



The Univoice

Newnham, Just & 2 Orts Named Ga Delegates

By: Gene Goodwin

Randy Newnham, Joanne Just and Keith and Carol Orts will represent Berks UU as delegates to the 2011 UUA General Assembly in Charlotte NC June 22-26.

The Board, in appointing our four delegates at its monthly meeting March 8, declared that if anyone else wanted to serve in this capacity, Keith and Carol Orts would be willing to step aside. They have been to many General Assemblies in their lives as active UUs in Ohio before they retired to Reading area. In fact, Carol was at one time on the National Board of UUA.

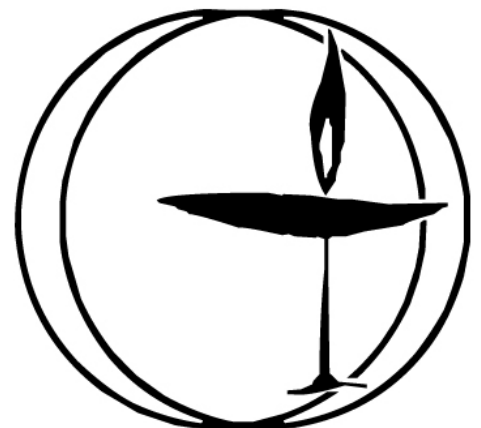
The Orts still plan to attend this GA, joining scores of non-delegate UUs who enjoy participating in big issue decision-making that goes on at that high level, as well as being with old friends from what might be called “the community of national UUs.”

The Board also has another appointment to make. They are currently looking for an editor for Univoice. Meghan Cocuzza has resigned from the job she has been doing for almost two years because she wants to become “a full-time Mom” when her first child is born in about four months.

Meghan brought superior computer skills to the job, plus a Penn State English degree, but she had to learn about UUism as it operates at this church and about publishing newsletters. As one of her mentors, I am proud of the job she has done.

The Board also discussed the agenda for the upcoming Spring Congregation Meeting on May 15. One important matter will be the election of three of the nine Board members. However, two incumbents, President Joe Plageman and Jeff Carson, have agreed to be nominated for three-year terms, leaving the nominating committee with the relatively simple task of finding a third name to fill out the slate to be recommended to the congregation in May. After their election, old and new Directors meet in June to decide who among them will serve as president, vice president, treasurer and secretary.

Our Directors will also have to be prepared for two meetings in April that will take them away from their Board responsibilities here. The first is the Spring PUC annual conference to be held in our church on April 2. Our Directors will also be attending the Spring JPD District Assembly in Harrisburg on April 9 and 10. The next Board meeting will be held on April 12.



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 will be on Sabbatical until May 2011. Please call (610) 372-0928 or email office@uuberks.org to contact the main office.

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

Nature

By: Ann Myers

“It seems as if the day was not wholly profane, in which we have given heed to some natural object.” –Henry David Thoreau

We have all been awestruck at times by the beauty and majesty of nature. And, for many of us, these moments of awe are moments of transcendence and experiences of the spirit. Thoreau makes this very explicit by saying “My profession is to always be on the alert to find God in nature, to know his lurking-places, to attend all the oratorios, the operas, in nature.” In our UU sources we honor earth-centered traditions as well as the interdependent web of existence that connects us all to each other and to the physical universe. Christians often focus specifically on St. Francis as a model for relating to the natural world with love and respect.

We have many things to be grateful for in relation to nature. Nature gives us possible experiences of oneness with the universe, a sense of unity with the creation. A storm or a beautiful sunset or a mountaintop vista may move us and make us feel connected to the world. But nature also gives us humility as we contemplate how small and vulnerable we are and how little we understand the mysteries of life. Mindfulness too is a gift of nature, as we are forced to pare down to essentials in order to take a hike or set out for an overnight camping trip. I have enjoyed all these gifts from nature on visits to Maine, especially the meditative state that comes from climbing over rocks on the downhill part of a demanding hike. Everyone in the group stops talking in order to concentrate, and the silence becomes almost

like a prayer. On a lesser scale, just spending some time outdoors each day is an important way to stay in touch with the weather, the sky and physical surroundings. For me, being able to walk in my neighborhood every day is very important. And, if our UU list-serve emails and video clips are any indication, it seems that many of us are involved in the excitement of following the migrations of swans and geese at Blue Marsh and elsewhere.

