



# The Univoice

## Board election slate: Shelly Kauffman and two incumbents

By: Gene Goodwin

Berks UU Church members attending the Spring Congregational Meeting after church on Sunday, May 15, will elect three new members to our nine-member Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee, chaired for the second year in a row by Board Member Gene Fizz, is ready to present its slate of nominees: Shelley Kauffman and two incumbents Joe Plageman and Jeff Carson.

### 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](mailto: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 [mklumpp@duranco.org](mailto:mklumpp@duranco.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

Perhaps less known than her running mates, Shelley has impressed church leaders by her volunteer efforts in such vital projects as the recent service auction.

If no additional candidates are nominated from the floor, which has been the case in recent church elections, the congregation likely will accept the Nominating Committee slate by a vote that could be read as one of confidence in Joe Plageman and the Board he headed for the past two and a half years.

After the election new and old board members will get together to decide who among them will be president, vice president, secretary and treasurer for the next year. Jeff Woodward is the only current board member who chose not to run again after serving 3 years.

Here are some more biographical facts about the 3 nominees:

Shelley Kauffman has been a member of the church for 2 years. Shelley has been active in the pledge drive, the R.E. program, and our annual the service auction fund raiser this past March. The Service Auction this year raised more money than ever.

Shelley is an adjunct professor of geology at Albright College, where her husband, David Osgood, also teaches. They met while doing graduate work together at Univ. of Va, Charlottesville. She has a BS degree in Natural History from Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa. Shelley has also taught at Yale University from 1998 to 2000.

Her two children, Schyler and Adam, are students at the Montessori Day School where Shelley currently serves as President of the Board, as well as being past Vice-President and Secretary.

If she is elected, she will join Delite Hawk as the second woman on the nine member board. (cont. pg. 3)



# Splinters from the Board

By: Joe Plageman

Notes from the April FUUBC board meeting:

Treasurer, Ron Smith reported that the financial picture is good. Expenses appear to be normal. Mark Burton is presently looking into some water billing questions. John Weishampel is working on a health care cost tax rebate from the federal government.

Gene Fizz (nominating committee chair) reported that the nominees for Board of Trustees to be elected at the May congregational meeting are Shelley Kaufmann, Jeff Carson, and Joe Plageman. Shelley is an active member involved in RE, fundraisers, and the pledge drive. She has attended developmental offerings by the JPD. Jeff has agreed to another term on the board. He is a present board member who was appointed to fill a vacancy. He was the leader in our Threshold Congregation application process. Joe has also agreed to another term on the board. He was vice president for ½ year and board president for 2 ½ years. Additional nominees will be called for at the Congregational meeting.

Mike Mannix (VP) held a committee council meeting with a focus on next year's committee budgetary needs.

Doug Mealing is leading an effort to streamline our electronic communications. He is investigating methods to lower our costs and improve our abilities in email, website, file backup and other forms of electronic communication. He has also been working with Susan on some computer related issues.

Jeff Woodward (sec.) reported on behalf of Ann Myers for the Pledge drive that we will be very close to our goal of a 10% increase in pledge level over this fiscal year's pledges.

The board discussed the need to fill Meghan's role as Univoice editor.

The May congregational meeting agenda was finalized.

The board is also reviewing the current organizational chart. A few adjustments were recommended and will be reviewed again at the May meeting.

The Board approved a waiver of the Gerber Room rental fee for a member's request.

The Board discussed and approved the Unitarian Women's award, "Clara Barton Sisterhood Award" for a long time member.

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## The Circle Group Corner

### Success And Failure

By: Ann Myers

"If you don't accept failure as a possibility, you don't set high goals, you don't branch out, you don't try—you don't take the risk." —Rosalynn Carter

As the authors of *Heart to Heart* point out, for most of us success is almost always a positive experience, and failure a negative one. Yet often times what we first see as a negative thing turns out to be a blessing in disguise. Failure to get a desired job, for example, may push us toward a different and more satisfying career path, or an enriching temporary work experience. Or, later in life we may see that an earlier life goal that we failed to achieve may well have been a trap. Being unable to have children pushes some people toward generous involvement in the lives of children and adults in the larger community. Maybe real success is doing the best we can with whatever comes our way.

Ultimately as UUs we have to define success for ourselves, and we have to realize that external failures don't mean that we're failures as people. Being able to stay balanced, healthy and realistic in the face of both success and failure is a real gift. And, if we're honest, we know that many of our "successes" have been the result of luck, or of being at the right place at the right time. Likewise, some of our "failures" may have been caused by circumstances totally outside of our control.

