



The Univoice

Board wrestles with \$80,000 shortfall to pay loans for Chalice House project

By Gene Goodwin

Should we borrow money from the UUA, and/or from church members at a lower interest rate, or seek additional pledges from members in a new mini capital campaign?

That sort of sums up the principal ideas from UU Berks Board members reacting to the authoritative report that our church will have to come up with additional finances to pay off the bank loan for the Chalice House project after all pledges are paid by the end of this fiscal year.

Board President, Joe Plageman, presented his estimate of an \$80,000 shortfall to the Board of Directors at its monthly meeting on Oct. 13. His report showed total costs for breaking through the wall and renovating two floors of the Chalice House amounted to almost \$380,000. Pledges totaled around \$339,000. But, because we had to borrow almost \$185,000 to pay bills before pledge money became available, interest costs have to be added to the shortfall.

The Board reviewed a copy of a letter to be sent to all who pledged to the capital campaign for the now-completed addition we rededicated on Sunday, Oct. 18. The letter, drafted by Barry Groebel, a member who is managing the finances for the building project, will inform pledgers how they stand and urge those who still owe money to pay their pledges as soon as possible.

In a brainstorming session, Board members wondered aloud whether congregation members might be willing to loan money to the church at low or no interest. That led to questions about whether we might also seek loans from the Unitarian Universalist Association or other sources.

Also suggested was a “more democratic” approach by going back to the membership through another pledge campaign.

Board members will continue to search for possible solutions for discussion at their next meeting Nov. 10. Ideas are welcome from all members.

It is not unusual for UU churches to go into debt to finance major capital improvements. And, as Barry has noted, doing so spreads the burden of payment to new and future church members. Although coping with debt may be difficult for a congregation with many members who have avoided large deficits in their personal lives, old-time UUs can recall cases in which debt helped strengthen congregations as they pulled together to pay it off.

Church Office Hours:

The church office is open from 10am-3pm, Monday through Friday, 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 to schedule an appointment. Monday is Rev. Fees day off.

Univoice Submission Guidelines

Email your 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 the mailbox in Chalice House 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 email of contacts.

--Meghan Klumpp, Editor

45 attend Association Sunday in Lancaster

The Rev. Sandra Fees counted 45 Berks UU members in attendance at “Association Sunday” in Lancaster October 4.

She made her count as members of each of the eight participating UU churches were asked to stand in the vast auditorium of McCaskey East High School. Our minister was pleased that our representation equaled that of the larger Harrisburg church and was surpassed only by the host church.

From Sandra's Study Rev. Sandra Fees

Rethinking My Local Commitments

For three years, I have served on the board of Berks Connections/ Pre-Trial Services (BCPS), this past year serving as Vice President. I have learned a lot about the organization and have had a positive influence on the board's process and the overall organization.

One of the most eye-opening parts of my time on the board was a tour of the Berks County Prison, which both saddened and angered me. My own assessment is that the prison administration focuses primarily on safety and security. This makes organizations like BCPS and its programs to assist prisoners that much more needed. Our congregation has supported this work by taking collections for BCPS as part of our special month plate collections, and we have participated in their annual Holiday Gift Drive for children of people who are incarcerated. We'll be participating in the Gift Drive again this year. BCPS is well run with excellent staff and an excellent board. However, I have chosen not to renew my term on the BCPS board at this time.

Instead, I'm taking some time, perhaps a few months or more, to consider and explore where to

commit my time and energy going forward. There are so many worthy causes and organizations – children's rights, nonviolence, marriage equality, assistance for senior citizens, climate change, prison reform, multiculturalism and anti-racism, animal rights, and so much more. And I consider it an integral part of my responsibility and commitment as your minister to be engaged in the local community. But how? The challenge is to decide how best to be involved. What is a moral imperative for me? For our congregation? What speaks to our values and passions as UUs? What is most worthy of my commitment?