In our circle groups this month we will be discussing nature. What is your relationship with nature? Have you had a special experience in nature? What moves you? Is there a picture or object or place that has special meaning for you? Do you have a favorite season or time of year?



Copeland String Quartet to play in Pottstown!

The Copeland String Quartet was formed in 2003 by members of the Delaware Symphony, and since that time has rapidly been making a name for itself as a very fine new quartet. In addition to playing concerts throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, the group has its own sponsored concert series at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, DE., and under the auspices of the Delaware Symphony, the quartet performs educational outreach in the Delaware and Maryland school systems. Come join violinists Eliezer Gutman and Thomas Jackson, violist Nina Cottman, and cellist Mark Ward as they inspire and delight us with sublime masterpieces from the string quartet repertoire. Free admission.

The concert will be held Sunday, Apr. 3 at 4:00pm. The concert is to be held at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 150 N. Hanover Street, Pottstown, PA 19464.

Complete information about the Music At Emmanuel concert series can be found online at www.emmanuelpottstown.org.



Murray Grove News 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: 7:00-9:00PM entertainment - \$10 per person; doors open at 6:30PM. Bring your favorite appetizers and/or desserts to share, and BYOB. April 13 – Bottleneck guitarist Pete Wagula reprises his very popular performance last fall. May 11 – “A fierce, female guitar and percussion duo,” ViRAGO play rock, Latin and blues. 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, Facilitator Performances. Drum under the full moon around our fire circle. Come for the whole weekend, or Saturday only. Visit murraygrove.org or call for the details.

Heritage Week at Murray Grove, July 31-August 5 - 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. 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 Renewal Center
 PO Box 246, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734
murraygrove@murraygrove.org
www.murraygrove.org



Face to Face Booking

Do you have hundreds of “friends” you’ve never met? Searching for something that goes deeper than a wall post? Would you like the novel experience of face-to-face interaction with live human beings?

The membership committee wants your input for the development of a seasonal UU social calendar –given the opportunity, what type of activities (movies, hikes, brunch, etc.) would you enjoy participating in with other UUs?



Getting to Know UU

Interested in learning a little more about Unitarian Universalism? Want to share about what it means to U to be UU? Want to hear about the path to membership?

Join us in the Gerber Meeting Room during Coffee and Conversation time on: Sunday April 10 and/or Sunday May 15 for an informal conversation about Unitarian Universalism and First UU Berks.

March Volunteers

Coffee Corps

- 4/3 III Joe & Paula Plageman
- 4/10 IV Walter & Wilfriede Axsmith
- 4/17 V Rick Salafia & Leigh Kane
- 4/24 VI Randall Newnham

Greeters

- 4/3 Paula Plageman
- 4/10 Megan Stubblebine
- 4/17 Judy Aubrey
- 4/24 Vince O'Brien



Ushers

- 4/3 Kieth Orts & Rebecca Hartman
- 4/10 Carol Orts
- 4/17 Nelson Simonson & Robin Lucas
- 4/24 Vince O'Brien

Caring Circle

Pat Getz

Special Plate Collection

The February Special Plate Collection for Reading Public Library brought in \$652.00.

The next Collection will be on April 17th for Children's Home of Reading. Children's Home of Reading cares for the needs of children and families in crisis, preparing them for success in life.

The rest of the Special Plate Collections scheduled are:
May 22nd UU BERKS Minister's Discretion Fund
June 12th UU BERKS Food Bank

Adult Programs

Lunch Bunch

Apr. 20 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 Ann Myers and Jeff Woodward will be coordinating the group. Please join us and don't forget your Brown Bag lunch.

