



# The Univoice

Sunday June 5th

Reverend Sandra Fees returns to our pulpit from  
her five month sabbatical!



## 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](mailto: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 [office@uuberks.org](mailto:office@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.

~Meghan Cocuzza, Editor

## Our Steeple In "Mortar" Danger

Joanne D. Just

The Building Keepers Committee wants to get your attention! Our steeple needs to be sealed by mortar NOW. All the rain this spring has made it imperative to rent a lift, hire a mortar contractor, and get estimates on new roofing, repairing woodwork, sealing windows, and restoring plaster.

Speaking of plaster, if you know of a good plaster contractor, please let Mark Burton or Fay Oxenreider know. When you come to church, look up at the DeBenneville window, and above the back wall behind the choir loft, to understand our concerns.

We realize these are difficult economic times. We need to ask for donations towards emergency "building keeping" repair work. For those of you who are able to give, please note "Building Keepers" on your donation and send it to the Church by the first week in June.

The Committee members Thank You! Mark Burton, Chair; Fay Oxenreider, David & Winnie Alcorn, Brad Richardson, Paul Haggard, Frank Wilder, John Showalter, and Joanne Just

## From Sandra's Study

# How are things going?

Rev. Sandra Fees

As you can imagine, I return from sabbatical with stories and thoughts to share. I traveled halfway around the world and also spent time at home. I enjoyed time with family and friends (some who I had not seen in several years) and also spent considerable time in solitude. I meditated, jogged, read, and rested. I had the chance to explore new spiritual practices, cook more often, and mulch my flower beds. And, of course, I've still done some of the less exciting stuff of life too – cleaned the house, paid the bills, filed my taxes, washed the dishes. In the coming weeks and months, you'll hear more about my sabbatical experiences and reflections.



But the truth is, I am most eager to hear about you. I want to know what you have been doing these past few months. I have missed you. Some of you are planning weddings and others are awaiting the arrival of a child. Some have started new jobs, traveled extensively, retired, or started a new adventure of another kind. Some of you have experienced job difficulties, serious health issues, and relationship losses. For some, life may be humming along with few changes. Whatever is happening in your life, I want to hear from you. I want to know how things are going. What's on your mind? How is your spiritual life? Your work life? Your family? What has your experience at church been like? What are your hopes and dreams for your relationship with our religious community? What have you learned?

I hope you'll send me notes and emails to let me know. Also feel free to visit me on Facebook, to call me, or to schedule a time to get together. The sabbatical committee has arranged something called "Sandra's Sabbatical Log" where you can share your thoughts and opinions about how things have gone during my absence. You may contact a member of the committee to make an entry.

Meanwhile, I am glad to be back and look forward to seeing you.

Yours in love and faith,

*Sandra*

## Splinters from the Board

By: Joe Plageman

Splinters from the board, May 2011

The board reviewed and approved the proposed budget with a few adjustments and made some final preparations for the Congregational meeting.

We reviewed the Personnel Policy Manual and found it to be very thorough and up to date. We also discussed the Staff compensations and benefits.

Our annual board retreat will be held on Saturday, Aug. 13 at Gene Fizz's home. We will be working on long range planning and developing our next 5 year plan. (2013-2017). We have evaluated the progress on our present plan and it has turned out to be a bit too aggressive in many areas.



*Scenes from the 2011 Service Auction*

# Spring Congregational Meeting, 2011 Highlights

By: Joe Plageman

37 Members attended this year's spring congregational meeting. 27 were necessary for a quorum.

Vice President, Mike Mannix presented the Treasurer's report for Treasurer Ron Smith who was away at a reunion.

