



MID-COLUMBIA UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

MCUUF NEWSLETTER—OCTOBER 2013

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Sex Ed and Religion: A Perfect Couple

Adult volunteers are saving lives in Hood River this year. They're facilitating sexuality education, in classes sponsored by churches. The curriculum is anchored in life-affirming values and based on scientific knowledge. In a culture that uses sex as a marketing tool to sell everything from cars to soda, these folks are the antidote (and my heroes).

Fifteen years ago, two religious denominations developed the best human sexuality curriculum around. It's called Our Whole Lives, affectionately known as "OWL." The Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ (Congregational) wrote OWL to support children, teens, and adults in developing healthy values and accurate knowledge related to sexuality.

The Unitarian Universalist Association has this to say about the program:

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.

Several years ago I served on a committee to advise the school district on selection of health curricula. They included the obvious things, like nutrition, safety, and the biology of how our bodies work. Health education in our schools also addresses the nasty trio of alcohol-drugs-sex. (There's also a heavy emphasis on earthquake safety, but that's just because California buys a lot of textbooks.)

So it struck me that some health education reasonably takes an abstinence stance. I believe that people can live fully actualized lives without ever taking up use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco.

Sex is different, though. Our sexuality is an ingrained piece of who we are, and I believe that integrating our own sexuality and gender identity leads to adult lives that are more secure, loving, and whole. It also creates communities that can embrace and affirm the diversity of people they encompass.

The youth participating in this program have a remarkable opportunity ahead of them. I'm tremendously grateful to the adult leaders and facilitators of the Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and Riverside Community Church who are making this experience possible for the young people of our community. It's a life-affirming opportunity, and one of our best incarnations as liberal religious people.

In Faith, Kristen

FROM OUR MINISTER

My. The new pope is certainly creating some waves.

Few outside the world of Roman Catholicism can fully appreciate the intensity of the shock waves created when an interview was published with Pope Francis in which he said that the church was “obsessed” with matters such as abortion, birth control, and gay marriage. This obsessing, he said, hinders the church’s ability to minister to the poor and marginalized and limits the boundaries of the church’s inclusiveness. It is noteworthy that the interview in which he said these things was actually conducted some weeks before it was published by several Jesuit journals around the world, but the furor erupted, of course, upon publication. It is also noteworthy that the day after publication, Pope Francis was ready to issue a clarification to satisfy the more conservative Catholics. It was a clarification reaffirming his conviction that these acts—contraception, abortion, and gay marriage—are in opposition to correct teaching and morality. But his remarks were only about priorities of the church. Obviously, this Jesuit from Argentina has read Machiavelli.

My first thought on hearing this news was one of relief. Finally, maybe this largest church in the world, which holds so much sway not only over the world but equally where I live in the Yakima Valley, might be ready to join the 21st century (or, for that matter, the 20th). Maybe this will allow for even more opportunities for us to join with our faith neighbors in the important ministry of healing the world and lifting people up. Yeah, I know it doesn’t actually change the official doctrines of the Catholic Church, but it does open up a conversation that I know is sorely needed.

My second thought was a little more mixed, although I admit it came from a somewhat ego-centric place. That was the thought that if the Catholic Church is evolving toward a more open-minded and inclusive ministry, there may not be as many people yearning for (our) Unitarian Universalist alternative. In my years in UU churches, I have met more ex-Catholics who left their faith community because of guilt and obsession over these kinds of issues. I admit, there’s ample opportunity for important ministry there.

I was in seminary in the 1990s, in the Bay Area, at a consortium of seminaries that included three Catholic ones (Franciscan, Jesuit, and Dominican). As you can imagine, the contemporary Bay Area is a place that is widely accepting and not at all enthralled with the so-called “traditional” teachings of the Catholic Church on sexual morality. That is maybe why, on the first day of school, Professor Bob Kimball said to us UU students that we’ll find we have more in common with our Catholic brothers and sisters than any other denomination. I found his words hard to believe that first day, but I soon came to appreciate them wholeheartedly.

