

GORGE UU NEWS - October, 2009

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Hello, my fellow UU friends,

A wonderful book I am reading currently, which is authored by Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, called "The Feminine Face of God," has a metaphor for spiritual development in it that I just love. It likens this aspect of ourselves to a Garden. This is in contrast to ideas like ladders or pyramids with its hierarchies and static nature. I love this Garden metaphor idea and think it's beautiful with its living, organic, complex, interdependent, growing nature and couldn't help agree with them, especially after viewing Aera and Dan's huge permaculture garden at their home this weekend. In a garden, there could be only one or more likely many different plants growing, depending on how much you plant or the plants grow. Gardens can be entered into a thousand ways and at any time...in childhood or old age. They come to maturity in their own way and in their own time. Nobody's garden is considered more spiritually developed than another's. Gardens give me a really good feeling inside, although that is coupled with a realistic aspect of all the work involved to keep it going. Yes, both food and flower gardens do require some nurturing if they are to be very useful to us humans. Another realistic aspect of gardens is that the plants in the garden can be growing or they might be dying in the cold time of the seasons or of the heart.

Then I got to thinking about how this metaphor can also be expanded to include the development of groups of people. And in the case of our fellowship's spiritual development, for example, I think it also applies. We have a living, growing group of people with many different members and families with many different beliefs, though all united in our belief in the Principles and Purposes. We have grown soooooo much since I first came into this group 8.5 yrs ago and it feels to me that most of that has been good. On the statistical side, our budget has quadrupled in the last 4 yrs (when it was very low to begin with) and our membership has doubled. On the functional side, this growth has allowed us to be available for families who want to bring their children for a good religious education program (and any garden or church that does not involve new seeds/sprouts or children eventually will die). It has been good for all the new visitors we have and significantly expanded membership, and better for our communities when more like-minded people have a place to meet and join causes they feel are important (like supporting food banks, supporting the right of marriage for all, and peace efforts). And we are dependent on one another in many ways as well, as we help each other in our times of need. Yes, joining people together can make more of a difference in the world, and that is important, I believe.

So the next question is, what is our next step of development for our fellowship Garden? At the time of this writing, we have not yet had our congregational workshop, nor our meeting on the proposal to hire a 1/4 time minister. Our elected leadership, the board, unanimously believes that our next step involves hiring a 1/4 time professional minister to help lead us in this stage of our garden's growth and we believe we can afford this mild additional cost (though likely this will generate more support as well). But we feel it is such a significant step in our development that we are bringing it to the fellowship to make the decision. Studies have shown that if churches at our level do not make this step, they tend more often than not, to stagnate and/or diminish. I don't think we are in a cold time of our fellowship's heart and I do not want us to stagnate as I believe in this fellowship and the Unitarian Universalist principles. Yes, we are realistic that this step will require some nurturing, as all functional gardens do, but I think and hope it will be worth it and we will be glad we made this, maybe scary, step. We imagine we would have a one-year trial period, so it might not be that scary of a step. And I do not believe we will lose our "home-grown" quality as we will still have three out of four services staying how they are. But I do think and hope that a minister can help us through further stages of growth so that we can continue to become a larger force in the world at large around us with our wonderful message of tolerance, interdependence and love for all people and things without exclusion. Please join us for the workshop and congregational meeting this coming weekend as we want to hear all opinions and will discuss the details there. We value each other and this is a question of what WE want.

Hope to see you there, Peace,

Cynthia, aka Cindy :-)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our Whole Lives Program for grades 4-6 and grades 7-9

OWL returns to the Gorge!! Now famous after a feature article in Oprah magazine, *Our Whole Lives* is an award-winning sexual health program, developed jointly by the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association. With the help of a county grant through the Faith Connection board (thanks representatives Laurie VanCott and Pat Pauly), eight adults from the area will be trained as facilitators. When you see UUs Tamara Thiel, Bonnie New, and Nikki Brandon, or Riverside Church members Michelle and Doug Beaman, Keith and Karen Harding, or Elaine Thompson, tell them “thank you!” Thanks also to experienced OWL leader Joe Usatine for signing up to teach again!

OWL helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *Our Whole Lives* provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

Classes for Grades 7-9 start Weds. January 6th
Parent Orientation Nights: Weds, Dec. 2nd and 9th - Plan to attend both
Location: Riverside church, 4th and State Streets, Hood River
Time: Wednesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM. January to June with vacation breaks

Classes for Grades 4-6 start Fall, 2010
At the Rockford Grange, Sunday mornings.

For information or to register contact Peggy Neuman, durkee@gorge.net or 509-493-8322.

ADULT PROGRAMS:

In Our Adult Religious Education study forum the last series focused on the intersection between science and religion using primarily the book “Science and Nonbelief.” by physicist Tanner Edis. Our forum sessions never had enough time, with us leaving each session challenged and pumped. Here is an all too brief summary of what we covered.