This report highlighted that the financial support of our congregation is ongoing and strong. It was noted that funds that are donated for special purposes are carried over into the next budget year, but that for generally budgeted items, budget monies not spent are rolled into the general fund. Fund raising efforts include The Service Auction, Script cards, and Coffee hour donations. The building committee has had some high cost expenses and generous donations have helped to offset the cost of some of these repairs. Collections for the special plate collections to date this year are: \$4674.46. Concerns about the budget are a 7.55% shortfall on pledges, and structural issues with the church itself. There was a plea to have everyone who pledged to pay their pledge no later than 6/30/2011, the end of this fiscal year.

The Chalice House Loan balance as of 4/30/11 was \$50,448. The CC account presently has a balance of \$20,789 and we try to maintain 6 months worth of payments in this account. Any amount of this is applied directly to principle. There are outstanding pledges on both the original capital campaign and the extended campaign.

President, Joe Plageman commented that any committee could apply for a Chalice Lighter's grant for a project or growth oriented goal and that the board would be happy to assist in this process. He gave a review of the past two Chalice Lighter's grants that we have recently received.

## **Social Justice Team (SJT)**

Presented by Mike Mannix for Carla Mannix. Social Justice Activities include: Food Bank, Special Plate Collections, Family Promise, PRIDE, Family Residential Center, and Advocacy. Our church will sponsor the next Family Promise group the week of Oct. 9- Oct. 16. For the year 2012, the dates scheduled include 1/15-1/22, 3/25-4/1, & 9/16-9/23. There is no Chairperson for the Social Justice Team and one is needed. Carol Gonzalez has volunteered to be the SJT secretary. There was an approved vote to move the Special Plate Collection for the Minister's Discretionary Fund to coincide with Sandra's return on June 5 and to move the Food Bank special plate Collection to May 22.

## **Sandra's Sabbatical**

General comments were made by President Joe Plageman and solicited from the floor in regards to our experiences during Sandra's sabbatical. It was noted that it was generally a positive experience and that everyone was anxiously awaiting her return.

## **Adoption of 2011-2012 Fiscal Year Budget**

The budget committee presented the board approved budget for vote. One note is that the amount for unrealized pledge funds was increased from 5% to 7.5% to more accurately reflect the recent actual amount. Much discussion occurred and some members expressed grave concerns about the income increases budgeted from fund raisers, in particular the auction. Some expense items were also questioned and discussed. The 2011-2012 budget was approved with 30 Yes votes, 4 no votes, and 3 abstentions. The new budget will be posted on the board bulletin board in the Gerber Room.

## **Election of New Board Members**

The board terms of Jeff Woodward, Jeff Carson and Joe Plageman ended with this meeting. Three new possible board members were presented by the nominating committee as candidates for approval. Shelley Kaufman, Jeff Carson, & Joe Plageman. There were no additional nominations from the floor and the slate of three were approved. It was noted that for the 2011-2012 Church Year, Ron Smith has agreed to be Board President, Mike Mannix will be Vice President, & Joe Plageman will be treasurer.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:17pm

## June Volunteers

### Coffee Corps

6/5 II John & Mary Jo Weishampel  
 6/12 III Joe & Paula Plageman  
 6/19 IV Walter & Wilfriede Axsmith  
 6/26 V Rick Salafia & Leigh Kane

### Greeters

6/5 Cindy Mock  
 6/12 Megan Stubblebine  
 6/19 Judy Aubrey  
 6/26 Vince O'Brien



### Caring Circle

Linda McCormick

## Murray Grove News Update

Grove Gatherings at Murray Grove

**Musical/Artistic Coffee Houses:** Every second Wed. of the month from 7-9pm - \$10 per person. Bring your favorite appetizers and/or desserts to share, and BYOB.

**June 8** – Marafanyi: West African Drum, Dance and Song – artistic expression combining rhythm, movement, song and spoken word in poetic motion.

**July 13** – Tom Parella: Rock, Country, R&B, Latin, Folk & Jazz. Kindly RSVP at [murraygrove@murraygrove.org](mailto:murraygrove@murraygrove.org).

