

***The Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of La Crosse Newsletter
December, 2004***

Sunday Services: Program at 10:00 AM Refreshments at 11:15 AM

Services Site: The Pump House 119 King Street

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

Message Center: 608-796-9993

Web site: www.uulacrosse.org

Upcoming Programs:

**December 5th: “Socrates, Thoreau:
Civil Obedience, Disobedience.”**

—UUF Member Bill Katra.

Bill writes: “These two iconoclastic individuals— one a proto-Unitarian, the other a pro-Unitarian, grappled with the issue of an individual’s obligation during unjust actions of the state. This debate is timely given that, within months, American youth might again be drafted to participate in a war in violation of their deeply held values.”

**December 12th: “Can We Choose Our
Religious Beliefs?”— UUF Member
Eric Kraemer.**

Eric writes: “UUs often talk as though they make deliberate choices about what to believe. We are all conscious of having entertained and rejected various religious claims. UUs are also familiar with having changed their minds about important religious matters, with either having consciously converted from one religious belief system to another or with having made significant revisions in their religious beliefs. In this discussion we examine the question of whether we can and do actively choose our religious beliefs, or whether it is our fundamental religious beliefs that find us and influence us, and, that in a much more passive manner, we just find ourselves believing them. We shall then consider implications of different answers to this question.

**December 19th: Winter Solstice
Celebration -- Fellowship member Wendy
Mattison and members of our UU Youth.**

Come to a celebration of the Winter Solstice focusing on the elements of Light and Dark. Music, dramatic presentation and traditional elements will be a part of the service.

Winter Solstice Potluck will be held at Liz Spangler’s house following the service. Liz will provide beverage, ham, and table service, please bring a side dish or desert to share. Come share food, conversation, and fellowship. There will be a Solstice bonfire, anyone for s’mores? If there is snow on the ground, children are welcome to bring sliding gear. Contact Liz for directions: We need everyone’s assistance to help welcome back the sun!

December 26th: (no service)

January 2nd: Labyrinth Walk—

**Sister Joan
Weisenbeck,
FSPA**



Labyrinth walks have been used by Christians and those of other religious traditions as a method of spiritual

exploration. Join us today to participate in this experiential exercise.

Choir News

Becky Post



Our UU choir sings two Sundays a month and rehearses one evening a month. **The next two evening rehearsals are:**

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, Jan. 5, 7:00 PM

Note that this is a change. (Canceled are the Nov. 24 and Dec. 22 rehearsals due to holidays.)

The choir will sing on the following Sundays:

Dec. 5, Dec. 19, Jan. 9, and Jan. 23.

Rehearsals those Sundays will be at 9:00 AM.

All rehearsals are at the Pump House in the basement conference room. For more information, call Becky Post at _____ or Eric Kraemer at _____

Religious Education News:

Welcome, Sarah

Kim Cobb

Meet our new Caring and Sharing teacher, **Sarah**. She has started as our teacher for our Caring and Sharing class, the birth to 1st grade group. Sarah is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology at Viterbo. Her background in working with children includes her current job as a Youth Development Professional with the La Crosse Boys' and Girls' Club, and over a year as a daycare provider for children birth to eight years old.

Sarah has been hired to be with our youngest class every week we have a service, including intergenerational services. Her presence will provide consistency for the group, and she will be using resources from our curriculum library to provide regular programming for the children.

We're very excited to have Sarah as part of the Religious Education teaching team-her energy, enthusiasm and love of children is a great asset to our program! Please invite your family and friends with young children to come and visit!

Reflections on Developing Lifelong UU's

Kim Cobb

Kate Erslev asks, "Why do members stay?" in her book "Full Circle: Fifteen Ways to Grow Lifelong UUs." In it, she explores the 15 common threads that lifelong UUs identified as critical in their commitment to their faith. Erslev surveyed and interviewed 82 men and women from ages 25 to 87 who were raised as UUs. A lifelong UU herself, Erslev is DRE at the UU Fellowship of Boulder, Colorado. Several of her recommendations seem to have particular significance as we move through the winter holiday season, and I'd like to share them with you.