Beginning with the enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the development of both religion and science enabled by a healthy skepticism allowed the emergence of critical reasoning, curiosity about the natural world, and systematic checks on theories produced. Initially the enlightenment produced a “natural theology” of the universe viewed as being produced by divine providence made obvious in the design of the world.

As science continued its process, however, it revealed a world that evolves from the bottom-up, not top-down. Our world is a place where particles get created and destroyed with no cause, where interactions are random, and where there is no difference between forward and backward directions of time. The evidence is overwhelming. It is a world that was created and remains accidental and random with continuity determined by natural selection without any imposition of outside design or any evidence of purpose. This view is supported not only by the basic sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology, but also independently confirmed again and again by astronomy, geology, geography, paleontology, sociology, molecular biology, and other scientific disciplines. Evolution can no longer be viewed as a scientific theory. It is a firmly confirmed fact.

The bottom-up view of the universe that science gives us is often counter to religious views, both ancient and modern. Some hold science should stick with science, leaving religion and philosophy to deal with metaphysics and morality. The problem is that territories of religion and science often overlap, frequently dissonantly—theories of cosmology, philosophies on the nature of man and any ultimate realities, specific implications for morality, and political influences and agendas. Edis accuses religion of often making extra-ordinary claims without the support of extra-ordinary data to back them, a behavior that would get any scientist laughed out of the profession. He further charges religion with frequently trying to co-op science to its own pre-determined goals and agendas.

In discussing science and religion Tanner Edis repeatedly uses the expression “rational people would” The inference seems to be that since human beings are rational animals, they must somehow be flawed to continue

behaviors that fly in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence as to the nature of the universe. Edis seems to overlook the increasing body of evidence that our beliefs and values are determined by far more than rational cognition. Yet our beliefs and values are indeed influenced by science; that influence lends imperative weight to our look at its intersection with those beliefs and values.

So in our next series, "Basis of Belief" we will take a hard look at how we as natural products of the universe do determine what we believe and how we form our values. Are our lives at the behavioral level determined by more than our rational cognition, attitudes, values, and beliefs? Continued lively discussion is anticipated. - Submitted by Don Hardin, forum coordinator

ON-LINE COURSES through the Church of the Larger Fellowship Full-Spectrum Joyfulness

Taught by Amanda L. Aikman: October 19, 2009 – December 7, 2009

This course is a delightful seven-session class based on current studies of happiness (hedonics). Developed by a UU minister, with UU's in mind, this program gives participants a unique, game-like, effective and practical approach to incorporating joyfulness practices into everyday life.

Light Year: Seasonal Writing for Spiritual Focus

Gail Collins-Ranadive: October 19, 2009 – December 14, 2009

New England Transcendentalism as a Living Legacy

Taught by Ellen Livingston: November 2, 2009 – December 14, 2009

Wisdom for the Soul: Biblical Wisdom Literature

Taught by Joanne Giannino: February 1, 2010 – March 1, 2010

For information about these courses and more, contact www.clfuu.org/learn or 617-948-6150 re@clfuu.org

SUNDAY SERVICES

October 4 – Ministry Among Us, Rev. Linda Kaufman. This is a soUUp Sunday. A congregational meeting will follow the service.

October 11 – Drawing from Christian Teachings, Rev. Emily Champagne – As UU's we gladly draw from many religious traditions. Yet, Christianity is sometimes the "elephant" in the room – present but still difficult for many of our members to talk about and celebrate. By looking at ways Christian practice has impacted our own Sunday services and by sharing with us both familiar and obscure teachings from the New Testament and Christian tradition, Emily hopes we might be able to think about and experience Christianity in a new way.

October 18 – Flap Less, Soar More, Mark Thomas. Mark Thomas has recently joined the Hood River community, along with his wife and their two young children, as the Director of Mission Integration at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital. He holds a master's degree in divinity from the Pacific School of Religion, the United Church of Christ seminary in Berkeley, California. **This is a Youth Sunday, see you there teens!** There will be a youth group outing after church this day.

October 25 – Will Work for Justice, Kristen Dillon. This Sunday also begins our annual participation in the "Guest at Your Table" program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

CALENDAR

Newsletter Deadline for November Issue—Sunday morning, October 25.

Sunday, October 11th, noon till 1 pm is the continuation of our new **book discussion group**. This is for anyone interested—new members, old members, visitors, non-members. The book selected for this discussion by popular vote is "Tuesdays with Morrie." The author, a widely credentialed journalist, chronicles a very spiritual journey he shared with a former professor who was dying from ALS, and how his own life found far greater meaning as a

result. Several copies are available through the local libraries. However, you need not have read the book to attend and enjoy. No signup is necessary. Just come and enjoy.

