



The Univoice

Church begins work on electing a new Board in May

by Gene Goodwin

Although we will not be called upon to elect a new Board until May, our Board of Directors has already begun work on the nominating process. At its January meeting on Jan. 18, Board members Gene Fizz and Kent Gutzler, agreed to start collecting names of possible Board candidates to be elected at the congregational meeting in May. Gene chaired the nominating committee last year. Kent is the newest member of the Board.

Board members whose terms expire this July 1 are Board President Joe Plagmen, Secretary Jeff Woodward and Jeffrey Carson, one of two new board members appointed since last summer to fill vacancies on the board.

Berks UU bylaws permit Board members to be re-nominated and re-elected. That decision will be up to the members themselves and ultimately the nomination process, which will be the job of a formal nominating committee who's three members must include at least one non-Board member. The term expiration dates for the remaining members of the Board are as follows:

Terms expiring in 2012 for Board Member Kent Gutzler, who was appointed to fill the two year term for Karen Neirle; Treasurer Ron Smith, and for Board Member Gene Fizz. Terms expiring in 2013 Board Members Delite Hawk and Doug Mealing and Vice President Mike Mannix.

Under our system, the Board annually elects from its own members, a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer who serve as Church Officers as well as Board Officers. Even the five non-title holding Board Members serve as committee members and on various projects, on behalf of the Board.

The Board hopes to have the three nominees lined up by its April meeting. Anyone interested in applying or nominating someone, should contact Gene Fizz or Kent Gutzler.

The Board appointed Richard Bromley to be the Trustee representing our church at the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention in April 2011. They also named Delite Hawk to be alternate trustee.

As the largest member of the PUC, our church traditionally hosts one of the two annual meetings of the convention. Our church also benefits financially by continuing its active participation with the PUC. The PUC is made up of the 7 Universalist Churches that were in existence in Pennsylvania in 1963. In 1963 the National Unitarian Churches merged with the Universalist Church to form the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Church Office Hours:

The church office is open Mon. through Fri. from 9:30-3:30pm, but please call ahead to ensure access.

Please contact office manager Susan Stewart to arrange for a temporary key if you need access any other time.

Rev. Fees has office hours by appointment. Please call (610) 372-0928 or email sandrafees@verizon.net, to schedule an appointment. Monday is Rev. Fees day off.

Univoice Submission Guidelines

Email submissions by attaching a Word file or including your material in the body of an email message to univoice@uuberks.org. You may also put typewritten submissions in our mailbox in the new Chalice House in the box labelled *Univoice*.

The deadline is the 15th of each month. Please include the date, time and location of events, and the full name and phone number or e-mail of contacts.

My telephone number is (610) 741-6006 if you need to contact me.

~Meghan Cocuzza, Editor

The Circle Group Corner

Loss And Grief

By: Ann Myers

“We want to live like trees....dappled with scars, still exuberantly budding.”

--Adrienne Rich

Our February Circle Group topic is loss and grief. As psychologist Sam Gottlieb has pointed out, every change in our lives involves loss of what was, even as we move into desired new situations. We lose former houses, old neighborhoods and neighbors, and high school or college friends as we move on. We lose our childhoods and young adulthoods and face growing older. Sometimes we lose our health. We also experience the painful loss of beloved friends, family members and pets. This is a lot to handle.

Losing loved ones is surely one of the hardest experiences we can have in life. A friend of mine whom I will call Jim has a mother with lung cancer. He told me of the conversation he had with his 13 year-old-son Alex as he first explained the situation to him. Jim said that he stressed how much love and joy Alex’s grandmother had brought to Alex’s life, and how much Alex had enriched hers. They

were so lucky to have had each other for all of Alex’s life. I thought that Jim was reframing the anticipated painful loss of his mother in terms of a rich, well-lived life. Alex now calls his grandmother frequently, and they are trying to enjoy whatever time together they still have. As Jim helped his son, he also was better able to deal with his own grief.

