

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Yellow Springs...



NEWSLETTER February 2009

Sinkford Writes “Memo to Obama”

[Rev. William G. Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), was among those leaders invited to send a "Memo to Obama" by Tikkun Magazine for its January 2009 issue. Also included are memos from Rev. William F. Schulz, former President of the UUA and former Executive Director, Amnesty International USA; Rev. Robert M. Hardies, Senior Minister, All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington, DC; and Sharon Welch, Provost and Associate Professor of Theology and Applied Theology, Meadville Lombard Theological School. January 9, 2009]

I learned of your election on a late-night flight to Africa. When the pilot announced that you would be the 44th president of the United States, many of us wept with joy. The hopes Americans have placed in you are so high, and the challenges are so daunting. You will lead us during a critical period of war, recession, and mounting ecological threats. Some might say you have taken on a thankless job; I am deeply grateful for a president who seems equal to these challenges.

And I am hopeful that your vision will encompass all of us. During the campaign, the rights of same-sex couples were downplayed even among progressives. While I understand the strategic reasons for this, I feel called to witness on behalf of those Americans whose rights were trampled and whose dignity was assaulted by state ballot initiatives preventing marriage or adoption.

Before the presidential campaign began in earnest, back in the summer of 2007, you said something that gave me great hope: “Too often, the issue of gay rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It’s about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect.”

I rejoiced at those words then, and I want to lift them up now. Some people—including some wise and experienced leaders—are still seeking to divide us. They are

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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 Kling at: tau.athanasios@gmail.com

February 2009 Program Calendar:

Sunday, February 1

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Is human violence inevitable in the future?"

10:00 a.m.: "Peace Partners in Pakistan and India," presented by Steve Fryburg, Director of the Dayton International Peace Museum. From mid-November through mid-December, Steve and his wife Rose embarked on a month-long peace education mission in Pakistan and India. Through the Peace Partners program they were able to teach peace to more than 2500 children and adults. A highlight of the trip was an opportunity to lead a student peace march through the streets of Mumbai within days after the terrorist attack on the city.

Fryburg was motivated to become involved in peace and conflict resolution based on his service in the U.S. Army, 1974-77, and having a career as a police officer where he learned through experience the futility of using violence to end violence. He now fulfills his passion for peace through the Dayton International Peace Museum's efforts to work towards a global culture of peace.

11:30 a.m.: A potluck lunch follows the program. Please bring your own table service and a generous dish to share.

Sunday, February 8

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

10:00 a.m.: "This Man's Story," presented by John Booth, who will talk about his background, his poetry and music, and his vision for Yellow Springs. John describes himself as follows: "I was raised in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, went to college at Wilmington College. I have worked most of my life with youth as well as the geriatric, mentally ill, mentally retarded. I spent a lot of my youth pursuing a music career, but always kept a day job. I started writing poetry as a teen and began competing in slams when I was 45. I competed nationally with Team Dayton for four years. I have always been socially conscious and have a reputation for getting involved when something doesn't seem right. I try to live my life

by the principles of the song "If I Can Help Somebody."

Sunday, February 15

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Are all intellectual, emotional, psychological and spiritual events located exclusively in the brain?"

10:00 a.m.: "Love!"--presented by Fellowship members Blythe Pelham and Mary Sims. Join us for a multi-media service, delving into the many ways love surrounds us and can be nurtured in our lives. We'll enjoy a visual presentation, sing love songs and hear poetry while our heart-strings come together in harmony.

Sunday, February 22

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "What is education? Where does it happen?"

10:00 a.m.: "The Strength of Community," presented by Faith Patterson. Faith's grandfather taught her that we have to be involved in the community where we live. Her work is based on the assertion that everybody counts. Faith is one of the founders of the African American Cross-cultural Works which started in 1992 and which has sponsored the Martin Luther King, Jr Day celebration, Kwanzaa, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, the AACW Blues and Jazz Fest, and beginning this year, Juneteenth. Come hear her story, be inspired, get involved!

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

Coming in March, 2009

Sunday, March 1

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "What benefits do we derive from the arts? Is art ever dangerous?"

10:00 a.m.: Our speaker will be Dr. Kelli Zaytoun, Director of Women's Studies at Wright State University. She will present a feminist view of coed versus gender-specific education for women.

11:30 a.m.: A potluck lunch follows the program. Please bring your own table service and a generous dish to share.

UUFYS Board Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2008

Present: Joan Chappelle, Mary Donahoe, Debbie Downey, Martha Gardin, Bengt Gregory-Brown, Jim Rose and Mary Sims

The meeting began at noon with chalice lighting, check-in and agenda review.

Administrative Coordinator: Martha reported that the Personnel Committee (PC) interviewed Helen Pelzl for this position and was impressed by her training, qualifications, and intelligence. The PC spoke at length with Helen about use of her time and organizational priorities. The Board interviewed Helen and then went into Executive Session. Members voted to hire Helen for the Administrative Coordinator position with a start date of 12/15/08.

Review of November board meeting minutes: The board meeting minutes of 11/9/08 were unanimously approved on a motion by Joan, seconded by Jim.

Treasurer's report: Members expressed appreciation to Mary Sims for the many hours she spent preparing the financial information for this meeting. She reported that UUFYS currently has 84 pledging members, 68 voting members, and 16 friends; this information will be supplied to the UUA as required.

At the next board meeting members would like to receive a report about the Schwaab account following receipt of the December quarterly update.