**Drum and Dance Fest**, July 15-17: Express yourself creatively and spiritually! 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 day-pass. Visit [murraygrove.org](http://murraygrove.org) or call for the details.

Heritage Week at Murray Grove, July 31-Aug. 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. 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.

## Special Plate Collection

The April Special Plate Collection for Children’s Home of Reading brought in \$451.00.

The next Special Plate Collection will be held Sunday, June 5 for the Minister’s Discretion Fund. This Special Collection was originally Scheduled for June 12th but was changed to honor Sandra as she is returning from her Sabbatical on the 5th.

The results of the Special Plate vote held at the May Congregational Meeting are below. The top 5 vote-getters will receive a Special Plate Collection on dates from September 2011 through January 2012.

Recovery Shop: 36  
 Kids Cafe Programs Greater Berks Food Bank: 32  
 Spectrum: 26  
 Campeaceworks: 23  
 Bridge Of Hope Berks County: 21  
 Mary’s Shelter: 20  
 Habitat For Humanity Of Berks County: 17  
 Concern Special Needs Fund: 17  
 Emma’s Place Education Center: 17  
 Wood To Wonderful: 11

## Adult Programs

### Reiki Share

On Tuesday, June 21st, 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...promptness is very much appreciated. Massage tables as well as aromatherapy and supportive music will be provided. RSVP to Joanna Groebel by email at [jvgroebel@gmail.com](mailto:jvgroebel@gmail.com).

### Lunch Bunch

Tuesday, June 14 noon-1pm all are welcome to bring a bag lunch. This will be Sandra’s first lunch bunch back from sabbatical, so please mark this date on your calendar.



## 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.

## The Circle Group Corner

### Friendship

By: Ann Myers

Friendship, our chosen connection with other people, is one of the things that make life worth living. Most of us have many different kinds of relationships with people whom we call friends: we know people from school, work or church, we know people within our own families and extended families, and there are people we meet in other situations with whom we form a bond. Many of us now have friends on Facebook as well—if only we could find them all! Facebook has created a whole new world of social interaction, a different way of keeping up with what is happening in the lives of others. Facebook aside, however, if we're really lucky we will know a small number of people in the course of our lives who qualify as true friends, those with whom we can share all aspects of our lives at a deep level without fear. If we have partners in life, we would hope that they would be numbered among that small circle of our best friends.

In addition to Jeff Woodward, a friend who later became a best friend and a husband, I have another best friend Judy whom I met when I was ten years old. We went to high school and college together, and remained in touch after that time even though we were not close geographically. When a teaching position opened up

at Albright in the 1970s, Judy applied for it and was hired, so we worked together for over 30 years and now are retired together. We walk, talk and share our lives literally on a daily basis. I consider her friendship to be one of the major blessings of my life.

Loving and supporting each other is certainly one of the goals and benefits of friendship. The authors of Heart to Heart suggest using the "Loving Kindness Meditation" as we try to nurture ourselves and our friends. At any time during the day you can say to yourself:

"May I be filled with loving kindness.  
May I be well.  
May I be peaceful and at ease.  
May I be happy."

Then, substitute the name of a friend for the "I," and finally, substitute "we" as you think of a group or a family you are part of. Praying for ourselves and our friends is one way of enhancing and deepening our ties to each other.

For our Circle Groups in June, please think about the role of friendship in your life. Have you had good friends? Are you seeking better relationships with some friends? What are some of the problems you may have encountered in maintaining friendships?

## Food Pantry

The next pantry date will be June 2.

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).



Scenes from the food pantry held Apr. 11

# Religious Education

Dear Friends,

Summer is nearly upon us and so, on June 12, we will be wrapping up the regular RE curricula that the students have been working on since September. We will have activities for kids the first three Sundays in June, a quiet July, followed by a three-part group RE series in August.

