

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF THE SWANNANOVA VALLEY

July 2013

Volume XII, Issue 7

Religious Freedom — Diverse Perspectives

From the Minister

Independence Day Indeed!

Another July 4th is upon us and many will be headed to the beach, barbecues, firework displays, bluegrass festivals, and the like. We Americans will once again celebrate our nation's birthday as we are once again reminded of our "freedoms and independence." And why not? Our young nation has much to be proud of and has been a beacon for many. Let's not however forget the price that was paid for this 'independence.' Chattel Slavery and genocide of our First Nations Peoples, not to mention our oppression of women and even children at times which in some way shape or form continue into the present day. I mention this not to elicit feelings of guilt (the opposite of conscience.) but to remind us that until we are transparent about our shadow side as individuals and collectively as a nation, our true independence, in the words of Frederick Douglass, "is a sham."

Douglass was angry at the nation and its self-congratulatory attitude about the freedoms that we share at the expense of the humanity of peoples of color at the time. If interested one can look up his speech on the 4th of July to read his words, and they are a powerful indictment against our country's hubris.

I want to mention another kind of "Independence" we can attempt to celebrate as we move forward as American citizens and just regular ole' human beings who are just trying to learn to live.

To be truly free is to embrace our humanness, warts and all. We and our ancestors have made horrendous mistakes in dealing with other members of the human family, not to mention the planet. To really acknowledge this, to feel the pain and the shame of our actions is the only way we can really be free. Our 7th principle states that we respect the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. This respect also includes acknowledging and making amends for the times we have tried to tear the web apart by our fear, greed, insecurities, and our belief in the separateness of our lives.

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The danger for many of us is that we have fallen asleep to the lullaby of just how wonderful and fabulous we are as a nation and as a culture. We then forget the truth of who and what we are. We suffer from historical amnesia and we begin to feel that we have nothing to learn from other individuals and nations, and that we have nothing to be as “repentant of.” The truth is that we all fall short. This is what it means to be a human being.

Yet as we move through these feelings of shame and grief, we can then genuinely acknowledge our history, the good and the not so good. We open ourselves to become free and independent of the very feelings we were ashamed and afraid to acknowledge in the first place. We are free and independent enough to remember and learn from the past, forgive ourselves as well as others, and then to move on to live the wonderful, meaningful, purposeful lives we were meant to live. It is the only way to true freedom and independence that I am aware of. It is the “North Star” that we all need to follow. If not, we will always be looking over our shoulders for the hounds of hell and slavery that will surely be behind us, tracking us, ready to drag us back into the bondage of our own antiquated inner voices of fear, shame, and guilt. Why not be proud to be an American? No reason not to! Just remember that we are so much more. We are made of “star stuff.” There really is a divinity that shapes our ends. In some Buddhist traditions, it is an honor and privilege to be born a human being. That is something to be proud of as well.

There is an old adage that says, “The truth will make you free but at first it will piss you off!” When we are able to hear and experience Truth with a capital “T” as well as our own individuals truths, without flinching, will we be independent and free enough to live out the fullness of our lives? Then and only then will we be truly free and independent, as a nation and as individuals. Then we will truly have something to celebrate. Then we will have Independence Day Indeed!

Michael

Summer

Under desert sun, road became a wavering river.

The shimmer of heat, salamander swift, crossed the burning middle of July.

When the moon, large as ancestry, conquered the sky, our weapons were bare feet and laughter—

a porch swing vigil staving off the day.

—The Ritual of Season by Remica L. Bingham, from, *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*

Acknowledging interconnectedness requires that we take responsibility of noticing how we affect other people, that we realize how our behavior and choices impact others, even at a distance...Before the culture of rampant individualism took over, traditional societies had for millennia based their cultures on profound knowledge of enlightenment; most cultures, even today, have words and concepts to describe it.

In South Africa, the word is ubuntu. Archbishop Tutu describes it, “Ubuntu means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other people. It is not, I think therefore I am. It says rather, I am human because I belong.

