



Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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January 2006
Vol. LIII No. 5

Of Cabbages and Kings: Looking Back, Looking Forward

It seems like an unlikely time to declare it to be a new year. Why midwinter? Wouldn't it feel more intuitively right to celebrate a time of new beginnings in the spring, when the earth renews itself and our farmer ancestors planted new crops and, along with them, new hopes? Or how about in autumn, when a gathered harvest naturally led to assessments of tasks accomplished?

Maybe these conditions of involuntary solitude and relative idleness lent themselves to contemplation, regrets over past mistakes and resolutions to do better. Maybe a rowdy celebration of the new year was just what was needed to defy the elements and declare a determination to go on, ever hopeful.

As for us twenty-first century types, warm and dry in our well-lit homes and heated vehicles, enjoying perpetual summer thanks to our grocery stores—as for us, perhaps some atavistic wisdom still calls us to self-assessment when winds howl around us and icy pellets tap-dance on our roofs.

There's a saying that you can't move forward if you're looking backward. There's another piece of conventional wisdom that claims that those who do not learn from their history are doomed to repeat it. As with most mutually contradictory sayings, there is truth to be found in each. The goal is to move ahead, of course. The past is not a healthy place to live if you're stuck there, mired in regrets or nostalgia. But it is also true that if we ignore the lessons of the past, we are bound to repeat old patterns that may have outlived their usefulness—or that didn't really work for us in the first place.

This is true for nations, businesses, families and individuals. It's also true for congregations.

One of the “developmental tasks” set for congregations in the interim between settled ministers is to examine their history in order to celebrate their unique character and accomplishments, as well as learn from their troubled times and let go of old hurts. The key is to discern patterns of behavior and to consciously determine if they should be repeated or changed. At the recent “Historical Timeline” exercise at which you were invited to join me in reviewing the ongoing story of MVUUF, some interesting patterns emerged. I will be speaking about these in future sermons and columns.

In the meantime, I wish us all well in our own “developmental task” of seeking out the patterns in our own lives. May we give credit to ourselves for difficulties endured and survived. May we have the wisdom to discern patterns of behavior that have not resulted in our achieving our dreams. May we have the honesty to reassess the rightness of the dream as well as the means to alter old patterns when these repeatedly bring us only frustration and unhappiness. And may we celebrate ourselves and one another—our strengths, our generosity, our capacity for hope and trust and love—and our ability to learn from the past so that we may be free to move forward.

Happy New Year to us all.

—*Martha Hodges, Interim Minister*



Martha Hodges

The Forum

VISION STATEMENT *We are a welcoming spiritual congregation encouraging one another on our personal journeys, embracing diversity, nurturing community, and working together for social justice. We actively promote the liberal religious principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.*

Remember to bring fresh produce, baked goods as well as canned or packaged food and diapers to donate during Second Offering every Sunday!

JANUARY SERVICES

Sunday, January 1—11:00 AM

Abracadabra, Presto, Change-o—Martha Hodges

The perennial faith in our ability to change our ways is one of the more endearing human qualities. We know that change is inevitable, but if it were that simple, we'd all be healthy, wealthy and wise, not to mention slim, patient and dependable. Alas, there's more to this change business than good intentions. Martha will share some theories about how transformation happens, both individually and organizationally, and talk about some of those obstacles to becoming our best selves. We will also observe the traditional "Letting Go" ceremony.

Sunday, January 8 - 11:00AM

The Power of Story—Rev. James Farinet

From our earliest years, "story" has been the primary informer, teacher and motivator for our lives. It is through story that we learn, grow and are often motivated to do significant things in our lives. MVUUF member Jim Farinet will speak on the importance of story and myth.

Sunday, January 15 - 10:00AM

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

You, Me, Them and Us—Martha Hodges

Service 10:00 AM Martha will provide some brief reflections on those contradictory UU ideals of individualism and interdependence prior to leading the congregation in welcoming our new members. The service will be abbreviated in order to accommodate the Congregational Meeting that will follow immediately afterwards.

Sunday, January 22—11:00 AM

The View from Giants' Shoulders—Martha Hodges

On this Sunday following the birthday of Martin Luther King, Martha will speak about "vision." Dr. King had it, as did many Unitarian Universalist leaders who supported the struggle for civil rights in the sixties, often at great personal risk. Did our denomination's passion for social justice peak during that decade? What have we done for the world lately? More to the point, what would we like to do for the world in the years to come? And closer to home, what would this congregation like to be known for...to stand for...in the wider world?

Sunday, January 29 - 11:00

Forgiveness—Rich Robinson

MVUUF member and frequent speaker Rich Robinson will be in charge of this service focusing on forgiveness. His programs are always interesting, entertaining and thought provoking.

Our Staff

Martha Hodges, Interim Minister

Office Hours: Daily except Tuesday, call for appointment.