It is never far from my consciousness that our congregation is rooted not only in a diverse urban environment, but also in a predominately Latino neighborhood. At a recent retreat of the Joseph Priestley District's Growth Committee (I continue to serve as co-chair), we invited Paula Cole Jones to talk with us about Multiculturalism, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression work among Unitarian Universalists. Paula is a life-long member of All Souls Church in Washington, DC, and co-chairs the JPD Journey Toward Wholeness transformation team. The Growth Committee has agreed



that anti-racism anti-oppression work is essential to our growth as a movement and in our congregations, and that, as the group awarding growth grants, we need to be educated in this area. So one of the things that is on my mind and heart is not only how our congregation engages in this work but how I can become more involved and educated about issues of diversity and multiculturalism in our local community. This seems to me to be an outgrowth of our congregation's own work to become a Welcoming Congregation and to "Weave the Fabric of Diversity."

I look forward to exploring the possibilities for my future involvement in the areas of anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism or elsewhere. As I do, I welcome your suggestions and thoughts.

Yours in love and faith,

Sandra

OUR NEW FACILITIES: VISIBLE STEWARDSHIP

Jeff Woodward, Stewardship Chair

By the time you read this, we will have dedicated our new unified church facility, and will have thus begun a new chapter in our church's life. It is a time of gratitude for all those who have so worked on and contributed financially to making this project happen. Our new physical space is stewardship in action, and is evidence of the way we care for and nurture our spiritual family and our surrounding community.

Our expanded facilities will serve many purposes. We can now meet and welcome visitors and prospective members in a variety of settings that are more conducive to communication and sharing. We can afford access for disabled members and visitors to all areas of our church. And our new, more spacious offices will give our Minister and staff more comfortable and work friendly spaces. For many, however, the most striking feature of the improvements is the new, safe and attractive learning environments for the children and young people in our RE program.

The new facilities are the physical realization of our long-standing commitment to mentor our young people in the Unitarian Universalist tradition. Our RE program aims to be a transformative experience. It offers our children a valuable opportunity to explore who they can be as spiritual and social people, individually and in community. It acquaints them with our UU religious traditions, as well as the traditions of other religions. And, most importantly, it allows them to explore the challenges of living an ethical life. Our young people learn our UU principles that call on us to see others as important, to accept and treat all others with respect, to stand for the

right of conscience for all peoples, and to work for a peaceful, fair and free world. The Religious education program aims to challenge our young people to practice this faith in their everyday lives.

But are these lofty stewardship goals in the RE program really attainable? Can this kind of "higher education" be taught? Can we as UUs play a positive role in influencing our young people's lives to allow them to ask for more from life than simple material well-being and self-interestedness? The answer is YES, and is being done in our RE program. We not only have the evidence of seeing our own young people's lives changed, but there is also convincing research to show that this kind of educative experience can transform lives and connect young people to the common good. Laurent Parks Daloz, a writer, teacher, and co-founder of the Community College of Vermont, has conducted a survey of more than 100 people who have devoted their lives to the common good. He sought to learn the kinds of experiences that influenced these people to become generous and committed. Not all the experiences listed below occur in every individual life, but the most common ones that contributed to lives of generosity and commitment are those that are part of our RE experience:

- Being seen and accepted as a child
- Having an active part in religious life
- Having contacts with adults in community who model commitment
- Participating in youth groups
- Having mentors
- Growing up in a home that is hospitable to the wider world

- Having at least one publicly active adult in their life

Our new facilities make our RE commitments easier to fulfill. Let's join our gifted RE leaders and our core of dedicated teachers and rededicate ourselves to support this life-changing program. In doing so, we will prove ourselves to be good stewards of our entire church family and of our faith, now and in the future.

Rabbi Michaelson to preach at interfaith Thanksgiving service



Join in our annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on Wednesday, November 25 at 7 p.m. Rabbi Brian Michaelson will offer the sermon, and clergy and leaders from the Buddhist, Islamic, Christian and Bah'ai traditions will also participate. The Interfaith service will be held at Church of the Brethren, 2200 State Hill Road, Wyomissing. A reception will follow.

Dear RE Parents and Friends,

As I write this article, Halloween is still two weeks away, but by the time you receive this issue of the Univoice, November and the season of giving thanks will be upon us. I'd like to take some time this month to express appreciation for a number of special gifts that people have shared with our RE program recently.

