

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse Newsletter November, 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:

November 7th: “Día De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead)”, an intergenerational service led by our RE students. We will be paying heed to a Mexican custom that culminates November 1st and 2nd. **Members of our congregation:** You are encouraged to state the name of someone that has passed, and ring a chime in commemoration. We will make time for everyone to share a name if they choose to do so. The tone will be of celebration and thanks for the times shared with those whom we have lost. There will be space reserved on the service table for pictures or mementos that you may like to bring to share regarding any deceased loved ones.

November 14th: “The Future of Our Faith: A 50/50 Chance”, The Reverend **Phillip Lund**. Rev. Lund poses this question: “What are the odds of a religious tradition that grows only 1% annually being around in another 50 years?” Reverend Lund is Lifespan Program Director of our Prairie Star District-UUA, based in Minneapolis.

November 21st: “Creating Family Rituals”, Sue Gilbert. Ms. Gilbert will give us examples of rituals and traditions that can bring comfort and security, including a family table/altar whose symbols tell the stories of family members across generations. Sue Gilbert, widowed mother of five adult children, headed Family Life for the Catholic Diocese of La Crosse for 17 years, and is currently pastoral minister at Cathedral.

November 28th: “AIDS: Still A Potent Worldwide Epidemic”, Dr. Lois Van Tol. While AIDS has moved off the front pages of American newspapers, it is a disease that continues to have devastating impact on many Third World countries. Medications that can put this disease into remission are well-known to medical science, but millions of the world's poor are dying because they lack resources to acquire the treatments. *What then is our responsibility, living as we do in a country of prosperity?* Dr. Lois Van Tol, a family physician who has done medical work in Haiti, treating a variety of infectious diseases, will share information with us. Today's service is in conjunction with World AIDS Day (December 1).

A potluck will follow the service.

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.”



Choir News

Becky Post



Our UU choir sings two Sundays a month. Rehearsals are the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM, and at 9:00 AM on the Sundays we sing. All rehearsals are at the Pump House in the basement conference room. Below is the choir schedule for upcoming weeks:

Sunday, November 7 -- Choir will sing. Rehearsal at 9:00 AM.

Sunday, Nov. 21 -- Choir will sing. Rehearsal at 9:00 AM.

Wednesday, November 24 -- Evening choir rehearsal at 7:00 PM.

Sunday, December 5 -- Choir will sing. Rehearsal at 9:00 AM.

Sunday, December 19 -- Choir will sing. Rehearsal at 9:00 AM.

Wednesday, December 22 -- Evening choir rehearsal at 7:00 PM.

For more information, call Becky Post at
or Eric Kraemer at

Religious Education News

Ann Beechler, Director of Religious Education

Each group of students now has consistent staff and volunteers to meet with them each Sunday. We have hired Liz Ash to work with the Inquiring Group (middle school) and Sarah Wendland to work with Caring & Sharing (nursery). Glad to have you on board, Liz and Sarah! Our volunteers are teaching the Acquiring Group (grade school) and the High School Group.



Board Notes:

Bob Huff, Board President

This is a summary of our September and October meetings.

September:

1. Voted to give cost of living increases this year to our two longest employees (Coordinator and Business Manager) since they have not had raises since beginning. This will begin in the 2005 budget. We want to pay fair and just wages to our employees.
2. Hired Ann Beechler as the DRE to provide more consistency in the very important RE program. This involves ten to twelve hours per week.
3. Also hired Ann to be the Volunteer coordinator to help schedule Sunday set up volunteers and other areas. This would amount to approximately two hours per week.
4. Discussed Policy Manual and will continue to gather info from all committees so that policies are clear to all concerned and published in a written manual as a resource to all.

October:

1. Approved the purchase of door in the RE area to separate two age groups to enhance the programs for both. Cost will be approximately \$700.
2. Approved the hiring of Liz Ash to teach the middle school group.
3. Discussed organizing a committee to update the Coordinator job description and Set up procedures for Sunday. The job has changed since moving into the new building. We would like a representative from the Program, Membership, and RE committees to work with the President.
4. We completed a Board Assessment to analyze the board's functioning together.
5. The board is creating and prioritizing a list of "three critical issues" for the board to focus on for the coming year. The board also wants to work with each committee so that each committee develops its' own set of critical issues to work on for the year. We will print the issues here in this column next month after we meet to prioritize them.
6. We also discussed setting up regular meetings with the Pump House staff to check in continually with each other as to the progress and status of our rental relationship to avoid misunderstandings before they cause conflict.

Nominating Committee

Ingrid Iverson

The Nominating Committee is meeting. We are looking for people who want to have fun, make new friends, bring about social change, and make a difference. There are many volunteer opportunities in our fellowship and we invite you get involved. If you have questions please talk to Ingrid Iverson, Kathy Schnitzius, or Lisa Metz-Belzer.

