



FIRST
**UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST**
CHURCH OF BERKS COUNTY

Church Office Hours:

The church office is open Mon. through Fri. from 10-3pm, 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, 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. 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 Univoice

New officers

Senior board member Smith is new treasurer

By Gene Goodwin

Ron Smith, "*el Senor*" of the Board of Directors, is our new church treasurer, having been elected to that position by the Board at its monthly meeting June 8.

The board also reelected Joe Plageman to another year as church president, and elected Mike Mannix to be vice president and Karen Nierle to serve as secretary, replacing Ron Smith and Doug Mealing, respectively. Bylaws dictate that the Board annually elect church officers from among the nine Board members.

Finding a new treasurer had been a major worry for the Board, particularly after no one from the membership answered the Board's urgent call for a volunteer. So the election of three new Board members (two of whom—Mike and Doug—were incumbents) came and went in May, and still no treasurer.

But careful observers of Board actions of the past year might well have recalled the number of times Ron Smith would quietly volunteer when President Joe called for a Board member to look into some usually sticky problem. A semi-retired anesthesiologist (call him "Dr."), Ron seems to prefer "sticky problems" that challenge his knowledge gained from years of experience both in and outside our church.

Ron, who was treasurer of the Reading area NAACP before assuming the presidency of the local branch, has been a Berks UU member for 27 years. In his earlier days, he served on the church Board for two years and on ministerial advisory committees for two of our ministers. No wonder when he returned to the Board a year ago, he was given the respect one associates with an *el Senor* in Spanish culture.

Ron still has two more years to serve on the Board. That's also true of Karen, the new secretary. Joe is the only new officer with just a year left of his three-year term.

At its most recent monthly meeting on June 8, the Board was not ready to make a one-year appointment to replace Board member Miryha Thibault, who resigned for health reasons. Joe asked Board members to suggest names to minister Sandra Fees, who will report back at the next meeting on July 13.

The Board will hold its annual retreat this Aug. 19 at the home of Board member Jeff Woodward and his wife, Ann. Judy Malloy of the Joseph Priestley District of the Unitarian Universalist Association will facilitate discussion of leadership development, policy governance and church-wide communication.



Recently reelected Berks UU President Joe Plageman, right, discusses some issue with immediate past president Norman Block at the after Sunday service coffee June 20. More Board news on pg. 3

From Sandra's Study

Rev. Sandra Fees

Thank Yous, Upcoming Study and Rest, and Miscellaneous

Thank you for your outpouring of love and support following the death of my Mother in early June. It is a tremendous understatement to say that it was difficult to lose my mother. I have been grateful for your phone calls, cards, emails, and other expressions of care. Some of you came to my mother's funeral in Lebanon, which touched me so deeply. The basket of flowers with white roses at the services meant so much to my family and to me. I have felt blessed to receive the care of our UU community. And I have treasured the stories so many of you have shared with me about your own losses. My heartfelt thanks to all of you.

On a different front, discussions about how UUs might best respond to Arizona's SB1070 are still underway. By this time, there's likely been a decision about whether our 2012 General Assembly will be held in Arizona or not. We UUs don't all agree on the details of how to proceed. No matter whether we go forward with GA in Arizona or not, there's much work to be done, and many Unitarian Universalists have a strong desire and commitment to actively engage in the immigration issue. Our UUA President Peter Morales describes the struggle in Arizona as not being about Arizona. He says it's a struggle for the future direction of our nation and a struggle for our soul. It is undoubtedly a complex issue – and among the most important and pressing of our day. I once again encourage you to educate yourselves about our UU efforts in this area.



As you read this column, I have already begun my summer leave. I will be away from regular church duties from June 27 through August 8, returning to regular responsibilities on August 10 and to the pulpit on August 15.

My husband, Chris, and I will be getting away to a cabin in the Finger Lakes in early July – a much needed time of rest and renewal. In mid-July, I'll spend a few weeks on worship and program planning and preparation for the next church year, including some intensive reading and research. I'll wrap up my time off with a spiritual retreat in early August. Sprinkled in there will be time spent hanging around home, going to local music festivals, and taking long walks. I hope to see many of you around town and in church this summer.

