

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse Newsletter December, 2003

Sunday Services: Program at 10:00 AM Refreshments at 11:15 AM
Southside Senior Center, 1220 Denton Street (by West Ave), La Crosse

Fellowship Mailing Address: PO Box 2676, La Crosse, WI 54602-2676

Message Center: 608-796-9993 **Web site:** www.uulacrosse.org

Upcoming Programs

Dec. 7th: Faith and Optimism. Eric

Kraemer. Must a religious faith be optimistic? Many of the world's great religions market themselves as sources of optimism but they also contain powerful pessimistic elements. This service explores the connection between faith and optimism by examining both optimistic and pessimistic features of traditional religion as well as various strands that comprise contemporary Unitarian Universalism.

Dec. 14th: What Do We Revere? Reverend Virginia Wolf, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Eau Claire.

Controversy has been stirred by UUA President William Sinkford in his call for developing "a language of reverence" within the UU tradition. The Reverend Wolf will offer her perspective on this issue. *A brief Congregational Business Meeting follows (see below).*

Dec 21st: Intergenerational Music Service.

Kim Cobb and Cindy Ericksen will coordinate. Join us for an intergenerational service celebrating the turning of the seasons! Share in some of the stories, lore, dance, traditions and music that help make this a special time of year for many. There will be no Religious Education classes -- students will be participating in the service. The Acquiring RE group (2nd through 5th graders) will be bringing percussion instruments of many kinds. Other children ages 0-99 may also bring a percussion instrument -- the more the merrier!

(Dec 28th): No Sunday Service.

Congregational Business Meeting

Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer

The Board will hold a brief Congregational Business Meeting following the service on Sunday, December 14. We hope to see you there. The following issues will be addressed:

Endowment Fund - We need to amend the Bylaws to formally establish an Endowment Fund for the Fellowship. As you may recall, the congregation voted to endorse the establishment of an Endowment Fund for the Fellowship at our Annual Business Meeting last April 13. We are ready to begin implementing that process. The first step is to have a statement in the Bylaws formally establishing the Endowment Fund. The Operational Plan (which will not be part of the bylaws) will spell out the details of the Fund and its operation. A draft of the Operational Plan will be available on Sunday at the Fellowship. The changes that the Board proposes to the Bylaws are:

Article XII - Endowment Fund

An Endowment Fund is established to provide long-term financial security for the Fellowship. The Fund will be managed by an Endowment Committee with the approval and supervision of the Board of Trustees.

The current Article XII - Amendments, will be renamed Article XIII - Amendments.

The current Article XIII - Dissolution, will be renamed Article XIV - Dissolution.

Mission, Covenant and Vision Statements - Drawing on discussions at numerous focus dinners and several retreats held over the last year, the Long Range Planning Committee has developed revised statements of the Mission, Covenant and Vision of the Fellowship for your consideration. The mission is a simple statement of why we exist and whom we serve. The covenant of the Fellowship identifies the shared values that sustain our life together, and the promises and commitments we make to each other in our community.

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A vision statement answers the questions: "What are our dreams? What do we want this congregation to look like in five years?"

We will be discussing and voting on the possible approval of the Mission, Covenant and Vision statements that are printed on page nine of this newsletter.

Space Update - We will be providing a brief update on our search for a new meeting space.

Music News

Becky Post

Looking for occasional percussion players!

We recently purchased some bongos, a tambourine and maracas. Since it's sometimes difficult to sing and play a percussion instrument accurately at the same time, we could use some rhythmically adept people to help now and then when we want percussion in the accompaniment. Perhaps some of our young people would want to do this. Of course, anyone is welcome! Ability to keep the beat is essential. This job would necessitate being at our 9:00 AM Sunday rehearsal -- but only on the days the choir would be singing with percussion. In addition to the instruments we just bought, we have claves, a dumbek (middle eastern drum), another tambourine, and some small shakers. Contact Becky Post or Eric Kraemer if you're interested in doing this. In other news...

- The choir will sing on December 7th and 21st.
- We rehearse the Sunday mornings that we sing, from 9:00 until 9:50 AM at the Denton Street meeting place.

We also have one evening rehearsal each month. Our next evening rehearsal will be Wednesday, December 17th at 7:00 PM at Becky's

New Member Recognition

Madeline Kepner

We will be welcoming our new members during the service on December 7th. If you have not met them, this is your opportunity to tell them how happy we are that they have joined our congregation. In the next two months we will introduce them to you in the newsletter.

