



Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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December, 2003
Vol. LI No. 4

The Forum

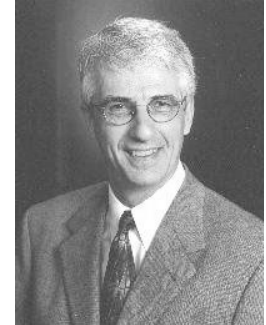
Richard's Reflections

A colleague reported on a billboard that read: "Absolutely Free! Love without limit; Peace of Mind; Life forever; Available at [name of church]." This was not an ad for a UU church, and my colleague replied that Unitarian Universalism is not free or easy. It is not easy to make ethical decisions as we search for the truth that comes out of the situation in which our choices must be made. We do not offer life forever or peace of mind and, although we do try to provide love without limit, but we don't always succeed.

Life demands that our religion not offer the easy answer or the easy life. We are called to confront evil, to alleviate hunger and homelessness and cruelty, not live with blinders to the persistent problems that beset so many.

My colleague's billboard would read: "Yours for the sharing—the world's wisdom; an opportunity to help others; leaning how to live in faith, love and justice offered at the Unitarian Universalist Church."

This is the season of giving and sharing. May it always be in season at MVUUF. And may your holiday celebrations be that. I wish you joy these wintry days.



Rev. Richard Venus

Richard

Candlelight Service and Party

A MVUUF tradition is to celebrate together on Christmas Eve with candles, song and a special program. This year **Rick Wagner** has prepared a delightful pageant. The service begins at 7:00 p.m. Following the service all are invited to **Richard and Marcia Venus'** home for treats and hearthside conversation.

Directions: Turn right (north) out of the MVUUF parking lot. Go to the second light (US 725). Turn right and go three lights to Paragon. Turn left (north) and take Paragon past the post office. Just under viaduct, turn left on Normandy Ridge. Take it a short block to Mountain Trail. Turn left on Mountain Trail to the end of the street (one block)—7299 Mountain Trail. Phone 435-4780.

OUR MISSION:

The Miami Valley Unitarian Fellowship, a Unitarian Universalist congregation, is a community of individuals who honor human diversity and respect religious differences, and is a supportive, accepting fellowship where people of all ages may grow spiritually, intellectually and emotionally, and create ethical solutions to social problems by sharing time, talents, and personal resources.

Saturday and Sunday Programs

Saturday, December 6—5:00 p.m.

Akil Sharif will present a Kwanzaa Celebration. Come experience this meaningful holiday ritual.

Sunday, December 7—11:00 a.m.

“**Geometry of Reverence.**” Join *Calen Rayne* for another “Old Time Buddhist Gospel Hour,” with music provided by UU Folks and the choir, as well as *Sparky* and *Rhonda Rucker*, who will bring special music as a prelude to their Sunday afternoon concert (See elsewhere for details.) *Richard Donnelly* is the worship associate.

Sunday, December 14—11:00 a.m.

“**Excavating Jesus.**” *Richard Venus* will bring insights from John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed who, after studying the archeological record, have written about the historical Jesus. *Joyce Cameron* and *Hillary Wagner* will bring special music. *Carol Narigon* is the worship associate.

Sunday, December 14—7:00 p.m.

WASSAIL CELEBRATION led by the MVUUF choir. Please bring a favorite holiday treat to share.

Saturday, December 20—7:00 p.m.

Winter Solstice/Yule Celebration. We will take time to honor the darkness and what gifts it brings as we also celebrate the return of the sun, which will begin to fill more of our days until the Summer Solstice, where it will reach its peak. This evening will involve ritual, song, and an indoor walking winter-garden meditation designed by *Gail Davidson*. Please bring a white unscented candle in a safe holder to use during the ritual. This celebration is for all ages. Led by *Gail Davidson*, *Carol Narigon*, *Genevieve Harvey* and *Don Shows*.

Sunday, December 21—11:00 a.m.

“**The Teaching of Jesus: Casting the First Stone.**” *Richard Venus* will reflect on this well-known story of Jesus’ compassion that is probably not faithful to the historic Jesus. *Mark Kalafatas* is the worship associate.

Wednesday, December 24—7:00 p.m.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE. A tradition at MVUUF is to celebrate with candles, special stories and music. Members of the congregation will offer readings compiled by *Rick Wagner* who has written of historic UUs and their thoughts that speak to this time of year.

Sunday, December 28—11:00 a.m.

“**A Service for the New Year: Endings Are Beginnings.**” *Richard Venus* will lead this service that includes an MVUUF tradition of burning regrets from our past and reflecting on hopes for the future. *Phil Wise* is the worship associate.

Our Staff

The Rev. Richard Venus, Minister

Office Hours: By appointment (except Monday)

Office Manager

Office Hours: Mon.—Thurs., 9:00—3:00 p.m.