Yours in faith and love,

Sandra

Annual country visit with the Quakers

Members of our church have once again been invited to meet with our Quaker "Friends" on Sunday July 18. The quiet service begins at 10:00 am. We will gather at the historic 1740s meeting house in the village known as Kindts Corner. This building is only used in the summer for services. Quaker service is a silent meditation broken only when a few words are spoken by an individual moved to do so by "the inner light." The service which lasts about an hour is a time for quiet contemplation in a bucolic setting near Lake Ontelaunee. Questions about this service can be addressed to Keith Orts. Please visit <http://www.calnqm.org/maidencreek.htm> for information on the church and directions.

Note: The church will have a regular summer service at the church at 10:30 a.m. Members and friends may choose which to attend.



Maiden Creek Meetinghouse
27 West Shore Drive
Just east of Kindt's Corner
Shoemakersville, PA, 19555

Splinters from the Board

By Gene Goodwin

The Berks UU Women's Alliance has contributed \$500 to help us pay off bank loans taken out to complete the Chalice House project.

The check, accepted by the Board at its monthly meeting July 8, was applied to the principal, along with the \$20,000 we received from Chalice Lighters, individuals in our Joseph Priestley district of UUA who donate annually to aid worthy congregations. That's \$20.5 K we won't have to raise in the extended pledge drive now underway.

In other business before the Board at its June meeting, the Directors carried out their responsibility under our bylaws to select which four of them will serve as church officers for the next fiscal year beginning July 1. For our report on this important matter, please see separate article on page 1.

Plate collection vote upheld

The Board also accepted the congregational vote on May 16 to schedule special Sunday plate collections next Fall to benefit the following:

1. Berks UU Food Pantry.
2. Our Minister's Discretionary Fund, which she uses mostly to help poor people these days.
3. Western Berks Free Medical Clinic.
4. Berks Connections pretrial services.
5. Southern Poverty Law Center.

We join Murray Grove

The Board decided to take out a \$125 institutional membership in the Murray Grove UU Retreat Center at Lanoka Harbor NJ, the birthplace of U.S. Universalism.

Service Auction makes over \$3,000 than expected!

By: Delite Hawk, newly elected Board Member

Was the 2010 UU Service Auction a success? You bet. It was successful in so many ways.

This year, our final total was \$10,565, the initial budget was for \$7,750, but that is just a number. As the 2010 UU Service Auction Co-chair, I'm proud of the group effort that this event was. The auction night was really special. The decorations were borrowed for us by Stephanie Kauffman and turned the Gerber Room and the Sanctuary into festive and lavish party areas. The food was exceptional thanks to Norm Block for those cheese pinwheels. The donated champagne flowed while Linda Blazer played the piano. Shhhhhh, don't tell anyone, but Ruthie Epler coordinated the Silent Auction. Fran Malley took charge of the Chinese Raffle, where buyers place tickets in the bag representing the prize they wish to win. Hong Thanh, the Vietnamese restaurant, was so popular it was offered in two bags!

Dick Henry, our auctioneer, put a great deal of life into the live auction. He kept the evening moving. Both the buyers and sellers were kept on their toes. Kimberly McGarvey used creativity, skill, and perseverance to contact potential donors and bidders and kept an eye on the quality of the items offered. Doug Wray raised bidding paddles for those people who could not trust themselves or were unable to be in our sanctuary on Saturday night. Randy Newnham and Doc Hawk were the runners/spokes-models during the auction. Paula and Joe Plageman were in charge of the money with Shelley Kauffman designing the spread-sheet, program, and tickets.



Joanne Matz bidding at the auction!

I have enjoyed cashing in on four of my purchases. How nice to have a round trip ride to the airport? Upon return from a two week trip out of the country My UU Driver picked me up @ Philly International, then catch up on both church happenings and the recent play of Fightin' Phillies at the same time. Just three days later. I truly felt back home as I attended 'Baseball Day in America.' This auction item was a softball game, followed by dinner for all ages five months to 75 years. No, the baby did not get to bat, maybe next time. I enjoyed a relaxed 'Dinner in the Country' at Jeanne Hey's lovely home also hosted by Ann Myers and Jeff Woodward with fourteen other lucky bidders.