As we grieve we adjust to loss, and we also try to internalize what is no longer there so that it can still be a part of our lives. My mother died 10 years ago, and I still miss her. My husband Jeff and I married later in life, so he met my mother when she was already 80. Still, he learned to know and love and appreciate her in the last 11 years of her life. Their close relationship was such an unexpected blessing for me. Now we joke frequently about what my mother Dorothy would have said or done in various situations. I think that Jeff is more tolerant of some of my (very few) foibles since he sees where some of them came from! My mother remains quite present in my life, and for that I am very grateful. For me, talking about and quoting those I have lost can help keep them alive in my heart.

For our circle group meetings this month please think of the griefs and losses that you have dealt with in the past or are dealing with now, and where you might be in the process. Have you found ways of coping that might be of help to someone else?

February Volunteers

Coffee Corps

- 2/6 Rick Salafia & Leigh Kane V
- 2/13 Randall Newnham VI
- 2/20 Judd & Mindy Bortz VII
- 2/27 Keith & Carol Orts VIII

Greeters

- 2/6 Paula Plageman
- 2/13 Megan Stubblebine
- 2/20 Judy Aubrey
- 2/27 Vince O'Brien

Caring Circle

Caroline Simonson



Adult Programs

Lunch Bunch

Feb. 16 noon-1pm

The Lunch Bunch meets monthly in the Gerber Room over a brown bag lunch for a conversation on a focused topic. This month’s topic will be “Standing on the Side of Love”. This month’s Lunch Bunch will be coordinated by Keith and Carol Orts.



Family Promise

New Dates for Family Promise 2011

By: Carla Mannix

Building on the success of last year, First UU will host families in need of housing twice this year. Mark your calendars for Apr. 17 -24 and Oct. 9 - 16, 2011. I am especially pleased that we will host over the Earth Day/Easter week because that is typically a week when other churches are too busy. The children in Reading School Dist will be on holiday break all that week, and other districts are closed later in the week. So the kids will have somewhere pleasant to go for the evening.

Please look for the sign-up board in the Gerber Room starting in March to reserve your preferred time and role. I will host a new volunteer orientation in early April. Thankfully, Stacey Campbell will again coordinate meals. Together, we can do this well!

Murray Grove Update

Murray Grove: peaceful, affordable space – perfect for retreats and family reunions

Grove Gatherings at Murray Grove: Musical/Artistic Coffee Houses. Every second Wednesday of the month: 7:00-9:00 entertainment - \$10 per person; doors open at 6:30. Bring your favorite appetizers and/or desserts to share, and BYOB. Feb. 9 – Valerie Vaughn singing her collection of love songs and Tom Brown playing old time tunes on the sax help celebrate Chocolate Week. Mar. 9 – Internationally renowned British folk singer Bram Taylor plays traditional songs. (One-time only – this performance will take place at the UU Ocean County Congregation.) Apr. 13 – Bottleneck guitarist Pete Wagula reprises his presentation from last fall. Kindly RSVP at murraygrove@murraygrove.org or 609-693-5558

Drum and Dance Fest, July 15-17, 2011: Express yourself creatively and spiritually! All levels welcome! LEARN Afro-Brazilian, Latin and West African Drumming, African Dance and Belly Dancing, plus Drum/Dance Jams, Fire Circle, Facilitator Performances, On-Site Massage Therapist, Walks. Come for the whole weekend, or Saturday only. Visit murraygrove.org or call for the details.

Heritage Week at Murray Grove, July 31-Aug. 5, 2011 - Workshops conducted by Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong – 2010 winner of the Angus H. MacLean Award for Excellence in Religious Education – on Universalist, Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist Religious Education History and General History with Rev. Carol Haag, Director of Sacred Worship and Rev. Dr. Carol Taylor, Director of Sacred Nourishment. Attendance at Heritage Week will qualify as a structured learning experience for the “Philosophy of RE – UU” competency, and as a significant structured learning experience for the credentialed level. In your free time, rest and relax, and have fun at Murray Grove! Walk the labyrinth, enjoy a pool party and live entertainment, sing around the fire pit, go to local beaches, lakes and creeks, walk the nature trail, play games and enjoy arts and crafts. \$375 per person, double occupancy, including meals; \$350 early bird before July 1, 2011. Limited single occupancy \$125 extra. Call to register.