The Group will be continuing for its next session **November 4th** when the book for discussion will be “Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist’s Personal Journey” by Jill Taylor. - Don Hardin

Faith, Health Reform and Our Community – October 15, 6:30-8:30 pm at Hood River Valley Christian Church, 975 Indian Creek Rd, Hood River. Sponsored by several organizations of which we’re a member (Faith Connection and Gorge Ecumenical Ministries) this event will bring together a panel of faith leaders and other knowledgeable panelists. Childcare provided.

Youth Group Outing – After church on October 18. Watch for details on when and where!

Adult Religious Education Study Group: Basis of Belief—The next series on religion is starting soon using Born to Believe by Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman. We will be deepening our learning about how the brain works in forming our beliefs and the nature of reality, seeing how beliefs emerge from a complex interaction of our brains with our personal relationships, societal influences, and educational and spiritual pursuits, and increasing our ability to discern between destructive and constructive beliefs. Our goal is a more informed understanding of religion that allows us greater and deeper personal religious experience in a religiously plural world. This is an upbeat, spirited study group that has a lot of fun.

The sessions are 10 to noon every other Wednesday (weather permitting) from Oct. 15 to Feb. 11 at *The Funky Farmhouse* in White Salmon. Group size is limited by space and time needed for all to be able to participate fully; only three new available spots are expected. Contact Don Hardin at 509 493 4819 for additional information or sign up.

CONTinuum - The circle is round; it has no end...Fall Con 2009

Presented by the Pacific Northwest Unitarian Universalist Young Adults!

November 6th – 8th, 2009, Tahoma Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Tacoma, WA

This conference is open to young adults, ages 18-35. **Online registration is available at www.connectuu.com.**

Local rideshare available, contact Nick Webster, nwebster84@gmail.com

Calling all leaders, doers, thinkers! The Pacific Northwest District of the UUA is offering a series of webinars for you. To register go to www.pnwd.org. There’s a \$15 dollar registration fee:

Webinar Title	Date
RE Road Maps: an introduction and overview	10/11/2009
Reassignment of Calling: how to fire a volunteer	10/14/2009
Behavior Management/ Support	10/15/2009
Lay Led Pastoral Care Teams	10/18/2009
So You Want To Be A Breakthrough Congregation: Everything I know about growth	10/18/2009
New Media for Congregational Leaders and Staff	11/1/2009
LREDA Guidelines: new member orientation & refresher	11/1/2009
Elements of Vibrant Worship	11/3/2009
Leading and Relationship: based on the UUA Administrative Renaissance Module	11/15/2009
Ask the K/Cathy's	12/13/2009
The Art and Practice of Creating a Safe Congregation	1/23/2010

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Sunday afternoon outings: 20 of us enjoyed 2 different excursions after church last Sunday. The teens went for pizza and swimming hole with Cindy, Paul Crouch and Paul Blackburn. Meanwhile, Tom Hons led a group, including our speaker Will Hornyak, on a hike up Riordan Hill. We all enjoyed the beautiful weather. Watch for more excursions in the future, hope you can join us – Paul B.

Calling all Photographers! Got photos of hUUrah? Other photos of fellowship goings-on. We have a page for photos on our website, but they're a year old. Turn in CDs or email me select photos – Kristen Dillon, kristen@speedfish.com

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Hiking Group - The newly formed UU Hiking Group is always looking for participants. If you'd like to receive announcements of hikes, please send an email to Anita Johnston, anitaji@yahoo.com, and we'll add you to the email list.

sUUps On First Sunday of Every Month—Plan to stay for a savory lunch after the service.

Spiritual Practice Group—Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky form the basis for study and discussion. Meeting place is at Tolya's home, 1206 14th Street.

Refreshments after service provide a welcome to visitors and give us all a reason to stay around and visit. Call Pam Morneault to arrange a week that would be convenient to host. She will e-mail instructions to you and make sure you have what you need. 509-493-4483 (day) mmorneault@gorge.net Pam

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF

From Linda Short, MCUUF member and secretary of the Rockford Grange:

As you may recall, the Grange must meet certain state Grange requirements to retain possession of the building. Some of you have graciously become members which was very helpful. For quite some time now, the Grange has not met its quorum requirements of seven people at each meeting. Several people have dropped their membership as well.

This not only puts a strain on the local Grange committee, but on the forward growth of the Grange overall. Besides meeting our own UU needs, it would be nice to re-ignite the Grange to its historical presence in the community, protecting the family farm, promoting simple living and restoring the environment. Values I'm sure most UU's hold dearly.

While the meetings can be painfully slow and antiquated, they don't really represent a holistic picture of Grange function. This Grange is running on the barest of minimums. That said, we can not only help keep the Grange afloat, but we can help make the Grange into something that will be vital and functional again for the community.

Please consider joining, or if you are already a member, **please try to attend some meetings**. We could even divide ourselves up and take turns attending if that would help. The meetings are the second Monday of every month at 7pm in the dining room. Thanks for your support! – Linda, (541) 386-2038, lshort@gorge.net.

CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHEN, AND WHERE? Go to www.mcuuf.org

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