Member News

Liz Spangler

- Congratulations to **Ingrid Iverson**, one of this year's recipients of the YWCA Outstanding Women Award!
- **Madelon Wise** will be moving to Madison, WI. We wish her the very best!
- **Jessica** is recovering well from her foot mishap. She is a wiz on her crutches!
- New in the UU kids' library is *The Wicked Trick*, written by Yvonne Holloway McCall. This is a story about deception, and Jacob & Esau. Check it out.

Caregiver for November is **Liz Bonnett**; her phone # is

AdventUUrers News

Liz Spangler

- Video and supper at Franciscan Spirituality Center: Thursday November 18.
- Set aside December 3rd. for "Swinging Yuletide" at UW-L in Valhalla. Check with Liz S. for details.
- AdventUUrers can check with Madeline Kepner for the date of the UW-L play in November.

Announcements

Bob Huff, Board President

1. Canvass Update: At the Newsletter deadline, we have pledges from 37 family units in our current canvass campaign for 2005. Our members have pledged approximately \$31,661 to date. If the remaining fifteen families pledge the same rate as last year, we will have raised about \$40,000 to support the things you say you want the Fellowship to accomplish. Last year we raised over \$36,000, so it is a healthy 11% increase over last year. Thanks to all who have so

generously given to the campaign, and especially for those who were able to increase their commitment to help with those who might be in tighter financial circumstances. Please ask for a pledge form if you have not yet been contacted by a campaigner and give generously and sacrificially to our liberal religious cause. Thanks to Kathy Schnitzius, Ron Malzer, Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, Madeline Kepner, Jean Novack, Eric Severson, Ingrid Iverson, Mikel Cobb, Liz Spangler, and Red Haines for generously giving of their time to help with the campaign.

2. Covenant Groups and Small Group Activities:

Our Fellowship needs to offer opportunities for our members to meet in small group situations. We lose folks if they do not feel a connection to our Fellowship. Small groups help people to relate on a deeper level. They are also necessary for new members to meet others, to explore their religious quest, to find out more about Unitarian Universalism. Small groups can take the form of covenant groups where the group decides the topics and follows a format with readings, simple rituals or they can be tied to specific activities. Some churches have covenant groups around books, Eastern Religions, game nights, hiking, social justice issues, prayer circles, bible study, music (singing, ensembles, etc) knitting, biking, circle dinners etc... Small groups are also important for new members to meet others and can be built around Unitarian Universalism 101 where they find out about UU's and the local church opportunities. These groups do not take lots of time. They are rewarding to the leader/facilitator as well as to all of the participants because you are doing things you like to do anyway. It is fun to get to know others outside of our Sunday morning services and build and bond with others of like mind and spirit. If you are interested in joining or leading a small group, please contact Bob Huff at

or

Friendliness

Bob Huff

“Places surrounded by unpleasantness are seldom surrounded by people.” This is one of the statements that I kept in front of me and the other staff when I worked at the YMCA. It was to remind me and others to be friendly to everyone and to make their visit to the Y as pleasant as possible during their visit. My hope for our staff was that we could exceed our member's expectations in service, in friendliness and in the cleanliness of the facility. (Friendliness of staff and cleanliness of the facility were two big reasons people would not return to a Y facility). --continued on page 4--

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We also had a common set of values that we tried to put into practice not only with our members but with each other.

How does our Fellowship rate in pleasantness? Are we friendly to each other? Do we go out of our way to make our services, our religious education, our committee work, our coffee hours, or whatever, pleasant? Do we exceed our member's and visitor's expectations? Do we make folks feel comfortable, welcome and not ignored? Is it "fun" to come to UU events?

Are we welcoming to newcomers? Do we expect the Membership Committee and the Greeter to do it all for us? Do you remember when you were a "first" timer? How did you feel? Did anyone talk to you or were you ignored? If folks don't feel like anyone is paying attention to them or no one talks to them, they probably won't return.

Be a "super greeter." Go up to others, especially new members and visitors, and talk to them. It is fun to get to know new folks and how they found out about us. Hey, it's fun to find out about our own members! What do they do for a living? How long have they been in La Crosse? How did they find out about UUism? What are their hobbies and interests? Did you know that Red Haines flies gliders? Did you know that one of our women members was a famous mud wrestler? (I won't tell you who she is, you will have to be a "super greeter" to find out) Can you introduce visitors to others with similar interests? How about letting them know of covenant groups, reading groups, UU AdventUurers, cross country skiing, kayaking, canoeing, biking or hiking partners who are UU?

Be friendly, be a super greeter. Offer to lead and/or attend a small group so that current members or new members have a way to connect to us. Let us surround ourselves with pleasantness, friendliness and "fun" so that we can grow this religiously liberal community into a bigger, more visible force in the La Crosse area. We say we want this and it takes some risk taking to get there. Challenge and stretch yourself to talk with two members that you have never talked to before and especially talk to two or three visitors and new members the next time you attend a service.

