

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNANOVA VALLEY

Feb 2012

Volume XI, Issue 2

Religious Freedom — Diverse Perspectives



From the Board

We're well into the first month of our New Year and we think we've been through the worst of winter.....and then there's February.

It can be a dark time. The days are still short and we haven't really seen any snow, so we intuitively hunch our shoulders expecting at any moment, the mighty blast of frigid air that February is so noted for. We hunker down in front of fireplaces, cook thick stews and comfort foods. We go to bed earlier. We know that there is more to come.

And yet....and yet, here and there, little buds have appeared, the green swords of daffodils come pushing bravely and foolishly, up. When the world is grey and cold, these little signs are like winks from Mother Nature. Hang in there, spring is surely coming. We need the assurance of seed catalogs coming in the mail, and days where the sun shines so brightly and the sky is so Carolina blue, that we might think we've escaped unscathed. Maybe this will be a mild winter....but don't count on it!!!!

So even if we get ice storms and lose power (I've read that those solar lights along your driveway can be brought into your house for light!) and even if we get snowed in and under, we can be grateful for where we live and the people who surround us. Our Sunday services continue to surprise and delight us. We have our Round Robin dinners and get to know each other a little better. We laugh and get rowdy and play games together. We build community with each other and the world around us. And we are here for each other. Could we ask for more? So what's a little snow, eh? (Will someone remind me of saying this if we get a whooper snowstorm like the winter of '93?)

Happy February!

—*Mary Soyenova, Vice President, Board of Trustees*

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Th 9:30-3:30)

Board Meeting: Monday 20 Feb, 6 p.m.

Send Newsletter Information to
Norm Kowal, *Editor*
normankowal@bellsouth.net

Newsletter Deadline: Tuesday 21 February,
10 a.m., covering March 2012

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 5 February 2012, 11 a.m.

Trust Me

Jeff Hutchins

Jeff Hutchins will speak on the issue of trust. "Trust Me" examines trust as the foundation of relationships and faith and the ways in which people trust and mis-trust each other.

Children will be in the first part of the service for another of Jeff's original children's stories.



Sunday, 12 February 2012, 11 a.m.

Roots of Racism

Rev. Dr. Marc Mullinax and Tyrone Greenlee

How does racism get defined? Is it a skin color thing, or is it also bound up with entitlements, power, social privilege AND skin color? How may we view this constellation of power arrangements through spiritual lenses? Tyrone Greenlee and Marc Mullinax will "team preach" on these issues, taking as their cues the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:31-34.



Rev Dr. Marc Mullinax is professor of Religion and Philosophy at Mars Hill College. He is UUCSV's enthusiastic monthly pulpit supply minister through June 2012.

Tyrone Greenlee is one of this region's "Go-To" voices on how to creatively and spiritually address racism. He is Executive Director of Christians for a United Community, a multi-denominational, multi-racial coalition of churches and civic groups that address the root causes of racism in our communities. He helps formulate responses to hate crimes, and can be seen on the front lines when race matters need addressing. His voice, while quiet, is nevertheless persistent and passionate. Recently he was ordained a deacon in his home church, New Mount Olive Baptist Church.



Sunday Programming

Sunday, 19 February 2012, 11 a.m.

The Buddha and the Surgeon General

Rev. Michael Carter

One of the teachings attributed to the Buddha goes something like this:

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it.

Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many.

Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books.

Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders.

Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.

What if Buddha's teachings were applied to our society? What if Sunday morning in America came with a message from the Surgeon General: "Warning – Believing what other people tell you can be hazardous to your health."

Michael Carter will ask that you believe absolutely nothing he will say during his visit with us in February. In fact, he will suggest that most of the suffering in the world comes from someone believing someone else's truth instead of struggling to live their own.

Michael is a graduate of the Emory University Chandler School of Theology. He served in the United Methodist Church for eight years working in parishes in Georgia and Kentucky as well as serving on the staff of one of the oldest statewide peace organizations in the United States. He spent many years in the corporate world and now is a starving entrepreneur living near Brevard.



Sunday, 26 February 2012, 11 a.m.

Does Community Still Equal God?