Please ask us about volunteering and bartering opportunities.

Don't miss our new quarterly electronic newsletter, the Hand-in-Hand! To receive it, email newsletter@murraygrove.org, or call us!

For information and registration:
Murray Grove Retreat and Conference Center
PO Box 246, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734
609-693-5558
murraygrove@murraygrove.org
www.murraygrove.org



The DeBenneville Endowment Fund: Making a Difference

What will be the future of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Berks County? Our new Mission Statement with its strategic goals gives us a clear map forward for the next ten years. However, our longer term future as an economically stable and vital liberal religious presence in Berks County will depend not only on a clear mission but also on the creation of a more substantial endowment fund to see us through difficult times, and to fund our future building improvement needs and our community outreach programs.

In 1997 First Unitarian Universalist Church of Berks County began such an endowment program, the DeBenneville Endowment Fund. Named after George DeBenneville, a Physician, farmer and minister of universal salvation who lived in the Oley valley, the fund was designed as a vehicle for planned giving to our church to promote its long-term future. In the last decade our church has made enormous strides forward in its ministries, its programs and its physical facilities. However, at this time with approximately \$44,000 in investments, the fund is not adequately funded to provide for the church's economic security or to generate enough in interest accruals to help fund our mission goals. At this time the fund interest is not sufficient to generate funds for the physical plant of the Church or for outreach into the community or to contribute to the wider mission of Unitarian Universalism.

With this need in mind, the Board is asking those members of the congregation who are in a position to do so to consider supporting the DeBenneville fund by pledging gifts of money, stocks, or other assets to the endowment fund in their wills. The simplest way to make a difference and to help shape the future of our church is to include a bequest in your will to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Berks County.

Bequests are an easy way to give in that they often involve only a few lines in your will designating a specific amount of money or a percentage of your estate to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Berks County.

Bequests are flexible meaning that until your will goes into effect, you are free to alter or change your plans based on changing family circumstances. A bequest allows you to change your will at any time, and bequests entitle your estate to an estate tax deduction.

This giving option is not for everybody. A bequest is for those who are in a position to direct some portion of their assets to the church. Those who are able to do so can make a lasting impact on the future of our church, and can show their gratitude for what the church has meant in their lives. For those considering this giving opportunity, or for those who have already made such a provision in their wills, please contact me or Mena Hautau, member of the DeBenneville Endowment fund committee.

We need to get started now!

Jeff Woodward
Chair of Stewardship



George Debenneville

January Board

By: Gene Goodwin

The Board completed work on its review of Building Use Policies and concluded that all persons who want to rent Church spaces will have to pay a security deposit, rental rates will be kept at present levels except for the upstairs Chalice House rooms which the Board sees no reason to rent out. More explanation and information on this policy update will be in the March Univoice.

Heard from Vice President Mike Mannix about developing leadership on the board. Mike had been involved in a spiritual search that included Catholic Churches, the Quakers and non-traditional religions. He has been a member of the UU for over 6 years. He is currently chairing the committee to develop more leadership in the church as a whole and specifically the board members. He is urging other Board Members to reflect upon their own spirituality and re-define what the UU means to them. Then to share this with other UU members and guests. Mike is hoping that this sharing of personal stories of faith will allow members to more comfortable discuss the role that UU plays in their daily lives.

Food Pantry

On Jan. 6 our church distributed food to 137 households; 22 families came to our pantry for the first time. A total of 491 people were served including 240 children, 219 adults and 32 seniors.