Erslev's surveys indicated that the curriculum we offer is not only classroom activities, but also events we participate in as a community, like potlucks, picnics and rummages sales. Our service celebrations, like the fall water communion, winter solstice and the summer walk in the La Crosse marsh are also a piece of our curriculum. These events demonstrate our values in action, create lasting memories, and provide a grounding and structure for both youth and adult members to build into our identities as UUs. Her research also indicated that Religious Education was an important vehicle for providing opportunities for leadership and involvement, which was an indicator of ongoing commitment to being a UU. Lifelong UU's recall participating in lighting candles, playing roles in celebrations, singing, and helping in congregational events. By identifying and providing channels for early leaders to grow, we nurture their appetite for increased, lifelong commitment.

It is encouraging to recognize that we are doing many of these things in our congregation! With a greater awareness of their importance in the long-term development of faith practices, we can make the most of these opportunities for all our members!

Kids Library Update

New in the kids' library "The Fairy Who lost His Wings" donated by Joanne Judson. "Dr. Seuss" and "I Wonder What a Rainforest Is" donated by Louise Randall-Winger. Thank you for thinking of our kids.



Social Justice Column:

Asserting Liberal Values in

Conservative Times—Ron Malzer

In our *religiously* liberal community, many of us (though not all) are *political* liberals as well. The November election is being described by some as a resounding defeat of liberal values. I would like to use this column to offer a personal view on two issues: 1) why the press label of “the Moral Values Election” significantly misstates what occurred; and 2) what political liberals need to do to get off the defensive, so that we can be more effective and successful.

Exit polls, read correctly, do shine light on how voters make their choices. A CNN exit poll has gotten much attention, particularly the responses to the question of what voters felt was “the most important issue”.

Given categories from which to select, 22% of voters indicated “moral values”; 20% picked “economy/jobs”; 19% chose “terrorism”; and 15% selected “Iraq”. (The remaining 24% were divided among “health care”, “taxes”, “education”, and other responses).

There are many ways one can view a splintered response such as this one. I believe the most salient fact is that a full one-third of the voters selected either “terrorism” or “Iraq” as the key issue. This is consistent with the fact that the Presidential candidates spent an unusually high proportion of the campaign discussing foreign policy, and in particular, on our stance regarding the clash between the West and the Islamic world.

By contrast, a choice of “moral values” as the most important issue can be viewed as a voter’s way of declaring that an election isn’t about policy choices, but instead is about good-versus-evil. This is the worldview of fundamentalist Christians.

I have heard a lot of dismay in liberal circles about the power of this bloc (which voted about 4:1 Republican). In post-Election despair mode, a newspaper cartoon made reference to “the United States of Jesusland”. I’m sure you’ve all read comments about rampant homophobia and fundamentalist America.

These reactions miss the fact that the overall thrust of the polling data points to a **moderate** consensus. The CNN poll shows the following: 93% of voters are either somewhat or very concerned about the “availability and cost of healthcare”; **60%** endorsed either “marriage” or “civil union” as options for same-sex couples (with the latter more popular); and **55%** believed that abortion should be either “always legal” or “mostly legal”.

American political liberalism has a proud tradition, but it is not being endorsed proudly. Despite a 20-year voting record that is strongly liberal by Americans for Democratic Action standards, Senator Kerry found himself running away from the liberal label, even calling it a false “charge” in response to one reporter’s question.

Ads repeatedly taunted Senator Kerry for being “liberal-out-of-the-mainstream”, but there were no corresponding challenges to President Bush’s conservatism.

Why is it that only 21% of voters called themselves “liberal” (with 45% identifying as “moderate”, and 34% as “conservative”)? How did the dominant political ideology of the New Deal through the Great Society fall into such disfavor?