—Margaret Wheatley

Note how this statement resonates with our 7th principal to respect the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part. Secondly, Descartes, declaration of, “I think therefore I am,” is replaced with the African perspective that I am because we are; and we are because I am. This is the basis of community.

Try saying this silently to everyone and everything you see for thirty days and see what happens to your soul:

I wish you happiness now and whatever will bring happiness to you in the future.

If we said this to the sky, we would have to stop polluting.

If we said it when we see the ponds and lakes and streams, we would have to stop using them as garbage dumps and sewers.

If we said it to small children we would have to stop abusing them, even in the name of training.

If we said it people we would have to stop stoking the fires of enmity around us.

Beauty and human warmth would take root in us like a clear hot June day. We would change.

—Joan Chittister

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 7 July 2013, 11 a.m.

The Time Will Come

Richard Graham

Many subjects shall be covered this Sunday morning: The nature of reality, both mundane and tragic; what a naturalist found on a crowded beach; seeing Jesus in Costa Rica; how to quickly bring our fragile planet back to robust health; the great philosopher, Woody Allen; and an ancient evening once upon a time which should never be forgotten.

Sunday, 14 July 2013, 11 a.m.

Forgiveness: The Art of Letting Go

Rev. Michael Carter

A few Sundays ago I was asked to speak to another UU congregation. During the sermon, I mentioned the word “forgiveness.” Afterwards, while speaking with the congregants, one man came up to me and asked just what did I mean by forgiveness.



He said that he was having trouble forgiving a grievance by someone he knew against him. It dawned on me at that moment that many people are harboring the same question. What does it mean to forgive and why should I do it? Is “forgiveness” something that I can just will myself into doing or is it a process? If so, where do I begin? Can I even forgive myself for my actions, reactions, and thoughts in this life? Let’s explore. See you on Sunday....Childcare is available.



Sunday, 21 July 2013, 11 a.m.

On the Field of Sacred Duty--The Bhagavad Gita Today

Stephen Wilkerson

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the world’s great philosophical and religious texts. It was composed approximately two thousand years ago, roughly the same time as the New Testament scriptures. And, like the New Testament, it has a variety of contemporary interpretations and applications. This presentation will focus on important and relevant similarities between the Bhagavad Gita and the psychology of the unconscious as understood by C. G. Jung and suggest how they may provide some practical guide to our everyday life.

Stephen Wilkerson was born in Shanghai, the son of medical missionaries to China, and grew up in Taiwan. He has a Ph.D. in history from Duke University, but has spent most of his professional career as a physician in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. Most recently, he completed a Ph.D. in mythology writing on the role of alchemy in Goethe’s Faust. He and his wife, Rose, live in Black Mountain.

Sunday Programming

Sunday, 28 July 2013, 11 a.m.

One Nation Under God?

Dr. David Kaylor

“Under God” was added to the pledge of allegiance during the cold war to distinguish the “godly nation” from godless communism. The move was part of a long tradition of what is now often called “American exceptionalism.” It reflects the notion that the United States is in some way a chosen nation, that it was founded on Christian principles, that it is the most righteous nation, that it is not subject to the same standards of judgment as other nations, that its wars and other expressions of power are for the spreading of democracy and human rights and well-being. This self-righteous attitude has led and still leads to disastrous consequences: needless wars, secret or overt interventions and overthrows of governments, etc. We will look at ways a critical application of the principles derived from Christian faith could lead to a more just and peaceful world.

Dr. David Kaylor taught Religion and Humanities at Davidson College from 1964 to 2000. He has been active in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as a teacher and speaker in local churches, supply preacher, and participant in mission trips. His interests in retirement include travel, woodturning, and spending time with family. He and his wife, Dorothy (Dot), have five children and 8 grandchildren. They have recently moved to Black Mountain.



Sunday, 4 August 2013, 11 a.m.

