and those of your families." The complete text and a newsletter from the Browns are available on the SocJus bulletin board in the gallery, nearest the outside door.

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Not Red and Green, But Blue - by Abigail V.

For many individuals, the holidays of December can be an intensely difficult time, triggering feelings of stress, loneliness and loss. If a person is prone to depression, these feelings can be magnified.

“How can anyone feel depressed this time of year,” you ask. It’s not that far-fetched. People who are separated from their families often feel isolated because they can’t celebrate in the traditional way. Families who lost a loved one during the year especially feel the absence at this time. Others become depressed because they imagine that everyone else is enjoying a warm, idealized family experience while they are on the outside looking in. Even people who enjoy the holidays can feel stretched for time, energy and money.

Some ways to ward off the holiday blues:

- Keep expectations reasonable. Don’t take on more than you can handle – in time or finances.
- Don’t overspend or run up a credit card debt. Plan a holiday budget and live within it. You’ll be much happier in the new year.
- Watch your alcohol intake. While society thinks it elevates ones mood, it is actually a depressant. If you have a problem with alcohol, start now to get whatever support you need to get through the holidays in good health.

A final thought: If you’re feeling down and want an instant ‘upper,’ the surest way to accomplish it is to do something nice for someone else. Call a friend with an invitation to lunch or dinner and volunteer to drive; go shopping for items to donate to a food bank; or volunteer to read to a child. Happy holidays!

Are We There Yet?

Winter started early this year, and fiercely. Here is a thought to keep you warm:

I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December –
A magical thing
And sweet to remember.
“We are nearer to Spring
Than we were in September,”
I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December.
-- Oliver Herford

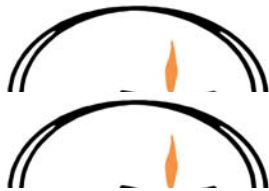
The Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.



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