The term “liberal” has taken a beating from a number of directions. Radicals of the 1960’s attacked liberalism as far too passive to defeat society’s injustices. The early 1970’s saw the coinage of the term “limousine liberals” for privileged people advocating for, but isolated from, the urban poor. Economic conservatives have attached the adjective “tax-and-spend” to the liberal label. Social conservatives denounce cultural changes of the 1960s, erroneously linking “permissive” parenting with political liberalism.

It is time for liberals to speak proudly. Liberalism accomplished a great deal from the New Deal forward: Social Security; the WW2 integration of the military; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; vital civil rights and Medicare legislation in the 1960s; and the launch of an environmental movement in the 1970’s. The anti-war movement forced an end to the Vietnam War. Over the last thirty years, the women’s movement has expanded life options and power for women, while gays and lesbians have started winning basic rights.

How we speak makes a huge difference. Paul Wellstone trumpeted his liberalism, and advocated it passionately, while avoiding bitterness toward his opponents. His 2001 autobiography “Conscience of A Liberal”, is a must-read, a blueprint on how to expand the liberal coalition. His surviving sons are now leading Wellstone Action (www.wellstone.org), which is carrying on Senator Wellstone’s message and methods.

Majority support exists for bringing healthcare coverage to the uninsured, and for finding ways to support same-sex and domestic -partnered couples. The destruction of the environment, unfair tax policies, and excessive deference to large corporations are all critical opportunities for liberals to assert our values. About half the country is dismayed at our present “policeman-of-the-world” stance, and that proportion may well increase as events unfold in Iraq and elsewhere.

Unitarian Universalists are diverse in our political philosophies, but we tend strongly to be internationalists and environmentalists. We tend to view health insurance as a right rather than a privilege, and generally believe that investing in education is the key to developing our future. We are passionate advocates of women’s rights and the rights of gays and lesbians. For those of us UUs who see liberal political action as a valuable mechanism for advancing these values, we need to embrace the term “liberal”, and advocate assertively, without bitterness.

Views expressed are those of the author.

Canvass a Success!!!

Bob Huff, Board President

Thanks to all of you who contributed and helped us to pledge more than we did last year! We have almost all members reporting now except for a couple new members. The total pledged for 2005 is approximately \$36,546. Last year you pledged \$36,000. **That's the good news.**

The bad news is that even though we pledged more, we need an additional **\$5500** to meet our increased expenses for the coming year. Three members have moved and several reduced their pledges (several increased too) We have; a much nicer meeting place with increased rent; more kids in RE which takes more time to invite, orient and schedule our teachers; increased need for volunteers and a need for a very part time volunteer coordinator; the necessary fact that we have to give raises to our book keeper and other part time staff to match our beliefs of **paying fair and just wages**; increased travel expenses for our visiting ministers if we want to keep improving the quality of our Sunday morning programs which increase our visibility, keep our membership and attract new religious liberals and freethinkers; training and materials for our volunteers and programs and more.

There is more good news! You still have two months to take advantage of year end giving and tax breaks. Are you selling stocks or have you appreciated stocks that would give you a tax break if you donate to the Fellowship? Talk your pledge over with your significant other. Can you increase what you have pledged? Are you paying your fair share to the Fellowship? Do you have any other property you could donate to the Fellowship which would give you a tax deduction and help us to meet our budget?

If you have ideas and are willing to help, do you have a great and easy fundraising project we can sponsor very quickly? Please contact any board member with ideas you may have on our raising an additional \$5500 in pledges before the end of the year.

Pledge Ranges Chart

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
2000-2500		1	2	2
1500-1999	1	1	3	3
1200-1499		4	5	6
1000-1199	1	3	3	5
800-999	2	3	5	3
600-799	7	7	8	8
400-599	6	8	10	12
200-399	15	14	9	7
100-199	7	5	8	2
Under 100	10	5	1	0
Total	49	51	54	48

The total pledged to date for 2005 is \$36,546.

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Member News

Madeline Kepner

W-L Jazz Band and Jazz Chorus Christmas Concert is Dec. 3rd. in Valhalla Hall. Join other UUs at 6:30 in the lobby. Concert begins at 7:00.

