



The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse Newsletter

Sunday Services: Program at **9:30 AM** followed by refreshments at **10:45 AM**
Southside Senior Center, 1220 Denton Street, La Crosse, WI
Fellowship Mail Address: PO Box 2676, La Crosse, WI 54602-2676
Message Center: 608-796-9993
Web site: www.uulacrosse.org

January, 2003

Upcoming Programs

January 5 – “Epiphanies and Healing Moments.”

Many Christians traditionally celebrate Epiphany on January 6, referring to the revelation of Jesus as “God with us” to the Magi -- the three wise men from the East. The Rev. Dean Staffanson, a chaplain at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, will reflect on the meaning of Epiphany and how it impacts moments of healing and grace. He also will share why he believes that the experience of recognizing God or Ultimate Being in the commonplace is important, particularly to Unitarian Universalists.

January 12 – Program to be announced. Program will be followed by our monthly potluck.

January 19 – “Applying Spiritual Beliefs in Tough Times.” Spirituality is a challenging issue for Unitarian Universalists, with some members finding it a poorly thought-out concept, and others seeing it as at the core of the way they live their life. In this service, UU members Cindy Ericksen and Ron Malzer will provide a framework for applying spirituality in difficult times and offer examples from their own lives.

January 26 – “Ethics and Animals: What should Unitarian Universalists think and do?” Dr. Eric Kraemer, UW-La Crosse professor of philosophy, will help us examine the controversial debate over animal rights and its radical implications for many current human practices. The discussion will consider how to apply current Unitarian Universalist theology to the many problems the debate poses.

Upcoming Meetings

The Program Committee will meet on Sunday, January 5 after the service.

The Building Committee will meet on Saturday, January 11 at 9:30 AM in the Trustees Room at the Main branch of the La Crosse Public Library.

The Vision Task Force will meet on Tuesday January 14 at 7:00 PM at Christopher Townsend’s house.

The Board of Trustees will meet on Thursday, January 16 at 7:00 PM at the home of Jean Novack.

Religious Education News

By Kim Cobb

Once January sets in, we expect to be back on track with our Peace and Social Justice curriculum. In this time of world tension, we're trying to provide our children and youth a framework upon which they can develop their own thoughts and behaviors. We hope also to empower our students, as these age appropriate lessons can provide tools for working for peace in our daily lives.

Inquiring Teachers for January:

January 5 Liz Spangler
January 12- Lisa Metz-Belzer
January 19 Ingrid Iverson
January 26 Ingrid Iverson

High School Teachers for January

Schedule still to be determined.

Options Available for Our Whole Lives (OWL)

We're also excited that our district is offering multi-age training this spring for the OWL. program at the First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis. This is a program developed cooperatively by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ to address the need for comprehensive, inclusive education regarding sexuality, helping participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. There will be trainings for Elementary and Jr. High OWL to be held in late April. We have been hoping to find training for these ages, and to have it so convenient is great! Lots more information will follow regarding the training, parent involvement, etc. At this point we're waiting for more specifics from the district. If you're interested in learning more yourself, you can review the web site at www.uua.org/owl/main

Looking for children's books

As our program grows, we start to recognize additional needs. It would great to start a library of children’s books, especially those with the messages supporting our principles. As your child grows and you clear out bookshelves to make way for “older reading,” consider donating the old books to the fellowship. We’ll put your name (or your child’s!) in the book to acknowledge your gift. Please contact Kim Cobb () if you have books to donate.

Choir News

By Becky Post

The UU choir will be singing in January the following Sundays: Jan. 12 and Jan. 26

The choir rehearses at 9:00 AM on the Sundays we sing and also one evening a month. Our evening rehearsal in January will be Wednesday, Jan. 8th, 7:00 PM at Becky's place, _____, La Crosse. Sunday rehearsals are at our Denton St. meeting place, upstairs.

We always welcome new singers. Come to one of our rehearsals or contact one of the co-directors: Eric Kraemer (_____) or Becky Post (_____).

Fellowship Book Group

By Kim Cobb

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 23, 7:00 PM at the Cobb's house, _____, Onalaska. (Call Kim at _____ if you'd like directions.) As usual, readers at various stages of the book are welcome!

The book for January is "Many Lives, Many Masters," by Brian L. Weiss, M.D. The front cover describes it as "The true story of a prominent psychiatrist, his young patient, and the past-life therapy that changed both their lives." And from the back cover "This book synthesizes the psychiatrist with the mystic, the seeking of ultimate truths, and the promise of personal reincarnation. It reads like a gripping novel and is so compelling I could not put it down"-Harry Prosen, M. D., Professor and Chairman, Dept. of Psychiatry and Mental Health Sciences, Medical College of Wisconsin. And on a more personal note, a friend gave me this book shortly after my mother died, and I found it both calming and thought provoking.