In August, **Katherine** joined our fellowship. Her husband is _____ and they have a daughter, _____, just over a year old. A miniature dachshund and a black Lab. are also members of the family. They plan to continue their enjoyment of camping and cross-country skiing when _____ is older.

Katherine is an attorney working in the _____ for eleven years. Prior to living here, she lived in the Twin Cities area. She finds members of the congregation warm and welcoming and so became a member. She formerly was Catholic.

One of the fellowship's newest members is **Liz** (the accent is on the second syllable), who says she's been trying to become UU for 30 years. Until now, she's lived too far from UU congregations to make membership feasible. In June of 2003, she moved to La Crosse from Uvalde, 40 miles above the Mexican border.

Liz's life work has revolved around three areas: nursing, counseling, and teaching. She spent 14 years as an Army nurse. In her most recent incarnation, she has grown vegetables and learned gratitude. What attracts her to UUism? Clear-thinking people who face with courage the things they don't know.

Board of Trustees Report

Kathy Schnitzius

1. Board of Trustees Meeting of November 20, 2003-- Announcements & Decisions:

- * Our PSD Liaison, Maryann Caudill-LoGuidice, will attend our Sunday service on February 15, 2004. She would like to meet with Board members and Committee chairs after the service.
- * We approved the addition of a bylaws recommendation from the Finance Committee establishing an endowment fund. This bylaws addition will be voted upon at the congregational meeting that will be held after services on December 14th (see page one).
- * We approved an additional \$722 for the 2003 Program Committee Budget.
- * We determined that the Nominating Committee should ask Committee Chairs annually in March whether they would like to continue in their roles for the following year.
- * We set a policy that the new Board Members and Committee Chairs will begin their terms on June 1st. The new Board Members will be asked to attend a Board meeting in May along with the current Board Members.
- * We agreed to conduct a show of hands regarding the desire to continue the 10:00 AM start time for services, or to return to the 9:30 AM time. (Continuing with the 10:00 AM start time was approved by congregational vote after the November 23 service.)

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* The Mission Statement and Covenant will also be presented to the Fellowship for acceptance by vote at the congregational meeting after services on December 14th. (see page one)

The Board discussed goals for the remainder of the year.

*Board President, Kathy Schnitzius, is establishing an "Operations Binder", that will include information to be passed along to each president and will be available to Board members. Information such as account numbers, insurance policy information and contacts, location of files, holdings, contact person for the building in which we are located, and other pertinent information will be listed.

*Kathy will prepare an annual report with help from committee chairs and others to be distributed before the annual meeting of 2004. It will include a "State of the Fellowship" report from the president of the fellowship.

*Our next Board meeting will be held on Dec. 18, 6:00 PM, at a restaurant yet to be determined.

2. UU Service Committee Award UU Fellowship of La Crosse the Vision Banner:

Our Fellowship has been awarded the Vision of Justice Banner from the UU Service Committee for fiscal year 2003. This designation means that 50 to 99% of our members donated to the UUSC. We increased donation levels from 25% during the past two years to 50% this year! In addition, our fellowship will be recognized in the January/February issue of the UU World. Thanks to all who helped our fellowship achieve this recognition!

3. UUA Directory:

The Unitarian Universalist Directory 2003-2004 has arrived in the mail. It is a large volume including this information:

- organization of the UUA
- statistics about member congregations
- information about professional religious leaders
- organizations operated by Unitarian Universalists
- scholarships and awards celebrating achievements of UU individuals and congregations
- bylaws and rules.

This directory will be placed in the lending library. It is being prepared by Greg, our coordinator, for checkout by members of our fellowship. Check it out!

4. Nominating Committee Seeks Member-at-Large:

The nominating committee is seeking members of our fellowship who are interested in being a member-at-large on the Board of Trustees. This position is a two-year term, and the duties include attending monthly Board meetings, retreats, etc. as well as reading minutes and agendas from the Internet before the regular meetings. Other duties may include serving on ad hoc committees or other special functions. The term of this position would officially begin June 1, 2004, with attendance at the May Board Meeting also required. People who have an interest in developing leadership skills for future leadership roles on the Board are preferred. If you are interested in becoming a Board member, contact Bob Huff, Madeline Kepner, or Jean Novack.