Barb Weber, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Office Hours: Tue. 11—1:30 p.m., Sunday Morning

Hillary Gregg Wagner, Music Director

Office Hours: By appointment



MVUUF Board of Trustees

Kathy Mays
President

Kathleen Turner
Vice-president

Judy Pickett
Treasurer

Mary Anne Frey
Secretary

Jamie McQuinn
Public Relations Trustee

Carol Vincent
Activities Trustee

Maureen O’Meara
Social Concerns Trustee

Laurie Shows
LRE Trustee

Barbara Czestochowa
Membership Trustee

Bill Wilson
Operations Trustee

Highlights:

<i>Board Reports</i>	<i>page 3</i>
<i>Nominating Committee Report</i>	<i>page 4</i>
<i>Announcements</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>Social Concerns</i>	<i>page 7</i>
<i>Peace and Justice Intern</i>	<i>page 8</i>
<i>Groups & Clubs</i>	<i>page 9</i>
<i>Notes from Hillary</i>	<i>page 10</i>
<i>Religious Education</i>	<i>page 11</i>
<i>Around the Fellowship</i>	<i>page 13</i>
<i>Grocery Certificates</i>	<i>page 13</i>
<i>Calendar</i>	<i>page 15</i>

This year our Sunday services will reflect the theme *Roots and Wings*.

Board Reports

The MVUUF Board conducted the following business when it met November 20, 2003 at the Fellowship.

Present: **Kathleen Turner**, Vice President; **Judy Pickett**, Treasurer; **Mary Anne Frey**, Secretary; **Richard Venus**, Minister; **Chuck Thomas**, Associate Minister; **Jamie McQuinn**, PR Trustee; **Carol Vincent**, Activities Trustee; **Maureen O'Meara**, Social Concerns Trustee; **Bill Wilson**, Operations Trustee; **Barbara Czestochowa**, Membership Trustee; and **Laurie Shows**, LRE Trustee. **Kathy Mays**, President, was not present. Also attending were **Barb Weber**, **Carol Narigon**, **Rich Robinson**, **Gail Davidson**, **Genevieve Harvey**, and **Alysoun Reichard** (for part of the meeting).

- Received a report from the treasurer, including the following. **Kate** and **Sean Halpin** have agreed to run the service auction again this year. It will be held March 20. The treasurer and others attended a meeting with National City Bank, and she signed papers for a one-year mortgage loan of \$704,000, to be renegotiated at the end of the year.
- Received a report from the Personnel Committee (represented by **Kathleen Turner**) on the status of the search for a new office administrator.
- Determined that **Jamie McQuinn** would report to the congregation on this board meeting at the service on November 30.
- Received a report from the Nominating Committee (**Alysoun Reichard** and **Genevieve Harvey**) that included the process the committee had followed and the slate of nominees it was recommending.
- Discussed the process for presentation of nominees at the meeting and the process for voting at the congregational meeting. The process will be published in the Forum, and nominees biographies and photos will be available on the website and the bulletin board.
- Decided that a survey to identify the interests of each individual member will be passed out at the congregational meeting, and members will be encouraged to complete it.

Mary Anne Frey, Secretary

Membership News

New Member Brunch

Individuals who have attended an orientation or who have been members of another UU congregation are invited to attend a membership signing brunch on January 11 after the 11:00 a.m. service. Signing the membership book signals a commitment of talent and financial resources to support the continuation of our liberal religious community. Please RSVP to the office at 436-3628 by Sunday, January 4.

Caring and Sharing

Please let **Lynn Haven** know if any member is hospitalized, suffering with an illness or recovering from an accident.

Orientation

Those exploring Unitarian Universalism and the Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship are invited to attend a monthly orientation session after the service on the third Sunday of each month. **The next orientation will be December 21.**

Barbara Czestochowa, Membership Trustee



Our thanks to Scott MacKenzie and Joe Zimmerman for building our new sign!

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee has made its report to the Board of Trustees regarding the slate of candidates selected for the election at our January congregational meeting and the process by which the committee selected these candidates. Below are excerpts of this report. The full report, including biographical information of the candidates, is available at our website, <http://mvuuf.org/governance/governance.html>, and from the Fellowship office. The report is also posted on the bulletin board next to the Founder's Room.

For each open position, the Nominating Committee has identified the willing candidate they feel is the best choice. However, the democratic process demands that the congregation have the final say. Any voting member who feels that another candidate will better serve the congregation is invited to nominate that person from the floor during the congregational meeting. If any floor nominations are made, each position will be voted on individually. If there are no floor nominations, we will vote once to accept or reject the slate as a whole.

Introduction

The Nominating Committee is very pleased to report that we have completed our task for this year. We have endorsed eight nominees for the Board of Trustees and two nominees to serve as Endowment Trustees. We are very excited about the individuals who have agreed to serve, and we believe the new Board of Trustees will be both effective and dynamic.

The committee had a big task this year: eight of ten members of the Board of Trustees will leave their positions in June, 2004. Now that we are in our new building, the Fellowship has reached a critical juncture. With so many new Board members coming in, the committee felt it was essential to find nominees who would be not just strong leaders, but leaders who would be able to establish working relationships quickly.

In addition, the committee felt that as the Fellowship prepares to grow, we need to move toward more codified, deliberative processes. In our first meeting, we discussed the need to develop more complete guidelines for the nominating process. We also discussed ways to solicit more input from the congregation. As the nominating process progressed, we found ourselves under greater scrutiny from the congregation than we expected. We tried to work on our processes, but we also had a limited amount of time in which to complete our task. The committee recognizes that our process was imperfect, but we feel that we have made progress toward improving the process. We also feel that the outcome of this round of nominations has been very positive for the Fellowship.

