

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Yellow Springs...



NEWSLETTER July 2008

They Need to Give

by Rev. Victoria Weinstein

How is it with your soul?
How is it with your church?
How is it with your church's soul?

Did you ever run into a local Unitarian Universalist (UU) at the store, or at the beach or at a museum somewhere? You spot that chalice necklace or you recognize them from a conference or a local worship service and you get that sense of delight we all get when recognizing someone from our tribe. And you chat:

How's everything? What are you doing? Ya going to General Assembly? Did you hear about the thing they're having down at the thing? And are you marching? We're sending our church banner.

And so on.

If you're an involved Unitarian Universalist, and most of you are (you didn't stumble in here by accident), you get emails like this:

"We're hosting an event and we'd like your support, and it's going to be here and at this time and

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July at a glance...

Sunday, July 6:

“Collateral Damage –
Emergency in Afghanistan.”

Sunday, July 13:

“Venezuela under Chavez”

Sunday, July 20:

“Transitions.”

Sunday, July 27:

“The First Principle: The Inherent Worth and Dignity of Every Person.”

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

July Program Calendar:

Friday, July 4

6:30 p.m.: Fourth of July picnic/cookout at the Fellowship meetinghouse. Bring friends and relatives, picnic food to share, outdoor games, folding chairs, and insect repellent. At sundown we'll adjourn for the fireworks display at Gaunt Park.

Sunday, July 6

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Patriotism: Pros & Cons."

10:00 a.m.: "Collateral Damage – Emergency in Afghanistan" Todd J. (Tj) T., Ph.D., a materials research engineer at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, will speak about his experience in Afghanistan as a member of the military and how that experience ties into his efforts to establish an Ohio chapter of the humanitarian relief organization, Emergency USA.

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

Sunday, July 13

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

10:00 a.m.: "Venezuela under Chavez". Jeanne L. and Al S. will report on their two weeks in Venezuela as part of a Witness for Peace delegation, focused on the health care system of Venezuela. They will share visuals and report their perspectives from meetings with many people and groups in Venezuela.

Sunday, July 20

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

10:00 a.m.: "Transitions," the youth of the fel-

lowship will lead the program with a general theme of transitions. Recently graduated youth will also be honored.

Sunday, July 27

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Existence, Essence, and the nature of Being."

10:00 a.m.: "The First Principle: The Inherent Worth and Dignity of Every Person" Fellowship members Mary C. and Joan C. will facilitate a discussion of this first principle and invite you to consider the following questions: Why do you suppose the UUA decided to affirm and promote this principle? What does this principle mean to you? How well do we live this principle at UUFYS?

Coming in August Sunday, August 3

8:30 a.m.: Spiritual discussion group, "Open Discussion Topic."

10:00 a.m.: "Courage At Any Age", a storytelling program presented by Martha M., a UU from Cincinnati. We'll celebrate some examples of those who have stood up against injustice and challenge ourselves to follow their examples. Hear fascinating accounts of three African Americans during the turbulent 1950s to 60s; a sixteen year old high school student, a six year old first grade student, and a forty-two year old office worker/seamstress. Learn how their determination to no longer accept oppressive segregation led to some of the most provocative and important events in America's civil rights movement.

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

July 6th Program

“In September 2001 Afghanistan was brought back into the American mindset after almost two decades of neglect. Once again the fate of both nations intersected, resulting in one of the largest combat deployments of American troops. For four months in 2006, I was deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom to Afghanistan in support of those combat operations. In the limited time I spent “outside the wire”, I saw the devastation from decades of war, the effect of the American and NATO reconstruction effort, and the raw beauty of the people and land that is Afghanistan. I’ll talk about what it’s like to be a deployed military member, and show many of the pictures I took while stationed at Bagram Airfield or out on convoy operations in northern Afghanistan. I will also introduce a humanitarian relief organization that I first encountered while on a mission in the Panjshir Valley of Parwan Province. EmergencyUSA is a non-governmental, non-partisan, non-religious organization that treats civilian victims of war. They provide long term medical treatment as well as humanitarian

support to civilians caught in war zones, regardless of which “side” they might belong to. Influenced by my experiences in Afghanistan, my wife and I are forming an Ohio branch of EmergencyUSA to continue supporting the humanitarian mission before Afghanistan once again fades from American minds.”