Awards Nominations

Jean Novack

Is there someone in our congregation whom you feel deserves recognition for his or her efforts? Here is your chance to recognize and honor that person with an award nomination. Below is a list of Prairie Star District Awards to be given in April 2004. Forms for nominating someone will be available on the back table at Sunday services, or you may contact Jean Novack. The PSD also recommends that your nominee receive this award within your own congregation.

PSD Social Justice Award pays tribute to those who witness to the ideals of social justice and responsibility so important to our UU heritage. **Two awards are presented: one to an adult and one to a youth** (under age 18).

Unsung UU Award affirms those UUs whose actions inspire, support, and express Unitarian Universalism, but who have not been previously recognized. The award is given to a person or group whose lifetime activities have made a significant contribution to the cause of Unitarian Universalism. The District's recipient of this award will be the District nominee for the **UUA Unsung UU Award**. (This award is usually given to someone who has also worked to further Unitarian Universalism in their district or nationally.)

Keeping the Faith Award was established to recognize people who live by UU principles. It is presented to persons who work to keep Unitarian Universalism alive in their community and who touch the lives of congregation and community members in a positive way. **Recognizing that there are great differences between small and large congregations, these four awards are divided into categories by congregation size.**

Canvass Report

Bob Huff

Our Fellowship has almost completed a very successful 2003 canvass. You continue to be generous and show by your actions that you want to support our mission and covenants of being together.

We had five new members give very generously and we welcome them into our Fellowship.

We are also very appreciative of those who have the means to give a little extra and well above our averages because it is through your generosity that we are able to insure that everyone has the opportunity to join our Fellowship regardless of their income. We do have some families who are struggling or who have gone through major changes in their income levels. We hope that these families do not feel guilty and know that we appreciate anyone's gift no matter how much.

We had a substantial increase last year and so the 14% increase this year is commendable. We increased our giving from \$28,000 to \$32,000 this year and will be able to improve our programs and services as a result. Our average pledge increased from \$512 to \$685 this year and about five families have not yet had the opportunity to give.

I personally want to thank all of you who pledged a gift this year. I also want to thank those who worked on the canvass. As you may know, when our campaigners talk with you, we gain very important feedback from you. A canvass is about more than raising funds. It is also about building relationships and finding out from you what are the important issues to focus on in our fellowship.

Know that our work is important and that we are all helping to build a community where you can come and feel comfortable and accepted. If you see these folks, thank them for their extra effort because they also serve on other committees in addition to the canvass. Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, Ron Malzer, Kathy Schnitzius, Cindy Ericksen, Madeline Kepner, Liz Spangler, Red Haines, and Keith Belzer.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to **Ron Malzer** for putting together and editing this month's newsletter. I know that Ron put a lot of effort into this, and think that he did a tremendous job with what turned out to be an unusually large amount of material. I just hope the experience didn't scare him off, as I look forward to working with him more in future!

Christopher Townsend

2003 Pledge Breakdown

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
<u>2000-2500</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>1500-1999</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>1200-1499</u>		<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>1000-1199</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>800-999</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>600-799</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>400-599</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>200-399</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>100-199</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Under 100</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>47</u>

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Guest at Your Table Program Starts on Sunday December 14th

Christopher Townsend

Grounded in Unitarian Universalist principles that affirm the worth, dignity, and human rights of every person, and the interdependence of all life, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a voluntary, nonsectarian organization working to advance justice throughout the world. The UUSC is an associate member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, but receives no general financial support from the UUA. Therefore the UUSC depends on the contributions of individual members to support its programs. (Source UUSC Web Site: www.uusc.org)

Our Fellowship will kick off the UUSC's annual holiday fund-raising campaign, "Guest at Your Table" on Sunday morning, December 14. Special boxes to save contributions in will be distributed that morning, and collected again on the last Sunday in January.

The Fellowship encourages members and friends to support the UUSC and appreciate your past support. If you are unable to attend the Dec. 14 service, boxes will be available for pickup at the Fellowship for the rest of December and January.

We commend our members for their past support of the UUSC (see item 2 of the Board of Trustees Report) and encourage you to continue this tradition by contributing generously to the Guest at Your Table campaign again this year.

Afghanistan And Land Mines: You Can Make A Difference

Ron Malzer

The holiday season from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day has many different meanings for us. Where my thoughts usually turn to is a sense of gratitude for the abundance and privilege in my life. Good fortune includes growing up in a family where I was loved, having a family of my own and caring friends for love and support, and enjoying good health. Good fortune also includes being born in this country, whose soil has been free from the ravages of war for more than a century, and where I, like most Americans, don't have to worry whether or not I will be able to survive the coming year.