Thanks to:

- Stephanie Elliott for helping organize RE supplies, my new office, and continuing to help catalog our RE books
- Susan Stewart and Shelly Kauffman for their assistance with organizing and decorating the RE spaces.
- Another thanks to Shelly for donating the neat checkerboard rug in the Explorers Classroom.
- The RE Committee for their ongoing support and insight (and for sharing their excellent cooking skills for special events!).
- Joanna Groebel for sharing her wisdom while giving me space to find my own path.
- Scott Kaufmann for the shelves in the DRE office, for repairing the antique table in the DeBenville Room and for helping to move the new chairs for the meeting rooms and the classrooms in Chalice House.
- Joe Plageman for helping Scott move the new chairs.
- Former church members Janette and Perry Fertig for donating the chairs.

With gratitude for all your support,

Elizabeth

"You just can't, at your age!"

At a recent Weaving the Fabric of Diversity workshop on ageism hosted by the Social Justice Team, fifteen people found that the phrase "You just can't, at your age!" can be applied to anyone at any age. A seventeen-year old wanting to chair a church committee and an active seventy-year old going white-water rafting could be told the same thing. The group envisioned a church where ageism has become a "wasm," and where our youth are meaningfully integrated into congregational life:

- Our teens play meaningful roles in worship and programming.
- Our post-graduate members come back to visit.
- Mentors abound.
- Older members are connecting one-on-one with a child.
- We have regularly scheduled intergenerational activities.
- Our physical space includes an elevator, sound panels, and transportation to/from church.

Workshops in November include Ableism on Nov. 7 and Racism on Nov. 21. Breakfast and childcare provided.

Photo: youngest workshop attendee Carla, 40, and oldest attendee Gene, 87.

Day of the Dead

Sunday, November 1--We'll enjoy some Halloween fun with a Haunted Bake Sale and our annual costume parade. Please consider donating a seasonal-themed bake good or treat.

Creative Arts Vision Quest

November 28th beginning at 1:00 p.m. until Sunday morning, there will be a lock-in for older High School youth and recent graduates. Joanna Groebel, Dance Therapist and Susan Lazarchik, a wonderful local artist will facilitate a Creative Arts Vision Quest utilizing Painting from the Source techniques and Trance Dance. Please call Joanna Groebel to personally discuss the particulars of the event and to register.

Wiggle for the Giggle

An evening of interactive rhythm benefiting GiggleWorks at Palmer (www.giggleworks.org). Tuesday, November 10, Miller Center for the Arts at RACC. Doors open at 6:00 pm; show runs from 6:30 - 8:00 pm. The Global Rhythm Program takes you on a journey from Africa and beyond, using world drums, percussion, voice and movement. This will be an interactive performance with lots of youth audience participation. General Admission: \$10 adults, \$5 children 12 and under. Contact Elizabeth by November 1 if you are interested in attending.



ADULT PROGRAM OFFERINGS



NEW TO UU – MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Sunday, Nov. 8, Noon-2:30 pm

Nadine Smet-Weiss, Membership Co-Chair, and Rev. Fees

This workshop is for anyone considering joining the church or who has recently joined. It includes an orientation to mission and programs, a tour of the building, a short UU video, and an opportunity to get to know other members and friends. We will share in a simple lunch together. Sign up with Nadine or Rev. Fees.



LUNCH BUNCH WITH REV. SANDRA FEES

3rd Tuesday, Nov 17, Noon-1:30 pm

Join us over a brown bag lunch for a conversation on gratitude and the harvest festival. We meet in the Gerber Room. Contact Rev. Fees for more information.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Saturday, Nov 21, 10 am-Noon

Facilitator: Rev. Fees

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.

Awakening Body Spirit Workshop II

Sunday, November 8th from

6:30-8:30 at the church will be the time and place for an experiential workshop exploring the function, sensation, and metaphors of our feet! Yes, our feet--more powerful than one might imagine...How we move out into the world, find our stance, leave and return may be issues that arise as we explore our feet in movement, art, and simple ritual. Your co-facilitators will be Joanna Groebel, Dance/Movement Therapist, and Karen Nierle, Massage Therapist and long-term yoga practitioner who will lead us in foot massage techniques as part of the program. Please register by calling Joanna. Details will follow after your registration.