Our Process

The nominating committee first met in September. We felt that the first step in the nominating process must be to understand what each position entails. In conjunction with the current Board of Trustees, Genevieve Harvey worked very hard to provide job descriptions for each Trustee position and post them to the Fellowship website.

In our first meeting, we also agreed that we needed to ask the congregation for their input. We placed an announcement in the bulletin, and Alysoun Reichard made an announcement during a Sunday service asking for recommendations and suggestions. In response to our efforts, we received comments from more than thirty members of the congregation. We also held an open forum in October. This event was lightly attended but useful.

While we were gathering input from the congregation, the committee worked on developing guidelines. We decided that each nominee should be evaluated for overall leadership skill, and Genevieve Harvey did some research to provide the committee with lists of leadership qualities. We also decided that with such a large turnover on the Board, we would place a great deal of emphasis on experience and long-term membership, especially in the Executive Committee. We discussed the need to provide as much balance as possible, representing as many different segments of the congregation as possible, and balancing such factors as age, gender, and length of membership.

Finally, we decided on a process for selecting individual nominees. After a thorough discussion of the suggested candidates for each position, the committee would attempt to reach consensus on each nominee. If we were unable to reach consensus, we would each rank our choices for the nominee and compare our rankings. If we were still unable to reach a decision, we would vote. I am pleased to report that we were able to reach consensus in all cases.

To be eligible for election to the Board of Trustees, a candidate must be a voting member of the Fellowship for at least one full year. I have verified the voting member status of our nominees with Barbara Czestochowa, Membership Trustee.

One aspect of the process that proved to be quite difficult was deciding how much to share about our internal deliberations with interested parties outside the committee. The committee accepted confidential comments from some members. We felt that it was our duty to "take the temperature" of the congregation, and we tried to listen to what everyone had to say. Some members of the congregation called for greater transparency in our process and felt that it was inappropriate for the nominating committee to base its decisions on confidential comments. However, the committee feels that we represent the entire congregation, including those members of the congregation who may not be comfortable with open debate. Most of the comments we received were quite general in nature, such as suggestions that the Board include long-term members. In no case did we base a decision solely on confidential comments. Still, this is clearly an issue worthy of further consideration.

Our Nominees

Our nominees are as follows:

Executive Committee

President: ***Jamie McQuinn***
Vice-President: ***Jim Faulconer***
Secretary: ***Carol Narigon***
Finance Trustee: ***Calen Rayne***

Trustees

Operations Trustee: ***Joe Zimmerman***
Public Relations Trustee: ***Lee White***
Activities Trustee: ***Gail Davidson***
Membership Trustee: ***Rich Robinson***

Endowment Trustees

New three-year term: ***Dan Narigon***
Replacing Calen Rayne: ***Wyatt Parkinson***

Maureen O'Meara will continue as Social Concerns Trustee, and ***Laurie Shows*** will continue as Religious Education Trustee. ***Bev Wince*** will continue as an Endowment Trustee.

Conclusion

As Chair of the Nominating Committee, I wish to recognize the efforts of all the committee's members. Each member of the committee demonstrated great commitment to the process. Because of her current life situation, and considering the enormity of this year's nominating task, ***Joyce Gibbs*** realized that she was not in a position to devote the amount of time required, so she stepped aside for this nominating cycle. She remains a member of the committee and will participate in the next nominating cycle. ***Bonnie Thompson*** graciously accepted an invitation to fill Joyce's position as an acting member of the committee for this nominating cycle. Her appointment was approved by ***Kathy Mays***, President of the Board of Trustees.

Beginning in September, the committee met together once a week. All the committee members attended the meetings faithfully, and each member offered input as to which candidates to consider. Each of the final selections was unanimous. It was an honor for me to serve with such dedicated and thoughtful people, and I thank them for their service.

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee by

Alysoun Reichard, Chair

Committee Members:

Don Ferguson
Alysoun Reichard
Laurel Herminghausen
Donald Renner
Joyce Gibbs
Genevieve Harvey
Bonnie Thompson (Acting Member)

Announcements

Update on the Teresa Neeley Case

Teresa's sentencing on October 30th did not go as anticipated. She was able to pay only \$5,500.00 of the agreed \$10,000.00. Judge Wagner sentenced her to five years of probation and ninety days of jail time commencing on December 1. However, Assistant Prosecutor Chris Delnicki feels that if the balance is paid prior to that date, her jail time will be suspended.

Prior to sentencing, Richard delivered a statement to the judge describing the financial and emotional hardships Teresa's actions caused our Fellowship, and requested appropriate consequences with consideration to the fact that she has two children. Richard, in his usual style, was both eloquent and compassionate. Thanks, Richard, for having taken on such a difficult task.

Kathy Mays

Governance Committee

Are you interested in how our church makes decisions and finds meaningful direction? We need your input and insight as we look forward to how our church might change some of its current governance structure as we continue to grow into a larger and more dynamic congregation. Help us brainstorm and explore all the possibilities. If you are at all interested in voicing your opinion and joining the discussion, please contact **Chuck Thomas**, **Gail Davidson** or **Rich Robinson**.