Pump House Relations

Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer

Some questions and concerns about our relationship with the Pump House have been raised recently and I would like to try to address some of those. Like any other "relationship", there are always issues that need to be worked out.

When we negotiated the lease with the Pump House, it covered our Sunday meeting time, plus a monthly Board Meeting and monthly choir rehearsal. Any additional meeting times have to be cleared with the Pump House. On Sundays, we have use of all of the common areas of the building, and none of the private offices. We knew when we rented the space that the primary mission of the Pump House is to be an art and performance center. Sometimes their mission conflicts with the Fellowship's needs. Everyone recognized the difficulties imposed on us when we were not able to use the gallery space for coffee hour after our services. When they have a late performance on Saturday night, the kitchen is sometimes messy the next morning and there may be empty bottles in the theater, because they do not have a cleaning service that comes in during the wee hours of Sunday morning. Like us, they have many things that are done by volunteers or their very few employees. We have asked them to be cognizant of our space needs and rental agreement as they schedule shows and events in the future.

We discussed the possibility of having fellowship representation on the Pump House board when we negotiated the original rental. Since the Pump House has a manager (who is now a full time employee), their board functions differently than the Senior Center board did – they are an advisory board, rather than determining day-to-day functioning. We agreed that it would be best to have the contact person at the Pump House be their manager, Toni Asher, rather than the board. Similarly, we have worked it out that the Pump House contacts our president, Bob Huff, or the chair of the Building Committee, Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer. Bob and Margaret plan to check in on a regular, maybe monthly, basis with Toni to ensure that things are going as smoothly as possible in this relationship.

What all of this means is that if you have concerns about something at the Pump House, please, communicate with Bob or Margaret. It would be really great if you sent an e-mail or handed us a written note, rather than hoping we will remember a conversation that took place during coffee hour. (I don't know about Bob, but my memory is not what it used to be.) I know that the Pump House is happy to have us as tenants, and I think the move was a positive one for the Fellowship. We hope to continue to build on that!



**A Pastoral Letter from the
Rev. William G. Sinkford, President,
Unitarian Universalist Association *October 2004***

Since our congregations opened their doors for the new church year last month, they have been ministering in a deeply divided nation. The *United States* seems to have vanished beneath the battle lines drawn between blue states and red states, conservatives and liberals, Democrats and Republicans.

Most destructive and divisive in this political campaign is its tone of fear and fundamentalism—the notion that there is only one way to be religious, only one holy scripture worthy of being followed. Only one way to be patriotic. Only one way to be a family. And, sadly, only one way to be an American.

We religious liberals share our pews with those who do not share our theology. Liberal Christian, Jew, humanist, Buddhist, Pagan -- all find a home in our UU congregations. We know pluralism as a blessing, and our lived experience, that our differences need not divide us, is a great gift that we can offer this campaign-scarred nation.

[Jason Shelton](#), a UU minister and director of music at our congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, wrote a wonderful hymn this year. He reminds us that when we stand on the side of love, we embody healing virtues:

*The promise of the Spirit faith, hope, and love abide
And so every soul is blessed and made whole
The truth in our hearts is our guide.
We are standing on the side of love.*

My friends, after the wrenching divisions of this campaign season, we need that blessing and that wholeness. In this spirit, I offer a prayer, in the hope that we may each play a part in the healing we all need:

Spirit of Life and Love, Be with us now in prayer.
We seek the blessing and wholeness that come
From knowing we are bound to one another.

Let faith, hope and love abide with us.
May we open our hearts, finding there the discipline
To avoid stridency, Which deepens not
understanding
But widens the chasms between us.

May we open our hearts, finding there the courage
To join our hands with other people of faith
With whom we do not always agree,
Knowing that to clasp hands with others is to extend
our reach farther than we ever could alone.

May we open our hearts, finding there humility,
Knowing that many who disagree with us
Are grounded in a faith as deep as our own.

May we always acknowledge and honor the
humanity
of those with whom we disagree.

May we remember what religion is:
a binding together of that which has been sundered.
For in this remembering, we lay wide the
possibilities for reconciliation and healing.

Amen.

Dear friends, as Americans, there is more that unites us than divides us, and there can be but one common destiny for this nation.

So let us stand purposefully on the side of love. The message of fear has been trumpeted throughout this election season. The message of love is quieter, but it is the antidote to that fear. Let us do what we can to help this quieter message be heard. And let us all do our part to bless and make whole a country wounded by partisan conflict and weary of division.

In faith,

William G. Sinkford
Rev. William G. Sinkford

Our Covenant & Mission

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist 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.

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 Groups...

Are you interested in joining a Covenant Group or getting involved in other small group activities? See page 4.

Thanksgiving Potluck

There will be a potluck following the service on November 28.