And if cold winter days are keeping you inside, you can read ahead on February's book. We'll read "Year of Wonders," by Geraldine Brooks. A brief description from the book jacket: Through housemaid Anna's eyes we follow the story of the plague year, 1666, as her fellow villagers make an extraordinary choice: convinced by a visionary young minister they elect to quarantine themselves within the village boundaries to arrest the spread of the disease. But as death reaches into every household, faith frays. When villagers turn from prayers to murderous witch hunting, Anna must confront the deaths of family, the disintegration of her community, and the lure of illicit love. As she struggles to survive, a year of plague becomes instead annus mirabilis, a "year of wonders."

No date has been selected yet for February.

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Please join us for our monthly potluck on Sunday,
January 12 after the service.
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Coming Soon... Focus Dinners!

By Liz Ash

The Vision Task Force will be facilitating Focus Dinners from the 15th of January through the end of February.

What's a Focus Dinner? It's a potluck with from 8 to 12 Fellowship members gathered for a guided discussion of individual visions for the Fellowship's future.

What's the purpose of a Focus Dinner? To offer a venue for concerns, comments, and hopes about the Fellowship with fellow members.



Why is sharing such things important? As a Fellowship, it's important that we learn about our priorities and visions for the Fellowship.

The focus of the Focus Dinners is the Fellowship - where it could/should go, how it might grow, etc.

In January, there will be sign-up sheets on the back table at Sunday services.

Please sign up and join other members at a Focus Dinner where your comments will be invited and encouraged. Comments and concerns voiced at these Dinners will be presented to the Vision Task Force and an over-all view of the Fellowship's many voices will be created.

The Vision Task Force is also looking for people willing to hold one of these potlucks in their homes. Please contact Bob Huff, Kathy Schnitzius, Madeline Kepner, or Christopher Townsend if you would be able to host a dinner in late January or February.

This is a wonderful opportunity for gathering, discussing, and participating in the future of the UU presence in the La Crosse area.

La Crosse Peace Initiative Meetings:

- ✂ Post office peace vigil: Weekly in front of Main Post Office, Mondays at noon
- ✂ Women in Black:
 - 4th and Main Street, 1st and 3rd Wed. each month at noon
 - UW Campus Bell Tower 2nd and 4th Wed. each month at noon
- Monthly meetings:
 - ✂ Interfaith Coalition: Place of Grace 919 Hood St. 2nd Thurs. 7:30 AM
 - ✂ Readings for Peace: Pearl Street Books, 3rd Sat. at 2:30 PM
 - ✂ Peace and Justice Coalition: Pearl Street Books, 4th Sun. at 3:00 PM.

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 January Caregiver is Celine Donofrio,

December Volunteers

January 5

Food: the Martin family
Setup/Cleanup: Christopher Townsend and the Martin family
Greeter: Ann Beechler

January 12

Food: POTLUCK
Setup/Cleanup: Jean Novack and Linda Van Art
Greeter: Liz Ash

January 19

Food: Ann & Oliver Beechler
Setup/Cleanup: Ingrid Iverson and Ellen Severson
Greeter: Madeline Kepner

January 26

Food: Liz Ash
Setup/Cleanup: Keith Belzer and Jan Wulling
Greeter: Lisa Metz-Belzer

February 2

Food: Kate Bain
Setup/Cleanup: Celine Donofrio and Mary Welch
Greeter: Ann Beechler

Theological Discussion Group to Meet

By Christopher Townsend

The fellowship's new Theological Discussion Group will have its first meeting over lunch on Sunday January 26 after the service. (Location to be announced.)

Award Nominations Sought

By Jean Novack

Please consider nominating outstanding members of our congregation for one of the following Prairie Star District Awards. Forms will be available on the back table at Sunday services. Give your nominations to Jean Novack or any other board member by January 31, 2003

Keeping the Faith Award is presented to persons who have worked to keep Unitarian Universalism alive in their community and who touch the lives of congregation and

community members in a positive way. There are 4 awards given, divided by congregation size.

Unsung UU Award is awarded to a person or group whose actions inspire, support, and express Unitarian Universalism, and whose lifetime activities have made a significant contribution to the cause of Unitarian Universalism.

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 for adults and one for youth (under age 18).

Upcoming Workshops

There are two workshops coming up this spring that might be of interest to our members. Since we don't have a minister or other paid professional to guide us in the area of church administration, it becomes each of our responsibilities to find ways to help our congregation function as well as possible. Attending the workshops offered by the districts of the UUA can be a great resource to improve our skills in these areas. Our Board does encourage members to take advantage of opportunities to improve their "church-functioning" skills, and reimbursement for workshop expenses is available. (Please check with a Board member.) The two upcoming workshops are:

Healthy Congregations: a Workshop on Church Systems

April 25 - 26, 2003 (Friday evening and Saturday until 3:00)
Hosted by Blue Hills UU Fellowship in Rice Lake, WI
Sponsored by Prairie Star District
Leader: Rev. Dillman Baker Sorrells, Rochester, MN

About the workshop: A congregation, like all human systems, is an emotional system. Emotional processes either advance or hinder the congregation's mission. Therefore, the health of a congregation is influenced by the way leaders respond to anxiety and the forces of change. Workshop format will include videotape, some lecture, and plenty of discussion. Registration flyers will be mailed to PSD congregations after the first of the year.