New Chair Order

We will be ordering another 75 new chairs for the sanctuary on or before February 2004. A member has made a generous donation to make this happen. If you would like to order one or more chairs with a plaque, please e-mail or phone **Iris Carter** to place your order. The cost is \$110.00 per chair.

Upcoming Events

Covenant Group ReMix Party!

If you have been in a covenant group or want to be, we want to party with you!

On **Saturday, December 6, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.** at the Fellowship, we will celebrate the connections built over the past 4-18 months and commence the new group formations. **We want you to come if you have been in a covenant group or/and if you want to be in a covenant group.** A soup supper will be provided by the existing covenant groups as they have their last "sit-down" together before joining new groups (or leaving the program).

If you want more information about Covenant Groups, contact **Genevieve Harvey** or check out the new section on the website:
<http://mvuuf.org/membership/cg.html>

Wassail Bowl

Our traditional Wassail service and dessert potluck will be **December 14 at 7:00 p.m.** The choir will present the program and **Jen** and **Erik Hunter** are in charge of the food. The food isn't limited to desserts; snack items and hors d'oeuvres are also welcome. Mark your calendar. This is a great way to start the Christmas season.

Christmas Dinner

If you are living too far from your family to join them on Christmas Day, bring some food and eat turkey with Fellowship family at 2:00 p.m.. **Carol Narigon** is in charge of this annual event. A good time is guaranteed.

New Year's Eve Party

Come join us December 31, 2003, 7:00 p.m. till whenever we decide to be done as we bring in the New Year with fun and fellowship!

Planned Activities include:

- A midnight service to "drum in" the new year
- Appetizer potluck - Bring your favorite recipe to share
- Music and dancing in the MVUUF Cafe
- Crafts and drum making in the creativity room
- A game room for the competitive among us
- A delicious, traditional New Year's meal after the midnight service
- Child care for those who need it.

Please contact **Ann Rismiller** if you have questions or would like to be involved in planning/preparation.

Concerning Social Concerns

Social Concerns Committee

The Social Concerns Committee will meet on **Tuesday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m.** We always love to see new people and hear new ideas for social action! Please join us.

We are currently working on putting together a long-term social action project that we can work on as a congregation. Look for upcoming information in the January Forum.

This Christmas we will be supporting both the House of the People, a Rwandan refugee house in Dayton, and the young women who participated in Planned Parenthood's Dream Shop last year. Last Christmas, we purchased gifts for all the residents at House of the People, as well as 15 girls involved in the Dream Shop. Although the Dream Shop lost its funding, Planned Parenthood is having a reunion with the girls and their families this December, and we have decided to provide gifts for them again.

Please watch for announcements about this project during the holidays-- we'll need donations to help purchase needed items for our families!

Kate Santucci , chair

Emily Upham Social Activist Award—Nominations Due January 2, 2004

Nomination forms for the Emily Upham Award will be available throughout December at the information table or in the Social Concerns box. All nominations are due before January 02, 2004. Emily was a member of MVUUF who throughout her life supported her vision for world peace and justice through her professional and, especially, her volunteer efforts, as a young woman with the United Nations and as an older woman with many local organizations including the World Federalists. Your nomination should reflect one whom you believe has been involved in on-going professional and/or volunteer activities in the community that support a vision of a better world. Please describe those qualities you feel support your nomination and (1) place your form in the Social Concerns mailbox or (2) send it to **Maureen O'Meara**, Social Concerns Trustee, at the Fellowship address with EMILY UPHAM NOMINATION marked on the envelope.

The Emily Upham Social Activist Award for 2003 will be announced at the January congregational meeting. If you have any questions, please contact Maureen.

Social Action Workshop—January 10, 2004

Everyone is invited to attend a workshop to identify a social justice project for congregation-wide action. The workshop will take place the morning of January 10. It will build on the social justice workshop held last January and on the ongoing discussions by the Social Concerns Committee to identify projects that can involve a wide spectrum of Fellowship members by integrating direct action, witness, education, and work toward systemic change, the four modes of social action identified in Gilbert's *The Prophetic Imperative*. In preparation for the workshop, the Social Concerns Committee will discuss its recommendations for projects at its meeting Tuesday, December 9, at 7:30 at the Fellowship. Please join them.

The project chosen at the workshop will be announced at the congregational meeting with a call to the entire congregation to help implement it. Please contact **Maureen O'Meara**, **Gail Davidson**, or **Kate Santucci** for more information and to register.

Guest at Your Table, January 25-March 7, 2004

This program serves as the annual fundraiser for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, founded in 1939 to respond to the needs of refugees of the Nazi Holocaust. The UUSC continues to work today "to empower women, defend the rights of children and support the struggles of oppressed communities" (UUSC highlights 2001-2002, UUA Annual Reports 2002). Guest at Your Table allows you and your family to sponsor an international visitor by donating once a day as you eat your main meal or to write a check for your guest's "meal card." **Look for further details in your January forum.**

Maureen O'Meara
Social Concerns trustee

Helping Hands

The next lunch at the Other Place will be December 13. Please check the clipboards to see what food items are needed. You may also contact **Diane Dover** for more information.