Tj T. was the Executive Officer of the 455th Mission Support Group stationed at Bagram Airfield in northern Afghanistan from January 2006 to mid-May 2006. During that time Tj participated in several convoy operations around Bagram, and as far north as the Panjshir valley. He was able to meet and talk with local villagers and political figures, and those experiences formed the basis of a novel entitled *Touching the Gator*. The proceeds of the novel will be donated to EmergencyUSA to further their work in Afghanistan. Tj left active duty Air Force service in 2007 but remains a reserve officer and anticipates being deployed again in the next year. Tj lives in Yellow Springs with his wife Nancy, daughter Cheyan, and son Jia.



Helping One Another

Our Help One Another Committee will meet on July 10th. Our core members include Sylvia Carter D., Donna

C., Byron D., Joy F., Martie J., and Al S., however, there are others who may not be on the “committee” but are always willing to lend a hand when there’s a need.

If you would like to be added as someone we could call upon for an occasional request of support for one of our members (i.e., providing transportation for an appointment, preparing a meal, etc...) please contact Sylvia or Joy. Any amount of involvement — a little or a lot — will be appreciated.

PLEASE HELP.....

The Religious Education Committee is looking for people willing to teach the youth. A commitment of once a month is all that is needed and we have two age groups (middle group and older/coming of age) to choose from. If you have an interest you want to focus on let us know and we will work with you!

We will do whatever we can to accommodate you if you are willing to commit some time to the youth. Help make UUFYS a truly inter-generational fellowship by volunteering to work with the youth.

See David K. for more information:
tau.athanasios@gmail.com

Minutes

5/4/08 UUFYS Board Meeting

Present: Mary D., Debbie D., Martha G., Blythe P., Louis S., Marianne W. and Judy W.

The meeting began at 12:10 p.m. with an Executive Session.

--50th Anniversary photo album project: Marlene M. displayed some of the photo album pages completed thus far. Because of the high number of relevant photographs, the Board commissioned a separate Tar Hollow album.

12:35 p.m. Check-in and agenda review.

--Review of meeting minutes: The 4/13/08 board meeting minutes were unanimously passed with one abstention.

--Treasurer's report: There was no report available for the meeting as Toby is still working to close out the April books. Louis will forward the financial reports for April when this process is completed.

Old Business

---Board vision, Follow-up survey, and Annual meeting: A survey will be distributed to congregants, which will be a follow-up to the presentations in 2/08 by B&G and 3/08 by the board; the survey will include questions about the building, congregational growth, RE and programming. The results will be compiled over the summer and presented at a fall Sunday service.

--Stewardship Committee & Pledge Drive: The 5/11 Stewardship Sunday slide show and presentation was discussed. The service will also include the traditional flower communion. Jim R. and Joann H. will provide testimonials about why the fellowship is important to them and why they are supporting UUFYS financially. Judy will schedule weekly testimonials between during May. Mary will speak each week about pledge drive progress and she volunteered to provide her

own testimonial on 6/1.

Board members will provide their 2008-09 pledge amount to Louis by 5/10. Also by that date pledge information for other fellowship leaders will be solicited for inclusion on the pledge drive "thermometer." Kitty P. will be asked to create the latter with \$10,000 increments.

--Religious Education: Blythe indicated that the intra-fellowship phone system is in place but is either not operational or else involved parties do not know how to use it. She will follow up.

--Leadership Development Committee (LDC) and Bylaw Revision: The annual meeting agenda for publication in the June edition of the newsletter includes: Bylaws change; Election of Executive Board Officers; Election of Leadership Development Committee Members; 2008-2009 Budget.

The proposed changes to the bylaws (Articles V and VI) were unanimously approved by the board and will be published in the June newsletter. These changes will be voted on at the annual meeting.

--Personnel: Toby K. will set up a flexible schedule to accomplish necessary tasks. Concern was expressed that she may be receiving requests for services from too many people with the result being confusion about what she needs to accomplish and by what deadline. It was decided that all service requests will be made through her immediate supervisor, Pat S. so that she can help Toby manage and prioritize projects.

