



# The Univoice

Congregation elects new Board members, adopts budget based on increased pledges  
by Gene Goodwin

The Berks County PA UU congregation at its Spring meeting on Sunday, May 17, elected three new Board members, adopted a \$215,144 balanced budget for next fiscal year and chose four recipients for special Sunday plate collections next Fall.

A "quorum" of 43 of the 175-member congregation took part in the well-run 50-minute meeting.

The new Board members who begin their three-year terms in June are Karen Nierle, Gene Fizz and Dr. Ron Smith. They join continuing Board members Joe Plageman, president; Doug Mealing, secretary; Jeanne Hey, treasurer; Miryha Thibault, Mike Mannix and Jeff Woodward. Board members being replaced are Norman Block, who served as president for the first year and a half of his three-year term; Richard Bromley, and Cindy Mock.



New Board Members: Karen Nierle, Dr. Ron Smith, and Gene Fizz

## Church Office Hours:

The church office is open Tuesday through Friday from 12-5pm, but please call ahead to ensure access.

Please contact the office manager 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 [univoice@uuberks.org](mailto:univoice@uuberks.org). You may also put typewritten submissions in our mailbox in the deBenneville Room.

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 email of contacts.

~Meghan Klumpp, Editor

The budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year beginning July 1 is based on a 7.7 percent increase in pledge income from \$147,735 to \$159,135, to be contributed by 113 pledging units compared to the 104 units in the current budget.

The new budget provides modest salary increases for our minister and religious education director. It also supports a part-time music director and a 25-hours-per-week office administrator, both new positions now being advertised. Besides money from pledges, the new budget anticipates about \$56,000 in additional income from such sources as plate collections, building rentals, special fund raisers (like the service auction, bake sales and breakfasts), grocery scrip sales, and grants from the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention.

The congregation voted, subject to Board approval, to hold special Sunday plate collections this Fall for our minister's discretionary fund and our church's monthly food pantry, both of which have experienced increased demand from the poor and hungry of our community. Although the food bank is supported by a \$1,500 item in the current as well as next year's budget, the minister's fund is built entirely from plate collections and donations.

The vote also recommended that two outside non-profits to benefit from a special plate collection this Fall: Mentors for Berks Youth and Olivet Boys and Girls Club of Reading and Berks County.

# Sandra's Study

## Rev. Sandra Fees

June signals the arrival of summer. And for me, that means the approach of a time spent in ways that break my normal patterns of ministry. Beginning at the end of June and into July and early August, it's a time for rest, play, and also to stretch myself intellectually and spiritually in new ways.

For two weeks, I will be attending Summer Academy classes at Lancaster Theological Seminary, where I earned my Master of Divinity Degree. This will include some short courses on alternative worship, postmodern worship, and theology and film. I also plan to take a week's retreat at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Retreat Center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. It's a great place to explore my creativity and be spiritually refreshed. I look forward to the beautiful grounds, Quaker-style worship, and home-cooked nutritious meals.



I'll use study leave time to do discernment and planning for the next church year. This includes reflection on overall ministry goals and priorities. I'll also be planning, reading, and researching to create the fall and winter worship calendar and adult education programs.

The rest of the time, I hope to learn some new knitting skills, something practical like how to knit socks, which is the rage among knitters. That may even move me from a beginner to an advanced beginner, even an intermediate! I expect to enjoy some yoga dance classes. And I'll be officiating at the wedding of a friend's daughter in the Poconos in mid-July. Plus there will be all the summertime gatherings with family and friends, music festivals in the city, lazy days on the porch watching the grass grow, and lots and lots of reading. Weren't summers made for reading?

There will, no doubt, be much, much more, including, I hope, some unexpected surprises, joys, and discoveries.

Yours in faith and love,

*Sandra*

Sandra's Summer Schedule:

June 22-August 9: Study Leave/Vacation

During that time, I am available for pastoral emergencies.

### Simonsons and Alcorn to represent us at GA

Nelson and Caroline Simonson and David Alcorn will serve as our delegates to the UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City starting June 24, the Board has announced.

And Carol Orts will be our forth delegate, but only in casting our third vote for UUA top officers, since she will not be able to attend. Our minister, the Rev. Sandra Fees, will also not be attending this 2009 GA and will cast her minister's vote for president in absentia.

## Needed: \$2,000 donor to match PUC gift to improve building

If you have a spare \$2,000, you might want to take advantage of a matching gift from the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention and spend \$4,000 on some special improvement(s) to our building in the coming year.