The Earth Circle

The Earth Circle continues to meet monthly on the second Wednesday from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. For our November meeting, we had a delicious pot luck followed by a presentation from our guest speaker, Pat Murphy from Community Service Inc. in Yellow Springs. Pat, who has been to Cuba several times, gave an interesting talk on the many positive ways Cuba has adjusted after their energy crisis of the early 90's.

In January, we will start a new voluntary simplicity discussion course. The course is eight weeks long, covering one chapter each week over topics such as the concept of simplicity, money time, material possession, and the American dream. The book costs \$20.00 and the course is free. Call **Linda Yoder** if you are interested. This discussion course is limited to ten people but the Earth Circle is open to all.

ESP Contributions

MVUUF members contribute to the Emergency Services Pantry to help persons who run out of food stamps or are unable to purchase necessities that food stamps won't buy. Canned goods and other non-perishable food items and disposable diapers (size 3 or larger) are always needed. Paper grocery bags with handles as well as other sacks are also always welcome. Place contributions in the purple bin, marked ESP, in the kitchen. Thanks!

Ellen Beck

UUSC Coffee Project

MVUUF is participating in the UUSC Coffee Project program with the coffee we serve during coffee hour, and through the sale of coffee for home use. Packaged coffee is on sale after Sunday service.

Just Call Me Another Thrower

The Gospels report that Jesus of Nazareth said "The poor will always be with you." Taken at face value, this simple phrase haunts even the most committed social activist. It's particularly easy to get discouraged when we embrace direct social action, providing immediate assistance to those in need, as our way of giving back to the world. No matter how many meals we serve, how many children we clothe, how many families we help, there are always more. Are we really making a difference? At times, the future looks so dark that many are tempted to give up.

Social scientists even have a name for these dark times in an activist's life. They call it "compassion fatigue." Compassion fatigue is the emotional residue of exposure to working with the suffering, often resulting in feelings of hopelessness and cynicism. Doctors get it, trauma workers get it, counselors and addiction specialists too. And so, apparently, do those who provide direct help for the poor.

The Dayton Daily News' series on the homeless in Dayton struck such a chord with me. I know that MVUUF provides much needed food and other goods to the marginalized in our community and to those who just need some extra help during troubled times. My family helps as often as we can, through these and other efforts. But some dark days, the enormity of the task really gets to me. It is then that I recall this story. It helps me through the dark times — perhaps it will help you.

In his book *The Star Thrower*, Lorans Eislely mentions an incident that happened as he was walking along the beach in Costabel early one morning. It was shortly after a storm had subsided and as he walked, he noticed that thousands of starfish had been washed up on the beach. Ahead of him stooped a little boy, repeatedly bending down to pick up an object in the sand, then flinging the object beyond the breaking surf.

Eislely went up to him and asked, "Son, what are you doing?" The little boy answered. "I'm throwing starfish back into the sea because if I don't, they're going to die." "But there are thousands of starfish. In the larger scheme of things, you're not going to make much of a difference." The little boy looked up at him, stooped down again to pick up another starfish and, gently but quickly, flung it back into the ocean. "It's going to make a big difference to that one!" he replied.

Eislely left, continuing to walk down the beach but unable to get pictures of the little boy out of his mind. In time, he returned to the star thrower, silently picked up a starfish and spun it far into the waves. "I understand." he said. "Call me another thrower."

Just call me another thrower. Care to join me?

In faith,
Leslie Woodward

Upcoming Group and Club Meetings

MVUUF Book Club

The MVUUF Book Club meets one Wednesday each month at the Fellowship from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Those who wish to may come at 10:15 for some social time. All are welcome. For further information, call **Carol Vincent** or **Sylvia Wince**.

December 17

Icy Sparks by Gwyn Hyman Rubio. This will be a Christmas potluck and book exchange at the home of **Carol Vincent**. Call Carol for information.

Evening Book Discussion Group

The Evening Book Discussion Group will meet at **7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 9** at **Alice Lizee's** house to discuss *The Dress Lodger* by Sheri Holman.

In upcoming months, we will meet at **Catherine Queener's** on **January 13th** to discuss *The Book of Sarahs: A Family in Parts* by Catherine E. McKinley. In **February** we will meet on the **10th** at **Kathleen Pennington's** to discuss *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi. In **March** we will meet on the **9th** at **Diane Dover's** to discuss *Ten Little Indians* by Sherman Alexie.

New participants are welcome. Contact **Ann Snively** if you would like more information.

The First Thursday Theological Society will meet from **7:30 to 9:00 p.m. on December 4**, in the Founders Room. We will continue our study of **Ralph Waldo Emerson**. If you missed the last meeting or would like to start coming for the first time, see **Ann Snively** for copies of the handouts.

New participants are welcome. Childcare can be arranged if requested in advance.

Young Adult Network (YAN)

Young Adults (age 20-40?) of MVUUF will meet at the Second Street Market in Dayton on **December 20 at 10:00 a.m.** to have breakfast, have fun, and perhaps pick up some last-minute gifts for the holidays. For more information, contact **Genevieve Harvey**. To sign up for the UU-YAN email group so that you can keep up with this group and events that may not be decided in time to publicize, contact **Alisha Dolbeer**.