Scott Conklin

Twelve years ago Scott Conklin delivered a "This I Believe" at the UU Church of Asheville. He told of his personal search for a source of spiritual uplift, for a Higher Power. Call it God, if you like. He concluded that spiritual uplift can be found only through full participation in community. Or simply put, Community equals God.

Then Scott became President of UUCA...

Then the minister resigned under pressure...

Then the community broke...

Then the community moved on...

Then Scott fled UUCA and joined UUCSV...

Then Emily died...

Is it wise to place one's Faith in a human community? Can that kind of "theology" survive church politics? Can it survive the sudden death of a beloved child? Does Community *still* equal God?

Sunday, 4 March 2012, 11 a.m.

Annual Budget Drive Kickoff

Jeff Hutchins

Religious Education Corner



It's winter. Or at least that's what the calendar says. With these mostly warm days, it makes it hard to believe at times. Winter, to me, is a time of reflection, planning, and inward motion, yet we are already looking ahead with great anticipation to our summer camp program. We are expanding it this year, to a full-day program, in hopes of drawing more families. We will keep an environmental theme, and will offer an after-care program for those working families who need that assistance. Soon, the congregation will be receiving a letter from us asking for your support towards a scholarship fund we are hoping to have available for one or more children to take part in this fun week of learning about our natural world. Please consider a donation.

Curriculum offerings for the coming month:

We have reorganized our class offerings slightly for the spring. These classes are noted below. Over the past month we have had several visitors on Sunday mornings, an encouraging sign that some younger families are considering being part of our congregation. Following are classes scheduled for the next month.

Infant/preschool Class: *We Are Many, We Are One*; free play, stories, and songs

Presently this class is focused primarily on cooperative play time, but as we get a larger group of older preschoolers, we will continue with this curriculum.

Grades K-5 Class: *In Our Hands and Moral Tales*

January 29 Affirmation of Self

February 5 Affirmation of Self and Others

February 12 Deciding for Peace and Justice

February 19 Respecting Others, Valuing Diversity

February 26 Creative Conflict Resolution, Part 1

March 4 Creative Conflict Resolution, Part 2

The work of this class will culminate in the spring in the creation of a peace quilt.

Grades 8-12 Class: *A Chorus of Faiths*

February 12 Difficulties of Inter-faith Work

February 19 Spreading the Good News

This class, as part of its goal for working with other faith communities, is exploring different available service projects of youth at other churches in our community. They will then decide upon one large project for later in the spring, or several smaller projects through the next few months.

Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Walk

Approximately six children and youth and six adults from our congregation joined together for the annual MLK peace walk on Monday January 16th. We had a great time, joining a gathering of over 2000 people who marched through the streets of downtown Asheville!

Summer Camp is a Go—Tell Your Friends!

We are planning our second annual summer camp program, with the same theme of Journey for the Earth: Daily Travel Adventures. At the request of many families, we will be expanding the program this year to a full day camp, for one

week. Camp dates will be July 16 - 20, for rising first through fourth graders. Cost for the full week will be \$150 for the general public and \$140 for church members/friends or if there is a second child in a family.

Youth Ministry Religious Education Renaissance Module

A "renaissance module" is another name for training for religious education professionals. To date, I have completed two other modules, "Philosophy of Religious Education" and "Worship", in addition to other general training in religious education. March 6 and 7, I will be flying to Boston for a module focused upon youth ministry. This will focus upon working with youth, attracting youth to a congregation, and programming for youth. I'm looking forward to bringing back lots of ideas to share!

Important Dates to Remember

February 5 IG beginning and RE Committee Meeting 9:30 a.m. (time change for this month only)

Late February Congregational soup/salad dinner and movie night—date and time to be announced!

As always, feel free to call me if you have an idea to share or have any concerns.

—Sybil Argintar, Director of Religious Education (sybil.argintar@yahoo.com, 230-3773)

Birthdays in February

- February 7th Sue Miller
- February 17th Sarah Scott
- February 17th Friend Skinner
- February 19th Annelies Fryberger
- February 22nd Jerry Pope
- February 23rd Will Byers
- February 24th Evelyn Carter
- February 24th Jeffrey Reckinger
- February 25th Frohm Lutvack
- February 27th Marjorie Alexander
- February 29th Tom O'Connell



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

Choir News for February

My heartfelt thanks to everyone, especially Ann Sillman and Sue Stone, for a congregational service of singing on January 22nd. And thanks for helping me observe my third anniversary as your choir director! It was joyful to fill the halls with music.