Email: hodges.m@att.net

Dale Bockhorst, Bookkeeper

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Email: musicfil@aol.com

Barbara Kelley, Administrator

Office Hours: Monday—Thursday 9:00 AM—3:00 PM

Email: admin@mvuuf.org

Jesse Minnefield, Custodian

Persephone, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Office Hours: Sunday AM and by appointment

Email: dre@mvuuf.org

Barb Weber, Transition Coordinator

Office Hours: Wednesday 11 AM—1:30 PM, Sunday AM

Email: BLW622@yahoo.com

MVUUF Board of Trustees

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The Forum

The Forum is published monthly by the Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 8690 Yankee Street, Dayton, OH 45458. Subscription price is \$20 annually and is included in membership. The Forum is edited by **Barbara Kelley** (admin@mvuuf.org). Thank you for help from **Gail Cyan** (PR Trustee), **George Henderson** (Mailer) and **Carol Narigon** (Proofreader). **The next Forum deadline is January 16.** The deadline for the Sunday bulletin is 10:00 AM on the preceding Monday.

Board Business

President's Message

Well, it has been a long year hasn't it? Enough has been said and discussed about the first half of 2005, so I will focus on the second half. It has been more than six months since the current board of trustees took office and much has been accomplished. Consider all that has transpired since June:

- Our Minister of 14 years resigned and his ministry was celebrated.
- An interim minister search committee was formed and the search process began.
- The interim search committee identified Martha Hodges and the board and congregation approved the hiring of her as our interim minister. (We were truly blessed when Martha chose to join us and help us through this period of transition.)
- Our former LRE Director, Barb Weber was contracted to serve as Transition Coordinator and continues to share her years of experience and knowledge with us.
- We hired a wonderful, creative and totally energetic new LRE director—Persephone.
- The board recently approved the governance model proposed by the governance committee and is preparing to present it to the congregation for final approval and implementation in 2006.
- The board has been meticulously editing and updating the MVUUF policies and procedures manual with the goal of completing it by the end of our fiscal year.
- The personnel committee (which includes the board executive committee) has been defining personnel policies including clearly defined job descriptions and the MVUUF employment benefits package.

Board members have spent countless hours to manage all that these events and actions have required plus all the work to keep up with social action, operations, activities, LRE, music, membership, public relations and worship programs. This period of transition is a critical time for MVUUF and your board of trustees has selflessly stepped up to their responsibilities.

Given all the turmoil of the past year, MVUUF is closing 2005 in a very positive position. Our finances, though always strained, are fiscally sound, the board, staff and minister are all working together in a positive and collaborative spirit. And Martha Hodges has brought to us her calming, loving and powerful guiding hand to help us find our renewed sense of purpose and perspective.

Looking forward, in 2006 we will vote to select an official ministerial search committee and begin the settled minister search process. With congregational approval, we will transition to a more efficient and effective governance model. And through Martha's spiritual leadership, we will define who we are and how that will serve us as we search for a new minister. I am sincerely grateful for the trust you have placed in me as well as every member of the board of trustees. At the end of six months as president and as 2005 ends, I am happy to say that it is good to be a UU and even greater to be one at MVUUF.

—*Kriss Gang*, President, Board of Trustees

Summary of MVUUF Board Meeting of December 18, 2005

Kriss Gang distributed the resume for Christine Price, a candidate for LRE Assistant. She interviewed with Persephone, and has met with a number of board members and others close to the LRE program. Scott Leonard made a motion to hire Christine Price to the position of LRE Assistant. Dave Rengel seconded the motion and it carried.

Scott Leonard distributed an employee benefits proposal for consideration. Joe Zimmerman motioned that the vacation benefit in the proposed plan be adjusted so employees accrue a total of 18 days vacation per year after two years and that the amended policy be approved. Kate Santucci seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Kriss announced that Rich Robinson has resigned from his position as membership trustee due to personal reasons. Gail Cyan made a motion to appoint Ruth Rowley as membership trustee for the remainder of the current term. Scott seconded the motion and the motion carried.

—*Bill Wendel*, Secretary

Highlights from the Board Retreat

Your Board of Trustees met for a daylong retreat at the home of Kriss Gang on December 3. The purpose of the retreat was to assess our strengths and challenges as a congregation, set objectives and priorities, and renew commitment to a vision for MVUUF's future. Board members were asked to picture the best Fellowship they could imagine five years from now. Here is a sampling of their descriptions:

- . A gazebo in the backyard
- . Electric guitars accompanying high energy music
- . A bus to bring people to our door
- . Packed services
- . An expanded religious education wing decorated with colorful murals
- . A meditation space
- . Two distinctly different Sunday services
- . Small interest groups formed around theological orientation
- . A social hall
- . Space for an orchestra
- . A Welcoming Congregation banner
- . A growing endowment
- . A social justice program that makes us known in the community and attracts newcomers

What is your dream of what MVUUF might be in five years? This interim period is the time to dream big and to give your time, treasure and talent to make those dreams come true. —*Martha Hodges*

UUA Conference in Phoenix

A UU conference for midsize congregations (like ours) is planned for March 2-5 in Phoenix, Arizona. *Congregational Change is Personal: Meeting People Where They Are and Moving On*, aims to help participants ask and answer questions that are central to midsize church organizations, including what we are and aren't willing to do to encourage growth, what steps to take to insure financial stability now and in the years ahead, what methods of governing are the most effective, how to nurture our many generations, and how to find our place in the larger community. The conference will offer dozens of workshops to help churches support their mission, cultivate growth, and attract and retain members. See the full description and register online at <http://www.uua.org/cde/midsize2006/>. Fees, including accommodations at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix and most meals, range from \$435-600 per person, excluding travel.