INTERWEAVE

INTERWEAVE, a support/discussion group for GLBT people and their allies, is now meeting on a new night. The group meets on the **third Wednesday** of each month (September through May) at 7 p.m. in the Founders Room at the Fellowship. For information, contact **Joyce Gibbs**.

Smart Choices is a group which meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month in the Founder's Room at 7:30 p.m. The focus is on the promotion of healthy living. Everyone is welcome. Contact person is **Lynn Haven**.

December 8: Almost-good-for-you cookie exchange and healthful food preparation. Each person attending is invited to bring a dozen cookies or holiday treats and the recipe for making that treat. We will each go home with a sampling of each kind of cookie. We will also listen to an audio tape which suggests ways to cook nutritious fast foods.

December 22: We will use color markers and pens to color pictures of wetland wildlife. The outlines are there for you, coloring book style. No special talent is needed! It should be a great stress reducer during the busy holiday season.

January 12: Pat Davis will present a workshop on how to use laughter to relieve stress. She is certified in this field.

January 26: Nancy Stamper will lead us in yoga exercises while seated in a chair. She will also teach us some breathing techniques which are beneficial to over-all physical fitness.

Poetic Insights

This group will meet at MVUUF at 1:30 p.m., **Dec. 28** (the last Sunday of each month). It is a group in which rough-draft, impromptu poetry or prose is written by the attendees after being given a general topic or stimulus. Those who wish to share what was written may do so. Everyone is welcome. Contact **Bev Wince** for further information.

Meditation Group

Join us Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:30 at the Fellowship for Meditation Group. We open with a reading from *Everyday Mind* and then sit quietly for 25-30 minutes. We then have a brief teaching and discussion referencing a myriad of world religious/spiritual paths, followed by a closing silent meditation— sort of a pre-service centering if you will. All are welcome. Please contact **Calen Rayne** if you have any questions.

Aikido Group

Aikido is a defensive, Japanese martial art with deeply spiritual aspects. Classes are open to all at the Fellowship and are led by **Greg** and **Katie Reese**. They take place on **Mondays** (6:45-8:00 p.m.) and **Saturdays** (9:45-11:00 a.m.). **Beginners are welcome and there is no charge to MVUUF members who want to participate in the sport but not get a ranking in aikido.**

🎵 *Notes from Hillary*

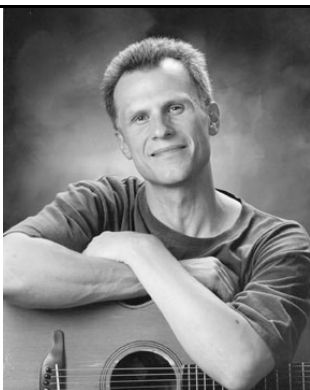
The premier performance of the MVUUF string orchestra will be on December 24. If you are a closet string player this is your last chance to be included in this performance. I am so happily surprised at the number of string players we have in our midst! The rest of you don't want to miss the very special evening of holiday music and the historic UUs' writings on Christmas!



Hillary Wagner
Music Director

Peter Mayer Concert **January 17, 2004, 7:00 p.m.**

This concert will touch your heart and lift your spirit. Peter Mayer is a Unitarian Universalist folk singer, musical storyteller, guitar master, and song-writer who explores the depths of our human experience and our interconnected web. He has performed at SUUSI and at this year's General Assembly in Boston. We have waited a year and a half to be able to get him to come to Dayton, and you won't want to miss his show. You can learn more about him at <http://www.petermayer.net/blueboat/>, but it is much better to hear and see him live! Tickets are \$10.00. **If you would like to reserve your ticket, call or email Genevieve Harvey.**



But you don't have to take it from me:

"Mayer's songs are crafted like fine Shaker furniture, with no place for superfluous embellishments or throw-away lines... (his) world is bright and hopeful and the transcendent nature of his lyrics...explore the mysteries of life...Mayer's fluid, clean, and tremendously intriguing guitar playing is topped with warm, rich vocals. This is music for the soul."

-- *Acoustic Guitar Magazine*

"I love Peter's work, though it irritates me that he plays so much better than I do. If I rocked half as hard as Peter does, I'd own the world by now."

-- *Janis Ian*, singer/songwriter

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker Concert **December 7, 2:00 p.m.**

We are honored to present nationally acclaimed singer and storyteller *Sparky Rucker* to MVUUF.

Pete Seeger says "*Sparky Rucker is unique! He'll make you glad to be alive and struggling.*"

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker have appeared at

- National Folk Festival- Scotland
- Smithsonian Folklife Festival
- National Conference of the Center for Black Music Research and College Music Society
- Old Songs Festival- New York
- Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- International Children's Festival- Wolf Trap Farm Park
- A Prairie Home Companion- NPR
- Carry It On- PBS
- Morning Edition- NPR
- Mountain Stage- NPR
- And countless other venues.

Join us **Sunday, December 7, at 2:00 pm** at our own Fellowship. The concert series is \$5 per person with a maximum of \$15 for a family. You do *not* want to miss this concert event!



Sparky and Rhonda Rucker

Lifespan Religious Education

Thoughts From Barb....

Even during my anti-religious college days, I wondered how I would raise my future children if they didn't have a church community. I knew that having many people to support, cherish, admonish and guide them would be vital in helping them become the adults I hoped they would be. I didn't realize at that time how much I would also need that support for myself as I parented them.