In February we will sing on the 26th for a service featuring Scott Conklin. We will meet on the 19th at 12:15, then on Wednesday the 22nd at 6:30, and then again on the 26th at 10 AM. Come and sing with us!

—Linda Metzner, Choir Director
(annelinde@hotmail.com)

Women's Spirituality Group

Our first Wed. meeting is on Feb. 1, at 6:30 pm. Topic is "Goddesses of Love and Compassion." Teresa Ballinger and Linda Metzner will share about goddesses from different cultures such as Aphrodite, Oshun, Quan Yin, Venus and others. All women are welcome to join this open circle.

—Barbara Rogers



From the 1 January Drumming Service

Exclusive Offer for Members and Friends!!

On February 5th, after the Sunday Service, at 12:30 p.m., your Membership Committee will lead a brief Orientation to UU. Light refreshments and beverages will be served as you learn (maybe for the first time) how our UU Congregation of the Swannanoa Valley came to be.

We will meet in the Minister's Office (small room on the left off the large RE room). We are looking forward to getting to know you better and to sharing some highlights of Unitarian Universalism.

Please send me an e-mail at underwooda@charter.net or leave a message at the church office (669-8050) if you plan to attend.

—Angie Underwood, Chair of Membership Committee

Friday Fling

February's Friday Fling, a fun party for grown-ups every third Friday of the month, will be held on 17 February 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 Visitor" (2008; "Moving, humane and life-affirming."—Rex Reed) will be shown. For further information call Norm Kowal (333-4925).



SOLS (Sisters of Lucy Stone)—Seventh Annual “Trillium: A Festival of Follies and Flings”

It is that time again—time to think about cleaning out garages, closets, toy boxes, and crowded cabinets, and donating your white elephants to the UUCSV huge yard sale that will be held in April at “Trillium: A Festival of Follies and Flings” hosted by our Sisters of Lucy Stone (SOLS).

We will announce later the dates you may bring your donations to the church for sorting and pricing. We will provide transportation for items you cannot deliver—details TBA.

Proceeds from “Trillium” go to UUCSV, our partner church in Romania, and a local non-profit.

Remember: “We Do Not Accept or Sell Junk.” It is NOT Junk if:

The motor is working.

The batteries will charge.

All parts are present.

It is clean and complete.

It is mildew-free.

The owner’s manual (if you have it) is included.

DVD cases contain the proper DVDs.

It is free of pet hair and smell.

It is unbroken.

It is in working order.

It is unopened, never-used cosmetics.

It is non-toxic.

It is unopened, never-used paint, fertilizer, cleaning products.

It is an antique

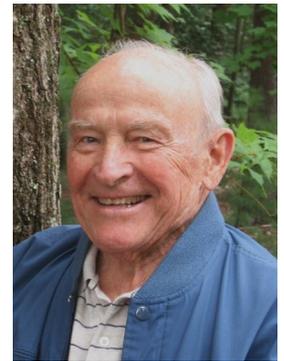
For information, contact Jane J. Carroll
dr_jcarr@msn.com; 828-664-1695

UU Winter BookTalk: a Skeptic's Delight

Nothing like a warm cup of coffee or cocoa and a stimulating book discussion on a cold February Sunday after church. We have two opportunities this February with two exciting authors for just that cozy, thought-provoking scene:

Sunday, Feb. 5, 12:30 PM: Asheville-based author, journalist, and activist, Bill Branyon will lead a discussion about his new book, *Liberating Liberals: A political synthesis of: Nietzsche & Jesus, Vonnegut & Marx (Groucho, not Karl), Gandhi & Machiavelli*. Billed as a “definitive solution to the controversy between: an Angry vs. Kind God, Capitalism vs. Socialism, and Paris Hilton vs. Meryl Streep,” Branyon's book explores the outer limits of freethinking and applies it to social and political issues revealing surprising horizons of human potential. Your brain will be tickled into action!