Workshop on Growth

Saturday, May 3
Location: Green Bay, WI
Sponsored by Central MidWest District
Leader: Angela Merkert, Congregational Services Director, CMWD

About the workshop: It will focus on doing quality worship, outreach--moving out of a strong matriarchal-patriarchal model [family church] into a strong small church model. [These terms are used by the Alban Institute to describe church size and dynamics.] Information available later in the spring from the Central MidWest District Office, 708-236-0831.

Fellowship Pledge Update

By Bob Huff

Thanks to all those members and friends of the Fellowship for making the commitment of a pledge to our association. These are the folks who have signed and returned pledge cards as of December 17, 2002. If we have made an error and not included you, please let us know. Also, if you have not signed and returned your pledge card yet, your name is not included. Please contact Bob Huff at _____ if you feel there is an error or if you would like to receive a pledge card.

Liz Ash
Jim Auler and Paula Murphy
Kate and Richard Bain
Ann Beechler
Keith Belzer and Lisa Metz-Belzer
Sara Boehm
Jan Bohn
Matt Bosworth
Julie Chamberlain
Ruth Davis and Kevin Kenow
Celine Donofrio and Philip Johnson
Cindy and Chuck Ericksen
Judy Eubanks
Dave Ford and Melinda Knutson
David and Nancy Goode
Gunnar and Betty Gundersen
Red and Diane Haines
Bob Huff
Ingrid Iverson and Milo Velimirovic
Bill Katra and Ari Franco
Madeline Kepner
Clay LaBrec
Dave and Connie Long
Ron Malzer and Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer
Lucy Malzer
Sharon Martin
Andy and Nancy Matchett
Kathy Neidert
Jean Novack and Phil Sandberg
Bob Porath
Becky Post
Bob and Marian Ramlow
Louise Randall-Winger
Laurie Rogers and Jeff Bernardy
Mike Schackman
Kathy Schnitzius
Eric and Ellen Severson
Liz Spangler
Dean Staffanson and Karen Pothen
Christopher Townsend
Joyce and Ray Starrett
Katie Van Roosenbeek and Tara De Long
Mary Welch
Gene Williams
Anne Zeisler

Forty-five households have pledged to date with about thirty-two more remaining to be contacted. The average

pledge of the forty-five households is \$688. Eight pledged 1000 or above this year as compared to four last year. And each category increased from last year.

*Our Fellowship's Social Justice Committee provides this series of newsletter articles highlighting various social justice issues. These articles are intended to raise awareness and stimulate thought and discussion. Opinions expressed are those of the author, not necessarily of the Fellowship or of the Social Justice Committee. **Keith Belzer** provides this month's article.*

Social Justice Committee Supports a Giving Lifestyle

By Keith Belzer

Is it truly better to give than to receive?

A study conducted by the University of Michigan shows that people who give during their life, live longer. In the alternative, people who received help, did not live any longer than those that did not receive help. Giving = longer life. Receiving = no longer life.

Why is this so?

“Helper’s High” is the term that Arizona State University psychologist Robert Cialdini uses to describe the euphoria reported by frequent givers in his research.

Why do we feel this way?

At the celebration of the start of a new year, it seems like a particularly good time to reflect on the joy that comes from helping others. Ours is not a faith that is based on post mortem retribution or heavenly inducements towards a proper way of life. Without the promise of heaven, or the threat of hell, why should we help others? The answer, “it’s the right thing to do,” while carrying moral weight, doesn’t really stir the soul. As this University of Michigan study suggests, perhaps the best reason to help others is the benefit that we receive from our labors. The connection to other human beings is much healthier than hoarding and self-preservation.

A prerequisite of this type of humanistic reward is an attitude of wanting to help for the sake of being part of the larger human community rather than giving out of obligation or hidden motives. One must give without expectation in order to receive from giving. In reality, to give to others, to help one another . . . is to help ourselves. I am proud of the work the individual members of our Fellowship do to help others. Perhaps more importantly, (in light of this study), I *feel good* about the work we do individually and collectively to help other people. I look forward to more good feelings as our Social Justice Committee and our Fellowship come together to help others even as we our helping ourselves, and very likely, living longer in the process. Happy New Year.

The Building Corner

“The Building Corner” column provides regular updates on issues related to finding appropriate meeting space for our Fellowship. Madeline Kepner provides this month’s column.