Budget: Mary Sims reported that expenses are ahead of income (66% of budgeted funds spent vs. 45% funds collected). In January members will look at pledge data in more detail and make budget cuts, and/or determine the use of savings to cover operating expenses.

Old Business

Finance Committee: Louis Sims has been encouraged to have a meeting in concert with the Stewardship Committee to plan the next pledge

drive.

2009-2010 Pledge Drive: Thanks to the efforts of the Leadership Committee, a Stewardship Committee has been formed to undertake next year's pledge drive. The committee chair is Judy Rose, members are Sid Welton, Mary Sims, Martha Gardin, and Judy Williams. The annual meeting this year will be on May 24th.

Action items: Mary Sims will send an e-mail to committee chairs requesting submission of their 2009-2010 budgets to her by 1/31/09. Debbie will look up board term information and distribute it to the board, Leadership and Stewardship committees so that recruitment can begin for a needed slate of board members.

Coordinating Council: Jim was planning to hold a CC meeting in January. Agenda items will include 2009-2010 budgets, leadership of committees and the fellowship in the coming year, and training needs.

Personnel: Per Martha a request had been received to reimburse Blythe Pelham for gasoline expenses incurred because of her long-distance commute. Members expressed appreciation for Blythe's commitment to UUFYS and leadership of the RE program. This expenditure was unanimously approved.

Congregational Survey: Martha shared copies of the survey questions, which were briefly reviewed. Members discussed the RE program and the most viable means of gathering input about people's vision for RE. The survey will be distributed in early 2009 with a submission deadline of 1/25.

B&G/Presbyterian Church: The matter of sharing space with the Yellow Springs Presbyterian Church is on indefinite hold while that church de-

termines its future.

Behavioral standards (Dangerous & Disruptive Behavior): Members did not have any changes to the standards as proposed, which will be submitted to the newsletter for congregation feedback prior to final board approval.

Conflict resolution guidelines: The discussion of proposed changes is ongoing.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Downey, Secretary

The next Board meeting will be held on Sunday, 2/8/09 at noon at the Fellowship. Prior to the meeting the Board will meet with congregation members and friends to address their concerns. Agenda items will include:

- Chalice lighting and check-in
- Review of the January minutes
- Treasurer's report
- 2008-2009 Budget
- Finance Committee
- Leadership Development/Stewardship Committee and upcoming pledge drive
- Committee oversight & Coordinating Council
- Congregational Survey
- B&G/Presbyterian Church
- Emergency closures
- Personnel
- Behavioral standards (Dangerous & Disruptive Behavior)
- Conflict resolution guidelines
- PR/Publicity
- Progress on 2008 board retreat goals
- Defibrillator training
- 50th Anniversary photo album project
- Green Sanctuary Committee
- Congregational leadership training in 10-08

Wanted: Gently used prom and bridesmaid dresses, jewelry, bags and accessories. A Yellow Springs High School senior is collecting these items now through Feb.16 for her senior project. They will be sold at "The Perfect Fit Boutique" in March, at no more than \$25. This will let girls with not much money purchase a party dress, plus all proceeds go to STARFISH, Inc., which helps needy families with food, utilities and housing. To donate dresses, simply drop them off at the school office before 3:30 p.m., or call Donna Haller at 767-2767 to make other arrangements or to obtain more information.



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cautioning you not to overreach as you set new policies. These people may advise you that legal equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people is a luxury, and they may urge you to put civil rights on the back burner for now. Wait, they are saying. Wait for a better time.

But we know there's never a better time to end discrimination. It wasn't the right time in 1954 when *Brown v. Board* ended segregation in public schools—the critics then said that too many states and cities weren't ready for a change as big as racial integration. And yet change came—not because we were ready but because—in the words of abolitionist Unitarian minister Theodore Parker that were echoed by Dr. King—“the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Progress may be delayed, but its course is unstoppable.

In 1967, if the United States Supreme Court had waited for “the right time,” *Loving v. Virginia* would not have been decided in favor of committed couples who wished to marry but happened to be of different races. Before this decision, in many states I would not have been allowed to marry my wife. Today, just a generation later, it is unthinkable that we would ever again adopt such laws that keep loving people apart. And yet that's exactly what happened in California and in several other states last November. You have the opportunity to correct this injustice and to put us back on course.

Yes, America is facing big problems, but I urge you not to view our country as a hierarchy of competing needs, with minority rights taking a backseat to issues like the economy. Instead, I pray that you will see our society as a diverse, interconnected web, where the health of our nation depends upon the well-being of each of its citizens. It will take an act of deep faith to believe that protecting individual rights and strengthening a small percentage of families will benefit the entire country. But it will.

During my visit to Africa, I learned much from Unitarian Universalist congregations and other religious communities in Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. I was humbled by their commitment to addressing dire social problems—extreme poverty, gender inequity, epidemic diseases, and profound racial and ethnic discrimination. They understand that social problems and health problems are also economic problems, and that addressing one issue means tackling them all.

Against tremendous odds, and within just a few short years, South Africans dismantled apartheid, legalized same-sex marriages, and rebuilt their entire society, and they did so by radically reimagining every economic, political, legal, and moral component. Surely we Americans can confront an economic recession, end an unjust war abroad, and advance civil rights at home. We don't have to choose peace and prosperity for the many at the expense of justice for the few. Instead, we have to understand that peace, prosperity, and justice are vitally interconnected.

You have my support and that of millions of justice-seeking Americans. With your leadership, we can be the country that finally lives up to its founding promise of equality for all.

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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