Keeping Up With Members

Thank You

Thank you, *Kathleen Pennington*, for taking charge of decking our halls this holiday season!

More Thanks

Thank you to *Ruth Rowley* for spearheading efforts to re-establish contact with MVUUF members who have slipped from view and also to *Ben Olive* for following through with personal calls and visits to these valued members.

More Thanks

Martha would like to thank *Carol Narigon* for her assistance with the Solstice service, *Mike O'Brien* for helping with the Christmas Eve service, and *Persephone* for her help with the Christmas morning service. Thank you all!

More Thanks

Thank you, *Julie Bragg*, for purchasing many, many rolls of 35 mm. film to be used to take pictures of MVUUF events for the historical album. This is not a church budget item, as the photo albums, developing, photo mounting, and most of the film and photos are my personal donation to the church. I am very, very grateful for this generous gift. —*Sylvia Wince*

Annual Membership Review

Every January, the board reviews the membership rolls for the purpose of reporting the most accurate number of voting members to UUA headquarters in Boston. If you are a voting member and have neither made an identifiable financial contribution nor attended a congregational meeting in the last year, you will be receiving a letter asking about your commitment to the Fellowship.

Please understand that we sincerely wish for you to maintain your voting membership status but that this is a necessary procedure.

—*Ruth Rowley*, Membership Trustee

Welcome New Member!

Lesia Cooper

Thoughts From Barb...

And so, once again, we come to another New Year. With Janus of the two faces as the symbol of this period of the year, it is a time to look both backwards and forwards.

I hope the path you have traveled this year has brought you to a good place. For some among us, it has been a difficult year, with family or job crises, illness or pain. For others, there have been joyous events, a time of growth, a deepened valuing of a cherished or new love. Most often, there have been both good and bad in the same lives during the year.



Barb Weber
Transition Coordinator

So it has been at the Fellowship. We have had painful days and sorrow in our community. We have said goodbye to people we have loved and have welcomed new faces. We have had a re-emergence of hope for the future, of commitment to our values, of confidence in the process of our life together.

Let us look to the future with dedication to being the best we can be. This year, let us celebrate what we do well and learn from our mistakes. Let us reach out to those in pain, whether they are outside or inside our family. Let us give generously of our gifts, both financial and spiritual, to build our better world. Let us nurture and support the good that is in each one.

Let us lift up the ideals that guide our lives. Let us live as individuals and as a community so that we shine as a beacon in a world with too much darkness. Let us look to the future and live this year so that, when we look back next New Year's Day, we can know we have done our best.

May it be so,
Barb

What Does Heartland Do for Me?

Few people are aware that the Heartland Unitarian Universalist District, of which we are a part, provides a lending library through the District Religious Education Committee. This resource is a treasure trove, particularly of Religious Education materials. Borrowing from the library has been helpful on numerous occasions and has saved the Fellowship from having to buy books and curricula many times.

Costs for UU curricula are high. Partly this is because they are of excellent quality, with a great deal of research, field-testing and so forth put into each one. The costs are shared by a relatively small number of purchasers, resulting in higher cost per volume.

Being able to borrow books has therefore saved us at the Fellowship quite a bit of money. The Youth RE curriculum sub-committee borrows materials almost every year to review as they put together the curriculum plan for the following year. Sometimes they have relied on the borrowed copy throughout the term it has been used. Sometimes after the committee has reviewed a curriculum, it appears to be one we will use often, and we have purchased it. And sometimes, having a thorough look at the material helps us decide that it does not fit our program goals and saves us from making a purchase.

The Heartland library is a free service, supported by part of our District dues. Materials are purchased, catalogued, maintained and shipped at Heartland expense. The only cost to the Fellowship for this service is the return postage.

The Unitarian Universalist Association provides a similar library at the Headquarters. Since our District library is shared by fewer churches, materials are more likely to be available at any particular time. Both libraries are important resources.

—*Barb Weber*

Congregational Conversation on “Commonly Held Values”

It's a perennial question among UUs: With our much vaunted and rightly valued diversity of theological beliefs, what holds us together? Do we have a shared identity that is based on commonly held values? This is an important question for this congregation to address on a more local level as the time approaches for choosing a settled minister. Does this congregation have a “dominant theology” or do our shared values lie outside the “theological”?

On January 22 at 12:30 PM, Martha will facilitate a conversation in which those present will try to answer some of these questions. Eventually, this work on “values” will lead into a discussion of a mission and vision that, growing naturally out of our true beliefs, will become part of how we define ourselves.

