



MID-COLUMBIA UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

GORGE UU NEWS – February, 2010

WRITTEN OFFERINGS from Rev. Craig Moro

Hello! This is my first column for your newsletter. All of my colleagues write their own column, each with a different title. One friend writes “Reverential Ramblings,” another writes “Ministerial Musings,” while someone whom I’ve known since we started seminary together writes “Weavings from the Web.” I call my column “Written Offerings.” It’s not just a casual name.

A very fine professor of religion whose work I’ve read begins each term by asking her students, what are the major differences between ancient and modern religions? They begin to spin out differences in beliefs, numbers of gods, ideas and values--then she cuts them short. The biggest difference, she says, is that most ancient religions emphasized sacrifice over beliefs—real, tangible offerings over discourses on ideas. I think she’s right, but I’m not sure that there has ever really been a break from the ancient ways. The form changes, but the essentials remain.

I’ve got a feeling that religious life still moves along through specific acts of offering, and offering is always a risk. Will my offering be accepted, rejected, understood or mistaken? I can’t control what happens after it is made. I can only prepare it to the best of my ability, and then put it forth. Much of what passes between us will be intangible, hard to define or describe or capture in words, yet still of great value—at least I hope so. But much of what I hope to offer will be in the form of words, spoken and written. Hence, “Written Offerings.”

In my first few visits to your lovely community, perched like a gem between mountain and river, I will be offering several sermons set (at least in part) near bodies of water—by ponds, on bridges, by the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Mississippi. I hope that these offerings will also do the mighty Columbia proud!

I look forward to getting our feet wet together in these coming months!

*In fellowship,
Craig Moro*

-PRESS RELEASE-

Unitarian Universalists call minister – the first since 1916 !

The Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is excited to announce the calling of Rev. Craig Moro to serve as minister. Rev. Moro’s first sermon will be on Sunday, January 31st; the title is **McElligot’s Pool And The Pond With No Frogs**.

Early in the last century, the Unitarians met for a dozen years at the corner of 9th and State St. in Hood River. Now a private home, this church building housed The First Unitarian Society of Hood River. This group (organized by Portland founding father Rev. Thomas Eliot, who summered in Hood River) dissipated in 1916 and sold the church shortly after. 70 years later, the Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship was founded in 1984, and after 26 years of lay leadership has called its first minister.

Rev. Craig Moro is a graduate of the Starr King school of ministry in Berkeley, CA and of the University of Chicago. He has pursued religious studies and pastoral work in India and Thailand; his areas of focus have been Hinduism and Islam. He has served congregations in Port Townsend and Richland, WA.

MCUUF is the only UU congregation in the Gorge, with members from the 4 county area. MCUUF meets Sundays at 10:00 at the Rockford Grange, 4262 Barrett Drive in Hood River. All are welcome. For more information, contact the Fellowship at 541-387-4011.

LEADERSHIP LETTER

"It is my desire to do nothing which I cannot do with my whole heart" Ralph Waldo Emerson

Greetings, fellow MCUUF members and friends,

This month it is hard for me to completely express my joy, relief, and excitement that we have passed a milestone in the life of our church. We now have our own minister, albeit part-time, and I am thrilled that Rev. Craig Moro has now joined us! After about 25 years of lay leadership, we now have some professional help to assist us in the next phase of our growth, which I am confident we will continue to do. I want to express my deepest thanks to the leaders who have helped lead this transition, namely our current board who did more than double time as the search committee and spent countless hours working on this endeavor. I also want to look backward and give thanks to our founding mothers and fathers as well as our prior board members and recent presidents, namely Tom Penchoen, Kristen Dillon and Scott Clements. And Everyone who works behind the scenes is also very much appreciated and we couldn't be growing as we are without all your help. For all the work that we ALL do, I give much thanks!

And I just have to say that it is wonderful to see us adding more rows of chairs in our services each Sunday and adding Circle Suppers this month (thanks Elaine Castles). I think having our own minister will just make things even more exciting, and I am sure this will benefit our fellowship in many ways. We invite you to use Rev. Moro's services as you have need as he will be available for counseling in many ways, and you may also give input regarding his role. We will get more details regarding the specifics of his schedule to you in the near future. We are also looking for a volunteer or two to be on the new Committee on Ministry to work with him closely, so if this interests you, please let me know. We cannot rest on our laurels, though, and expect Rev. Moro to take over all of the good work of the church. I urge all of us to keep involved and help us keep such a lovely experience that we have here going. Let's keep up the good work!

Peace, your president,
Cindy H.

SUNDAY MORNINGS

February 7 – Will Work for Justice, Kristen Dillon. This Sunday we join with congregations throughout the region in celebrating Equality Sabbath. Sponsored by the Community of Welcoming Congregations, we celebrate together the contributions of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender people to our communities and congregations, and look forward to a more just future for all.

February 14 – Mind, brain, soul: tales of a spiritual animal, Patrick Phillips. Is there more in our heads than our brains? An exploration of the balance and tension between our biology and our sense of a greater self. Back for his second time with us, Dr. Phillips is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene and a professor of biology at the University of Oregon. **This is a Youth Sunday.**

February 21 – A UU Perspective on Evil, Elaine Castles. We Unitarian Universalists are justifiably proud of our optimistic view of human nature. But at times this perspective feels inadequate to explain the evils that we see in the world around us (and maybe even the imperfections we find within our hearts). How might we reconcile our First Principle commitment to "the innate worth and dignity of every person" with the terrible deeds that we human beings seem capable of doing to one another?

