

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNANOVA VALLEY

May 2014

Volume XIII, Issue 5

Religious Freedom — Diverse Perspectives

From the Minister

Even though some places in Colorado and elsewhere are still getting snow, as I write this column on April 15th (it seems there must be something I must do today, but it will come to me) Spring has made her appearance here in Black Mountain, NC. It's a gray, rainy morning, with temps going down into the low 20's tonight (a record low for this time of year) and 20-30 mile an hour winds predicted, ---it is still Spring. No, I have not given up the ministry for a meteorological or astrological career. Yet there also appears to be plenty of celestial activity going on in the heavens of late as well. A full "blood moon" and the first lunar eclipse of 2014 occurred last night. It occurred here on the east coast at 1:58 am this morning. I could not see it because of the rain and dense cloud cover, but while speaking to a friend of mine on the west coast, he described it to me and he made it sound spectacular. This blood moon also happened to arrive on the first day of Passover, which is April 15th, 2014. The astronomical phenomenon was the first in the 'lunar tetrad'---a series of four total eclipses that will continue into 2015. The next one will take place on October 8, 2015. I just love nature and this universe we live in.

But that's not all. There will be a solar eclipse on April 29th, 2014, and something called a Cardinal Cross in the heavens this month as well. This celestial event occurs on April 22. The planets Uranus (in the west)and Mars (in the east) make up the horizontal bar of this cross and Pluto (in the north) and Jupiter (in the south)make up the vertical bar of the cross. Of course, like our ancestors before us, much speculation and predictions are being made by those in the know and those not so much, as to what is going on and what all of this may mean for our planet and humanity at large. Suffice it to say that there is enough going on already to keep many of us guessing. Whatever this means to you, or if it means anything at all, we are in the season of new life and regeneration and the heavens are marvelous to behold. This we know for certain: There is nothing we can be sure of except that everything must change. Comforting or not, this is how nature works on planet earth.

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Norm Kowal, *Editor*
normankowal@bellsouth.net
Newsletter Deadline: Tuesday 20 May, 10
a.m., covering June 2014

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There is a more earthly occurrence that I want to share with you. As some of you know I was invited to speak again this Lenten Season by the ministerial association that I am a part of. This year I was invited to speak about the "The Saving Love of God," at the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Shannon, who by the way, has moved on to a larger church in the Chicago area. I reminded her that I was a Universalist, and to her credit, she said she had a free pulpit and yes, there may be some who would be ruffled, but no worries. The talk was scheduled for March 26, a Wednesday, at 12 noon, with a nice lunch to be served afterwards. UUCSV members Helen Bell and Pam Sain attended to support me. A very nice size crowd attended and afterwards a few people came up to me and were generous in their appreciation of my homily, yet one man was not so generous. My presence there offended his theological sensibilities and he made it known to me afterwards. I thought that would be the end of it but when I arrived in my office the following Tuesday and turned on my computer, I discovered that he had written a letter to the community of ministers in the area and to the church about me being a false prophet in their midst and that the community needed to be protected from the likes of me. I did take the high road in my response to him but held my theological ground.

I would like to share this homily with you this June so you may hear just what I said that so offended this man. He also has 5 other names on this letter who I am assuming agree with him. However, I believe, and we believe, as a ministerial community that he did raise an important question and I will share it with you. Having said all of this, I am even more convinced that now more than ever, we need our free religious voice in this community.... Long may it be so.

Please mark your calendars for our Congregational Meeting on May 18th after the service. Also advised that the minister's office will be moving to make more room for RE and a possible Day Care space in the future. Exciting things are going on as we grow as a free liberal religious community! A caterpillar is becoming a butterfly.

Michael

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 4 May 2014, 11 a.m.

Bones and Stones

John Snodgrass

We live in a time of rapid change and technological advancement - but have our toys and tools brought us closer to discovering the meaning of life? We have unprecedented access to information - but what will we use it for? How can we learn to be human beings? And if a talking Tyrannosaurus Rex showed up, what would it say to us?