My family growing up thought that working hard and getting an education were the very highest goals, to the detriment of developing social skills, doing community service and just having fun. These "protestant work ethic" values sometimes caused unhealthy competition among my siblings and me, and resulted in our case in a certain preoccupation with grades and academic success. All this made us less likely to take risks and try new things, since if we didn't achieve as our parents expected we felt we weren't measuring up. As an adult it has taken me a long time to rethink all of this!

What messages about success and failure did you receive growing up? How do you define success and failure now? Do you have examples of successes or failures that you're willing to share with your circle group?



Joe Plageman and his wife, Paula, have been married for 27 years. They live outside of Temple PA with their son Jason, 2 dogs, 2 cats and 3 goats. They also have a daughter, Jessica, who is living independently.



Joe and Paula Plageman

The Plagemans attended our UU church regularly in the late 80's and early 1990's and came back to us in 2006. Joe is finishing a 3 year board term and has decided that he would enjoy contributing to our community in this manner for another 3 years. He served as vice president for ½ year and has been our board president for the past 2 ½ years. He has gotten involved in many aspects of our church life. Included in this is his present position as Treasurer of the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention. He has attended developmental seminars offered by the JPD, the past three association Sundays and the JPD annual conference.

Joe says: "My active involvement in our community has provided me with a depth of spiritual development that I would not receive without it. I love what the board does, how it supports our mission and the effect we can have on the world around us. I plan on being a member of this community for the rest of my life; I have found my spiritual home here at FUUBC."

Later he comments: "My work for the congregation has also contributed immensely to my personal growth."

Joe smiles as he says: "Best of all, I have gotten to know most members and have developed many cherished friendships. The members of our congregation are the most loving, caring, beautiful people I have ever gotten to know in my life. I also have total admiration and love for our minister, Sandra, and feel a calling to help her in her ministry with us."



Jeff Carson and family

Jeff Carson: Jeff has been a member of the Board of Directors since his appointment July 2010. He has been a member of our congregation for just over a year. He was the leader in our Threshold Congregation application process.

Jeff is a scientist with GlaxoSmithKline. His wife, Laura, and their daughter, Amelia, live in Exeter Township.

Existing Board members and their term expiration dates:

Gene Fizz, Kent Gutzler, and Treasurer Ron Smith terms due to expire next year.

Vice President Mike Mannix, Delite Hawk, and Doug Mealing terms due to expire 2013.

## RE Calendar of Events

### Family Morning Out

**Friday, May 13, 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 Class

**Sunday, May 15 from 12:15 to 2:30 PM**

Session 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.)

### RE Sunday Intergenerational Service "Good News/Bad News" Sunday, May 15, 10:30 AM

Imagine that you have a beloved horse and that she has just run away. Is that good news or bad? Are you sure? This Chinese folk tale reminds us not to label things too quickly, because whether an event is wonderful or tragic sometimes changes according to the context. The story also reminds us that life is full of changes and surprises.

How can we meet life's twists and turns with hope? What does our UU tradition teach us about our power to create happy endings? This service will include a bridging ceremony for graduating high school seniors and a teacher appreciation moment.

**After the service, RE teachers are invited to a thank-you lunch on the 2nd floor of the Chalice House.**

### Youth ArtCon for Joseph Priestly District High School Students Friday, May 20 – Sunday, May 22

Teens aged 15-19 are invited to church for a weekend of creativity, art making, worship, friendship and fun! Registration is required—please contact Jessica Chadwick at [j\\_lives4art@gmail.com](mailto:j_lives4art@gmail.com) for more information.

### Circus Sunday May 29, 2011

On Memorial Day weekend, we will have a combined multi-age RE session looking at the life of Universalist PT Barnum and learning some circus tricks. If you are skilled in any circus arts, such as juggling or magic, please consider sharing your talents with the children for this lesson.

\* Please see page 6 for RE News

# May Volunteers

## Coffee Corps

5/1 VII Judd & Mindy Bortz  
 5/8 VIII Keith & Carol Orts  
 5/15 IX Fay Oxenreider  
 5/22 X Nadine Smet-Weiss & Mike Szajana  
 5/29 XI Joanne Just



## Greeters

5/1 Jane Nase  
 5/8 Linda McCormick  
 5/15 Carol Orts  
 5/22 Nadine Smet-weiss  
 5/29 Cindy Mock

## Caring Circle

Ann Meyers & Jeff

## Special Plate Collection

The March Special Plate Collection for Reading Risk Reduction brought in \$411.00

The next Special Plate Collection will be held May 22nd for our own UU Minister's Discretion Fund.