*Barb Weber
Director Of
RE*

You, the members of this Fellowship, have been all that and more to my children and me. I am grateful for all you have given us through the years.

I have been strongly reminded of all that in recent weeks as my almost-18-year-old son Chris, or Topher as he now prefers to be called, left home to travel the country. As most of you have heard, he began those travels by participating in protests at the Free Trade Area meeting in Miami and at the School of the Americas in Georgia.

Reports of police brutality, particularly at the Miami protest, have terrified my mother's heart. But I have also been filled with pride that Topher has the courage and passion to stand up for what he believes.

Much of Topher's passion was kindled through the years by those of you who have taught his YRE classes and served as his Youth Group advisors and engaged him in challenging conversations. It has been further nurtured by his involvement in District and Continental YRUU events. He has taken to heart the lessons of our UU heritage and of those among us, present and past, who have worked for justice.

I pass along to you Topher's request that we all speak our truth to power whenever we can. He particularly encourages each of us to contact our legislators to make our views known and to demand they stand up for justice.

I thank you, for all that you do today and for all you have done through the years.

I also want to thank the countless ones among you who made our new building dedication such a memorable event. The building looked wonderful, the service was moving and the reception was delightful. Thank you all!

Now that we are finally moved in, I will be taking some long-delayed time off. I will be on vacation from December 14 - January 12. Please let me know ASAP if you anticipate RE needs during that time, or contact the office if you have questions during my vacation.

Barb Weber

LRE Assistant Needed

Laurie Shows has announced that her life has become too busy and she is resigning as LRE Assistant. She has done a remarkable job in the role, and the congregation owes her a big THANK YOU!

That means we are looking for someone to join our friendly RE staff. Here is a description of the position.

LRE Assistant: Help nurture and support our Lifespan Religious Education programming. Make a difference in our world, deepen Fellowship friendships and learn more about UUism. Responsibilities are negotiable and may include volunteer support, clerical, and organizational. Schedule up to an average of 5-6 hours per week at your convenience, except one or two Sundays mornings per month are required. Salary \$7.25 per hour.

Contact *Phil Wise*, Chair, Personnel Committee or *Barb Weber* with questions or to apply.

Juline Renfro Award Nominations

The YRE Committee is seeking nominations for the Juline Renfro Award for Service to Youth Religious Education. This annual award is presented in honor of our former RE Assistant. The recipient should be someone who has devoted significant service to the religious education of our Fellowship young people, anywhere from nursery through senior high. Please submit your nomination, along with a paragraph explaining why you recommend that person, to *Barb Weber* in the RE Office. **These must be received by 12:30 p.m. on Sunday January 11.** The award will be presented at the January Congregational Meeting.

Adult Child Caregiver still needed!

Someone recently told me she assumed we had filled our Child Caregiver position by now. Unfortunately, we still need someone for this position. If you know anyone (neighbor, co-worker, babysitter) who you think might be good with our babies and toddlers on Sunday mornings, please speak with him or her or pass the name on to me. Or if you know somewhere to post the advertisement, please let me know that as well.

The childcare position pays \$8.50 per hour and involves Sundays from 9:15 to 12:45. Other hours may be possible from time to time. We are looking for a mature, responsible adult who enjoys little ones and who can also relate to our teen helpers.

Having reliable, responsible nursery care is one of the things that will help our Fellowship grow. Please help us fill this need.

RE Prep Room

Since we only have one service now, RE staff rarely gets to “go to church.” We are therefore putting together a group of volunteers to help in the prep room during services. We anticipate these volunteers would only give up about one Sunday service every six weeks and it will give them a chance to see what great things the kids are up to. This is a great way to support Youth Religious Education if you are not comfortable teaching. We will provide training and be available for questions and any problems that arise. Please let **Barb Weber** know if you are willing to be part of this group. Your staff will be grateful!

Sitters Needed for Christmas Eve Service

Our Christmas Eve Service is family-friendly, but we do traditionally provide childcare for the very young. However, because many people are out of town during the holidays, we often have trouble finding sitters. If you or someone you know is willing to look after our tiny ones from 7:00—8:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve, please contact **Barb Weber**.

YRUU, the Senior High Youth Group, generally meets on Sunday evenings from 6:30 to 8:00. It is open to all youth from 9th grade through 20 years old. December plans include:

Saturday, Dec 6 - Daytrip to Louisville to attend a social justice workshop with teens from other UU churches

Sunday Dec 7 - Attend the Sparky and Rhonda Rucker concert together

Sunday Dec 14 - Meet to check-in following the Wassail Celebration

Date TBA- Holiday-sharing overnight, when we will shop for and wrap gifts for girls involved with Planned Parenthood’s Pregnancy Prevention program.

Contact **Don Kazyak** with questions.

Social Justice in YRE Dinner Planned

Save January 23 as the date for an upcoming dinner and discussion of how we can incorporate more social justice work into the YRE curriculum. **Leslie Woodward** will facilitate the discussion. Teachers and others interested in RE or the Fellowship's social justice involvement are invited to attend.