Heart to Heart Gatherings

Jane Rohrbach will be leading a small group called Heart to Heart, loosely based on the book **Heart to Heart, Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing** by Christine Robinson & Alicia Hawkins, two UU women who have been involved with small group ministry. The sessions will include time for silence, reflection, sharing, and conversation, with an emphasis on careful, uninterrupted listening. Group size will be limited to ten people. The group will meet on Mondays from 7 PM until roughly 8:30 PM in the Gerber Room at our church, and the dates will be December 14, January 4, February 1, March 1, April 12, and May 3. If you are interested in joining this group, please email Jane Rohrbach.

Ruth Epler, church historian

Ruth Epler, who has been a Berks UU -member for 43 years (since 1966), has volunteered to take on the job of putting together a history of our church, which can trace its beginning back to before 1831.

Ruth outlined her plans to an approving Board of Directors at its October meeting. She said her first task was hanging the historic photos in the DeBenville room, now the new gathering place for people entering the church. Her end goal, she said, is a publication depicting the role our church in the development of Reading.

See page 7 for news about Weaving the Fabric of Diversity workshops.

Food Pantry

By Kelly Hartman

On Thursday, Oct 1st, we distributed food supplies to 142 recipients, 21 of whom were new to our pantry. These persons represented families totaling 520, including 243 children, 242 adults, and 35 seniors.

The nation is in the midst of what some economists are calling "the worst economic down turn since the Great Depression." Locally, more folks are turning to our food pantries and soup kitchens to meet their families' nutritional needs.

UU Berks, thru the support of our congregation's members, is on the forefront as one of the churches responding to these current events.

More people means longer lines, increasing the need for volunteers from the congregation to help our community, and pass along with the food UU feelings of humanity, compassion, and respect.

Become part of the process by contributing your time/energy for several hours the morning of an upcoming pantry Thursday: Nov 5, Dec3, Jan7. For further info contact Walter Axsmith.

VOLUNTEERS!

Coffee Corps

11/1	IX	Fay Oxenreider
11/8	X	Nelson & Caroline Simonson
11/15	I	Joanne Just
11/22	II	Norm & Bonnie Block
11/29	III	Joe & Paula Plageman

Ushers

11/8	Orts/Coccuza
11/15	Lucas/Plageman
11/22	Simonson/Brownstein
11/29	Tyson/Szajna



Special Plate collection

We will be taking a Special Plate collection for Reverend Sandra's Minister's Discretion Fund on Sunday November 8th.

Bring Pantry donations every Sunday

At the urging of Board member Jeff Woodward, the church Board is asking congregation members to bring their donations of food and toiletry items for the poor every Sunday, not just on the Sunday prior to the monthly opening of our Food Pantry.

UUBooks

On Sunday, Nov 8, at 9:15 am, we will talk about impressions/discoveries found in reading Paul Redekop's **Changing Paradigms**, for many an introduction to the principles/applications of the restorative justice concept.

The next reading selection, for Dec 13 discussion, will be Steven Johnson's **The Invention of Air**. This is an intelligent entertaining account of Joseph Priestly as scientist, dissecting theologian, and influence on this nation's founding fathers.

His monumental scientific discovery was that plants return "something fundamental" to the air--which we now know as oxygen being restored thru photosynthesis. His politically liberal and spiritually dissenting views, however, created such animosity he felt obliged to leave England and emigrate to America, where his thinking as a rationalist utterly opposed to religious fundamentalism was valued and respected, by Thomas Jefferson among others.

UU Berks is a member congregation in the Joseph Priestly District. Have you ever wondered who he was, or what he was all about? This is a fine opportunity to find out.

For further info, contact Nadine Smet-Weiss or Kelly Hartman.