John Snodgrass teaches World Religions at Brevard College and is the author of *Genesis and the Rise of Civilization* and *Turning the Tables: Farming and Feeding in the Gospels*. He lives in Hendersonville with his wife and two children.



Sunday, 11 May 2014, 11 a.m.

What On Earth Is Going On?

Rev. Michael Carter

This Mother's Day I would like to talk about the way we are treating our



planet, our Divine Mother. Many of our problems regarding how we treat our fragile ecosystem stem from our Judeo Christian beliefs! Perhaps it was good that Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden, as the Creation Myth goes, for they were most likely bound to destroy it . . . That really isn't fair because, yes, there is a different perspective developing between the dominant monotheistic religious belief in this nation of ours regarding being stewards of the earth. But is it too late to reverse the damage already done? Human-caused climate change, underground missile testing, oil spills, destroying our rainforest, the very lungs of the planet . . . the list goes on and on. Is this anyway to treat our Mother? What on Earth Is Going On?

See you at church . . .

Sunday, 18 May 2014, 11 a.m.

End of Year RE Service

Patricia Fahey

The End of Year service will be an EXPLORATION IN WORLD RELIGIONS, and RE will take over the sanctuary with informative learning centers and some world music. This will be a Full Intergenerational Service, which is the culmination of our work this year.

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 25 May 2014, 11 a.m.

Lest We Forget

Rev. Michael Carter

In a culture that has brought the glorification of the military to unprecedented highs, at times it is difficult for me to really acknowledge this day. Yes, I do intellectually, but in my heart it can be very difficult. And yet, there are those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, whether they believed in the wars they fought in or not. This service is for those courageous men and women—Lest we forget. Join us.



Sunday, 8 June 2014. 11 a.m.

Blessing of the Animals Service

The service will take place at the Lake Tomahawk Pavilion at 11:am.

Sunday, 1 June 2014, 11 a.m.

Into the Woods

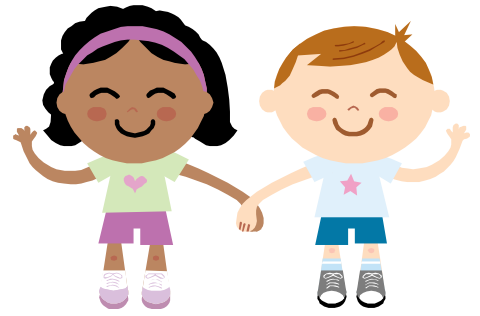
Pana Columbus

How do we embrace change with a spirit of adventure? How do our most painful experiences set us on course toward our sweetest joys? Guest speaker Pana Columbus will look at archetypal characters in fairy tales like the Trickster, the Old Woman, the Impossible Task and the Hero to show us the profound support that is waiting for us whenever we take the leap into the unknown.



Pana Columbus is an award-winning playwright as well as a private transformation coach. She has been a speaker at a TEDx conference at Acadia University, at churches, women's retreats, fundraisers and board retreats. Pana is currently a monthly guest speaker at the Unity Church of Asheville.

Religious Education Corner



RE has seen a great influx with your youth attendance but nonetheless has persevered with guest speakers and visits to area churches.

In February and March the middle and high school youth attended the Mt. Zion church in Black Mountain and discussed the religious perspectives and experience with members of the church. It was engaging and informative.

The same two groups enjoyed a visit by the Islamic Center of Asheville in March and felt better equipped to understand the Islamic cultures and put aside stereotypes about what they perceive people from Islam believe in.

The Elementary Group has been busy studying world religions and learned about Buddha and Buddhism and Shinto. Their projects were based in those religions and they even made and tasted some foods from the region.

On the 5th Sunday in March a few youth, adults and Jim Carillon helped beautify the church! Thank you everyone for helping with spring cleaning.