I also bid for and won the Personal Writing Coach because I need it and how helpful that has been. Hasn't it? In all of these situations, the opportunity for fellowship and friendship exceeded my expectations. How comfortable to sit and talk with like-minded people?

As a new UU member, I had the opportunity to work with talented UU's I might not have any other way. All that and having my money help support our church. Thanks so much to all who helped.

Religious Education

Dear Friends,

Although summer is now in full swing, and most of us with school-aged children are hopefully enjoying a slightly more relaxed pace, the Fall semester, with its schedules and meetings, will be here before we know it. And so, for the RE committee and I, the work of organizing next year's RE program is also in full swing.

I want to send out a warm thank you to long-time RE teachers Barry Groebel, Lisa Frank, and Jane Palmer, who have decided that they need a break from teaching next year. Thank you for sharing your gifts, for so many years, with the children of our church. I'd also like to welcome new member Crystal Owen, a Montessori teacher, to our group of early elementary teachers. With the retirement of three of our "regulars," some slots have opened up in our teaching staff and I hope some of you will consider joining our intrepid band of religious educators.

As food for thought, I invite you to read some of the following excerpts from Anne Lamott's book *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* in which she describes her efforts to start a Sunday School.

"I had imagined a wacky sort of rainbow love fest. I had not counted on so many minor injuries. For example, I had hoped we could throw around a beach ball while we memorized a line of Scripture—calling out one sentence, like "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." But the kids had the attention spans of fruit bats, and the boys would throw the ball too hard at one another, as if playing dodge ball. I quickly switched to "God is love," but the children could barely remember that, either, and wanted it to be their turn only so they could try to hurt the others with the beach ball. . ."

We did not exclude anyone, because Jesus didn't. Some days, I could not imagine what he had been thinking. . ."

OK—so I'm not going to lie to you. Teaching religion and spirituality to children can be challenging. Some days, the suggested lesson activities just don't seem to work, one of the kids is unusually difficult, or you just really need another adult helper. So why do so many of our church's adults take the time to teach RE? Again, I offer you the words of Anne Lamott:

"Holiness has most often been revealed to me in the exquisite pun of the first syllable, in holes—in not enough help, in brokenness, mess. High holy places, with ethereal sounds and stained glass, can massage my illusion of holiness, but in holes and lostness I can pick up the light of small ordinary progress, newly made moments flecked like pepper into the slog and the disruptions. . ."

". . . Someone long ago said that God is not a boss or a judge, that God is a purpose, and I tried to live by this. My purpose was to show up and offer myself to people who were having a hard time, and part of doing that was to run this funky school."

I think that many of us share the UU idea of being a religion of "deeds not creeds" and social justice is tightly woven into the fabric of our community. We reach outside our church walls to spread the seeds of peace in the world, but let's not forget to spread our love within those walls too. Being an RE teacher is challenging, but important, work. I hope you'll consider joining us.

Peace,
Elizabeth

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



Elizabeth Kaufmann
Director of Religious Education

Save the Date!

All-ages combined Summer RE session runs August 15, 22, and 29. Sandra will be back in the pulpit and we will be doing a three-part series on music, ending with a drum circle on August 29, led by professional drummer Michael Clipman.

Adult Programs

Awakening BodySpirit 6: Room To Breathe

You are invited to join Joanna Groebel for an evening of inquiry into the abiding marriage of breath and movement at the church on Sunday July 25, at 6:30 p.m. The nature of breath is, like life, and is in constant change. It oscillates, rocks us to and fro, fills and empties us, expands and condenses, and embodies our fundamental exchange with the world. Through gentle perceptual, expressive, and artistic explorations into our breath, together we will greet our

breath...and invite a more full participation with life. No experience necessary. Please wear loose comfortable clothing and bring a mat. RSVP by contacting Joanna.

Enough. These few words are enough. If not these words, this breath. If not this breath, this sitting here.

This opening to the life we have refused again and again until now.

Until now.
-David Whyte

History Revealed

By: Ruth N. Epler

The Ladies Aide Society was organized in 1854. The objective was to raise money, for charitable purposes. At that time, not unlike today, there were money problems, "the Panic of 1857." The Society provided clothing and food for widows and orphans. It led all others in an offering of about \$160. Evidently local groups vied with one another in these charitable causes. Rev. Shrigley commented that we had a long history of fair standing in Reading and among its people. Our doctrine was introduced here by good men and women, but then, the German element was always liberal and fairly educated which made for very poor bigots. Their minds are too philosophical, and they have little faith in creeds and confessions. No one will ever be persecuted here for their opinions.