The lack of publicity about the Sunday service in this week's Yellow Springs News was questioned by the board. Toby will send publicity to the News along with a request for confirmation of receipt of the submitted item(s).

--Tar Hollow: Blythe reported that 75 people have registered thus far; the deadline was extended and flyers and publicity continue to be distributed. The rental expense for the camp is \$450. Steve Jones is working to keep food expenses as low as possible without compromising the quality or

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quantity of the menu. A possible future fund raiser might be a Tar Hollow calendar.

--Defibrillator: Louis applied for a grant for a \$2,000 defibrillator. If the grant is denied, an anonymous member has offered to purchase the defibrillator as a gift to the fellowship. Peter W. has agreed to train interested members in how to use it safely and effectively.

New Business

--Volunteer Recognition: This important activity will be part of Blythe's 6/29/08 Sunday program on gratitude; following the service the Fellowship will sponsor a thank you ice cream social.

Topics of discussion continued until the next meeting:

--Space Usage and Building & Grounds

--Committee Oversight and Coordinating Council:

--Building Rental:

--Fellowship behavioral standards:

--Conflict resolution guidelines

--Review of 7/07 board retreat goals:

--Green Sanctuary: This topic was addressed in part through e-mail contacts.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie D., Secretary

July meeting: The next Board meeting will be held on Sunday, 7/20/08 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, welcome to newly elected members and check-in
- Review of the June minutes
- Treasurer's report
- Stewardship Committee and pledge drive
- Board vision, follow-up survey and annual meeting

- Leadership Development Committee and by-law change
- Volunteer Recognition
- Committee oversight & Coordinating Council
- Space usage and B&G
- Building rental
- Personnel
- Fellowship behavioral standards
- Conflict resolution guidelines
- Tar Hollow
- Purchase of a defibrillator
- Review of 7/07 board retreat goals
- 50th Anniversary photo album project
- Green Sanctuary Committee

Hosts for Rwandans Needed

I announced a couple of months ago that four Rwandans would be coming to Yellow Springs from the school I taught at in Rwanda. I am seeking hosts for three of the four and would like to give Fellowship members the first opportunity for this.

The four will likely arrive on 2 November and stay until shortly before Christmas. I will host the male biology teacher but need hosts for the two students and the female math/physics teacher.

The students are 18 years old and will have completed the 10th grade. They are both in the math/physics area of study. I am confident that they would be extremely hard working and deeply appreciative of the host family's commitment.

Ideally the students' host families would have a child in the school system who could help orient them to the way things are done here.

I think that the hosts for these Rwandans will find that they will get as much as they give in serving as hosts.

Please contact Al S., 767-7468 to get more information and have your questions answered. I would like to have hosts lined up within the next month or two.

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we hope you'll come and bring lots of people and lots of money with you, because it's a really good cause."

Or from the District Office:

"There's going to be a training to learn how to be friendly to people on Sunday mornings. Please send a team of at least four people from your Sunday Morning Friendliness Committee. Hope to see you there."

And you dutifully sign up and you go and you have done good work.

But I would like to know, how often during any of these interactions do any of us really turn to each other and say, *"How is it with your soul?"* *"How is it with your faith? You've been toiling in the vineyards of your congregation for so many years now. Is your heart growing, and is your spirit expanding because of it?"*

No workshops, no training, no marching. Just spending a moment in spiritual connection with each other, holding the other to the light of hope and strength. Connecting with the ancestor spirits; getting back in touch with the soulful purpose of our religious life. Trusting that whatever the theology of the person you are talking to, you are together in the Unitarian Universalist endeavor.

We are here this morning to do the business of our district and to reflect on the stewardship of the 21st century church. It's a very sexy topic nowadays, and not just for UUs. The 21st century church! What will it look like? What do we need to do to be hot stuff in the 21st century? Are we shrinking, are we growing, what new programs are you offering, how many people ya got in the pews on Sunday mornings, and what percentage of your congregation would that be? Do we need new office software? How about a screen to project the hymns onto!? Should we knock out all those uncomfortable pews and put in Laz-E-Boy recliners? On wheels? Maybe.

