

VUSBHC April Newsletter 2004



FROM THE MINISTER. . .

Nobel laureate Elie Weisel noted incidents of anti-Semitism ebb and flow through the year. Few occur at Christmas but they increase sharply before Easter. What good is Easter in a pluralistic society if it incites intolerance?

If we cannot accept orthodoxy, why celebrate Easter? If we modify its meaning, does it bear much relation to the original context? While inseparable from the story of Christ's resurrection, Easter can mean more for us than a nice long weekend, through its two major themes: atonement and redemption.

Atonement is at-one-ment: Creation becoming at-one with Creator. Atonement requires a willingness to recognize our errors and to make up for them - not just apologizing but preparing ourselves to avoid the same mistakes again. Atonement reconciles ourselves and what we've done with who we yearn to be, as individuals, nation and world. The opposite is alienation - dismembering ourselves from goals of peace with justice, truth and wisdom, alienating Creation from itself: body and mind from soul and spirit. Atonement makes amends and re-unifies heaven and earth.

In each struggle, we can bring more love and justice into the world. As America wrestles with many problems these day, how we understand atonement can be of primary social and spiritual importance.

The second major theme of Easter is redemption. Our souls are redeemed – literally, made valuable again. Death can make life worthless. As a friend says, "Life stinks then worms eat your face". If life is a matter of being born, growing, perhaps reproducing, only to fall inexorably toward death, then life ultimately means nothing.

But Easter demonstrates there is more. It may be only that doing good is worthwhile or that living life fully is essential, but it affirms spiritually, or demonstrates psychologically, that we yearn for more. We yearn for meaning and Easter affirms something deep and powerful is there - however we might define it.

Mark Allstrom, Minister

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

April is the month where we make some important decisions at our Society.

On April 18th we will hold our Annual Meeting. This is the time when we will elect new leadership for our Society, adopt next year's operating budget, and approve policy that will guide our direction for the coming year.

This will be my last Annual Meeting as Chair of our Society. Although my term officially ends at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th), the election of new officers naturally causes me to reflect over the last two years. I want to extend my appreciation on behalf of the congregation to the officers and trustees who have served with me: *Leigh Zeitz, Jan Gallagher, Heather Flory, Russ Campbell, Mary Kay Madsen, Sue Hill, Al Hays, Christine Carpenter, Karla Frazier and Anne Seltzer*. We have experienced a lot of change and activity during the past two years, and I know the congregation appreciates the hard work that goes on "behind the scenes" to keep things running smoothly.

For the past year and a half we have been participating in the Welcoming Congregations workshops. I want to extend my appreciation to all of you who participated so enthusiastically. I think we have all benefited from this program. We will vote on becoming an official Welcoming Congregation at the Annual meeting.

Religion's purpose is not just to comfort the afflicted but also to afflict the comfortable. This adaptation of one of my favorite expressions describes what is to come, as next year will be one of many changes as we prepare for a new Minister. One of the "charges" of our Interim Minister, *Mark Allstrom*, is to shake things up a bit. This interim year will be our opportunity to try new ways of doing things, and to stretch a bit out of our "comfort zone". Some things may not work, but some may surprise us. Just as we come here to stretch our personal spirituality, I urge you to be open to the opportunities for change and growth for our Society in the upcoming year. Please join me as we move out of our "comfort zones" and see where we can go.

Mica Lorenz, Board Chair

~~UNITARIAN BUSINESS MEETING~~
Unitarian Universalist Society of Black Hawk County
Sunday, April 18th, 2004 at 10:30 a.m.

The Annual Meeting is open to all members and friends of this Society. While only members have the right to vote, the right to voice is open to all. We will be voting on these new officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Finance Director as well as one trustee. We will also be approving the budget recommendation from the Finance Committee. In addition, we will be voting on whether or not we wish to become a Welcoming Congregation. As part of that process the Board will be recommending the By-Laws changes.

The Congregation's Board of Trustees will be recommending two By-Law changes at the Annual Meeting. These By-Law changes are part of the process of becoming an official Welcoming Congregation. The proposed additions to the By-Laws will be:

Under Article IV Membership, the first statement would read:

No test of creed, faith, national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation or identity, physical ability, or other similar test shall be imposed as a condition of membership.

Under Article VI Ministry, the first statement would read:

Eligibility for Minister of the church shall not be restricted on the basis of age, national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation or identity, or physical challenge.

We will also be asking the Congregation to vote on becoming an official UU Welcoming Congregation. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation means that we will be listed as such on the UUA web site. In addition, we can indicate that designation in our promotional materials and we can display a notice proclaiming to all that we are indeed welcoming to all persons including Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons.