My thoughts then turn to other nations in the world, whose recent history has put people in a very different position. Over the last three decades, ugly wars have ravaged a number of countries, many of them struggling for survival even before the shooting and bombing began. In these countries, the deaths that have occurred mean that there is enormous grief for many families. The list includes: [Afghanistan](#), [Bosnia/Herzegovina](#), [Cambodia](#), [Croatia](#), [Iraq](#), [Mozambique](#), and [Vietnam](#).

Getting news from the American media, one has the impression that, other than Iraq, the warfare in these countries is over. Sadly, that is a very misleading picture. Several of these countries, including Afghanistan, are still seeing violence used regularly as part of the struggle to determine who will rule the country. And all of the countries listed above share another tragic feature: large areas of land mass containing minefields and unexploded ordnance.

I then try to picture what it would be like to be a farmer in a subsistence-level country, only to lose my farm when the placement of landmines makes my small plot unusable. Or what it would be like to have children playing outside, worrying that a single wrong step could kill them or take their legs off.

The people suffering in this way live halfway around the world, and most are non-European. Therefore, sadly, their stories are obscure to us. Our UU principles call for "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations" (Principle #2), as well as "the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all" (Principle #6). I believe it is a part of my spiritual work to try to follow these principles by making a conscious effort to find ways to feel connected to suffering in the Third World. I want to feel both the joy of abundance in my own life and, at the same time, the anguish that so many in the world have to endure.

In my view, there is a particularly strong case to be made for America taking an active role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. In the wake of 9/11, we achieved part of our objectives in helping insurgents topple the Taliban, but, inevitably, our intervention resulted in the destruction of property and deaths of many innocent civilians.

And landmines continue to kill and maim. A war between 1979 and 1992, in which the Russians battled a Muslim resistance force, included the massive deployment of land mines. Adopt-A-Minefield® paints the following picture of Afghanistan:

"Landmines have been planted indiscriminately over most of the country. Agricultural farms, grazing areas, irrigation canals, residential areas, roads and footpaths, both in urban and rural areas are contaminated. Mines are a major obstacle to repatriating, relief, rehabilitation, and development activities."

"Afghanistan is one of the heaviest mined countries in the world. In spite of eight years of intensive clearance [as of the year 2000], only 146 square kilometers of mined areas have been cleared. An area of 713 square kilometers remains to be cleared. [In 1999], landmines killed or maimed an estimated ten to twelve people each day in Afghanistan."

This deplorable situation led Ray Starrett, a member of our Social Justice Committee, to form LAMP, the La Crosse Afghanistan Mine-removal Project. LAMP works through Adopt-A-Minefield®, which is an affiliate of the United Nations Association of the USA. Ray spoke very convincingly of the responsibility that America has to Afghanistan, a country whose people suffered through 13 years of combat triggered by the Russian invasion, and who continue to suffer as the American-supported government now battles with Taliban supporters and other adversaries.

The Adopt-A-Minefield® program raises funds to enable the painfully labor-intensive and dangerous task of mine removal. It is at work in the seven countries listed above, and it employs citizens of each country receiving the aid. In some areas, the work is done in part by specially-trained dogs. Regardless of country or method, three very important goals are accomplished: a reduction in the number of deaths and serious injuries; a flow of money into the nation; and the ability of people to re-claim land for inhabitation and for agriculture.

I write this column encouraging you to think of what your life would be like if you lived in Afghanistan, a country slightly smaller than Texas. The terrain is mostly rugged mountains, with arable land only 12% of the country. Your life expectancy at birth would be about 46 years. Your chance of having literacy would be less than one in three. You would live in a country where survival is a mighty challenge, and where life is a far cry from what we are lucky enough to experience in America. You can learn more about Afghanistan at [www.landmines.org/Country Facts](http://www.landmines.org/CountryFacts).

You may also help directly by contributing to LAMP. At year-end 2002, LAMP was able to combine its collection with that of a Minnesota group, and sponsor a de-mining team west of the Afghan city of Herat. There is evidence that casualties due to mines throughout Afghanistan are now decreasing, and that the acreage of safely de-mined land is increasing. Contributing to this cause will make a difference by building upon this past success.