Or maybe we could consider the possibility that what most needs an upgrade in our congregations is our insides, so battered by the horrors of the 20th century and the mounting evidence that our super-optimistic view of humanity could stand some revision. We might consider that what begs our serious engagement today is not so much our technology but our theology, now that we've realized that religious conflict and theological wrangling are hallmarks of this new century, and we'd like to have something thoughtful, informed and nuanced to contribute to the conversation.

Maybe we could consider that no matter what great innovations we may think up, the Church still stands and always will stand for the eternal and the essential things which do not change all that much century to century—how to endure tragedy. How to be a force for the good. How to prepare for the inevitability of death. How to seek truth. How to serve on a committee with really irritating people.

I'm all for snazzy innovations where they're appropriate, and I like change. But I think that as we envision the 21st century church, it is all too easy to become unwittingly complicit with one of the greatest dehumanizing myths that drives our culture today. That myth is that we are, above all, consumers—and that, as consumers, we are best served when we are barraged by a dizzying variety of products, and that our purpose in life is to choose from among those products based on purely individualistic, ego-based preferences, and that we should consume or use or join these "products" only to the extent that they please us and meet our own personal needs.

When we buy into this mythology (pun intended)—and it happens without our realizing it—we begin to regard everything around us as a product to consume—everything becomes a shopping experience! We become consumers not only of material goods, but also of relationships, education, travel experiences, health care choices, and of course...religious communities.

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The church of the 21st century must stand against this cultural sickness with all its might—especially, I might add—those churches that are located in the heart of middle-class, suburban America, to whom this mythology has been most relentlessly promoted, with the most spiritually toxic and morally paralyzing results.

So what do 21st century church seekers need from us? To begin with, they need not be treated as consumers of a product, an ideology or a social club, but welcomed as human beings who have their own unique stories and their own destinies. They need to be invited to join forces with a healthy community of people who are happily absorbed in the work of mutual ministry and who are devoutly committed to daily incarnating divine love in the world, everywhere in the world, and...who can abide in a mature and forbearing manner with real difference.

Today's seekers to our congregations need to give. They need not to be examined at the door to assure appropriate theological or political conformity, or greeted with smug assurances that they're smart and sophisticated enough to be "one of us," nor should they be pandered to if they come damaged by the narcissism and entitlement instilled in them by this culture. If they come because they heard that Unitarian Universalism is a hospital for the religiously wounded, we should not expect to find them ten years hence, directing traffic from their stretchers in the parish hall, still ranting about the abuses they suffered from religious traditions long since abandoned. We should provide them opportunities to learn, to understand, to reconcile, to develop a life-giving personal theology for themselves, and finally, to heal. We should not be afraid to tell them that this area of spiritual growth and reconciliation is not only encouraged, but that the church joyfully anticipates such healing for them.

Stewardship of the 21st century church is not about providing services and a superior product to consumers, it is about fostering worshipful hearts and reverent souls who love what the church

represents so much that they begin to live their lives in accordance with its ideals.

In this vision of stewardship, churches are not afraid to have expectations of their members, among them:

- That they will practice love and hospitality as their chief spiritual disciplines;
- That they will minister to and let themselves be ministered unto;
- That they will help when asked;
- That they will pledge generously to the church (and that they will fulfill those pledges);
- That they will pray for (or think good thoughts about) those who ask for their prayers;
- That they will make themselves students of the religious and theological heritage of Unitarianism and Universalism;
- That they will make a joyful noise on Sunday mornings even if they can't carry a tune in a bucket;
- That they will consider no question too stupid to ask in learning how to participate in the democratic process or in leadership;
- That they will consider no congregational meeting too minor to attend; and that they will abide with all their hearts, all their minds, all their soul and all their strength by the covenant of the church.

I grew up and came of age in the Unitarian Universalism of the late 20th century, which was largely defined by negations and a sense of terminal and isolating uniqueness. I hope to walk with you into a 21st century Unitarian Universalism that is defined by affirmations, by a sense of fellowship with all people who seek meaning through religious community, and by a sense of high expectation and limitless possibility.

Amen, and amen.

Source: Delivered at the opening worship service of the Ballou Channing District meeting, 2004.

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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