COOT (Continuing Our Own Theology) meets monthly on the first and third Mondays at 7:00 p.m. The group gathers to discuss theological issues and share ideas and fellowship (and occasionally have a good dinner). Newcomers are welcome.

Women’s Group News

Women’s Group will meet from 9:30—10:50 in the Founders’ Room, to discuss relationships, our current topic.

Men's Group

Men’s Group meets the first Sunday of each month at 9:00 a.m. for fellowship and discussion. All men age 16 and older are welcome to attend. Childcare can be provided if requested in advance. Contact **Richard Venus** for more information.

Community Class

The Community Class is a group that meets every Sunday morning from 9:30 - 10:45 a.m. in the MVUUF library for fellowship and thought-provoking discussion. A chance to let your hair down, speak your mind or say nothing at all, without criticism. Up close and personal. Please join us.

Sunday Dec. 7

“The Meaning of Dreams.” We all dream during sleep, whether we remember our dreams or not. What value are our dreams - what are they telling us about our waking lives? Share your dreams and learn a few theories about the significance of dreams.

Moderator: **Quentin Burgess**

Sunday, Dec. 14

“Judaism without God.” What do cultural Jews have in common with Jewish fundamentalists? Can a non-believing Jew find meaning in life without faith in a Creator?

Moderator: **Mike O’Brien**

Sunday, Dec. 21

“Santa and the Tooth Fairy.” How did childhood myths and magic enrich our lives? When did we learn the difference between fact and fantasy, and how did we come to terms with disenchantment? How do/did the parents among us perpetrate these myths and dispel them to their offspring? What other unrealistic cultural expectations did we have to face and let go of in our life’s journey?

OPEN FORUM

Sunday, Dec. 28

“Our Humanist Legacy: Seventy Years of Religious Humanism,” based on an article of the same title in the Nov/Dec 2003 issue of UU World by Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA, former president of the UUA and author of the recent book Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism about the evolution of humanist thought in Unitarian history.

Moderator: **John Gormley**

Around the Fellowship



Helen Geyer and son Sasha



MVUUF kids planting our peace pole with the help of Paul Stipe



Richard Venus with Rev. Jill McAllister on Dedication Sunday

Deadlines Approach

The deadlines for the upcoming issues of *The FORUM* are December 18 and January 15. Please submit your articles to **Laurie Shows**.

The deadline for the Sunday bulletin is 12:30 p.m. on the preceding Monday. If you plan to use the building for any reason, please schedule with the office. Not all building use is listed in the calendar published in our newsletter. Private use, building maintenance or other unannounced events may already be scheduled. Also, please be sure you have scheduled your event on the official calendar before you begin promoting your activity.

Thanks!
The Office Manager

MVUUF GROCERY CERTIFICATE ORDER FORM

Dorothy Ln: \$5 \$10 \$20 **Total** _____

Kroger: \$10 \$20 \$50 **Total** _____

Your Name _____ **TOTAL** _____

Please make check or money order payable to: MVUUF or Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Send this order form along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: MVUUF, 8690 Yankee Street Dayton, OH 45458

MIAMI VALLEY UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship Calendar for December 2003

Additions? Corrections? Changes?
Please notify the office manager ASAP.

*** Schedule of Regular Sunday Offerings***

9:30 a.m. Adult RE: Community Class Room 10

9:30 a.m. Women's Group

9:30 a.m. Meditation Group

11:00 a.m. Service & Youth RE

6:30 p.m. YRUU

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		7:30 p.m. Choir	7:30 p.m. First Thursday Theological Society	9:45 a.m. Aikido Group 5:00 p.m. Saturday Celebration 5:30 p.m. Covenant groups ReMix Party		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
See above for regular offerings 9:00 a.m. Men's Group 2:00 p.m. Sparky and Rhonda Rucker Concert	6:45 p.m. Aikido Group 7:00 p.m. Continuing Our Own Theologies 7:30 p.m. Smart Choices	7:00 p.m. Evening Book Discussion Group at Alice Lizée's 7:30 p.m. Social Concerns 8:00 p.m. Renaissance Band	7:30 p.m. Choir 7:30 p.m. Earth Circle	6:00 p.m. Executive Com- mittee Meeting	9:45 a.m. Aikido Group 11:30 a.m. Helping Hands lunch at the Other Place	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
See above for regular offerings 7:00 p.m. Wassail	6:45 p.m. Aikido Group	7:30 p.m. Recorder Consort	10:30 a.m. MVUUF Morning Book Club 6:00 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting 7:00 p.m. INTERWEAVE 7:30 p.m. Choir	6:30 p.m. MVUUF Board Meeting	9:45 a.m. Aikido Group 10:00 a.m. Young Adult Network outing 7:00 p.m. Winter Solstice/Yule Celebration	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
See above for regular offerings 11:15 a.m. ORIENTATION	6:45 p.m. Aikido Group 7:00 p.m. Drum and Poetry Circle 7:00 p.m. Continuing Our Own Theologies 7:30 p.m. Smart Choices		7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service	2:00 p.m. Christmas Dinner	9:45 a.m. Aikido Group	
28	29	30	31			
See above for regular offerings 1:30 p.m. Poetic Insights	6:45 p.m. Aikido Group	7:00 p.m. New Year's eve Party				