Your tax-deductible check will be your way of saying that America still cares about Afghanistan — not just as a "theater of operations" — but also as part of our wish that all people should have a chance at experiencing the goodness of the earth.

Checks should be made out to "LAMP UNA USA," and may be sent or given to LAMP's President, Ray Starrett (). I serve as LAMP's treasurer, and will accept checks after services on December 7, 14, and 21.

Items from UUA

What Does your Money to the UUA's Annual Program Fund Support?

Meg Riley,

Director of the Advocacy and Witness Staff Group

UUA Boston, MA.

October, 2003

One place it goes is to the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Here, a vibrant hum of activity emanates from the UUA Washington Center, where nine full-time staff, several part-time staff, and a host of volunteers' work. My name is Meg Riley. It's my privilege to serve as the Director of Advocacy and Witness Programs. In the current political climate, where my outrage has settled into a daily habit, it is a deep pleasure to be able to transform my UU values into activism.

- * To represent the UUA on a September religious delegation to China after the Bush Administration eliminated funding for the UN Fund for Population.
- * To assist with a UUA media response to the President's proclamations that next week is "Defense of Marriage Week," and that marriage is only for heterosexual couples.
- * To prepare a response to the expected ruling of the Supreme Court about pledging allegiance "under God."

We've gotten better, and more strategic, about this advocacy and witness work in my years at the UUA. We have a strong team of professionals both in D.C. & Boston who are on fire with energy to get a good word out about UU values. We have a UUA President who is deeply committed to being a voice of healing and reconciliation.

What does your money to the UUA - Annual Program Fund support? Justice. Equality. Compassion. Thank you for putting your money where your mouth is. And, check out our Web site! Stay in touch!

UUA President on Massachusetts Ruling Regarding Same-Sex Marriage

Deborah J. Weiner,

Director of Electronic Communication

UUA Boston, MA.

November 18, 2003

Following the announcement of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's long-anticipated decision in the case of Goodridge et al vs. the Department of Public

Health, UUA President **William G. Sinkford** issued a statement lauding the decision of the Court. Sinkford said,

"We enthusiastically applaud today's ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in favor of same-sex marriage. The Unitarian Universalist Association has a long-standing and deeply held religious commitment to support full equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people, and today's ruling is a significant step forward in guaranteeing that the rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are also available to its bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender citizens. We trust that the Massachusetts Legislature will act promptly and fairly to support same-sex couples and their families."

The Court, in its 4-3 decision, found that the Commonwealth's law which opposes same sex marriage is unconstitutional, saying that the state "failed to identify any constitutionally adequate reason for denying civil marriage to same-sex couples," but it stopped short of ordering the Commonwealth to immediately enact same sex marriage. Instead, the Court ordered the Legislature of the Commonwealth to remedy the **inequitable** situation "within 180 days." 14 plaintiffs from five MA counties brought the original suit in 2001, when seven same sex couples went to their city and town halls to obtain marriage licenses. Seven of the fourteen plaintiffs are Unitarian Universalists.

The UUA President went on to say, *"The citizens of Massachusetts should be proud that this state is at the forefront of the growing movement to extend basic civil rights to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, and it is our fervent hope that Massachusetts can be a model for other states to emulate. In addition to today's decision by the Supreme Judicial Court, the recent United States Supreme Court decision in the case of Lawrence v. Texas and legal rulings in the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, as well as in Belgium and the Netherlands, demonstrate a growing understanding that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is wrong. Today's decision also reinforces the Unitarian Universalist commitment to work to end homophobia. We acknowledge that while progress has been made, we still have work to do to honor every person's inherent worth and dignity."*

Read Rev. Sinkford's complete statement at <http://www.uua.org/president/031118.html> .

The decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is posted at

<http://www.uua.org/news/2003/031118b.html> .

The complete story on the SJC ruling and UUA reaction and comment can be found at

<http://www.uua.org/news/2003/031118.html> .

Covenant Groups, Anyone?

Bob Huff

Anyone interested in joining a covenant group? What the heck is a covenant group? Many UU congregations have found that covenant groups provide members another opportunity to get to know each other in a small group situation. They generate a deeper experience of community, friendship, affirmation, support, and more. They are for long time members or new members, and give each an opportunity to find out more about UUism, life issues, and personal experiences, while strengthening the congregation. They are small (six to ten members), voluntary, possibly affinity based or not. Each group writes a consensually-based covenant, meets together regularly for at least a year (or nine-month season,) and is assisted by one member who is trained as a facilitator.

