



MID-COLUMBIA UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

MCUUF NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER, 2013

LEADERSHIP LETTER

A Year Together

“Whenever a trapdoor swings or the roof caves in, don’t ask ‘Why?’ Why will get you nowhere. The only question worth asking is ‘Where do we go from here?’ And part of the answer must be ‘together.’ Together we kneel. Together we walk, holding each another’s hands, holding each another up. Together we do love’s work and thereby we are saved.” - Forrest Church, *Love and Death*

Our congregation has experienced several of those “trapdoor moments” in the last few years. I can think back on many times when it felt, at the moment, like the floor had gone out from under us. We’ve lived through recent difficulty with real estate, with ministers departing unexpectedly, with an unsuccessful initial search for an interim minister, and with a rising sense of collective anxiety about our future.

Do you remember that feeling, “On no...what’s going to happen to us now?”

I also remember, as each of those crises passed a sense of relief and renewed focus on the key elements of what we seek to do in the world. As the events fade in the rear-view mirror, I find myself able to focus my attention forward and feel many others of you able to do the same. One of the reasons we’ve been able to do this is a little noted anniversary that we achieved this month.

It’s been a year since Rev Ken Jones joined us as interim minister. He now holds the record as the longest serving minister in our congregation’s history!

I’m very grateful to Rev. Jones for his joyous and thoughtful work with us. Please join me in celebrating a year of Rev. Jones’ interim ministry and committing to the life-changing, faithful work that we can all do together going forward.

In Faith,
Kristen

FROM OUR MINISTER

Wow. Reading our dear Board President’s message in here informs me that I am now the longest-serving Minister in the history of the Mid-Columbia UU Fellowship. Sounds like there should be honor in that – but it happened so fast! Or at least it seems like it.

It doesn’t even feel like it has been a year, except for the fact that Satus Pass is losing its allure as winter sets upon it again. The good news is that I’ve had ample opportunity to plot out the exact miles and average times for all the variations on the route that runs between Hood River and Yakima. My favorite routes are those that bring me in through Bingen and across the \$1 bridge into Hood River. I like that bridge because it feels so – well, bridgelike. Not just because it’s a narrow, seemingly rickety bridge over a formidable stretch of a major river (as if that weren’t enough!) but also because it feels like a bridge that teeters between two very

different environments. More than once I've crossed it (in high winds, of course) and looked to the west to see thick clouds/fog/rain, and to the east see blue sky. The gorge is sort of a chasm that cuts through the Cascade curtain, and I don't mean that only in a geologic sense. What I've learned over the past year is that our particular place in the Gorge feels in some ways like it's on a precipice between two worlds, delicately balancing on a windy spot between the wet, urban environments to the west and the dry open prairie to the east.

Perhaps I believe this only because it is a fitting analogy to where MCUUF is right now: delicately balancing between a past as an informal fellowship without a consistent Ministerial presence and a future in which people feel as though this religious community has stability and a solid future. Indeed, the role of an Interim Minister is usually likened to being a bridge between a congregation's past and future, and I can tell you, after a year in service to you all, that I certainly feel as though this is the case. The feeling of apprehension and anxiety over the rocky road that you all had traveled prior to my arrival has slowly been giving way to confidence and excitement about your future. What a wonderful thing to experience!

And yes, I must admit that it feels to me at this point that I've crossed the "precipice" of that bridge; that I've moved well beyond the "Hi, glad to meet you" phase and see in the not too distant future that time in which we'll begin to say goodbye. But for now, I'll continue to enjoy the bridge, of being with you and ministering together in the present moment with gratitude and faith.

Peace,
Ken

SUNDAY SERVICES

December 8—Rev. Ken Jones, "Anything I Want!" In this continuing series on the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism, Ken takes on the fourth principles, "a free and responsible search for truth." Does this mean, as some are wont to imply, that we can believe whatever we want? Yes, and no.

December 15—This wonderful multimedia service, led by Elaine C. and Eric E., will focus on finding and appreciating wonder in our lives. It will include an ODES discussion in the service, instead of a sermon. See details below.

December 22—Bruce B., Theresa N. and guest Priya K. will present an "Interfaith Yule" service to celebrate the return of the sun.

December 29—Rev. Ken Jones, "Question Box; a.k.a. Stump the Minister." Come bring your questions for our Minister and watch him attempt to answer them and possibly create an impromptu sermon at the same time. If nothing else, we'll watch him sweat off a few holiday pounds and, as always, enjoy one another's company.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Evensong

MCUUF is announcing an eight-week series of gatherings in which participants will explore individual life journeys through sharing thoughts, experiences, doubts, and beliefs about traditional religious concepts. Listening is at the core of Evensong. It offers people the opportunity to listen, speak of what matters to them and be with one another in respectful ways. Listening solidifies relationships and is a foundation for community.

The program will be facilitated by Rev. Ken Jones with the assistance of Trish H. and will begin on February 2, 2014. The dates for the series will be Sundays: Feb. 2, 16, Mar. 2, 16, Apr 6, May 4, 18, and June 1. Participants will be asked to bring a sack lunch and meet at The Grange from 12-2pm. Child care will be provided. Participants are expected to be able to attend all eight sessions and no one will be added after the sessions have begun in February. The group will be limited to 15 persons.

Please contact Trish H. if you wish to sign up.

ODES Discussion, December 15

“As I Walk Along, I Wonder. . .” We spend most of our lives thinking and doing. Today we’ll take the time to explore the wonder of being. We are, after all, human beings. We don’t have to just think to ourselves, “What a wonderful world.” This ODES program gives us the opportunity to share our thoughts and feelings of wonder.

Our Food on the Fourth program has not been productive, so we are returning to asking people to bring food contributions for FISH on ANY Sunday. Donated foods can be placed in the FISH grocery bag near the podium ANY Sunday, and we will transport to the Food Bank.

Women’s Awareness Circle

The Women's Awareness Circle will not meet in December. Please look for information about our January 24th meeting in the January newsletter.

UU Meetup Group

The UU Meetup and Hiking Group is an email list of people who like to share events with others. Examples of events that have been shared are musical and theatrical events at the Columbia Center of the Arts in Hood River, movies, school performances, charitable events and, of course, hikes. Sometimes we meet up for dinner before evening events. Anyone can initiate a UU meetup by sending an email announcing the meetup opportunity to the UU Meetup email list. If you do not have the latest email list, you can obtain it from Steve C. or Anita J.

If you would like to have your name added to that list, please email or call Steve at [shcastles at embarqmail dot com](mailto:shcastles@embarqmail.com), or email Anita at [anitajj at yahoo com com](mailto:anitajj@yahoo.com).

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 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.

Upcoming Performances in Hood River

Many UUs are involved in creating these opportunities in the Gorge.

- The December VOCI concerts are scheduled for Saturday, December 7, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, December 8, at 2 p.m. in the high school auditorium. It will feature choral music of wintertime from many traditions and cultures.
- Scenes from “The Nutcracker” will be featured in three performances: twice on Saturday, December 14, at 2 and 4 p.m., and at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 15, at the Hood River Middle School auditorium.

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