Please join us for this important meeting.

WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS

We will continue our discussion about Transgender issues at our Welcoming Congregation program during Adult RE on April 4th. We will have one more Welcoming Congregation session on May 16th. I would like to thank everyone who has participated in these sessions over the last eighteen months. The information that we have learned from the materials and our discussions will certainly be relevant in the coming months. I would encourage everyone to visit the www.uua.org web site for information about our denomination's involvement in this important civil rights issue. Recently two UU Ministers were charged by a New York District Attorney with solemnizing an unlicensed marriage.

Mica Lorenz, Welcoming Congregations Facilitator

PASQUEFLOWER WALK

Pasqueflowers are some of the earliest wildflowers to bloom in the Spring. Their arrival is often associated with Easter. Although these are common wildflowers in the Rockies, they are much less common in Iowa. I know of only one place in Black Hawk County where they grow.

On a Sunday afternoon in April, I plan to lead the annual UU hike to see the flowers. Which Sunday this will be depends upon the weather, but I shall try for Easter itself, April 11th. I will make the announcement in the Sunday Service on the day that we will go. The trip involves a few miles of driving and a short hike into the woods. You might wish to carry your hiking boots in the car for when that day arrives. And if you are from someplace where you have never had a chance to see pasqueflowers (oh, say maybe Australia), you definitely ought to plan on coming.

Lynn Brant

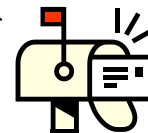


CLASSES FOR NEW UUs

“The New UU”, a three session-long exploration for newcomers and new members, will continue during Second Hour on April 25th when *Kay Rewerts*, UUSBHC’s archivist, will help explain the history of our congregation. The third and final session will be held during Second Hour on May 23rd when *Rev. Allstrom* will investigate Unitarian and Universalist history.

CONSCIOUS LIVING CORNER

When you bring your mail in and let it fall on the table, do you feel as though you were invaded by all kinds of salespeople trying to sell you all kinds of things you have no interest in at all? In 2001 alone, the U.S. Postal Service handled ninety billion pieces of junk mail! That’s about 5.4 million tons! You can reduce the amount of waste produced in your name. Send a postcard with your name and address to: Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512.



BOX SERMON: From “Why UUs Hide”, by Mark Allstrom, February 22, 2004

In the newsletter of her church, a colleague recently lamented that UUs are very good at hiding themselves from the rest of the world.

I grew up in a good-sized UU church in a New York suburb. But they kept it a secret in an interesting way. They used to be in the center of a fairly good-sized city. But as the church grew, they needed a new building. So they built this wonderful church out in the woods. They abandoned city-life for suburban serenity and a burgeoning middle-class, highly educated clientele. They justified this with a circular argument which UUs still use sometimes when starting up new congregations: most UUs are middle-class and well-educated, so let’s set up a church in a place where middle-class, highly educated people live. What a surprise then when the only people filling their pews were middle-class and highly educated. Proves they were right all along.

Sometimes UUs hide by keeping our origins a secret. In the 90s I served a church in Hopedale, Massachusetts. If you’re up on your UU history, you might note the significance of that place. It was a town originally founded in 1841 as a religious commune dedicated to nonviolence by the Universalist minister Adin Ballou.

The commune lasted seventeen years. Compared to other utopian experiments, it managed pretty well. But it had problems. First, as the Civil War approached, it became clear that if you were a peace-advocate, you were condoning slavery. Peace and justice can be a difficult balancing act. Second, they had financial problems. Most they handled, but when his son died, Ballou had a hard time dealing with finances on top of the loss. Meanwhile two brothers named Draper ran a loom manufacturing business within the commune and were very successful. They offered Ballou a nice retirement and offered to pay the commune’s debts in return for complete control. It was illegal but no one wanted to fight it. And so Hopedale was converted from a radical religious commune into a staunchly conservative company town. The Drapers rebuilt a luxurious and opulent church and divorced the company and the town from its origins. But kept the church going as an example to others of how good, kind and generous they were.

So through media, free concerts and public events, we re-introduced the town to its own origins. This is a really important lesson for this church: you’ve got a good and powerful history. Use it. Re-define it according to your current needs and according to your dreams of what you can be. Origins determine destiny. It is how you define those origins that determines how far you go and how you get there.