Why?

Small groups help to provide a feeling of belonging, warmth, and intimacy. They help retain a sense of community in a growing congregation and help to serve the needs of individual members, the congregation, the local community and our Unitarian Universalist movement. They help to fulfill our congregation's goals, mission, and vision for the future such as, worship/spirituality, fun social activities, education, outreach and activism, fellowship tasks and projects.

Covenant Groups will:

- Make membership more meaningful
- Help welcome new members
- Keep members from feeling isolated and lost within the congregation
- Fulfill our mission statement
- Make our values real in an exciting and fulfilling way

Who will join?

Members and friends of the Fellowship who seek

- Deeper experience of community
- Participation and friendship
- Affirmation and support
- To share common interest

How will groups be formed?

- Let us know your particular interests
- Members will sign up for the group of their choice

When will Covenant Groups be formed?

- Some existing groups may choose to become Covenant Groups
- January- those interested in facilitating or starting a pilot group will begin.
- Fall- facilitators will have been trained and groups can begin to meet.

Process

The directions the groups will take will depend upon who joins the groups and what they want to happen. In other Unitarian Universalist congregations they meet at least once per month in homes, coffee shops, offices etc. Meetings start and end with a UU reading. There is a check in and check out time. Topics are chosen by participants.

Interested?

If you are interested in either joining a Covenant Group or in being a facilitator give Bob Huff a call at 895-3375 or e-mail me at Bhuacbob@aol.com. I would like to start a facilitator group as soon as possible and then start other groups later this winter or in the fall.

Already in the works...

"Reflections"

Consider joining a series of "Reflections" in gatherings starting in January which will explore individual life journeys through sharing thoughts, experiences, doubts, and current beliefs. Look for more information on the membership table, or call Madeline Kepner at - or e-mail

What Would Venus Do?

"To be cultured is to be aware of the highest possibilities of the human spirit throughout time."

Matthew Arnold

I, the Principle of Beauty and Kinship, particularly appreciate the work of our choir directors, Becky Post and Eric Kraemer. They have been carefully selecting and teaching music that the fellowship can work with. They are selecting songs to fit with the theme of the program and helping us to become more familiar with the gems in our hymnals. And I particularly like the way that they are playing preludes and postludes around the services to provide an atmosphere for maximum connection and beauty. That's what I would do. Thank you, Eric and Becky.

Love, Venus

Member Activities and Support

Liz Spangler

Caregiver for the month of December is Katie Van Roosenbeek.

Congratulations to **Dean Staffanson** for getting a job with the Pastoral Care Dept. of Gundersen-Lutheran Medical Center. We welcome to our fellowship new members **Randy and Sandy Paine**.

AdventUUrers are planning to attend the, “**Swinging Yuletide**” big band & jazz performance at UW-L Valhalla, Cartwright Center-Gunning Addition on Friday evening December 5th at 7:30 PM. Tickets are \$10.00 adult and \$5.00 student. I will purchase them for anyone who calls me ASAP. Liz Spangler, . We will meet at the entrance to Valhalla at 7:10 PM sharp. If you want to get your own ticket you may call 785-8415.

Last Cinema, Soup & Sandwich event for the year is December 18th at the Franciscan Spirituality Center, 920 Market Street. Supper is at 5:30 PM and the movie, “Tree of Wooden Clogs” begins at 6:00 PM. The story takes place in Italy at the end of the 19th century. The film chronicles the lives of peasant families and their relationship with the earth and those who toil on it for survival. English subtitles. Call in your reservations for supper at (608)-791-5295. Next year's series will begin the third Thursday of January.

On Sunday, December 21st you are invited to a Solstice Potluck at Liz Spangler's Come anytime after our morning service. Bring a dish to pass. Drinks and table service will be provided. Children are always welcome. We especially invite our new members and new friends.

*******Directions to Liz Spangler's:** *****

Book Recommendation

Ellen Severson

Here's a good book for parents of middle schoolers: “Not Much, Just Chillin’: The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers,” by Linda Perlstein. Journalist Perlstein spent the 2001-2002 school year shadowing students and families connected with a Washington, D.C. area middle school. Her subjects—kids and families alike—appear to have been remarkably candid with her. Perlstein, an education reporter, has produced an engaging book that combines current research with real-life details on a variety of subjects, including religion, relationships, gender roles, early teen brain development, smoking, sex, and the Internet. Since Perlstein was doing her research on 9/11 and the school is only 40 miles from Washington, the aftermath of that tragedy plays a part in the book but not overwhelmingly so. I read the book aloud for a month during Eric's and my commute between La Crosse and Winona. It was helpful since I've had no tie to the middle school crowd since I attended Bell Junior High in Milwaukee in the late '60s. It was nice to see what has changed and what still resonates with my own experience, back when we all rode dinosaurs to school. The La Crosse library has a copy.