If you know of an organization that you'd like to see placed on the ballot at our May congregational meeting please contact Mike Szajna

## Adult Programs

### Reiki Share

Tuesday, May 17th, from 7-8:30 p.m., there will be a Reiki Share for any practitioner who has taken at least Level I Reiki training. It will be held in the Chalice House in the Teen Classroom (the farthest in the back). You may enter through the Chalice House entrance. Please let me know if you plan to attend so we can wait at the door for you. Massage tabs as well as aromatherapy and supportive music will be provided. RSVP to Joanna Groebel at [jvgroebel@gmail.com](mailto:jvgroebel@gmail.com).

### Moving the Bones

Saturday, May 14th from 9:30-12 at the church, you are invited to engage in an enlivening and deepening melding of modalities for self/other exploration: gentle movement, walking and sitting meditation, and timed writing as put forth by zen teacher and writer, Natalie Goldberg. All you need is a journal or something to write on, and clothing you can move comfortably in. Please RSVP to Joanna Groebel.

### Lunch Bunch

Wednesday, May. 18 noon-1pm all are welcome to bring a bag lunch. Let's talk about the many fights for freedom going on in the world. Carol and Keith Orts will lead it off with some remarks about their visit to Tunisia in April. We start at noon, but leave when you need to.



## 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](mailto:mklumpp@duranco.org) for further details. I am looking forward to your e-mail or phone call!

## 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

## Successful Week of Service

By: Carla Mannix

A special thanks goes out to the 30 volunteers who planned, cooked, folded, slept, and fed our Family Promise family last month. Ms. Torres and her three children were thrilled with the accommodations in the Kids Space, and the freedom they had to just relax. Thank you all for opening our church to practice hospitality to a family in transition.

Mark your calendars now for the next hosting week of Oct. 9 - 16.

In the meantime, please consider volunteering over the summer for the Berks Family Residential Center where families whose immigration status is in limbo are housed. This is the only INS facility in the country where immigrant families can stay together while they wait for processing. They cannot leave the premises and always welcome visiting groups to help pass the time. Some groups lead movie, game, or song nights; others provide craft materials or teach a skill. Last summer, the Social Justice Team organized the building of a raised bed garden for the residents to use. They loved it! This year they'll need seedlings and plants and supports. Contact Keith Orts at [kcorts25@verizon.net](mailto:kcorts25@verizon.net) if you have a talent or materials to share.

## Food Pantry

The next pantry date will be May 5.

This month we served a record number of people. The April food pantry served 197 households, 2 new families served, 347 children, 291 adults, and 52 senior citizens. Total people served were 690.

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](mailto:w2axsmith@comcast.net).



Scene from the Food Bank held on Apr. 7

# Religious Education

Dear Friends,

As our RE year moves closer to its conclusion on June 12, it's time to start thinking about our program for next year. Do you enjoy spending time with children? Doing arts and crafts? Sharing meaningful books and stories? Sharing your own spiritual journey? Acting out Bible stories or wisdom tales? If so, being an RE teacher might be for you.

Why Do You Teach Sunday School?

In answer to this question, Julia Smith, who teaches the Explorers (Upper Elementary school) class, said:

“What I've learned from the kids is so enriching to me. I love being surprised by their ideas about things. I love being surprised by what they know.”

Sounds pretty good, right? But isn't being an RE teacher a big commitment? What Does Being an RE Teacher at First UU Berks Involve?

We have a selected curriculum for each RE class, so teachers do not have to come up with the lesson plan (but they are encouraged to add their own person flair when appropriate). Sunday Helpers assist the teacher and support any child who may have extra needs on a particular day. Parents from each class are assigned to be Sunday Helpers 3-4 times a year. Classes begin around 10:45 AM and end between 11:30 and 11:45 AM.

Teachers usually end up teaching once or twice each month. One year, a teaching team broke the curriculum into units and each teacher did three weeks on and then had six weeks off from being the lead teacher. Teaching teams are welcome to come up with different ways of rotating the schedule.

In keeping with the UUA's Safe Congregation program, we conduct background checks (Criminal Record Check and PA Child Abuse History Clearance) of all teachers, in order to assure the safety of our children. If you have already had a background check for your job or another volunteer position within the last five years, you can just submit a copy of the forms.