I’m not sure why UUs seem so into hiding. It’s almost as if we’re ashamed or guilty. Maybe just shy. Or maybe we don’t think we have much to say to the world. I don’t know exactly, but I do know we have a lot to share and that the world needs a faith such as ours to deal with the problems it faces. The world needs to know it is possible to have a faith that respects the views, experiences, insight, revelation and wisdom of others. People need to know there is a church where they are free to share what they have found and free to acknowledge that while we don’t have the answers, we sure do have great questions.

When I was in Australia I met Dick Hasty, an openly gay UU minister who died a couple of years ago of cancer. What he told me means just as much to a straight person as to a gay, lesbian, transgender or whatever. You are what you are. You have to face that and accept it because if you don’t, you end up trying to hide yourself, or some aspect of yourself, from the world. But the problem with hiding is the vast energy spent on it which could be spent on something more creative. United together, we invigorate each other.

Spring (Easter) Breakfast will be Sunday, April 11th at 8:30 a.m. We know it is early, but come—it will be worth it. Hope to see you there!



Menu

Breakfast casseroles

Fruit

Breads, rolls, muffins

Juice, coffee, tea, hot chocolate

UU YOUTH IN THE NEWS

Variety Show Planned for Sunday Evening, May 16th!

Mark your calendar now for the next youth-organized Variety Show. (Remember how great that last one was?)

We're looking for all kinds of talent. . .music, comedy, magic tricks, poetry reading, dance, whatever you have to share. So start thinking, planning, rehearsing, at the very least plan on being in the audience. With all the talent in our midst, you won't be disappointed!

Proceeds will go to our Youth Programs--with a social-action twist. (More on that later.) For more details call *Heather Keyt* at (319) 939-2081. See you there!!!

MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMUNAL MEAL

We shall again gather at 6:00 p.m. this Maundy Thursday (April 8th) to share vegetarian dishes (i.e., a vegetarian potluck) and reflect upon the role of food in ritual celebration, why there have been festivals at this time of year, and what they celebrate. Participants will be invited to comment on why the dish they bring has significance to them in particular, or for the world in general (if they wish). Contact *Russ Campbell* (266-0394--Home; 273-2447--Work; <campbell@cedarnet.org>) for further information.

MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Thanks to all of you who filled out our brief form during the Pledge dinners. Now, to the next step: Before long, all members, associates, friends, and others who are concerned about our Society's future will be receiving a Congregational Survey. You may wonder why we are bothering with this step; does your input really have any influence on the process of selecting our new minister? Our response is a resounding "yes"! We, of course, will be looking over the credentials of curious/interested ministers. At the same time, they will be looking at our credentials with the same objective: to assure that our congregation's new minister is the best fit possible for us and for our new leader. Your input individually and collectively will be part of our ultimate 'picture': who we are; what our interests and concerns are; what our visions are for our Society's future. We are making every effort to develop a user-friendly Congregational Survey format to encourage you to participate in this vital step of the search process. Thank you in advance!

Your Ministerial Search Committee: *Lynn Brant; Jan Gallagher; Pam Hays; Carolyn Hildebrandt; Esther Kieffer; Shanlee McNally; Judith Harrington, Chair*

FROM THE HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

After surveying some church members and discussion with the Board, the Hospitality Committee has decided to change how we offer hospitality on Sundays.

As you may know, those who prepared the coffee and tea also provided the snacks and paid for that out of their own pockets. This system has worked well in the past, but now they are feeding increasing numbers. We hope this growth will continue, but it is a greater burden.

The Hospitality Committee will continue to offer tea and coffee but now will keep a store of cookies, bought with donations from the coffee jar. Special snacks can still be offered on special occasions.

The main purposes are to enjoy each other's company and help newcomers feel welcome. We feel changing the system will give both newcomers and long-term members an opportunity to participate. It will also work more simply.

But it will work only if everyone remembers to put a few coins in the coffee jar. How much would you pay for a cup or two of good coffee and a few cookies?

Thank you for your donations. Please express comments on this new system to *Esther Kieffer* or *Louise Allstrom*.

Sundays from 11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

April 4th

What is Quakerism?—This is another in a series of monthly discussion groups on Quaker beliefs. All are invited to share in the discussion.

Conscious Living Circle—A discussion group considering how we as individuals and as a congregation can deepen our commitment to live in harmony with the Earth.

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation—This continues a series of discussions that prepare our Society to be a truly welcoming congregation to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. We will be discussing the resolution that the congregation will be voting on at the Annual Meeting. Led by our Board Chair, *Mica Lorenz*.