A New Mythology

Tim Perry

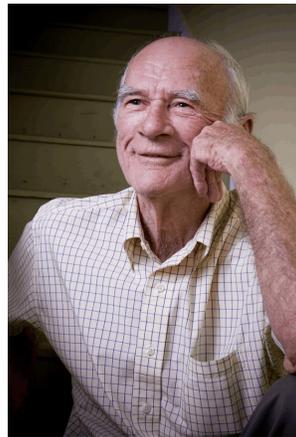
It seems that almost nothing else has the power of religion



to inspire people (for good or ill) to commit themselves to a larger cause. If my hunch is right, what the world needs most is a new religion: one that has the wisdom to learn from the others and not repeat their mistakes; one not based on some long-dead individual's supposed encounter with the Divine, but instead, rooted in the human experience we all share. That religion will need a mythology. How else will we instruct our children before they achieve the complexity of thought required to grasp an entire philosophical/religious construct? But where would we find a mythology not easily dismissed by rational adults as a mere fairy tale? Again, I believe it must come from our human experience. I'd like to explore one possibility with you today, along with its moral and societal implications.

Tim's original religion and first love was free thought – as it was for all of us. Then he encountered and became infatuated with Christianity, and committed his life to her. After a 25 year marriage to that faith, including several ordinations, he realized he'd never quite gotten over his first love. He secretly returned to her and found her patiently waiting for him to tire of his domineering bride. He began to question what his well-meaning spiritual leaders were offering him, and he found it wanting. The marriage ended amicably (so far), and today Tim considers himself a hopeful agnostic and a heathen priest.

Religious Education Corner



Reflections

As we begin more active planning for the adult members and friends in our congregation, it reminds me how important community is. Summer is a time when I see adults who don't often have the chance to interact with our children step up to the plate and offer to share a special talent. Often I am amazed that those special talents were such well-kept secrets! It gives me a chance to get to know more adults in the congregation, and provides our young people with that wonderful experience of intergenerational community. Growing a church means growing in numbers (which we are doing!), but it also means growing spiritually through connection to others. Many thanks to all of you!

Religious Education Corner

Summer Sundays

Summer programming is a chance for everyone to kick back a little, and give adults in the congregation a chance to meet some of our younger UUs by offering a couple hours of time to present a program. The children love the variety of fun activities. We are filling up, but still have some open slots. So don't be shy. Let Sybil know as soon as possible what you would like to share! We only have four open spaces left—don't miss your chance! Sarah Gilmour will help in the preschool again over the summer, along with Milt Warden, Carolyn Shorkey, and Heidi Blozan.

Here's what we have lined up so far:

June 30 **Tales of Bubbleland: The Trust Bank, games, activities**

Sybil, Sue Phillips assists

July 7 **Beautiful Church Grounds!**

Jim Carillon, Helen Bell assists

July 14 **Wetlands Walk (off-site activity)**

Heidi Blozan

July 21 **Mrs. Schnoodles, The Best Teacher in the World!**

Betsy Stubbs, Sue Phillips assists

July 28 **OPEN**

August 4 **OPEN**

August 11 **Flower Press (tentative)**

Scott and Susan Shaw

August 18 **OPEN**

August 25 **Balloon Sculptures**

Milt Warden and Carolyn Shorkey

September 1 **OPEN**

September 8 **Ingathering IG service and storytelling with Becky Stone (tentative)**

September 15 **Classes Begin**

Religious Education Corner

Registration for Upcoming School Year

Already? Well, very soon. Parents/guardians should watch for registration forms coming out towards the end of July with our curriculum offerings. It is very important that you return these forms so we can plan our programs and so we can keep up with changing needs, food and medical allergies, and contact information. Preschool will be cooperative play time, Grades K - 5 will follow Picture Book World Religions, Grades 6- 8 will follow Neighboring Faiths, and Grades 9 - 12 will participate in the Building Bridges Tapestry of Faith Curriculum.

Teachers Needed!!

We still need teachers and assistants for next year. Even if you haven't taught before, don't hesitate to join in. Full training will be provided in August, and you will only need to teach two Sundays/month. If you assist, there is no preparation ahead of time. You will just be in the classroom to assist and be another knowledgeable presence! See Sybil if you would like to discuss further or have any questions.