Building Search

By Madeline Kepner

An issue that our fellowship has been discussing for several years is the building and space situation. Our space is limited; we share it with others and the set up and take down time requires a lot of effort and volunteers to start each session. Both the adult meeting space and the space for religious education require furniture to be rearranged, and materials to be retrieved from storage in order to begin each session. The storefront image doesn’t portray the image that we hope to present to the community. Without our own building, we aren’t visible to the people in the area where we reside.

We are grateful to Connie Long and Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer for their dedication in searching for a building that would better meet our needs. To those of us who are newer in the fellowship, it’s hard to believe that they have been looking at properties and buildings for at least eight years. In next month’s newsletter, I plan to tell more about how that search has been conducted and the results of their efforts.

In February of last year, fifteen people met on a Saturday to accelerate the process of the building search. Sub-committees were formed and insofar as is possible, goals for the sub-committees were accomplished. The location sub-committee has continued to visit buildings and explore possibilities. A survey was sent to all members and the results tabulated by the survey subcommittee. Recommendations from the finance subcommittee led to the creation of an active Finance Committee and the completion of a successful annual operating fund drive. The communications subcommittee published a pamphlet highlighting member’s comments collected in the building survey, and started “The Building Corner” a regular newsletter column devoted to building issues. One thing that wasn’t discussed at that meeting was the history of the building search. In interviews with Connie and Margaret, I hope to bring everyone a bit of that history.

Connie and Margaret have worked with a Realtor to inform her of our needs so they could be directed to buildings and properties. From the beginning, they have asked that members suggest locations for them to investigate. They have examined the property ads in the newspaper. They have followed up any leads by driving by, and when needed searched for the owner. With a promising property, they have further investigated it, measured it, and considered the feasibility of it according to the criteria that had been established.

In the next issue, we will briefly look at some of the sites and how they were selected; what some of the most promising places were and why were they either unacceptable or unavailable; some of the near misses; and last, but not least, building financing. Questions that members have about the building search can be sent to Madeline Kepner () or e-mail: () and I'll attempt to find an answer.

Communications Committee Formed

By Christopher Townsend

The Board of Trustees has approved the formation of a new Communications Committee. While the name “Communications Committee” is new, this is actually more of a re-organization than a totally new committee. The committee will be responsible for major fellowship-related communications, specifically our monthly newsletter, all electronic communications (Web site and weekly e-mail reminders,) publicity to the larger community, brochures about the fellowship, and weekly Orders of Service. The new committee will be chaired by current newsletter editor, Christopher Townsend.

You may notice that all of the functions mentioned above were already being done in the fellowship, and they probably won’t be affected much by this re-organization in the short term.

In the longer term, I would very much like to see the committee do a periodic review of all our printed and electronic communications, to make suggestions about how they function as a group and how individual areas could be improved to better serve the fellowship.

The area of publicity to the larger community has been somewhat inactive over the past year, and I would really welcome the participation of anyone who has an interest in this area. We currently use the free section of the La Crosse Tribune as much as they will allow, and have a paid listing twice a month. We have a very nice fellowship brochure, but could be doing more to get it out into the community. Publicity to the larger community would also include information booths, such as have been done at Pride Along the Mississippi and UWL’s Involvement Fest, and could include improved signage for our building and listings in other community calendars or publications.

The Communications Committee will also handle special publications such as flyers for special events when required.

I am very pleased that the fellowship has moved ahead with this organizational change, since I think this structure will serve the Fellowship well as it grows into the future. However, in order to expand any of our communications or publicity activities, we will need the involvement of new people on the committee. So if you have any interest in any of the areas described above, please let me know. I will be very glad to try to structure involvement with the Communications Committee in ways that suit individual volunteer’s preferences.

PSD Annual Conference

Congregations in Changing Times: 40 Years in the Prairie Star District

April 4-6, 2003, Rochester Minnesota

Plan ahead to attend the Prairie Star District's Annual Conference and Meeting. The Annual Conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn and socialize with UUs from across our district. Mark your calendar now.

Check out these links!

The Rev. William G. Sinkford, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, has written a holiday message to all Unitarian Universalists.

The text of his message may be read at

<http://www.uua.org/president/021212.html>

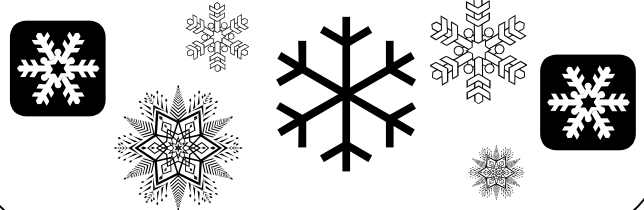
A video version of the message is available for viewing at

<http://www.uua.org/realaudio/02/sinkfordholiday.ram>

(or follow the link on the text page).

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