April 11th

Social Action Discussion—Every year UU congregations are asked to consider which issues should be discussed at the General Assembly as part of a three year process leading up to the eventual adoption of one issue as the denomination's major social witness issue. Please join in giving your input on these important issues

Theological Discussion Group

April 18th

Annual Congregational Meeting - No Adult RE

April 25th

Theological Discussion Group

New UUs!—This will be the second in a series of sessions introducing Unitarian Universalism for new members and people who are thinking about joining us. It can also be a refresher course for some of us “old timers”. *Kay Rewerts*, our church archivist, will lead us on a “tour” of our congregation's history.



CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

April activities:

First hour - Alternative Activities

We will continue to explore Unitarian Universalism, by looking at the lives of famous UUs. We will also be working on a musical craft project.

Second Hour - Religious Education and Exploration

During April we will be working on Session 4—Personal Power where the children will be studying how to empower themselves.

April 11th is our Easter Celebration, we will have an Easter egg hunt at 11:30 a.m.

April 18th the children will be going on an activity (to be announced later) planned by the UUYouths.

Some of the UUYouth members will be attending the convention at Boone April 30th, May 1st-2nd. For more information contact *Chris Klink Zeitz* or *Kathy Klink Zeitz*.

The Church Mouse noticed during his daily scamper around the grounds that there has been an addition to the outdoor sign. Thanks to *Ray Berner* for adding a signboard for the Quaker meeting.

The Church Mouse



APRIL SERVICES

April 4th – Palm Sunday - “The Silent Rose: Reflections on the Passion”: My wife, Louise, and I saw Mel Gibson's “The Passion of the Christ” a couple of weeks ago and I was reminded of another, very different film from the late 1980s – Martin Scorsese's “The Last Temptation of Christ”, based on the book by Nikos Kazantzakis. Both caused storms of controversy but, not surprisingly, they paint two very different pictures of Jesus.

April 11th – Easter – “Time Travel and the Easter Story”: It isn't easy for the human mind to contemplate the implications and ramifications of time travel. But then it ain't easy for the Unitarian mind to understand Easter!

A couple from Minneapolis decided to go to Florida for a long weekend to thaw out during one particularly icy winter. Because they both had jobs, it was decided that the husband would fly to Florida on a Thursday, and his wife would follow him the next day.

Upon arriving as planned, the husband checked into the hotel. In his room there was a computer so he decided to send his wife an e-mail back in Minneapolis. However, he accidentally left out one letter in her address, and sent the e-mail, without realizing his error.

In Houston, a widow had just returned from her husband's funeral. The dearly departed was a minister of many years who had been called home to glory following a heart attack. The widow checked her e-mail, expecting messages from relatives and friends. Upon reading the first message, she fainted.

The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen which read:

To: My Loving Wife
Subject: I've Arrived
Date: 18 March 2004

I know you are surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now and you are allowed to send e-mails to your loved ones. I've just arrived and have been checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then! Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.

P.S. Sure is hot down here!

SPRING RUMMAGE SALE

The sale will be Wednesday, April 28th. Hours will be 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. I will need people to help set up Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., people to help with the sale, and to close up. Contact *Mica Lorenz* if you can help.

If you have items to offer (no clothes, please) please bring them to the church on Tuesday evening the 27th. If you are unable to bring them at that time, either bring them on Sunday, April 25th or contact me. We can store a limited amount of items in the church basement until the sale. Contact *Mica Lorenz* at <Micalea@mchsi.com> or 291-6509.



***** 2004 *****

APRIL 4	10:00 A.M.	<u>“THE SILENT ROSE: REFLECTIONS ON THE PASSION”</u> – <u>The Rev. Mark Allstrom</u> <u>Alternative Activity for Children</u>
	11:00 A.M.	Fellowship Time
	11:30 A.M.	<u>R.E. for Youth / Adult Education</u>
APRIL 11	10:00 A.M.	<u>“TIME TRAVEL AND THE EASTER STORY”</u> – <u>The Rev. Mark Allstrom</u> <u>Alternative Activity for Children</u>
	11:00 A.M.	Fellowship Time
	11:30 A.M.	<u>R.E. for Youth / Adult Education</u>
APRIL 18	10:00 A.M.	<u>“GATHER THE SPIRIT”</u>
	10:15 A.M.	<u>Group Activity for Children TBA</u>
	10:30 A.M.	<u>ANNUAL MEETING</u> Fellowship Time following Annual Meeting
APRIL 25	10:00 A.M.	<u>“GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS: DO WE RESOLVE?”</u> – <u>Del Carpenter</u> <u>Alternative Activity for Children</u>
	11:00 A.M.	Fellowship Time
	11:30 A.M.	<u>R.E. for Youth / Adult Education</u>