Our Building Keepers Committee has these seven suggestions for how this money could be spent (explained in a handout at the congregational meeting May 17):

1. Replace flat roof above deBenneville room with a sloping roof: This might stop the leaks whenever water collects up there, and make the space below more suitable as the gathering place just inside our new main entrance for Sunday worshippers and visitors. Cost? Estimated \$4,000.
2. Replace concrete on ramp on right of building exterior: The surface has been damaged by inadvertent use of salt in the past, and although we now use only snow/ice melt that does not damage concrete, contractors feel the only way we can keep the surface from starting to crack and break away is to shave it off and replace it with new cement. This ramp will continue to be the only access for wheelchairs when the building addition is opened this fall. Cost? Estimated \$2,000.
3. Noise problem in Gerber Room: Although the building keepers are not certain what to do about the poor acoustics in this room, a recent consultant recommends hanging drapes and other materials. While this problem requires more study, our committee hopes to come up with a solution shortly. Cost? Estimated \$1,000.
4. Paint iron gate and fence in front of Church: Our committee feels that the old paint needs to be removed before new paint can be put on, which may require the services of an outside contractor. Cost? Estimated \$1,000.
5. Stained glass windows need to be reglazed: Most of the stained glass windows have lost glazing in spots, and our committee feels that as pieces of glazing start to fall out, water will be allowed in and endanger the entire glazing surface. Also the window sash of the deBenneville room needs to be completely replaced and the large stained glass window near southwest wall in the sanctuary needs to be repaired. Cost? Estimated \$750.
6. Rain gutters: The rain gutters along the sides of the building are starting to sag and rust, and some sections are missing entirely. Cost? Estimated \$1,500.
7. Heat tape in downspouts around building: Some of the existing heat tape on our downspouts is not working, which could result in water damage during winter months. Cost? Estimated \$200.

## Progress continues with new building construction



*In the final phase of our building project, the deBenneville Room is being transformed into a new entryway for the church. Kate Diller, Student Minister, is pictured in the “before” picture and the new archway is “in progress” in the other photo.*

## Jack's Blessing Ceremony



*The Bortz's: Judd and Mindy with children Hailey, Ethan, and baby Jack. Baby Jack's blessing with Rev. Sandra Fees on May 10th.*

Dear Friends,

Summer is almost here! As you read this, high school and college students will be graduating, and younger students will be counting the days until summer vacation begins. Our RE staff will also be breathing a sigh of relief and looking ahead to some less hectic Sunday mornings in the summer.

We at First UU Berks are very lucky to have such a dedicated volunteer staff of teachers, Sunday helpers, and RE committee members. To all of you who worked so hard to keep the RE program going as I got up and running as DRE, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you!

Over the summer, we will be meeting to select curricula for next year. If you are interested in participating in this process or have some input to share, please let a member of the RE committee or me know. What do you want your child to be learning about in Sunday School?

Also, I want to remind everyone that ours is a cooperative Sunday School. At least one parent or guardian from each family needs to participate in our program at some point during the year. Some of the ways you can be a part of our RE program include:

- Serving as lead teacher, classroom assistant, substitute teacher, or Youth Group advisor
- Being a member of the RE committee
- Assisting with arts & crafts for holidays/special events
- Helping to catalogue and organize books in the RE library
- Helping to organize new RE spaces in Chalice House
- Providing or organizing music for children's worship
- Sharing one of your interests or talents during a special program or class

Nursery care will continue to be provided every Sunday throughout the summer for children ages 6 and younger. Some special activities are being planned for a few Sundays in July and August, so that our UU kids can continue to feel welcome at church during the summer months. Look for details in the July Univoice,

Peace,

*Elizabeth*

RE Committee  
 Lisa Wilder, Chair  
 Emily McNulty  
 Susan Stewart  
 Kent Gutzler  
 Tracy Brant  
 Celeste Galanos, Youth Representative



*Elizabeth Kaufmann*  
 Director of Religious Education

## Upcoming RE Events

**June 7:**  
 Religious Education Celebration Sunday  
 The RE Committee, RE teachers, and their families are invited to come at 9:15 am to enjoy a special breakfast as a thank-you for all of the hard work throughout the year. RE volunteers will be acknowledged during the service. This is the last day of formal RE classes for the summer, but stay tuned for some special kids activities in July and August.

**June 14:**  
 Blessing of the Animals Intergenerational Service  
 All are invited to share in a celebration of our animal friends! You are welcome to bring your well-behaved and portable pets to church. If your animal friend does not travel well, bring a picture or drawing.



## Adult Programs

### Getting To Know UU with Rev. Fees

**Sunday June 7 from 12-1:**

Members, friends, and visitors are invited to gather for informal conversation with our minister to learn about the church and Unitarian Universalism and to get to know others in the community. We will gather in the sanctuary.

### Centering Prayer

**Wednesdays 6:30 - 7:30:**

The centering prayer circle gathers weekly on Wednesday evenings for a time of shared stillness.

### Lunch Bunch with Rev. Fees

**Tuesday June 16 from 12-1:**

The Lunch Bunch meets monthly over a brown bag lunch for fellowship and a focused topic.

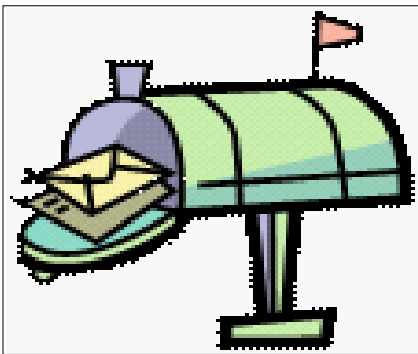
### Prayer Shawl Ministry

**Saturday June 13 from 10-12:**

The Shawl Ministry knits and crochets shawls for members and friends of our spiritual community who are experiencing a significant life event—an illness, birth, or death. Beginners are welcome.