The annual Winter Solstice Pot Luck at Liz Spangler's home is scheduled for Dec. 19th (see page one of this Newsletter for details).

Elise was one of the seven-member Central High Varsity Cross-Country Team that qualified for the State championship girls' race. Congratulations to **Devin**, October Student of the Month at Logan High. And a very big congrats to **Ingrid Iverson**, who was recognized by the YWCA in their Annual Tribute to Women Award.

New Members—1. We welcome

_____ to our Fellowship. (He) is a native of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Penn State. (She) is a native of Viroqua and she went to Michigan Technical College. (He) has lived in La Crosse about three and a half years and (She) has lived here two years. They both work at First Logic where (He) is a software engineer and (She) is a technical writer. Their family includes a Dalmatian, who is currently in obedience school. (He) enjoys playing basketball and (She) is a cross-country skier. They both enjoy movies.

New Members—2.

Celine Donofrio

I would like to introduce the Fellowship to our newest member family, **and their daughters and** (He) and (She) recently found us through their contact with Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer at the Great River Folk Festival in La Crosse this summer.

They come from different traditional religious heritages ((He) - Methodist, (She) - Catholic) but have not been a part of either for years. They were looking for somewhere where "they could be who they are" and they found it with our congregation. They describe themselves and logical, thinking people, interested in social justice. A perfect fit!

Their girls think our RE is "great". (He) is originally from Waukesha and the Oregon area, and (She) is from River Falls. (He) is a software engineer for FirstLogic and has also designed his own fishing simulation software. He enjoys fishing and is a juggler, with a strong musical influence (He was performing at the folk fest this summer).

(She) is an environmental educator/teacher who is substituting right now and studying for a Student Librarian degree.

(Daughter 1) is a writer/artist/musician and (Daughter 2) is a nature buff. The whole family loves the outdoors, hiking and camping together. I hope you're as eager to get to know them and help welcome them as I am.

Christmas Cookie Exchange

Bob Huff

Someone at our most recent board meeting (a cookie monster in disguise) suggested that we have a cookie exchange so that we can have a supply of unusual (UU) cookies in our homes this Christmas season. So **Sunday, December 12** is a little less than two weeks away from Christmas. If you want to participate, please bring three dozen cookies for exchange after the service on that day.

Plan to exchange two dozen for yourself and to donate one to the Fellowship for someone cookie-baking challenged! We may charge 50 cents a cookie for those (remember it's a fundraiser) with price subject to change. The proceeds will be split with 50% to Youth Programs and 50% to the Building Fund. Maybe the youth could help with this since we are infringing upon their doughnut sales...that is if we can keep their sticky little hands off the cookies!!! (And we are referring here to youth and kids of all ages from six to ninety two) If you have enhancing ideas for this that don't take lots of volunteer time, please contact a board member with your ideas.

Interest Groups and Covenant Groups Meet

Bob Huff

A knitting group is being formed to meet tentatively on Sundays after service. If you are interested, contact Ellen Severson at **The AdventUurers** meets regularly with many great outings and events. Contact Liz Spangler if you are interested at

A covenant group of seven is meeting in a home and chooses topics at it's' meetings. The group is currently studying the Build Your Own Theology program. The group will choose a service project for the Fellowship and one for the community at large. Its' purpose is to build relationship and community within the UU community and when it reaches ten, to split into two to keep the group small and intimate. New members or seasoned members are welcome. We meet the first and third Wednesdays of the month at a home from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. If you are interested in either joining or starting a new group, please call Bob Huff at or e-mail at

Reptile News

Eric, Ellen, & Severson

Three UU fellowship members would like to invite you to a reptile and amphibian program they'll be involved in on Dec. 1. Ellen, Eric and Jo Severson helped found the Coulee Regional Herpetological Society last spring, and the society will present its first holiday reptile/amphibian show aimed at educating people about what they need to know to keep a snake, turtle, lizard, frog or other "herptile" as a pet. The program is slated for 6:00-8:00 PM on Wednesday, Dec. 1, at La Crosse's South Side Public Library, on 16th and Farnam streets. Participants will be able to handle animals (if they wish), and have their questions answered. For more information on the Dec. 1 program or to inquire about the society's educational presentations, call 785-1274, corner one of the Seversons at a fellowship meeting, or e-mail laxherps@email.com.