Plan to bring a bag lunch or take-out food with you to the Founders' Room and please let Barbara Kelley know if you plan to attend.

Announcements

Storage Room Clean Up

The storage room (off the Sanctuary) will be ruthlessly cleaned by a neat and tidy volunteer on or after Monday, January 9. Please pick up any items that will not be used at the Fellowship in the future. Write your name on items that need to stay in the storage room.

UU Winter Wonderland

Join UU friends from other congregations for a weekend of fun, relaxed family time in the snow or curled up by the fireplace! Sponsored by the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, the YMCA Camp Pinewood (20 miles NE of Muskegon, Michigan) will offer a family camp weekend January 13-16. The camp will provide lots of winter fun including cross-country skiing, ice-skating, ice fishing, sledding and much more. Each family will have a private cabin and the fees range from \$105-120 per person (children under 2 are free). The weekend includes 3 nights lodging, 8 meals (Friday dinner through Monday brunch), evening snacks and program activities. Arrival is Friday late afternoon; departure is Monday at noon. See the full description online at www.uuaa.org.

UD's Lifelong Learning Program

The University of Dayton Lifelong Learning Institute offers senior adults in the Miami Valley opportunities to attend a wide variety of informal discussion seminars based on the peer-learning concept. Adults over 50 years of age and their spouses are eligible to participate. The cost is \$60 per term and entitles members to take as many seminars as can be scheduled. The winter quarter begins January 9. For more information, call 229-2347 or visit the UD website.

A Spot of Beauty

Members wishing to provide flowers for the altar for one of the Sunday services are asked to contact Barbara Kelley in the office (436-3628 or admin@mvuuf.org) to schedule. If the flowers are in memory of someone or to celebrate an occasion, please tell Barbara. The flower donors and occasion will be listed in the Sunday bulletin.

INTERWEAVE

INTERWEAVE, a support/discussion group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) people and their allies meets at the Fellowship at 7:00 PM on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May. See the article on *The Welcoming Congregation Workshop Series* that follows. Contact **Joe Law** for more information.

MVUUF Daytime Book Club

The Daytime Book Club meets on a Wednesday each month at the Fellowship at 10:30 AM in the Founders' Room. We discuss the book of the month and then go to lunch together. Call **Carol Vincent** or **Sylvia Wince** for further information.

- January 18—*Puddinhead Wilson*, by Mark Twain
- February 22—*1776*, by David McCullough
- March—TBA
- April—(date TBA) *The World is Flat*, by Thomas Friedman

CineManiacs— 3rd Sunday Evening, January 15

If you're wild about art films, join CineManiacs on the third Sunday of each month at The Neon Movies for the 5—5:30ish showing. The title and time will be electronically sent on the Thursday prior to the Sunday event. After the movie we'll meet in the Neon lobby cafe for fellowship and a discussion. Call **Trudy Krisher** or **Lindy McDonough**.

Articulating Your Faith

Do you ever find yourself floundering for a good answer to the question, "Unitarian Universalism? What's that? What do Unitarian Universalists believe?" It's a hard question to answer on the spur of the moment—or even after giving it some thought. And yet, we do ourselves and the world a disservice when we give a flippant or inadequate answer to those we meet, especially to strangers or others with whom we have just a casual acquaintance. There is help!

Martha will facilitate "Articulating Your Faith" starting January 11 at 7:00 PM for five Wednesdays. The classes will be on consecutive Wednesdays, except skipping February 1.

The UUA Bookstore describes the curriculum this way: "This creative five-session course guides participants through a series of easy and engaging exercises that equip them to discover and articulate their beliefs, including personal reflection, role-play, discussion and even the creation of a worship event. Great for newcomers, and a wonderful next step for long-time Unitarian Universalists." Don't be scared off by the "role-play" or the "worship event." You will be among friends, and we will tailor the curriculum as needed to meet the needs and desires of the participants.

The class is filling up now. Contact Barbara in the office now to reserve your space.

January ChaliceLight Gallery

The MVUUF ChaliceLight Gallery is pleased to feature the works of **Hendrina van't Hoog**, a well known local artist who passed away last summer. The presentation can be viewed throughout the month of January, starting January 8. Contact ChaliceLight Gallery chair **Joan Albrecht** for more information or to purchase artwork. The artist's daughter, **Jackie Mulhall**, shares with us a little about her mother's life.

My mother, Hendrina van't Hoog, was born in the small village of Wassenaar in the Netherlands on January 31, 1933. Growing up in Holland, she was always near the water. There were canals near her house where she could see boats go by and trenches filled with water along the fields, which she jumped over using a long pole, getting quite muddy. She loved the ocean—the sound of its waves, the smell of the air swiftly moving across its surface, the way the sun reflected its pink and golden hues over the water like many faceted gems. It was her playground, where she sailed with her family and swam, even in the cold of November. Many days were spent running and playing along the dunes where she found hidden holes with rabbit bones, which she collected and later on painted and turned into necklaces.