Univoice Designer Needed

Do you like to work behind the scenes? Do you love design? Do you want to be a huge part of our church's communication process? Then you may want to consider becoming the new Univoice Designer!

If you are someone who knows your way around the computer you may want to consider this job! We have someone interested in editing the Univoice, the designer would be needed to compile the information into the aesthetically pleasing document we know and love! This is your chance to join the evolutionary process that is our newsletter and in my opinion, the fun part.

Please contact me at mklumpp@duranco.org for further details. I am looking forward to your e-mail or phone call!

Food Pantry

The next pantry date will be Apr. 7.

The March food pantry served 122 families, 2 new families served, 238 children, 212 adults, and 37 seniors. Total people served were 487.

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.



Social Justice Team

Vision Statement:

An inclusive community that nurtures people's spirits, supports their spiritual journeys, and serves the cause of justice and love in the world.

Mission Statement:

The First UU Church is an open, nurturing community that encourages respect for and knowledge of all spiritual paths, promotes generous giving of time and resources, puts Unitarian Universalist values into action, and acts as a strong voice for social justice.

Family Promise Time to Sign Up for Family Promise Week

By: Carla Mannix

At least two families in need of shelter will spend the night in our church during the week of Apr. 17 - 24. We need your help to host them warmly.

The families are carefully selected to meet strong criteria for success. They are allowed to stay in the program for only 90 days while saving 80% of their income for a rental deposit and move in money. They can do this because hosting congregations provide all meals and a place to sleep each night, and the families stay at school, work, or a Day Center during the day. The families are then monitored and mentored for another two years.

The families are so grateful to have loving volunteers spend an evening with them in an inviting space. We hope you can join us in helping our neighbors get thru a crisis.

Please write your contact info on the Sign-up board in the Gerber Room or contact Carla Mannix at hfbmannix@yahoo.com when you're ready to volunteer.

Each Night:

- Dinner Preparers (make entree and/or side)
- 1 or 2 Evening Host (5:30PM - 8:30PM)
- 2 Overnights (8:30PM -7:00AM) preferably one male and one female
- 1 Morning Host (6:00AM - 7:30AM)

Weekly:

- 1 Shopper (for breakfast and lunch foods)
- 4 Laundry Workers (wash sheets at end of week)
- 5 Set-up beds on Apr. 17 in the afternoon
- 5 Take down beds on Apr. 24 at 8:00AM

I will also post a link on the listserv to a Googledoc that you can look at and type in your name directly. Both sign-up board and online doc will be updated to match.

New volunteers will need to attend a 30-minute Volunteer Orientation on Sunday, Apr. 3 or Apr. 10 after church in the Gerber Meeting Room. Volunteers will view a very enlightening video and sign confidentiality agreements.

PS - If you can't help during our week, St. John's Lutheran in Mohton still needs help with their week of hosting Family Promise, Apr. 10-17. Please contact baxcurran@comcast.net to find out their greatest needs.



Scenes from Family Promise

Religious Education

Dear Friends,

It is the time of year for bunnies, chicks, chocolate eggs, and bars of soap? Yes, as Easter draws near, it is time again for our church's annual soap bar hunt. In lieu of a hunt for plastic eggs filled with yet more candy, a tradition was started several years ago of having the children hunt for donated bars of soap which are then given to the food pantry. The food pantry is always in need of personal care products. The children redeem their bars of soap for a treat. So yes, there is still candy involved, but hopefully we also remind the kids of the joy of helping others.

What we need to make this event a success is SOAP! So please bring your donations of soap to church and put them in the specially marked collection box.

Also, if you are making summer plans, I am getting catalogs from various UU camps for children and families. Look for brochures in the DeBenneville Room as you enter the church or see me for more information.