Pet Sitter Needed?

Severson

Instead of paying a load of money to board your cat or dog, why not hire a pet sitter? I have been sitting for pets for a few years and by now have gotten quite good at it. Whether you'll be away for two weeks or two days, your pets will be pretty happy with the care they get while you're gone. I can sit for cats, dogs, birds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish (whether they need it or not). I can also bring in mail, water plants and walk/feed the critters, among other things. If you're interested, call me at or e-mail me at least 1 week in advance at

La Crosse Town Hall: Stopping the Constitutional Ban on Civil Unions & Same-Sex Marriages

Action Wisconsin e-mail, submitted by Ellen Severson

Thursday, December 9th @ 7-8:30 PM Valhalla Hall, 1st floor, Cartwright Center at UW - La Crosse Pre-event reception hosted by PFLAG will begin at 6:15 PM (same space)

On November 2nd eleven states passed constitutional amendments that will ban legal protections for same-sex couples and their families. It was a sad day for the entire nation, but we can't let it paralyze us. In Wisconsin, we have a real shot at drawing a line in the sand against this injustice.

Wisconsin is likely to face a statewide vote on a state constitutional ban on civil unions and same-sex marriage as early as April 5th, 2005. We can beat it--but only with your help. Join us in La Crosse on Thursday, December 9 at 7:00 PM to learn more about the amendment and the real harms of discrimination against LGBT families.

Local clergy and LGBT allies will discuss this issue from their perspective and two same-sex couples from the La Crosse area will share their personal stories about the impact of discrimination. There will also be time for questions and comments.

The Seven Rivers LGBT Resource Center has worked closely with Action Wisconsin to coordinate this event. Other cosponsors include Rainbow Families (Minnesota), Rainbow Families Wisconsin, GALAXY, and PFLAG La Crosse.

For more information, contact Joshua Freker at josh.freker@actionwisconsin.org. For background on the constitutional amendment, visit: <http://www.actionwisconsin.org/amendment>

A Perspective on Morality

Fellowship Member Norman Nelson

One commentator on the Great Depression considered it caused "as much by defects of spirit and character as of institutions." For this critic, the country had gone through an "orgy" of speculation and quick profits, with "money bringing returns which required no real work." The obsession with making money, this observer believed, caused people to lose track of the more worthwhile things in life and of our interdependence, that is, that "one part of the country or group of countrymen cannot prosper while the others go down

hill" and "that we are responsible for each other." The commentator was Eleanor Roosevelt and her words are as relevant today as when they were written. For we in our own time are in the midst of a calamity that results as much from the very same moral failure as anything.

Mrs. Roosevelt is not alone in divining the causation of national tragedy as including a moral component. Abraham Lincoln came to see the cataclysm of the Civil War as fundamentally a moral crisis with its enormous bloodletting being the necessary expiation for the sin of slavery. We should well remember his words that the idea that "You toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it" represents the same tyrannical principle in whatever form it takes and that it and the rights of humanity "will ever continue to struggle." This struggle, of course, very much persists in the here and now and we have recently suffered a grievous setback in it.

But then our country did survive the Great Depression and the Civil War and perhaps we can survive this also. Italy did endure some twenty years of Mussolini and Russia almost thirty of Stalin. The day of the current reigning obscenity that clothes itself in the guise of moral righteousness too shall pass. What is of importance is how long this will take and at what cost.