As a young adult, she immigrated to the United States, married my father, Jack, also from the Netherlands, and started a family. When my brother and I got older, Mom went back to school and studied Fine Arts at Wright State University. It was natural for her to paint the things she loved: seascapes, flowing water smoothing stones in multicolored earthen tones, landscapes in abstract blocks of color and bright flowers. My mother once told me that art, for her, brought her that same free feeling of happiness that she had when she played as a child. To be in the midst of an artistic process that was really coming together well got her in touch with that satisfying unleashed joy of childhood play.

Wanting to help others and make a profession of the work she loved, Mom studied further at Wright State University and got a Master's degree in Art Therapy. This was a good fit for her as she learned to use her creative talents to help others express themselves in therapy, in ways they were unable to do previously. A lifelong seeker for spiritual truth, her therapy had a spiritual approach which also helped others heal emotional wounds.

Her art therapy degree brought her work in many places: from prison cells, youth group homes, hospitals, Hospice of Dayton and finally a private practice in her home. Helping others energized her and gave her life great purpose. She attended the Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Dayton for many years and was an active member of the Jungian society in Dayton. She also enjoyed gatherings and seminars focused on dream interpretation, art, psychology and spirituality.

In July of 2004, she was diagnosed with uterine cancer. At that time she had a plane ticket to go to the Netherlands and visit her brother Thijs and sister-in-law, Tineke. She was unable to go because she needed surgery and radiation treatments. It was a difficult time. She was very disappointed that she couldn't go back to her homeland and see her family that she missed so much. So she painted. Painting was one way for her to process her feelings and help her overcome her fear of death. For a year she had treatments and nurtured her body. At each small window of opportunity that she could take a trip to the Netherlands I would say to her. "Let's set a date with the airlines and go." But she would say things like "No, the weather is not good this time of year. We need to go in the summer when it is warm." Finally the summer came and we had a family reunion so we could all spend some time with Mom. During that weekend her thinking was clouded and she was easily confused. We went to the hospital, which was exactly a year after her initial diagnosis, and discovered that the tumors had gone to her brain. With some medicine and radiation treatments the tumors became small and her thinking cleared. The doctors conferred with one another and gave her permission to go to the Netherlands. Mom and I went together and had a wonderful time. We visited with my aunt and uncle and cousins. We ate all the foods my mother had missed, looked at old photo albums, laughed, cried, and many family stories came pouring out. It is easy to say that it was one of the most wonderful times of my life. We focused on what mattered, our love for each other. The next week, just days before our departure date, Mom began to lose the use of her arms and legs because the tumors had attached to her spine. On July 29, 2005 my mother peacefully passed away in her homeland. She looked straight into my eyes but her focus was in another world beyond me. I held her hand, told her I loved her, and to go to God. I still feel my mother's presence with me. I know she is near when I pray for her. She is on a new journey. Her paintings are hung in my house. They are pieces of her that greet me every day. I feel so much joy to look at them. I hope you do too.

—**Jacoline (van't Hoog) Mulhall**

Storytellers Workshop

The Miami Valley Storytellers, Inc. is inviting adult members of the Fellowship to enjoy a free workshop on storytelling, music and theatre exercises. The emphasis is on learning peaceful stories, stories of community building and peaceful solutions to conflict.

Presenting will be Ga-Li (www.ga-li.tmvcna.org), including renowned storytellers, Alicia Pagan and Ray Two Crows. The workshop will be held at the Fellowship on Sunday, January 22, 2006 from 2:00—4:00 PM.

Please register for this free workshop by emailing Rachel Chadwick at Rachel.Chadwick@att.net or by calling 291-9721 and leaving your name and phone number. Please register by January 18.

Announcements Announcement

In order to keep our Sunday services to one hour (most of the time) and to prevent them from becoming too cluttered with “business,” we are going to try implementing a new policy regarding announcements on Sunday mornings. The policy is in two parts:

1. Announcements will be read by the Worship Associate. Place brief, written announcements in the “Announcement Folder” that can be found in the MVUUF front office on top of the bookcase. Announcements must be placed in the folder on Sunday before the service, no later than 10:30 AM. If you prefer to personally announce some Fellowship activity or other business, fill out the yellow form “Special Announcement” that can be found in the same folder, also no later than 10:30 AM on Sunday. *There will be a limit of two such “special” announcements; that is, announcements presented by someone other than the Worship Associate, per week (first come, first served.)*
2. Please announce any particular event no more than twice. You can still announce it in the Sunday bulletin as many times as you want. Bulletin announcements need to be submitted to Barbara no later than 10:00 AM on the Monday before the Sunday, in order to appear in the bulletin.

Of course, exceptions to this policy will be made in the event of an emergency or in the case of business that takes continuing priority for the entire congregation, such as the search for the settled minister or the pledge drive.

Make a Joyful Noise

Do you love to sing? Love our hymnal but find some of the songs too difficult? Beginning in January, you are invited to gather ‘round the piano on Sundays at 10:30 AM to practice the hymns selected for that day’s service. This is an opportunity to have fun—no particular singing talent required! After singing your heart out for 20—30 minutes, you will take your regular seat in the congregation. Being familiar with the hymn by that time, you may be able to sing out a little louder and help the rest of us along. Do you love a particular hymn but don’t get to hear it much? This Sunday morning hymn sing will also consider requests for favorites, as time allows. Special thanks to **Jeanette Filbrun** for agreeing to accompany and lead this activity!