This winter we are collecting outer wear for adults and children. Please put warm clothing such as coats, gloves, scarves and sweaters on the coat rack closest to the Gerber Room or in the gray boxes below that rack. We also appreciate your gifts of non-perishable food items such as canned fruit, vegetables and tuna. These items may be placed in the entryway basket

The next pantry date will be Feb. 3.

New volunteers are always welcome, anytime between 9 AM and noon on the first Thursday of every month. For more information please contact Walter Axsmith at w2axsmith@comcast.net.



Scenes from the food pantry held 1/6



Kent playing trumpet at the Christmas Eve Service

Special Plate Collection

The December Special Plate Collection for Berks Connections/ Pretrial Services brought in \$535.00. Our next Special Collection will be held on Feb. 20 and it will benefit the Reading Public Library.

The rest of the Special Plate Collections scheduled are:

- Mar. 20** Reading Risk Reduction
- Apr. 17** Childrens Home of Reading
- May 22** Minister's Discretion Fund
- June 12** 1st UU Food Bank

Religious Education

Dear Friends,

Last month, I shared some information with you from the *Book of New Family Traditions* by UU author Meg Cox and a list of ten good things that family rituals do for children. This month, I would like to share some more information from Cox's book.

She offers these five signs that you might need to create a family ritual:

- A big occasion, such as a birthday or graduation, is coming
 - A member of the family receives major good (or bad) news: a sports victory, a good report card, the death of a loved one or pet, a big promotion
 - A recurring rough spot is causing stress in the family routine
 - Members of the family display a general sense of boredom or malaise
 - You want to make "teachable moments" both fun and unforgettable.
- You might want to pass on your values, family history, or practical life skills.

For birthdays, Cox offers a wealth of suggestions, such as creating a birthday wreath to which a meaningful token is added each year or giving the birthday child two envelopes on the special day, one marked *New Privilege* and one marked *New Responsibility*.

To make Valentine's Day special, she suggests creating a Family Book of Love. To do so, decorate an inexpensive blank book with a heart and then each year have every member of the family write one loving thing about every other member (take dictation for young children or let them draw a picture).

For more ideas on creating family rituals, please let me know if you would like to borrow *The Book of New Family Traditions*!

Blessings,
Elizabeth

RE Committee: Stephanie Elliott, Emily McNulty, Lisa Wilder, and Celeste Galanos

RE Calendar of Events

Mom's Morning Out (Topic: Mommy-Daddy/Wife-Husband)

Friday, Feb. 11, 2011, 9:30 - 11am

Mothers (and Fathers) are invited to bring their babies, toddlers, and preschoolers to the church for coffee, snacks, conversation, and play time. With Valentine's Day around the corner, we'll talk about how we tend to our relationship with our spouses as we also tend to the constant and ever-changing needs of our growing children.

All-Ages Choir Potluck Dinner and Rehearsal

Saturday, Feb. 19, 2011, 5:30pm

If you like to sing, but don't have time to commit to weekly choir rehearsals, here's your chance to raise your voice in song. Tracy Blunt has an amazing ability to help people of any age make the most of their vocal abilities. Please bring a potluck dish to share and your enthusiasm!

Art Journaling for Young Women with Joanna Groebel

Saturday, Feb. 19, 2011, 10am - 3pm

The ladies of the Seekers Middle School class are cordially invited to a cozy, convivial, creative day of soulful art making. We will be creating Art Journals. Please come with some photos of yourself, any magazines or images that intrigue you and, something to share for lunch. Blank journals and lots of materials and ideas for will be provided. There is no cost, but an RSVP would be much appreciated so that Joanna knows how many journals to bring (jvgroebel@gmail.com).

All-Ages Choir Sings during Worship Service
Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011

Please report to church by 10:15am to warm up.