What We Look for in An RE Teacher

We have RE classes for children in preschool up through high school. If you enjoy the unedited, honest wisdom and humor of the very young, then helping with PreK, Kindergarten, Grade 1 or 2 might be the best area for you. If you are interested in exploring and discussing ethics, religion and spirituality on a deeper level, than working with one of the older age groups might be the best fit.

When someone is asked to be an RE teacher, their first thought might be, “how can I teach about UUism when I am so new to the church myself?” Well, the good thing about teaching RE is you get to learn about Unitarian Universalism, world religions, and spiritual practices right alongside the children. And since we are a religion of deeds, not creeds, the quality of your interaction with the students is just as important as the information that you may impart. All of our RE classes involve discussion time, and sometimes providing a young person with a supportive listening ear is the best gift of all.

Blessings,

Elizabeth

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



Elizabeth Kaufmann

| May 2011  |                               |   |  |                            |                                   |   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sunday  | Monday                        | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday                   | Friday                            | Saturday  |
| 1   | 2                             | 3<br>Reading Beautification Board Mtg<br>6-8:30pm | 4<br>Choir Practice<br>7:15 – 8:30pm                     | 5<br>Food Pantry<br>8-12pm | 6                                 | 7<br>Painting Workshop for Men 9:30-4:30pm  |
| 8<br>Sunday Service 10:30am<br><br>OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm   | 9<br>Heart to Heart 7:30-9pm, | 10<br>Board Meeting 7-9pm                         | 11<br>Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm                       | 12                         | 13<br>Mom's Morning Out 9:30-11am | 14<br>Moving the Bones 9:30-1pm<br>Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm<br>Veterans for Peace 2-4pm |
| 15<br>Spring Congregational Meeting 11:45-1:15pm<br>Building Keepers Meeting 12-1pm<br>OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm | 16                            | 17<br>Reiki Share 7-8:30pm                        | 18<br>Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm<br>Lunch Bunch 12-1pm | 19                         | 20                                | 21  |
| 22<br>Sunday Service 10:30am<br>OWL Session 12:15-2:30pm  | 23                            | 24  | 25<br>Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm                       | 26                         | 27                                | 28<br>Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm  |
| 29<br>Sunday Service 10:30am  | 30                            | 31  |  |                            |                                   |   |

# Sunday Service Schedule

10:30am every Sunday

**May 1 “Slamming Open the Door: Personal Suffering and our UU Family”**

**Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno**

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno is an award-winning author and poet who received the Beatrice Hawley Award for her book of poetry, *Slamming Open the Door*, published by Alice James Books in April, 2009 and is the #9 best-seller for contemporary poetry in 2009. *Slamming Open the Door* is a collection of poems recounting the true story of the murder of her daughter, Leidy Bonanno, in 2003. Kathleen’s poetry has also been published in *Women’s Review of Books*, *Margie* and the anthology: *Beloved on the Earth: 150 Poems of Grief and Gratitude* which includes poems by Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver and Denise Levertov. In 2007, Kathleen received the Purple Ribbon Award from the Lutheran Settlement Home for her advocacy on behalf of domestic violence issues. She is a contributing editor of *The American Poetry Review* and teaches English and creative writing in Montgomery County.

**May 8 Mothers Day Service**

**Kent Gutzler, Vince O’Brien and Lisa Frank**

Celebrating all things mothering, from the unselfish love of our mothers, to mothering as creating, to the bounty and beauty of Mother Earth. Special music by Michelle Post.

**May 15 RE Sunday Intergenerational Service “Good News/Bad News”**

**Elizabeth Kaufman**

Imagine that you have a beloved horse and that she has just run away. Is that good news or bad? Are you sure? This Chinese folk tale reminds us not to label things too quickly, because whether an event is wonderful or tragic sometimes changes according to the context. The story also reminds us that life is full of changes and surprises. How can we meet life’s twists and turns with hope? What does our UU tradition teach us about our power to create happy endings? This service will include a bridging ceremony for graduating high school seniors and a teacher appreciation moment.

**May 22 “It Matters What We Do”**

**Howard N. Dana**

At age 50, Unitarian Universalism is at a spiritual and institutional crossroads. There is a simple solution to moving boldly into our bright future. Will we take it?

**May 29 Memorial Day**

**Tracie Greth**

Memorial Day began as a way to honor the Civil War dead. This service includes a bit of the history of Memorial Day, a simple ritual to honor our own dead, a brief talk about a boy soldier in the Civil War by Ruth Epler, and a few thoughts from Tracie about how UUs can find meaning in Memorial Day.



*Printed on recycled paper*



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