Cool Summer Trip

Five Alaskan UU Fellowships invite other UUs to an eco-cultural program in June, July and August 2006. See the *real* Alaska! Alaskan UUs will provide bed and breakfast accommodations in their homes in Anchorage, Seward, Fairbanks, Juneau and Sitka, and will lead tours and hikes and host parties. Visit with Tlingit, Inupiat and other Native Alaskans. See whales, sea otters, sea lions, seals, bears, moose, caribou, wolves, puffins, eagles and other birds in the wild from the Arctic Ocean to the Inside Passage in the south, and visit Denali and other national parks. Reverend Dick and Mary Weston-Jones are the trip leaders. Visit website www.wuurld.org, e-mail dick@wuurld.org, or phone toll-free 1-888-998-8753 for a brochure.

Pancake Gathering Is Relocating

Beginning January 5, Martha will be waiting for you to join her for **brunch every Thursday at 11:00 AM at Panera**. Panera is located on Route 725, about halfway between Yankee Street and the Dayton Mall, on the left as you drive from the Fellowship. Please drop by between 11:00 AM and 12:00 noon for coffee—they’ve got great coffee—a bite to eat and fellowship. This “Panini Ministry” is replacing the “Pancake Ministry.” Those of you who find early mornings incompatible with conversation, take note!

Living the Welcoming Congregation Time to Renew Our Vows

MVUUF is a Welcoming Congregation.

For a long time, you've been able to read that statement on the weekly order of service or to see the framed Welcoming Congregation certificate in the Gathering Space. When we contacted the UUA in Boston to find out just how long, all they could tell us is that the Miami Valley Unitarian Fellowship (as it was then called) was the first in the Heartland District to be awarded a Welcoming Congregation designation. Everyone's best guess is that the requirements were completed in 1991 or 1992. That's a long time in the life of any congregation. There have been many changes in the membership—and in the larger society.

Since 1992, the UUA has written new materials for the Welcoming Congregation course and created a follow-up program, called Living the Welcoming Congregation, for long-term Welcoming Congregations. Because we have been a Welcoming Congregation for so long, the next logical step for us is to embark on the *Living the Welcoming Congregation* program, and Social Concerns has decided to include it as a project for this year.

The UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns asks groups that completed the original Welcoming Congregation program to run a refresher course that includes the new materials. We would like to offer such a course early in 2006 so that we can begin the Living the Welcoming Congregation later in the year. It will consist of ten small-group sessions, beginning in late February or early March, probably meeting each week.

Here's how the UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns describes the program:

The Welcoming Congregation Workshop Series is an introspective and interactive educational journey into the issues surrounding the lives of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people. The learning goals are:

- To explore thoughts, feelings, and current knowledge about sexual orientation (homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality) and gender identification (transgender)
- To probe the origins of our beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identification
- To test attitudes toward sexual orientation and gender identification in Unitarian Universalist congregations and society, and their connections to current social issues such as AIDS, racism, ableism, ageism, and so on
- To understand the experiences of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people
- To see the effects of heterosexism and homophobia on people of all sexual orientations in Unitarian Universalist congregations
- To uncover the biblical roots of common religious perspectives on homosexuality
- To devise individual and institutional strategies for Unitarian Universalist congregations to become more welcoming to bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people and their families

As we continue to plan, please let us know how you would like to participate. We also need volunteers to help facilitate the small groups—the program recommends two facilitators for a group of six to ten people. We need to have an idea of workable meeting times as well.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact either *Joe Law* or *Phil Wise*.

Grocery-Card-Carrying MVUUF Member

Do you shop at Kroger, Dorothy Lane or Meijer? Your purchases can earn money for the Fellowship without costing you a cent. Members of the Grocery Fundraiser Team are available every Sunday in the Gathering Space after services to sell you grocery cards. Look for team members wearing a tag with a color picture of a grocery basket (*Ellen Beck, Cynthia Brooks, Joyce Cameron, Lindy McDonough, Mike Nelson or Maureen O'Meara*).

Kroger has the easiest system, and returns 4% of our recharge amounts monthly to the Fellowship. Three steps and we earn money every month from your purchases:

- All you do is purchase a Kroger gift card for \$5. On your first trip to Kroger, you get \$5 of groceries free.
- Use your card like a debit card.
- When it runs low, recharge your card at **Kroger** (with cash, credit card, debit card, or check), even in the checkout lane before you check out your groceries.

Many of you already have Kroger gift cards—remember to use them when you shop. More than 40 have been sold, but only thirteen of them were in use at our last report. We now earn an average of \$168 a month from the use of these cards, and could easily double or triple this.

Dorothy Lane offers two programs that benefit the Fellowship, **gift cards** and the **Community Rewards Program**.