<h1>November</h1>		
Tuesday 11/3	ELECTION DAY Women for Health	 7am-8pm 9am-Noon
Wednesday 11/4	Choir Practice	7:30-9pm
Thursday 11/5	Food Bank Film & Theology	8am-Noon 7-9pm
Saturday 11/7	SJT Weaving Diversity Workshop	9am-Noon
Sunday 11/8	New to UU Member Class (Chalice House) Awakening Body/Spirit Workshop (Gerber Room)	Noon-2:30pm 6:30-8:30pm
Tuesday 11/10	Women for Health Board Meeting	9am-Noon 7-9pm
Wednesday 11/11	Veteran's Day Choir Practice	All day! 7:30-8:30pm
Sunday 11/15	Building Keepers Meeting	Noon-1pm
Tuesday 11/17	Women for Health Lunch Bunch PFLAG	9am-Noon Noon-1:30pm 6:30-7:30pm
Wednesday 11/18	Choir Practice	7:30-8:30pm
Saturday 11/21	SJT Weaving Diversity Workshop Prayer Shawl Ministry (Minister's Study)	9am-Noon 10am-Noon
Tuesday 11/24	Women for Health	9am-Noon
Wednesday 11/25	Interfaith Thanksgiving Service (Church of the Brethren, Wyomissing) Choir Practice	7pm 7:30-8:30pm
Thursday 11/26	THANKSGIVING	All day!
Sat-Sun 11/28-29	Teen Lock-in	6pm-9am

Diversity workshops continue

The final two of five workshops on "Weaving the Fabric of Diversity" will be held on November 7th and the 21st. The Saturday workshops, hosted by the Social Justice team, run from 9-11am, with refreshments served at 8:30am.

Ableism workshop, led by Rev. Sandra Fees and Don Zeigler, November 7.

Racism workshop, led by Bonnie Block, Kimberly McGarvey and Zand Szurgot, November 21.

Please contact Gene Goodwin if you would like to attend either workshop.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Congregational Meeting,
December 6th

UU NEW YEARS at Murray Grove with Rev Craig Hirshberg – December 31, 2009-January 1, 2010



A FESTIVE, FUN & SPIRITUAL OVERNIGHT RETREAT for UUs, families and friends. Individuals, couples and groups are welcome! \$75 per person; children under 12 \$50. Space limited – RSVP ASAP! 609-693-5558 or murraygrove@murraygrove.org

Sunday Service Schedule

November 1 Day of the Dead

Rev. Sandra Fees, DRE Elizabeth Kaufmann, Dan Matz, Music Director, and the First UU Choir

Join us for our annual intergenerational celebration of the Day of the Dead. We'll share in a participatory ritual to honor loved ones we have lost. You are invited to bring photos and mementoes of your loved ones to add to the altar.

November 8 The Liminal Zone

Rev. Sandra Fees, Joanna Groebel, Worship Associate, and Dan Matz, Music Director

Sometimes we feel like we are in limbo and suspended in time. In these in between spaces, we are neither here nor quite there. Today we'll explore how this liminal zone is a sacred space that can actually open up possibilities for our lives and the world.

November 15 Weaving the Fabric of Diversity

Carla Mannix and Kimberly McGarvey

In case you couldn't make it to a Saturday workshop, we're bringing the Fabric of Diversity to you. Come hear stories and

songs from the deep sharings that took place over the last two months. Various members will share their reflections. You will be touched and feel camaraderie. Join the journey of our congregation toward a brighter future of social justice action.

November 22 Harvest

Rev. Sandra Fees, and Dan Matz, Music Director

This is the season of gathering crops, of gathering the fruits of our labor. In this Thanksgiving service, we express gratitude for the harvest by sharing in the Breads of the World Communion.

November 29 Pilgrims, Puritans and Us

Rev. Sandra Fees, Nelson Simonson, Worship Associate, and Linda Blazer, Pianist

This Thanksgiving weekend, we will explore our connection to the Pilgrims and Puritans. We'll consider how they became Unitarian Universalist and what, if anything, we can honor from that history in our faith today.

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Church of Berks County

416 Franklin Street
Reading, PA 19602
610 372-0928
www.uuberks.org

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