Sunday, Feb. 19, 12:30 PM: Our own Dr. Joe Haun will share his powerful memoir, *Unbelievable! Faith, Reason, and the Search for Truth*. At 91, Joe has not slowed down, and this memoir shows how his incredible energy and curiosity about the world and religion fuel that embrace of life. From belly-landing a Naval training plane to developing the Haun scale for measuring plant growth, to pushing for campaign finance reform, and thinking through life's most important questions, you will be part of Joe's inspiring, important life. And you will hear why Joe's main concern in the book focuses on the negative impact on our democracy of fundamentalist religions.



Copies of both books are available in the church library. Or you can order your own copy by contacting Monroe Gilmour, 669-6677, mgilmour@main.nc.us . Reading the books before the discussion will enhance your enjoyment, but know that each author will lead discussions assuming most participants have not read the books. So come and enjoy!



A group from our congregation braved the cold to participate in the MLK Peace March on 16 January in downtown Asheville. Pictured are children Evan, Cassady, and Cecilia; and adults Susan Shaw, Helen Bell, Carolyn Shorkey, and Sybil Argintar. Photo by Scott Shaw. The group enjoyed lunch at Pack's Tavern afterward.

Letter to the Editor

Dear fellow congregants,

There is a growing phenomenon during services that bothers me. I'm wondering if it bothers anyone else.

Last Sunday, one of our older members went up to share a burden during Joys and Concerns. Before she'd gotten two words out, at least four people shouted, "microphone!" Startled, she stepped back, then obediently to the mike and regained her train of thought. I'm guessing (but don't know) that some or all of the shouters were not shouting for themselves, but for the real or imagined poor ears of others. We UUs love to speak up for the downtrodden (as I may be doing now), whether the downtrodden want us to or not. Throughout the service, every speaker first did a mike check before getting to what they were there for. When you speak into a microphone you can hear whether you are being amplified or not. If not, move closer or leave it to one of our competent sound technicians to turn up the volume.

Ekhart Tolle, in "The Power of Now," suggests that the mind is a tool. We are not our minds. I like that. In the same way, we are not our microphones. It is just a tool, a little booster which we—sophisticated souls—have been exposed to before and know good-enough how to use. Like the obsession with clock watching, the loud and repeated yelling about the mike gets in the way of what for me is a spiritual event. Sunday mornings are not about the mechanics of the event but the content.

"But I'm only concerned for Tom, or Dick or Harry," I imagine you shouters shouting. Those three, as we all, are capable of shouting for themselves. And do. And have done. If we too readily leap in to defend those we presume to be powerless, do we not deprive them of some agency, the power to speak for themselves?

I'm not advocating doing away with the mikes, just the shouting about them. And if you are one of those who have trouble hearing, you might consider moving closer. Like all churches, the front rows of ours are the least inhabited.

If I'm the only one who feels this way, I shut up. If not, let the harrumphing begin.

Sincerely,

Jerry Pope



At Evelyn Carter's request (and with nurse approval!), Sarah Gilmour brought ironic contraband into the Mission Hospital Heart Tower

From the Editor—The Last Word

In the "Our Worship" chapter of the 2004 edition of *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide* there is the following statement:



Recently, some of our congregations have developed rituals around the passages in ordinary human life: the birth of a grandchild, the passing of an exam, the loss of an uncle, the visit of good friends, a divorce or an engagement. Some of these rituals involve lighting candles and telling personal stories; others name loved ones in the middle of a silent meditation. Such rituals of "joys and concerns" [now, thankfully, "joys and sorrows"] may serve to deepen real bonds of community.

It is my observation that we at UUCSV have strayed from the original purpose of the ritual. "Joys and Sorrows" is not a time to dispense information about the next demonstration, or to proselytize or preach to the choir about issues we all agree on. It is not about campaigning for social issues; it is about revealing and sharing deeply personal issues—seeking understanding, sharing joy, requesting help, or perhaps just letting go of something that's driving you nuts. (BTW: There are several social issues, e.g., nuclear power, that members of the "choir" do *not* all agree on.)