I know there are countless Catholics out there who have been struggling all their lives with the conflict between supporting their faith communities and living their values, like nearly all of my seminary classmates. For them I celebrate the new Pope’s inclusive message.

Maybe now we can join hands and do the really important work in this world.

In faith, Ken

SUNDAY SERVICES

October 6—Rev. Ken Jones, “Human Beings, not Hum-machines!” In this second in a series of sermons on the Unitarian Universalist principles, Rev. Jones explores what it means to affirm and promote "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

What is worship? What is it that brings us together on Sunday mornings? If you are interested in these topics, please join us for a conversation after the service on Sunday, October 6. The conversation will be facilitated by the Rev. Ken Jones and will include at least one member of our Ministerial Search Committee, who will provide information from the recently completed survey and will be listening for what a new settled minister might want to know about us. We'll meet upstairs at 11:30; the discussion will take about an hour.

October 13—Rev. Maggie Sebastian. Rev. Sebastian, one of Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital's chaplains, returns to our pulpit.

Gorge Grown Mobile Farmers' Market (see announcement below).

October 20—Zoe Pressley, “Songwriting the Soul.” A musician and storyteller, Zoe will share her work and process.

October 27—Mark Alter from Wy'East UU Fellowship is coming to preach on loss and love and life.

ODES on a Theme discussion after the service (see announcement below).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shelter team organizing: Eleven of us have already signed up to serve at our local warming shelter again this winter. Want to learn more about how you can help provide a warm safe place for our poorest neighbors? See Paul Blackburn.

The Gorge Grown Mobile Farmers' Market will be coming to our October 13 service. Gorge Grown is appreciative of the support MCUUF has offered to help develop this program, which gets fresh, locally grown produce out to underserved communities in the Gorge. This year the Mobile Market served seven different communities. After the October 13 service, the Mobile Market will be set up outside for you to buy local produce and to hear more about how this project operates. Local apples, squash, pears, and more will be available. Come see what UU is supporting and learn more about your local food system.

Oregon Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice, October 19, Eugene, OR
At this annual meeting, UUs from around the state will gather in Eugene to decide statewide advocacy priorities for 2014 and to commit themselves to working together on those social justice issues. In 2014 there will be a short session of the state Legislature and an election that will probably include a marriage equality ballot initiative. For information on and the marriage equality ballot initiative, call 541-387-4011.

Marriage for same-sex couples is now legal in 13 states, but Oregon is one of the 30

states that has a constitutional amendment banning it. The only way to change that is through a vote of the people. Basic Rights Oregon has spent years working to build support for the freedom to marry in Oregon, and the national mood is very positive. Momentum is with us, but in order to win, we must have conversations with our neighbors, co-workers, families, and friends about why marriage matters. And we must have the financial support to run an effective and efficient campaign. Please attend a house party on Friday, Nov. 1, to learn more about how you can support this watershed campaign—Oregonians United for Marriage (OR4M). For more information, contact Paul Blackburn at 541-387-4011.

The Women's Awareness Circle will meet 7-8:30 p.m. Friday, October 25, in the home of Gail A. The Circle is open to all UU Women. Trish H. will facilitate the discussion. The topic will be "The Illusion of Control." Do you struggle with trying to control things that cannot be controlled? Do you feel like you are being controlled? How much progress have you made in learning to tell the difference between what can be controlled and what cannot?

ODES on a Theme is an adult Religious Exploration discussion program. A topic is introduced then we form small groups to provide the **O**pportunity to **D**iscuss, **E**xplore, and **S**hare our beliefs and opinions. The emphasis is on participation, not prior knowledge. No advance reading, preparation or commitment to attend is required. Discussions will be after Sunday services, from 11:30 – 12:30 at the Grange, on October 27, Nov 17 and Dec 15. Topics will be announced in advance here. If questions, contact Eric E.

Start-of-School clothing give-away for kids in K-12: Saturday, October 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 11th & Eugene streets in Hood River. Donations of new or gently used clothing items are being accepted now at St. Mark's.

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 Fetisoff, Anita Johnston, Ray Klebba, Jay Larsen, or Tom Penchoen. The Care Team will do its best to organize respectful and appropriate help for this situation.