Religious Education Committee 2013 to 2014

We have several new members joining this committee in the coming year. This includes Patricia Fahey, Kristin Ozuna, Sue Phillips, Heidi Blozan, and Anna Stearns. Long-term members Lisa Brooks, Beata Ball, and Evelyn Carter will remain on the committee. Committee chair and our committee secretary, Scott and Susan Shaw, are rotating off the committee after a six year commitment. Welcome to all and a HUGE thank you, Scott and Susan, for all your time and dedication to RE!!!

Adult Religious Education Program

We have received back about thirty responses to our adult education survey. This is a great response rate. Sybil will be compiling the results in the next week, and the adult education committee will then discuss to determine the priorities for additional programming. Obviously this response shows there is a lot of interest in providing opportunities to be together beyond Sunday mornings! Thanks to everyone who participated!

Religious Education Corner

Important Dates to Remember

July 14 Religious Education Committee meets 12:30 p.m. Transitional meeting between old and new members.

August 25 Teacher Training 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Lunch provided.

September 15 Classes Begin



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

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



Rev. Carter with new members on New Member Sunday, 9 June. The new members present, from left to right, are: Sharon Schuster, Sue E. Miller, Judy Curtis, Sandy Saunders, Mary Muhlig, Patricia Fahey (partially behind Mary Muhlig, with long dark hair & turquoise shirt), Jackie Franklin, Betsy Stobbs, Sue Phillips, Anna Stearns, Ginny Moreland, Jane Hancock (partially behind her husband Alton, her white hair is showing above his head), Alton Hancock, Richard Graham, and Diane Graham (partially behind Richard, only her hair is showing). Also present, but not visible in the photo, were Jane Carroll and Sandra Goodson. Additional new members (not present) were Sarah Kirkpatrick and Amy McGillicuddy.

Room in the Inn

Social Action sends special thanks to all those who helped out with the June 28 Room in the Inn at the Black Mt. Methodist annex. With your help these homeless women are able to find the help and support they need in Buncombe County. This was our last event for 2013 since the Black Mountain churches are now only hosting the women two times per year.



—*Connie Krochmal, Social Action Room in the Inn Coordinator*

Choir News

The choir will sing for the July 28th service. We will rehearse on July 21st at 12:15 after the service, then on Wednesday the 24th at 6:30 PM, and then on the day of the performance, July 28th at 10 AM. Thank you to everyone who sang so beautifully for our service on June 23rd. We are a friendly bunch—come sing with us!



—*Linda Metzner, Choir Director*

Birthdays

- July 5 Nancy Burns
- July 13 Elaine Stennett
- July 14 Bette Bates
- July 15 Laine Everly
- July 22 Bob McDicken
- July 26 Jey Hiott



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

Friday Fling

July’s Friday Fling, a fun party for grown-ups every third Friday of the month, will be held on 19 July 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 “Albert Nobbs” (2011; Glenn Close; a woman trapped in a prison of her own making) will be shown. For further information call Norm Kowal (669-4668).



Sunday Service Associates

Summertime, change time.

The Sunday Service Associates are extremely pleased to announce the addition of two new Associates, Roberta Madden and Lee Reading. Thank you Roberta and Lee for taking on this responsibility. At the same time Ann Sillman will retire from the Associates. Ann has been with them since they were formed after Sally Beth Shore's interim ministry was finished and our church was without a minister. Now that we have a wonderful half time plus minister, Michael Carter, the Associates are still contributing to filling the pulpit all other Sundays, not an easy job and they are also part of the Sunday Service every Sunday. When you see Roberta and Lee at church, thank them for stepping up when needed.

—*Ann Sillman*

Social Action Committee

On May 24 the Social Action Committee provided lunch for the Prison Fellowship Community Service Project. Various churches provide meals for women prisoners who are working on homes for a week that have been selected by the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries. The people living in these homes do not have the resources to make some necessary repairs. We have been helping with this project for a number of years.

This year there was less money for the project than in previous years due to fewer contributions. Also the prison system is not allowing as many women to work on the project and not allowing them to do many of the tasks needed in making repairs to the selected homes. There is an impression that more emphasis is being put on confinement and less on rehabilitation. Hopefully we will be able to continue to help both those in need and those trying to improve themselves so that they will not be returning to prison.