During April all youth have been studying Hinduism with Monroe and Fern Gilmore who shared their shrine to the region, complete with stories, artifacts, pictures, and statues of the Gods and Goddesses.



Monroe and Fern Gilmore working with children to make a floral headpiece as an offering to the Hindu God and Goddesses.

Religious Education Corner

RE seeks volunteers to mentor youth next year for the COMING of Age Group that will be formed between now and fall. At least 6 youth (middle and high school age) are needed to make the year and trip to Boston a success.

In MAY look for The Food Celebration on May 4th. That's next week! We will offer adults and youth a chance to nibble on foods from a few different regions we've studied.

On May 11 we will rehearse for our End of Year service taking place May 18. The End of Year service will be an EXPLORATION IN WORLD RELIGIONS and RE will take over the sanctuary with informative learning centers and some world music.

In Service and with thanks to adults who filled in while I was away. We are happy to be back and look forward to the next few weeks.

Warmly,

—*Patricia Fahey, Director of Religious Education*

Birthdays

May 11 th	Cecilia Shaw
May 11 th	Richard Graham
May 12 th	Charlie Chilton
May 14 th	Kim Taylor
May 14 th	Tom Motzko
May 15 th	Jill Tagudin
May 15 th	Kay-Sea Conklin
May 15 th	Peter Boggs
May 17 th	Harry Hamil
May 20 th	Sue Stone
May 24 th	Jeffrey Carillon
May 25 th	Emory Underwood
May 25 th	Michaela Fahey
May 26 th	Jay Ellis
May 27 th	Sue Everly



If you would like your birthday posted in the church bulletin, please fill out the form located on the table in the foyer.

Money Talk

We concluded our annual pledge drive in mid-April. Here are the results:

Sixty seven pledges have been received that total \$74,864 in commitments for our next fiscal year that runs from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. Most impressive are the 27 folks who have increased their pledge over last year and the 12 people who have made a first-time pledge in support of our congregation. If by chance we did not get around to meeting with you, or if you have any questions regarding your pledge or our church finances, please feel free to give me a call at 664-0082 or send me an email to lreading0082@charter.net. I want to thank all who have pledged to support our work through their Time, Talent and Treasure. And a special shout out to our canvass team; Jim Carillon, Harry Petrequin, Mary Soyenova, Chuck Shimer, Carolyn Shorkey and Jill Tagudin. These people have been a joy to work with!

Our annual congregational meeting is coming up on May 18th. Included with the notice of this meeting that will be sent out soon to all members will be our operating budget proposed for 2014-15. Please review this prior to the meeting to learn exactly where the money goes. I also would like to add one friendly reminder regarding the pledge you have made for this year. Please do your best to fulfill this pledge before June 30th. The income that we budget is forecast directly from the amount of pledge each one of has made. Thanks so much for your stewardship for UUCSV.

—Lee Reading, Treasurer

Building Improvement Update: Trading Spaces

On April 4 the Building Improvement Task Force launched our first project: Trading Spaces between the current Nursery/Library and Michael's office. New Library bookshelves are now being built off-site and will be installed in Michael's current office, which will become the new Nursery/Library. The current large Office/Nursery/Library room will be split in half by a new partition, forming two adjoining but separate offices for Michael and Tricia. This change will consolidate our church offices, and the Religious Education classrooms. The RE operation will be more functional during Sunday services, and the dedicated Nursery space more attractive to newcomers. This will also make the RE wing will more attractive for potential weekday rentals -- building rental income is a vital part of our five-year growth plan. Tricia and Michael will work together more efficiently during weekdays, and with greater safety and mutual support than they currently have with widely separated offices.