February 28 – The 5 Questions of Ms. Thought, Rev. Craig Moro. Someone special shared these questions with me in Thailand. She told me that if I tried to answer them seriously, I might come to know myself better than before. Come this morning, and I'll share them with you. Bring your friends along!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In mid-January, a passel of our youth as well as some adults and children from our congregation made a fieldtrip to First Unitarian Church in Portland. "I didn't know there were so many other Unitarian Universalists!" and "It was really fun to be in such a big building," were a couple of the comments obtained by your intrepid reporter. Thanks to Tom Hons, Cindy Horton, and Dave and Laurie VanCott for driving. Huge gratitude to Peggy Newman for organizing in advance and leading the trip that day. – Kristen Dillon

CALENDAR

March Newsletter Deadline – Wednesday February 24

First Circle Suppers – Saturday, February 6. If you signed up to participate, you should be receiving information from Elaine Castles or your host with details for the dinner.

New Member Welcome Ceremony – Interested in signing the book and becoming a member of our congregation? The next opportunity will be during worship on **Sunday, February 7**. Contact Cindy Horton.

The next book discussion group will be **noon, February 7th** facilitated by Aera Atkins.

Our turn to serve FISH Food Bank is on the following dates and times:

February 8, 10 and 12 at 3:15 for about 1 1/2 hours of volunteer time distributing food.

If you are able to help with this effort please contact Tamara Thiel.

NEWS

UUs making waves - Thank you to members Bonnie New and Elaine Castles, recently inducted as volunteers for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) to serve as representatives of the interests of children caught in the middle of legal disputes among their adults.

Congratulations to member Colleen Ballinger, honored as this year's Outstanding Citizen by The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce!

Check out our bulletin board at The Grange for great Hood River News coverage of the Our Whole Lives class for ages 7-9 that began this month.

An effort is underway by the **Rural Organizing Project and Basic Rights Oregon** to educate people in Oregon why marriage matters for gay and lesbian couples prior to considering placing an initiative on the ballot in 2012. A planning meeting took place in late January to craft strategy for working in the Gorge. If you want to participate or get more information, contact Brian Stahl or Kristen Dillon.

Chalice Lighter call is currently ongoing to support the Whidbey Island congregation in expanding their facilities. For more information about their plans and what a bunch of \$25 contributions can accomplish, check out the letter at pnwd.org. **The Chalice Lighter Program supports congregations of the Pacific Northwest District of the UUA in growth and new initiatives.** Since over 30% of our congregation's members are Chalice Lighters, we are eligible to apply for a grant when the time comes. Recently, the program has shifted to email, rather than mail, communication. This saves a lot of money, but it appears the message may not be getting to many of you. PLEASE – check your spam filters and make chalicelighters@pnwd.org a "trusted sender." If you really didn't get this most recent call letter, please contact David Dierdorff, coordinator of the program.

MCUUF Treasurer Bruce Bolme will be sending out thank you letters to MCUUF donors in the near future. Bruce will provide a letter as an email attachment to those donors with email who made contributions during 2009 that total \$250 or more. Bruce will provide a thank you letter to other donors if they request one of him. Also, Bruce will provide a hard copy of a donation letter to any donor who requests one. IRS instructions require taxpayers to have a statement from a charitable organization for any single donation of \$250 or more claimed as a deduction.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

UU Meetups is a grassroots casual social group meant to nurture friendships and a sense of belonging within the fellowship.

Grassroots means that whoever has an idea for an activity "announces" it by sending an email to the list. Interested participants reply to let the organizer know how many to expect. (Drop-ins are also welcome).

Planning is either in advance or last-minute spur of the moment.

Ideas: A movie, a play, lunch, a cup of coffee, skiing, a visit to a museum, a concert, or charitable and civic activities... If you're interested in being on the email announcement list, please send an email to Anita.

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

Religious Education – Our religious education program now spans from children in preschool to youth in high school! We could use an additional adult volunteer willing to spend one Sunday a month with the younger crowd. Nikki Brandon (nbrandon@gorge.net), our Coordinator for the program, will provide you with a lesson plan and materials for the day. You just need to get a good night's sleep and show up! Peggy Neuman (durkee@gorge.net) is also seeking 1-3 adults interested in working with our youth (age 13-18), either on periodic Sunday mornings or for other activities during the week. Thanks for considering getting involved.

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.

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.

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF

PNWD District Assembly, February 19-21, 2010, Bellevue, WA

Come to the annual gathering of UUs from throughout the Northwest. Register at www.pnwd.org -> news and events-> District Assembly

§ See and hear Grammy award-winning entertainer Bill Harley

§ Meet Rev. Peter Morales, the new UUA President

§ Meet with hundreds of other Northwest UUs

§ Share knowledge, experience, and resources

§ Learn new skills and expand your understanding of UUism at stimulating workshops

§ Be a delegate and participate in making district decisions at PNWD Annual Meeting

§ Above all have fun learning, laughing, and worshipping with new UU friends

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

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