- The new Dorothy Lane **gift cards** have a declining balance; they can be used until you have spent all your money but cannot be recharged. We currently sell them in denominations of \$20 and \$50. The Fellowship receives 5% for all cards sold.
- In addition to these cards, Dorothy Lane offers to all shoppers a **Good Neighbors program** for donations to a favorite charity *for which individual shoppers must register annually*.

Meijer no longer sells gift cards or certificates. For their program, you apply for a special card for their **Community Rewards Program** (applications available on the desk in the Gathering Space). They return from 1.5% for a family's purchase of \$200 a month to 5% for those who purchase more than \$800 a month.

—*Maureen O'Meara*
Grocery Cards Fundraiser Chair

Fellowship Gourmets

Now that the holiday season is over, it's time again to start traveling around the world with the Fellowship Gourmets. Please RSVP to **Ruth Rowley**.

Saturday, January 28, 6:00 PM

Amber Rose (1400 Valley Street, 228-2511)

January seems like a good month for a stick-to-the-ribs eastern European dinner. Entrees range from \$12—\$15. Amber Rose is not open on Sunday, so after the service...

Sunday, January 29, 12:30 PM

Asia Café (1501 Lyons Road, 436-2531)

Since it's so handy, Asia Café is a mainstay of some Fellowship members. It's in the shopping center at the northeast corner of Lyons and Yankee.

Saturday, February 25, 6:00 PM and

Sunday, February 26, after the service

Amar India (Indian cuisine, 2759 Miamisburg-Centerville Road, 439-9005) Entrees range from \$8—\$14.

Saturday, March 25, 6:00 PM and

Sunday, March 26, after the service

Peerless Mill Inn (319 S. 2nd Street, Miamisburg, 866-5968) Entrees range from \$16—\$24.

There's nothing wrong with good ol' American food once in a while.

—*Ruth Rowley*

A Moment in Time

The Diet of Torda was not a particularly unappetizing-sounding weight reduction regime. It was a meeting called by Transylvanian King John Sigismund in 1568 to debate the true nature of Christ.

The minister Francis David represented the Unitarian view and was judged to have bested his debate opponent, the Calvinist bishop Peter Melius. Sigismund converted to Unitarianism the same day (becoming the first and last Unitarian king) and issued the Edict of Torda, declaring official toleration for other religions.

This was the first instance in Western history of a ruler allowing his subjects to practice a religion different from his own. Francis David served as the king's advisor until the latter's death in 1571. David was subsequently imprisoned by Sigismund's Jesuit successors and died in prison, a martyr to his Unitarian beliefs.

Activities

Chair an Activity!

Please contact ***Yolanda Crooms*** if you are interested in chairing or volunteering for any of the following activities: May Day, June Barbeque, Ice Cream Social, Fall Picnic, Fall Retreat, and Thanksgiving Dinner. I am also looking for someone to run Movie Night and Game Night every other month until June. Thanks!

—***Yolanda Crooms***

Third Tuesday Walkers

With the darkness coming sooner this time of year, the Third Tuesday Walkers have changed the venue for the walks from the woods to local neighborhoods. With the ambient light from the houses and street lamps (as well as many Christmas lights that are sure to still be on), walking on the sidewalks should be well lit in the evenings.

All are welcome to join the walk on January 16. The walks still start at 5:30 PM, from ***Jeni Cullen's*** house in Miamisburg, and will go through the neighborhood and continue (weather permitting) up to the Miamisburg Mound for a beautiful view of the city at night. If it is very snowy or icy, the walk will either be cancelled or changed to a walk through neighborhoods and on the bikeway past the skate park. The group will walk unless it is really treacherous. Afterwards, plan to stop at Jeni's house for hot or cold drinks and maybe some snacks or possibly stop by the Peerless Mill for adult beverages and half-priced appetizers.

If you have questions or need directions, contact ***Jeni Cullen***.

Activities Committee Meeting

Looking for a fun, easy way to get more involved with the Fellowship? Join the Activities Committee! We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at the Fellowship from 7:00 to 8:00 PM. Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 11.

Community Breakfast

Attend the Martin Luther King Breakfast on Monday, January 16 at 7:30 AM at the Christ United Methodist Church Activity Center, 3440 Shroyer Road at Lincoln Park Boulevard in Kettering. The Rev. Dr. Leah Gaskin Fitchue of Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce will be the featured speaker. Tickets are \$5 adults, \$2 children or students and are available at the Kettering Government Center, the Oakwood City Building and other locations. For more information, visit KOMLK.org.

Concerning Social Concerns

Holiday Sharing Project

Thank you to all who contributed to our Holiday Sharing projects. They were very successful again this year. We collected over \$300 and were able to buy some useful things for the youth in Daybreak's program. Additionally, the teen class was able to make some nice scarves for the Daybreak youth. We have also collected a large number of mittens and gloves that we will hand out at The Other Place. Special thank you's go out to the ***teen RE students, Don Kazyak, Yolanda Crooms,*** and ***Shannon Harper*** for all of their hard work, and to ***Karen Evans*** for letting us use her Christmas tree.