1845 – Rev. A.B. Grosh was hired at a rough moment. The church faced yet another debt, the library was down to a few adult tomes and there was opposition from other church members. Some of these non-Universalists went so far as to question if Rev. Grosh was even ordained. Fortunately, these objectors were rebuked and the Rev. went on to doing his work serving our church, "and that prospered!" The Sunday school grew in public favor and numbers. The members produced excellent "exhibitions," picnics and "celebrations," which drew standing room only crowds; expelling, all others in the city. The church debt was paid off in five years, 700 books were added to the library and a fine singing group was added. This was also the time when the church yard burial grounds, to the west of the church, was emptied. The remains were reinterred at Charles Evens Cemetery. The church plot was sold for \$1500. Most of this information was gleaned from the 50th anniversary record. I was disappointed there was little to say about the Civil War Era, so I will dig for more the next episode.

July's Volunteers

Refreshments

- 7/4 Keith and Carol Orts
- 7/11 Bonnie & Norm Block
- 7/18 Randy Newnham
- 7/25 Nelson & Caroline Simonson



Ushers

- 7/4 Paul Haggard
- 7/11 Orts/Axsmith
- 7/18 Tyson/Szagna
- 7/25 Showalter/Simonson

UU Books

By: Kelly Hartman

The July 11, 9 am discussion will be held on *Lost on Planet China* by J. Maarten Troost, who sees modern China as a planet unto itself, with deep cultural roots in transformation to unencumbered capitalism, influencing how the entire globe lives, works, thinks. Troost uses humor, local color and insight of culture to present an upbeat look at this complicated, mysterious, evolving country.

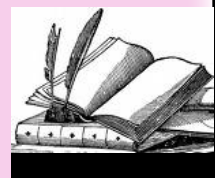
The Aug. 8 selection is *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* by Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman. In this provocative book, two neuroscientists at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Spirituality and the Mind contend that meditation, prayer, and other spiritual practices reduce stress and permanently strengthen neural functioning in specific parts of the brain that lower anxiety and depression. This increases neuroplasticity, enhancing social awareness and empathy, and improves cognitive functioning. Fundamentalist thinking, however, appears to rewire the brain in unhealthy ways.

The authors research how people experience the concept of God or spirituality, and where in the brain that experience might be located. They offer exercises for enhancing physical, mental, and spiritual health: stay intellectually active, meditate, consciously relax, exercise, dialogue with others, trust in your beliefs.

The brain has a way of evaluation what is best for the organism, that which is healthiest and gives the greatest pleasure. Having a sense of the spiritual can be seen as natural selection in an emotional form. What is best for the organism is not just survival and reproduction. We human beings have chosen to value beauty and spirituality, aesthetic senses, in the process of natural selection.

This forceful study gives scientific credence to numerous studies which have shown meditation, prayer, spiritual practices can enhance physical health and healing from illness.

For further info. or to suggest a book contact Nadine Smet-Weiss,, or Kelly Hartman.



Social Justice Team

Berks UU joins Family Promise, we'll host first homeless families

Thanksgiving week

By Carla Mannix

WE DID IT ! so WE WILL DO IT !

We are proud to say that enough volunteers signed up to stay overnight at the church with homeless families in the Family Promise program. So First UU Church will indeed host families during the week of Nov. 21- 28, 2010. What better way to live in gratitude than sharing your time that week?

We now need six people to be a Morning Host, helping set out breakfast foods, make lunches and straighten up from 6- 7:30 am . We also need 14 Dinner Preparers, seven to make an entree and seven to make a side.

Look for green forms in a box on the sign-up table in the Gerber Room. These forms list all the roles you can play. You can also call or email me, Carla Mannix with your choices.

All volunteers will receive a sensitivity training in the Fall. In the meantime, we will be collecting 20 twin sheet sets. If you see some on sale, please donate a set or two.