Those helping with the lunch this year included Heidi Blozan, Jane J. Carroll, Connie Krochmal, Ursula Goebels-Ellis, Tina Rosato, and Emory Underwood.

Grant Application

The UUCSV Board of Trustees has decided that our congregation should apply for a Chalice Lighter Grant and named Carolyn Shorkey as the Project Manager. We will apply for money to be used to expand the number of hours Rev. Carter works for us. Please go to this website, <http://www.seduua.org/chalicelightersgrantap.html> to learn more about the grant process. If you are interested in helping Carolyn with the project, please contact her at c14shorkey@gmail.com.

Pet Food Drive at UUCSV

The Religious Education department is sponsoring a pet food drive this summer to benefit Brother Wolf Animal Rescue in Asheville. BWAR has an immediate need for help in feeding their many rescued dogs and cats, still awaiting adoption. A collection box is set up in the RE classroom at church, so please help by bringing dog food and/or cat food any Sunday from now through the end of July. Their primary need is for dry adult dog and puppy food (Pedigree brand preferred, but all are welcome) and dry adult cat and kitten food (any brand). They also welcome donations of canned pet food, peanut butter, and dog and cat treats. Thank you!

Martin Luther King Opportunity in Montreat July 4th Parade

The social action committee is co-sponsoring a float for the MLK Breakfast Committee. We will set up the float on Tues. July 2nd and Wed. July 3rd. Then attend and/or ride the float on July 4th in Montreat. 828 273-6677

Please contact Monroe Gilmour our UU contact if you are interested: mgilmour@main.nc.us or cell: 828 273-6677

Report on the 52nd UUA General Assembly

This year's General Assembly was held June 19-23rd in Louisville KY, and was attended by Geoff and Sue Stone. The theme was "From Promise to Commitment". We UU's have promised in our Principles and Purposes to "affirm and promote" such values as "the inherent worth and dignity of every person", "justice, equity and compassion in human relations", the democratic process and "respect for the interdependent web". But to what extent are we committed to these values? What are we actually doing as a national organization, as local congregations, and as individuals, to promote them?

The programs and workshops at this gathering were all about what has been done, is being done, and, more often, what still needs to be done. Some of the topics discussed were: our work on anti-racism and inclusivity; environmental issues, especially mountain-top removal; the connections between environmental degradation, racism and classism; the work of the UU Service Committee in places such as Haiti, India and New Orleans; women's reproductive rights; interfaith work, especially among young adults; and also how to promote the growth of our denomination.

Every year, the General Assembly, in addition to dealing with changes in By Laws, elections, and other business, discusses and votes on Statements of Conscience and Actions of Immediate Witness. This year, a Statement of Conscience on immigration reform was approved, along with three Actions of Immediate Witness. Those were: "Amend the Constitution: Corporations are not persons and money is not speech"; "Condemn the racist treatment of young people of color by police"; and "Consider divestment from the fossil fuel industry". These statements list suggested actions to be taken by the UUA, local congregations and individuals. The texts will be available on the UUA website.

Speeches by Bill Schultz of the UUSC, and outgoing Moderator Gini Courter were especially inspiring. Gini emphasized that the board of the UUA exists to serve us, to carry out our visions for our faith, and urged us to get involved, to consider what we want, and to let them know. To this end, I have decided to take on the job of keeping up with denominational affairs and keeping you all informed. You will hear more!

Next year's General Assembly is in Providence, Rhode Island. Learn more and consider going. The GA is inspiring, exciting, challenging, and always makes me feel proud to be part of an organization that is doing so much to make the world a better place. Some funds are available to help with the expense. Or, now, in the interest of making the process even more democratic, you can attend on-line and even be a delegate, speak your mind, and vote from your home computer!

—Sue Stone

From the Editor—The Last Word

Appreciations to Jill Tagudin for sorting out the names of the new members pictured (and those not) in the New Members Sunday photo.