RE teachers are being recruited for next year as well as two to three RE committee members. Curricula for next year will be selected in late June. Any input that you and your kids have on what you would like to see in next year's program is greatly appreciated. Email me your ideas at [esmjkfamily5@gmail.com](mailto:esmjkfamily5@gmail.com).

During the summer as our RE program regroupes for next year, you might want to check out KidSpirit Online (<http://kidspiritonline.com/>) For the last several years, young writers and artists (ages 11-15) have been sharing their ideas in KidSpirit Magazine, an ad-free quarterly that explores spirituality, values and life's big questions in an inclusive atmosphere. KidSpirit Online combines this remarkable magazine content with a growing community on the Web!

A description from the website:

You can become a member and participate in forums on a wide range of topics. Start a group and, if you are over thirteen, create your own KidSpirit profile. Teachers, parents and youth leaders will find great resources on our site and experience the inspiring efforts of our young contributors and impressive adult guest writers.

Kid Spirit is a global coed online magazine and community for deep thinkers with big ideas. Our community is a place where members actively express their views and engage each other through groups and comments. The quarterly magazine is a unique forum for kids to tackle age-old questions that affect us all. We want to help the young people of the world show their colors and share each other's cultures, art, beliefs, ethics and values. Our goal is to encourage varied perspectives and contribute to greater mutual understanding in our lives and our world.

Each issue of the magazine has a thought-provoking theme that draws in readers and urges further exploration. We invite submissions in the form of poetry, artwork and articles from readers around the world.

Thank you to church member Wendy Luckenbill and Cory Ness, DRE of UUCY for reminding me of this excellent resource.

Happy Summer,

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



Elizabeth Kaufmann  
Director of Religious Education

June 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	2 Food Pantry 8-12pm	3	4
5 Sunday Service 10:30am	6 Heart to Heart 7:30-9pm,	7 Reading Beautifica- tion Board Mtg 6-8:30pm Intro to Reiki 7-8:30pm	8 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	9	10	11 Yoga Dance Workshop 9:30-3:30pm  Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
12 Sunday Service 10:30am  Process Painting Workshop 6:30-8:30pm	13	14  Board Meeting 7-9pm  Lunch Bunch 12-1pm	15 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	16	17	18
19 Sunday Service 10:30am  Building Keepers Meeting 12-1pm	20	21 Reiki Share 7-8:30pm	22 Choir Practice 7:15 – 8:30pm	23	24	25 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
26 Sunday Service 10:30am	27	28	29	30		

# Sunday Service Schedule

10:30am every Sunday

**June 5** Kindle \* Amichai \* Really?

**Rev. Sandra Fees**

**Music Directed by Dan Matz, Susan Pena on Piano**

**Choir performance: "Love is the Doctrine of this Church"**

In her first Sunday back after sabbatical, Rev. Fees shares theological reflections and discoveries in this three-part sermon.

**June 12** A Native Flower

**Rev. Sandra Fees**

**Music Directed by Dan Matz**

In February, Rev. Fees visited Unitarian congregations in Northeast India. There is an indigenous tradition which echoes Transcendentalist tenets. Come and learn about what this native flower has to offer us theologically. We will also celebrate the Unitarian Universalist Flower Communion. Please bring a flower to share.

**June 19** "The Narrow Ridge"

**Rev. Sandra Fees**

**Music Directed by Dan Matz**

Jewish theologian Martin Buber described the genuine encounter with others and God as the narrow ridge between abysses. How can we remain poised on that ridge? What can tug us back into relationship when we falter?



**June 26** Struck by Grace

**Rev. Kathy Seitz Bortner**

**Music Directed by Dan Matz**

For Unitarian Universalists reason, conscience and free will are foundational to the way we make our way in the world. Does that mean we can expect no grace. Is Grace unavailable to or lost to us? Rev. Bortner serves two quarter-time positions as Associate Minister at the UU Congregation of York and Consulting Minister at UUs of Gettysburg.



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**First Unitarian Universalist**

**Church  
of Berks County**

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