A Letter from Bhavana

It was a rare privilege to be allowed to speak with you Sunday morning. (October 26) I appreciated to be in the company of so many like minded people, and as I said, your welcome prayer could be recited in Auroville, and we would all be saying "yes yes" along with you. I trust that Evolution and our own active participation in becoming more and more conscious, aware, caring and holistic in our attitudes and actions will bring us all though the present turmoil on our planet.

As I promised, here is the link to the newsletter about development work in the villages around Auroville.

www.aviusa.org/avag_newsletters/projects_avag_news.html, and if you want to know more about Auroville in general, it's www.auroville.org .

I hope our common aims and goals will result in our linking up more and more. Please feel free to send me an e-mail if you have any questions, or if any one is coming toward India, do write and we can welcome you in Auroville.

Warmly,
bhavana

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse Proposed Mission, Covenant, and Vision Statement November 2003.

Mission

Our Mission is to support all people in their spiritual development or search for meaning in their lives in order to build a more just and peaceful world.

Covenant

We, the members of the UU Fellowship of La Crosse, gather together to:

- **Sustain a caring community that nurtures, empowers, and challenges;**
- **Foster respect for individuality and diversity;**
- **Promote an active and ongoing quest for truth, meaning and justice;**
- **Explore and celebrate the mysteries and interconnectedness of life;**
- **Nurture our children, teach them our religious history and traditions, and encourage them to develop ethical and spiritual values;**
- **Honor the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association;**
- **Live this covenant as a positive influence for ourselves and our community.**

Vision

Programming: Our vision for the future would be to have a full-service Fellowship with inspirational Sunday services and all levels of religious education from infancy through adulthood. There would be a balance and integration of the spiritual and the rational. There eventually would be complete pastoral services and ceremonies available to celebrate all life passages such as weddings, graduations, births, deaths etc. Youth and adults would participate in district and national UUA conferences, workshops and camps. There would be a wide variety of public forums and offerings that provide peaceful, rational discussion on local, national, and world social issues of the day. Social action activities would provide the opportunities for members to actively involve themselves in real life community work. Small group gatherings would continue to meet the need for socialization and contact with others.

Demographics and values: The congregation would be diverse in belief, age, economic levels, gender, and ethnicity. There would be enough members (125 to 150) to offer a wider variety of programs, community service, and a larger source of volunteers and donors. The Fellowship would continue to remain warm, friendly, welcoming and intimate.

Leadership: Eventually, a professional minister would join with the congregation to provide weekly services as well as care giving, religious education, training volunteers, fund raising, record keeping and other administrative duties. The minister will be visible in the community and active in local issues and organizations. Volunteers will continue to be the backbone of the Fellowship.

Image: The Fellowship, its programs, leadership and facilities, would be highly visible and respected in the community. Our Fellowship would be seen as a hub of progressive thinking and action in the Coulee Region.

Facilities: We would have an aesthetically pleasing, energy efficient building conveniently located within the Coulee Region. There would be adequate parking and drop off for small children and disabled. There would be a well-landscaped outdoor area with gardens and playground. It would be family friendly and a creative place for youth and adults. Community groups could schedule the building at times not utilized by the congregation and it would be available to members seven days a week for meetings and programming. We may rent, lease or buy facilities as our needs and financial ability dictate but our ultimate goal is to own our own space.



Notice of Business Meeting

December 14th after service there will be a brief congregational meeting. Three issues will be addressed:

- 1) a vote on the proposed **new Mission Covenant Vision Statement** (see page nine);
- 2) a vote on the proposed **Endowment Fund** (see page one);
- 3) an update on **new congregational space possibilities**.

*There will be a **Solstice Potluck** at Liz Spangler's house following the Service on **Sunday December 21**. Everyone is welcome!*



Donations requested for Adopted Family.

The wish list for our Fellowship's adopted family will be available on Sunday November 30, and gifts and donations need to collect by Sunday December 7. Contact Ellen Severson for more information.

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