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



Elizabeth Kaufmann
Director of Religious Education

RE Calendar of Events

Youth Service: What's Holding You Back?

Sunday, Apr. 3

Taking risks seems to be a part of the teenage years. And while our teens' behavior can sometimes leave us shaking our heads, what can we learn from it? How does fear hold us back? When is it good to take a little risk? The teens will lead us in a meditation and a ritual for releasing those beliefs and ideas that hold us back from finding our truer selves. Students in grades 3 and up will remain in the sanctuary for the service. Regular RE classes will be held for students in PreK – Grade 2.

Family Morning Out

Friday, Apr. 8, 9:30 – 11 AM in the Gerber Room

Mothers (and fathers) are invited to bring their babies, toddlers, and preschoolers to the church for coffee, snacks, conversation, and play time.

OWL Classes

Sunday, Apr. 10 and Apr. 17 from 12:15 to 2:30 PM

Sessions for participating Middle School students will be held in the OWL Classroom on the second floor of the Chalice House. Please don't forget to eat a nutritious lunch before class. (OWL is the Our Whole Lives sexuality education program developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ.)

Easter/Earth Day Intergenerational Service

Sunday, Apr. 24

We will celebrate the joy of the Earth's renewal as a community with an Easter Intergenerational service. After the service, we will have a soap bar hunt for children up to grade 5 that will benefit our food pantry. Children can redeem the soap bars they find for a sweet treat.



April 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm		1	2 Spring PUC Trustees Meeting 9-10am Spring PUC Trustees Meeting 10-5pm
3 Sunday Service 10:30am OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm	4	5 Reading Beautification Board Mtg 6-8:30pm	6 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	7 Food Pantry 8-12pm	8 Mom's Morning Out 9:30-11am	9 Berks Bards Poetry & Painting 9:30-4pm
10 Sunday Service 10:30am Building Keepers Work Day 12:30-3:30pm OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm	11 Heart to Heart 7:30-9p,	12 Board Meeting 7-9pm	13 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm Lunch Bunch 12-1pm	14	15	16
17 Sunday Service 10:30am OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm MS-Building Keepers Meeting 12-1pm	18	19	20 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	21	22	23 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
24 Sunday Service 10:30am 	25	26	27 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	28	29	30

Sunday Service Schedule

10:30am every Sunday

Apr. 3 Youth Service: What's Holding You Back?

Elizabeth Kaufmann

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Apr. 10 "Carried on the River of Story"

Jen Gittings-Dalton

John Bruchac, Native American elder, wrote "Our stories remember... so we don't have to." Stories are one of the most ancient things we have inherited from our ancestors, and also perhaps the most powerful gifts we can offer our families and communities. The stories we choose to share define who we are and shape our reality and future to an incredible degree. Some stories are not even "ours," but a gift from the accumulated wisdom of other lives! Our talk will try to honor and awaken the power of story within us, on this spring morning in April.

Jen Gittings-Dalton and Stan Dalton. Jen is a college counselor and poet. She and her husband Stan, a member of the Exeter Friends Meeting, are long-time friends of the church and raised their children here. They've had the chance to hear stories from all over the world and from their own ancestral and family traditions, and only get hungrier for them as time goes on.

Apr. 17 Small Group Ministry Sunday

Ann Myers

Please join us for a celebration and discussion of our expanded Circle Group program. Various group leaders will speak of their experiences, both positive and challenging, and there will be time for questions and comments from members of the congregation. Participants in the service will include Nelson Simonson, Laurie Grelle, Rachel Gutzler, Mary Jo Weishampel, Brad Richardson and Ann Myers.

Are you interested in participating in a circle group? Registration forms will be available following the service.

Apr. 24 The Jesus Whom I Celebrate

Richard Speck

Unitarian Universalists sometimes are ambivalent about celebrating Easter which is the highest holiday in Christianity. We will explore the central figure of Jesus and lift up what is worthy to celebrate about this man who changed the world. We can rejoice in his life and work at this time of year



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