Bookshelves: The current Library bookshelves are constructed of painted lumber, built in place, and can not be readily relocated. These existing shelves will be removed as part of creating Michael's new office. The new Library bookshelves are being constructed as furniture units, each unit seven feet high by two feet wide. Eight of these units will be stand side-by-side in Michael's current office, secured to the wall for stability. Two additional units will be installed in Michael's new office. The new bookshelf units can be relocated in the future, as our building grows and our needs change. The shelves are being constructed from oak plywood that is formaldehyde free, certified by the Sustainable Forestry Council (FSC), manufactured at a plant in Old Fort, and purchased from Gennett Lumber, a local company, rather than a "big box" store. Constructed with donated labor, these substantial, attractive, "green" custom-made bookshelves will cost the church the about same as less-sturdy Ikea shelf units, manufactured in who-knows-which third-world country, purchased in Charlotte, and constructed of plastic veneered particle board.

Partition: The new partition creating Michael's new office will be highly sound-resistant for privacy, centered on the existing sliding glass door. The sliding door will be removed and its wall opening filled with a new swinging glass exit door on Tricia's side of the partition, and a window on Michael's side. The new partition will have an interior door between Michael's and Tricia's offices. To assure privacy, this door will be solid core, have no glass, and be sound-sealed all around when closed. The new office will have its own quiet heating and air conditioning system, and a ventilating fan to draw in fresh air. Michael and Scott Conklin met with mechanical contractor Brad Stickle on April 16 to discuss the new system. We will likely be hiring a small general contractor to pull permits, building the partition, and coordinate the mechanical and electrical contractors. We will most likely look to church volunteers to paint and finish the new spaces.

Finances: This project will be paid for by the building improvement fund, started with seed money from Carol Shorkey and Milt Warden. The fund currently totals about \$7,200.

Coming Soon: During this summer, Building Improvement Task Force will proceed with detailed plans and cost estimates to enlarge our lobby by enclosing the drive-thru canopy. We will be displaying drawings and seeking feedback from the congregation as this planning progresses.

Friday Fling

May's Friday Fling, a fun party for grown-ups every third Friday of the month (but the fourth Friday this month), will be held on 30 May at 6:30 p.m. at the church. Refreshments (red and white) will be provided. Bring some simple food, so that we can make a potluck supper out of it. The movie "The House of Sand" (2005; a mother and daughter, stranded, live out their life in the shifting sand dunes of northern Brazil) will be shown. For further information call Norm Kowal (458-4537).



Choir News

The UUCSV Choir enjoyed singing for "Stand Against Racism" day in April. In May, we will meet on the 18th at 12:15 after the service, then on Thursday the 22nd at 7 PM, and then on the day of performance, May 25th at 10 AM. We are sad to say goodbye to our long-time tenor, Charlie Chilton, but wish Charlie and Gene a wonderful life in Virginia with their family.



—Linda Metzner, Choir Director

Social Action Sends Thanks to Our Room in the Inn Volunteers

Special thanks go to our stalwart, faithful volunteers for a great job with the Room in the Inn event on Friday, March 28th. Everything went amazingly well and the meals were just so scrumptious. The women were in good hands thanks to our experienced, knowledgeable, and dedicated overnight volunteers who gave so freely of their time. Our next event will be on Friday, September 26 at the Black Mountain Presbyterian church annex. We expect to begin sign-up in early August or so.

—Connie Krochmal, Social Action's Room in the Inn Coordinator

General Assembly, A Meeting of Congregations

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Attendees worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend; congregations must certify annually to send voting delegates.

June 25-29, Providence, RI. See the poster in the foyer.

From the Editor—The Last Word

“All great religions, in order to escape absurdity, have to admit a dilution of agnosticism. It is only the savage, whether of the African bush or the American gospel tent, who pretends to know the will and intent of God exactly and completely. ‘For who hath known the mind of the Lord?’ asked Paul of the Romans. . . . The difference between religions is a difference in their relative content of agnosticism. The most satisfying and ecstatic faith is almost purely agnostic. It trusts absolutely without professing to know at all.” [H.L. Mencken. 1918. *Damn! A Book of Calumny*]