Family Promise of Berks County runs the program where homeless families live and train at a Day Center during the day, and then eat and sleep in various host churches for one week at a time until they have saved enough money to secure their own housing.

Last month, I visited a host church and met a young mother with her four children. She and her husband, who works second shift, had been in the program for just two weeks. The children heartily ate their lasagna and salad, while we chatted about news, neighborhoods, schools, and her hopes of getting into subsidized housing. Their beds were set up in an upstairs Sunday School room. "The mornings are pretty hectic. The van is here at 7 am. But it's been good to get us in more of a routine," she explained, describing one of the benefits of the program. To see more of how the program works, please view the seven-minute video at <http://www.familypromise.org/ihn-video>.

One Sunday in July

By: Nadine Smet-Weiss

The annual Reading Pride Celebration will be held in Centre Park on Sunday July 18th. The membership committee is looking for volunteers to help us staff a table at this community event.

Having a presence at Pride is an opportunity for First UU members and friends to live out our principles by demonstrating our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered members of the Reading/Berks community.

At the same time hosting an information table at Pride allows us to raise awareness, among the LGBT population and their allies, of the important spiritual community that is First UU Berks.

If you are not already committed to serving as a Silent Witness at this year's Pride event, please consider your ability to volunteer an hour or two of your time to staff our information table.

Look for the sign-up sheet in the Gerber Room, or contact Nadine.

We need YOU to make it happen!



Keith and Carol Orts serving as Silent Witnesses at last years Reading Pride Celebration.

<i>July 2010</i>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Food Bank 8am	2 Family Morning Out 9:30-11am	3
4 Sunday Service 10:30am Independence Day 	5	6	7 Meditation Group 6:30-7:30pm	8 Act 47 Community Committee Mtg 4-6:30pm	9 Family Morning Out 9:30-11am	10 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
11 Sunday Service 10:30am UU Books 9am	12	13 Board Meeting 7-9pm	14 Meditation Group 6:30-7:30pm	15	16 Family Morning Out 9:30-11am	17
18 Sunday Service 10:30am Annual visit with the Quakers 10:00am (see pg. 3) Reading Pride Cel- ebration (see pg. 2)	19	20	21 Meditation Group 6:30-7:30pm	22	23 Family Morning Out 9:30-11am	24 Arts and Crafts Group 11-2pm
25 Sunday Service 10:30am Awakening Body Spirit 6:30pm	26	27	28 Meditation Group 6:30-7:30pm	29	30 Family Morning Out 9:30-11am	31

Sunday Service Schedule

10:30am every Sunday

Ghandi's Seven Deadly Social Sins Series

July 4 Worhsip Without Sacrifice

Nadine Smet-Weiss

What is the meaning, place and purpose of sacrifice in our lives? Examining traditional and popular notions of sacrifice, in conjunction with current social issues and our UU principles, may lead to new discoveries about the link between worship and sacrifice in our lives.

July 11 Commerce without Morality

Lisa Wilder

Long before the term Affluenza entered our vocabulary and questioned our race to acquire more and more things, Gandhi identified Commerce without Morality as a deadly sin. Our everyday decisions on what and where to buy leave footprints on society and on the well-being of others. In this age of corporate scandal and amid cries for greater social responsibility of business, it is valuable to examine the moral implications of our buying. Even Adam Smith, in his first and lesser known work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, states that man is impacted personally by the effects his decisions have on others.

July 18 Pleasure Without Conscience

Kate Diller

People find imaginative and dangerous ways of bringing excitement to their otherwise dull lives. Their search for pleasure and excitement often ends up costing society very heavily. Gandhi believed pleasure must come from within the soul and excitement from serving the needy, from caring for the family, the children, and relatives. Building sound human relationships can be an exciting and adventurous activity. Unfortunately, we ignore the spiritual pleasures of life and indulge in the physical pleasures, which is "pleasure without conscience."

Kate Diller was student minister at UUBerks in 2008-2009 and graduated in May 2010 from the Lancaster Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree.

July 25 Science without Humanity

Doug Dinwoodie

Science is the search for truth, employing logic and cold calculation. Is there any morality inherent in numbers and facts? When does the pursuit of pure knowledge conflict with the best interests of mankind? We continue our exploration of Gandhi's Seven Deadly Social Sins by examining this balance.



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