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## Directory Updates



### UU Books

Our June book will be *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman. This award winning author was interviewed recently on NPR. *The Graveyard Book* is written for young and old alike. Young adults and older children are welcome to join us on June 14th. We meet on the second Sunday of every month at 9:15 at the church. Please contact Rachel Gutzler or Cindy Mock for more information.

# This Month's Volunteers

## Coffee Corps

June 7, Group VIII – Carol and Keith Orts, Vince Chiles & Deb Kemmerling, Paul Haggard, Robin Lucas, Jane Rohrbach, Rob Schaeffer and Susan Stewart, Delite Hawk.

June 14, Group IX – Fay Oxenreider, Henriette Alban, Ruth Epler, Karen Nierle, Michele Post, John Showalter, Ron Smith and Kelly Wiegand.

June 21, Group X – Nelson and Caroline Simonson, Kent & Rachel Gutzler, Nadine Smet-Weiss, Mike Szajana, Sam Tyson and Gene Fizz, Meghan Klumpp & Duran Cocuzza.

June 28, Group I – Joanne Just, Joan & Richard Bromley, Barbara & Greg Burdan, Raydell Hymon, Kim McGarvey & Doug Wray.

### Ushers

- 6/7 L. Gerson M. Thibault
- 6/14 K. Orts J. Showalter
- 6/21 F. Oxenreider R. Lucas
- 6/28 M. Szajna S. Tyson



## Special Plate Collection

The June Special Plate Collection will be held Sunday, June 21st and will benefit Silent Witness PA.

Silent Witness PA (SWPA) is an organization of gay and straight allies dedicated to providing a non-confrontational buffer between those who condemn others based on their sexual orientation or identity and those they condemn. We provide visual protection from protesters at events such as Pridefests using our bodies and rainbow umbrellas as shields, often acting as escorts for those who would like to attend such events.

*Joe Plageman, Board President, and Kimberly McGarvey, Social Justice Chair, along with a few dozen others from UU Berks and area UU churches, served as Silent Witnesses recently at Albright College where Judy Shepard spoke. Her son Matthew was killed in a hate crime because he was gay.*

## From the Pantry

We served 509 people from 147 families in May!

As the building renovations continue, extra furniture has been housed in the Gerber Room. With the help of Ruthie Epler, Joe Plageman, John Showalter, Paul Haggard, Albert Davis, and Frank Wilder we were able to rearrange the incredibly heavy sofas and chairs in the Gerber Room and continue to serve our neighbors. Thank you to all those involved in another successful month with our pantry.

Our next pantry will be held on June 4th. Some of our volunteers are away for the summer. Please consider giving an hour or so anytime between 8:30 and noon on the first Thursday of every month. Heavy lifting is not required, especially later in the morning during the distribution. For more information please contact Liz Eshelman (610) 775-3751 or [eshelman@epix.net](mailto:eshelman@epix.net)

# June 2009



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Choir Practice 7:30-9pm	4 Food Pantry 8:30am-12	5	6
7 Getting To Know UU 12-1pm	8	9 Board Meeting 7-10pm	10 Choir Practice 7:30-9pm	11	12	13 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10-12pm
14 UU Books 9:15-10:15am	15	16 Lunch Bunch 12-1:30pm	17	18	19 Drum Circle 7-8pm	20
21 Building Keepers Meeting 12-1pm	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

See the last page for the Sunday service schedule.

# Sunday Service Schedule

## June 7 The Perfect Teacher

Rev. Sandra Fees, Student Minister Kate Diller, and the First UU Choir, directed by Tracy Blunt

We have many teachers throughout our lives. What makes a teacher great? What do they give us? How can they help – and harm? In this service, we will recognize our religious education teachers.

## June 14 Animal Blessing Ceremony – for All Ages

Rev. Sandra Fees and Elizabeth Kaufmann, Director of Religious Education

This morning we follow in the time-honored tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, and join in celebrating our animal companions for the joy, beauty, and comfort they bring to the world. You are invited to bring your well-behaved pets, who must be on a leash or in a cage, or to bring a photo or symbol of him or her, to be blessed.



## June 21 A Change of Pace

As summer begins, we often experience a shift in our daily pace. Join us in exploring how the summer solstice marks this change and ushers in a time of power, joy, and reckoning. This morning we share in a child dedication ceremony.



## June 28 “Keeping Hope alive during difficult times”

–Vince Chiles

This service will take a look at maintaining faith during times of uncertainty. Faith in ourselves, our fellows, our futures and even the divine can be challenging if not impossible in times of crisis. This service will explore finding the opportunity that exists in crisis and how to keep hope alive.

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### First Unitarian Univesalist Church of Berks County

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[www.uuberks.org](http://www.uuberks.org)

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