The answer to the question of what might this moralizing of times past have to do with social justice in the present day may be put in one word—Everything. For any viable concept of social justice must have as its epicenter that morality espoused by Mrs. Roosevelt and Mr. Lincoln. We can certainly take heart from their example. And any viable concept of social justice must have as its beginning us living this morality not because it is a better thing to do or even the best thing to do, but, rather, because it is unquestionably the right thing to do. In any humane society, we owe ourselves and everyone around us no less.

UU Church of Niagara—Niagara Falls Vacation Opportunity/Fund-Raiser

Hear the roar! Feel the mist! See the mighty Falls! July 17-20, 2005. Come experience the wonder of Niagara Falls including some great educational opportunities while being taken care of like royalty. The UU Church of Niagara is conducting a four day UU Niagara Experience which is a lifetime opportunity to encounter the Falls up close from every prospective, even safely riding beneath a tethered balloon. Spend four days with UUs exploring the rich historical and natural wonders around the Falls. For information, visit their Web site: <http://www.uunex.net/>
Email: info@uunex.net
Telephone: (716) 791-4453

UUF PHOTOS

Louise Randall-Winger



The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship's 2004 Holiday Family

Ellen Severson

Heidi and her husband owned a business; she worked for him, but when payday came around she never got a paycheck. When she would ask him about this, he would get very angry and on two occasions beat her badly. After one of the beatings, she could not work because of the injuries. Her husband left town on a business trip about a year ago, and she took her son and left, leaving everything behind.

Although Heidi and her son constitute a smaller family than our fellowship usually selects, their needs are great and immediate. Heidi desperately needs help buying food and gas. If you can donate money early, I will turn it into gift certificates for groceries (Quillin's) and gasoline (Kwik Trip) and make sure she gets the certificates immediately, not waiting for the wrapped presents.

To avoid duplicating gifts, I will make up "reminder notes" listing individual Christmas wishes for Heidi and Marcus; I'll bring the notes each Sunday through Dec. 5, and fellowship members and friends can grab a note for an item that they'd like to donate, wrap the gift and mark it for Heidi or Marcus (not their real names, so "mother" and "son" might be better), and bring it to fellowship on Sunday or drop it off in the "Specially Marked UU Holiday Family Gift Box" that we'll leave on the west porch of our home at 1316 Market St., La Crosse (two blocks east of Franciscan Skemp). If you have questions, or if you want dibs on getting a particular present, feel free to call me at 785-1274 in the evenings and on weekends. You also can e-mail me, but please use my work address: .

To meet New Horizon's deadlines, I need to receive all gifts by Sunday, Dec. 12. Since I'm at work in Winona when New Horizons is open for donations (9-4 Monday through Friday), it would be great if someone could volunteer to haul the goodies over to New Horizons on Monday, Dec. 13, or Tuesday, Dec. 14.

New Horizons Notice

Ellen Severson

Our fellowship has had a long relationship with New Horizons, a local shelter for women and children who are fleeing domestic abuse and constructing healthier paths through their lives. A donation box is available each Sunday at the front of the meeting room.

This month, please consider contributing one or more of the following items that are especially needed: pots and pans; purses; robes; scissors; 3/4-inch Scotch tape; shampoo and conditioner; crib and twin-size sheets; socks (adult and child); standard staples; Post-It notes; and nonperishable food. If you have questions, please contact Ellen Severson at

Monthly Caregiver

The Caregiver sends cards and flowers to Fellowship members and friends as needed, and helps pass on the word if someone needs cheer or support.

If you know of any member who is ill, has suffered a loss, or is having a rough time and could use cheering, please let the Caregiver know. Fellowship members don't always know of other members' difficulties, but we would like to extend a hand to any of our members and friends in need, so please let us know about your hardships, as well as the joys in your lives.

The Caregiver for December 2004 is Katie Van Roosenbeek. She can be reached at _____ or by e-mail at _____

The Seven Principles and Living Traditions of the Unitarian Universalist Association

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

- ◆ The inherent dignity and worth 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 rights 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 inspire 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;

Humanistic 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.

If you aren't a contributing friend or member make a recorded donation to continue receiving the newsletter.