Elizabeth Kaufmann



February 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Reading Beautification Board Mtg 6-8:30pm	2 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	3 Food Pantry 8-12pm	4	5
6 Sunday Service 10:30am OWL Session 12:15-4pm	7	8 Board Meeting 7-9pm	9 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	10	11 Mom's Morning Out 9:30-11am	12 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm Private Party 2:30-10pm
13 Sunday Service 10:30am	14 Heart to Heart 7:30-9p,	15	16 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm Lunch Bunch 12-1pm	17	18	19 All-Ages Choir Potluck Dinner and Rehearsal 5:30pm Art Journaling for Young Women 10-3pm
20 Sunday Service 10:30am Building Keepers Meeting 12-1pm OWL Session 12:15-4pm	21	22	23 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	24	25	26 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
27 Sunday Service 10:30am (23)OWL Session 12:15-4pm	28					

Ushers Wanted

You say the short days are kinda getting you down...and those holiday pounds are just not shedding away as fast as you want... and the weather has chilled your insides? Is that what's troubling you, Bunky?

Well, here is a guaranteed solution to your troubles! Sign up to become a UU Usher! That's right! When you become a UUU, your spirits will rise and shine away the darkness; carrying the collection plate will burn off those calories; and your good works will warm the cockles of everyone's heart (including yours). It's as easy as 1-2-3 (hand out bulletins, pass the collection plate, and hand the offering to the treasurer). What could be more simple?

Sign up now and your ushering opportunities will occur about every 6 weeks. Hurry, while supplies last! Operators are not standing by...but Steve DeBroux is. Simply walk up to him and say, "How can I join the fun group of UUUs?" He will take care of the rest. Sign up now!

Sunday Service Schedule

10:30am every Sunday

Feb. 6 With Humble Hearts

Rev. Libby Smith

Our Unitarian emphasis on human potential can leave us at risk for arrogance even as we seek to learn from the religions of the world that teach the importance of humility! Cultivating humble hearts can leave us better able to live out our potential in the ways that matter most.

The Rev. Libby Smith grew up in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York, PA. She received her MDiv from Harvard Divinity School in 1992 and was ordained the same year. She has served congregations in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and from 2005 - 2010 was the chaplain at Unitarian Universalist House, a small nursing home in Philadelphia. She is the consulting minister to the UU Fellowship of Lower Bucks in Langhorne, PA.

Feb. 13 Being Black In The 21st Century

Ron Smith

African Americans first arrived in this country in 1619. Where do African Americans stand in America today?

I have been a resident of Berks County since 1982. I am married to Helen. I have 3 grown children and 3 grandchildren, and one more soon. All three of the children attended the UU Church while in Berks County. Two of the children will be participating with me in the service. I have been a member of this church since 1983 and have always felt very at home. This is where I belong spiritually. Over my years in Berks County, I have been very involved in volunteer community work. Much of this has involved the African American community, where I made many friends. I am presently

a semi-retired anesthesiologist, planning to retire completely at the end of 2011.

Feb. 20 Love and Money

Rev. Patricia Hart

Love and money are both essential in life. But their effects are often quite opposite: love pulls us toward other people, while money can keep us apart. How shall we value the things we love? How can the ways we use money demonstrate our love for the world?

The Reverend Patricia Hart is a Unitarian Universalist parish minister and congregational consultant, currently serving as Co-Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Since completing seminary in 1998, Rev. Hart has served five UU congregations in New England and Pennsylvania, and consulted to dozens of congregations considering capital projects – including the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berks County.

Feb. 27 Prison, Prayer and Pine Sol

David Farrington

Perhaps you can recall a person that changed the trajectory of your life. Walton “Flash” Reynolds was such a person for me. In my early twenties, I met Flash in a state prison in Massachusetts. What followed was often dramatic, covering the full range of human emotions and always filled with learnings -- a love story of the most unusual kind.

Before accepting the pulpit at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Pottstown in 2008, the Reverend David W. Farrington served churches in Norton, Rockland, Athol and Northfield Massachusetts, Norwich Connecticut, Brunswick Maine and Corpus Christi Texas and enjoyed several distinguished careers, including business consultant (organizational growth and development), teacher and corrections official. In 1999 he completed a Master’s of Divinity degree at Andover-Newton Theological School.



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