



MID-COLUMBIA UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

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LEADERSHIP LETTER

Setting the Welcome Table

We've arrived at the time of the year when many people decide to act on their resolution and "go find a church."

What if they're looking for us?

Today I found myself humming the tune of the freedom song from the 50's and 60's that included the words, "I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days. . . ." It gave voice to an outsider's desire for access that had so far been denied.

While many of you may have seen yourselves as outsiders from religion, you've become part of our (religious) congregation. Surprise—you're the insiders now. Even if you see yourself as an outcast from the religion of your childhood, you're an insider now. Even if you're not quite sure why you came or what you stayed for, you're an insider now. And we're the insiders with a message that saves lives.

It's a message that grounds people who are out to change the world in humility and awe. It's a message that calls every one worthy, no matter how profound our own flaws. And it's a message too good for us to keep to ourselves. We're the ones who have the opportunity to set the table this time.

And it turns out that the welcome table isn't actually a table. It's us.

When you see a visitor and introduce yourself, you're the welcome table. And so is the person who makes the coffee, hosts a circle supper, fills in the awkward empty chair next to a newcomer, or keeps the kids occupied—and learning—downstairs. This is the season of new religious beginnings for many, and I hope you each will act to make our fellowship a welcome new start for our neighbors who come looking.

In faith,
Kristen Dillon, Board President

FROM OUR MINISTER

I don't know why I do it. I spend half my time every summer fretting over how quickly the summer is passing by, as if some great tragedy awaits at the end. Yet without fail, fall arrives on schedule, and far from being disappointed, I'm always reminded that fall is actually my favorite season of the year. The days are nice, the evenings are cool, the gardens are bountiful, and communities come alive again—including the community of the church.

Blessings to all as we re-engage (those of us who've been away, anyway) with this beloved community of MCUUF.

In spite of my joy at this re-engagement, I also admit to having a heavy heart at the same time. For once again, our nation is discussing dangerous new military engagements in a distant part of the world. I understand that the situation in Syria is very serious, and I don't pretend to have a solution that fits with the varying political persuasions of everyone in our fellowship. Yet when faced with these kinds of discussions, I feel it is very important—vital, really—to let our faith speak in terms of peace. This doesn't mean we all advocate for this or that particular policy or this or that political leader. What it does mean is that we not let our faith and hope for peace get drowned out by the intensity of the talk of politically-sanctioned violence. It means that wherever we are or whatever role we're playing, we remember in our heart of hearts what our faith teaches us: that human beings do have the capacity to live in peace and love, and saying so is never, ever, a waste of time. This is as true for military chaplains as it is for protesters practicing civil disobedience.

So I hope to see you all, re-engaged or not, soon. And I hope that as we gather in spirit our coming together will remind us of how important our faith is in the world.

In faith,
Ken

SUNDAY SERVICES

September 8—Rev. Ken Jones: “It’s What We Do.” People tend to think of Unitarian Universalist congregations as “faith communities”; however, they often forget that we are not fundamentally a community of faith but a community of a covenant. On this day Ken will kick off a series of sermons on our seven core principles, which are not statements of belief but an agreement on our purpose.

September 15—Beyond Categorical Thinking. Staff from the UUA are visiting to support our search process. ***Please remember there is a workshop from 12:30–3:30 following the service. Lunch will be provided.*** (See announcement below).

September 22—Water Communion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Will the new minister hear me? Will my concerns and needs be met? Will the minister understand what I'm living with? How will the community respond to our minister?

Your Ministerial Search Committee invites you to participate in a UUA-sponsored “BEYOND CATEGORICAL THINKING” workshop September 15 to help answer these and other questions related to our search for a new minister. The workshop will be held from 12:30 to 3:30 at the Grange and will be led by Edward Carroll of the UUA. At the workshop we will:

- Consider our hopes, expectations, and concerns for a new minister.
- Learn more about the ministerial search process, and
- Explore how thinking categorically about people sometimes interferes with choosing the best candidate.

Lunch will be provided.

The selection of a minister is important. The Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop is another opportunity for everyone in our congregation to be a part of that process, and it will provide guidance for the search committee.

Pianist needed!

Susan T's teaching load has gotten too heavy, and she needs to step away from playing for MCUUF. Anyone able to accompany us for hymns? Jane F. would love to hear from you if you would be able to do this. Thanks.

“UU Taxi Service” Can you give an occasional ride to one or two people who attend our UU services but have no means of transportation? Most of them live in the Heights, and we're looking for volunteers who would not have to go out of the way to give them a lift to and from the Grange. We take one week at a time. If you can help, contact Tom K.

Sign up for Circle Suppers

The next Circle Supper will be held Saturday, September 28. These are small potluck dinners, held in MCUUF members' homes. Visitors and newcomers are especially welcome. If you would like to attend or be a host, e-mail Jonathan E.

ODES on a Theme

The next ODES discussion will be held after the service on Sunday, September 29, from 11:30 to 12:30, and may run longer if people want to continue. This discussion is designed to be part of the community involvement in our ministerial search process, along with the congregational survey and the workshop on September 15, and it will help prepare us for upcoming congregational conversations about worship that are in the process of being scheduled.

The theme is: **“To-may-toes/To-mah-toes; Religious Words are Not Just Small Po-tay-toes/Po-tah-toes.** The words we use to describe ourselves and our beliefs hold many meanings. What do terms such as: “religion, faith, worship, prayer, church, spirit, soul and God” mean to us individually and how should they be used by MCUUF?”

The **Women's Awareness Circle** will meet on **Friday, September 20, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.** in the home of Irene K. (Please note: this is the 3rd Friday of the month.) The topic will be: How people come to change their minds. “I used to think . . . but now I realize. . . .” Please RSVP by calling Irene. This group is open to all MCUUF women.

Our Whole Lives Lifespan Sexuality Education

Seventh through ninth graders are invited to join the *“Our Whole Lives Lifespan Sexuality Education”* program, which will start in mid-September and meet approximately two Sundays per month at the Grange during church services. There will also be a few additional meetings in the fall.

Our Whole Lives 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* not only provides facts about anatomy and human development but also helps participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality. Unlike many other sexuality curricula, this program is comprehensive and progressive. In an inclusive and developmentally appropriate manner, it addresses sensitive topics that are typically excluded. The curriculum was developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ. The program does not promote a specific religious

doctrine. The underlying values of the program reflect the justice-oriented traditions of both denominations. More info is available at: <http://www.uua.org/re/owl/>

To register for the program, to get a copy of the draft schedule, or for additional information, please contact Alicia B.

We need to recruit additional youth for this program, so please help us spread the word about this unique opportunity.

You can be a gift to a teen.

Join fellow UU s in mentoring teens through **Mentor For Success**. We have many kids aged 14-18 waiting to be matched with caring adult mentors. The teens are referred by school counselors and desperately need the stability and encouragement of a mentor. It's fun and rewarding and can be the critical ingredient for a struggling area teen. Contact Bonnie N.

Care Team

MCUUF strives to be a community that supports each other. If you or someone you know in the fellowship has a need because of a loss, illness, or other difficulty, please notify the Rev. Ken Jones or any member of our Care Team: Jane F., Anita J., Ray K., Jay L., or Tom P. The Care Team will do its best to organize respectful and appropriate help for this situation.