Supper Postponed until April 1

The Social Concerns soup event to benefit the East Dayton Emergency Services Pantry and The Other Place that was planned for February 4 has been postponed until April 1. Watch for updates in future bulletins and in *The Forum*.

You're Invited!

Join the teens on a short walk to the MLK Rally!

**January 16, 11:00 AM
Oregon Emporium
400 East Fifth Street, Dayton
(Corner of Fifth and Brown Streets)**

We want to be there, but come on! We don't do long walks in the cold! We're good UU teens, but not saints! We're going to meet at the Emporium at 11:00 for hot drinks and head to the rally around 11:20. Of course, if you're into walking miles in the freezing cold, feel free to meet up with people at one of the designated meeting places. For more information on those, call the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at 268-0051.

Get Involved

A great way to get involved is to join the Social Concerns Committee! We meet on the fourth Monday of the month at the Fellowship, at 7:00 PM. The December Social Concerns meeting (which was scheduled for December 26) was postponed until January 2 because of the holiday. We will meet again as scheduled, on the 4th Monday, January 23. Contact ***Kate Santucci*** for more information.

Urban Hunger Project

Thanks to all who have been bringing in Second Offerings! Donations of non-perishable food, hygiene items, and diapers are so appreciated. Place items on the Second Offering table in the Sanctuary.

Lifespan Religious Education

YRUAUU?

One of the six components of a balanced youth program is "youth-adult relations." The bond between youth and their elders is essential to youth empowerment. YRUU communities where youth and adults work together and have power with each other have huge potential. Intergenerational environments encourage all of the other components of youth programming. Youth and adults can learn from each other, experience worship, build community, empower each other to lead, and make a difference in the world through social action.

So, what does this have to do with you? We are looking for some adults willing to be paired up with a teen for YRUAUU... "Why Are You a UU?" This will involve a little bit of writing on your part (just a few paragraphs all together), a willingness to share some things about yourself, and a desire to be a part of integrating our youth into the larger congregation. The entire program will take place over the course of four weeks.

Here's how it works: You will write three separate things about yourself on three separate sheets of paper. These can be a few sentences to a paragraph or two each. These will be hints about who you are and they will be given to the teens over the course of three weeks. Your fourth paragraph/letter/card will be the story of how you became a UU, what being UU means to you, and why you remain in this 'chosen faith.' On the last Sunday in February, the teens will serve coffee during coffee hour. During this time, you and your teen will be trying to match yourselves up with each other (you will also have been receiving clues about them). You will have time to chat and get to know each other a little more during coffee hour.

If you are interested in participating, please contact *Alex Moreda* or *Persephone* by Sunday, January 22.

Poetic Insights

This month, Poetic Insights will meet on Sunday, January 15, at the Wince's house. Bring a sack lunch to eat at 1:00 PM. The writing session will start at 1:30. *Sylvia Wince* will be prompter. Anyone may come and join us. No talent needed; it's fun!

Juline Renfro Award

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 *Persephone* no later than 12:30 PM on Wednesday, January 11. Nominations may be submitted via e-mail (preferred method) or on paper in Persephone's mailbox.

The award will be presented at the January 15 Congregational Meeting.

Past recipients:

2005 *Barb Weber*

2004 *Vinnie Marshall*

2003 *Sean and Kate Halpin*

2002 *Juline Renfro*

Men's Group

The Men's Group meets the first and third Sundays of each month at 9:15 AM in the Richard Venus Library for fellowship and discussion. All men age 16 and older are welcome to attend.

The Women's Group

The Women's Group meets every Sunday at 9:30 AM. We come together to meet new women, to speak about how we are feeling and to listen to each other.

Starting January 8, the Women's Group will be studying *Voluntary Simplicity*, a 7-week discussion course through the Northwest Earth Institute. Some of the things included in the discussion will be money, possessions, time and material consumption. The varied readings will be from Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Wendell Berry, Thich Nhat Hanh, Paul Hawken and many more.

Contact *Linda Yoder* to participate.

"Live simply so that others may simply live."
—Gandhi



Are You a Person of Faith?

What is *faith*? What does it mean to have it? What is a *faith community*? Are you a *person of faith*? We hear the word *faith* used a lot. Keep the faith. Have faith. Oh, ye of little faith. One can have faith in God, faith in Jesus, faith in humanity, faith in oneself...I think you get my point. Faith is often used in relation to believing in something. Many hear the word and think of something counter to human intellect, turning a blind eye to science and reason in order to believe in something for which there is no evidence. While this is the popular definition, it is at best an inadequate and juvenile misinterpretation of the word, a definition that has evolved away from its true meaning.

If you're with me so far, I'd like to introduce you to someone very special...

His name was Yeshua and he was a Middle Eastern spiritual teacher. He spoke of faith. The Aramaic word that we translate as *faith* is *haimanuta*. (You're about to see the most Unitarian Universalist definition of the word faith possible!)

According to Aramaic scholar Neil Douglas-Klotz in his book *The Hidden Gospel*, *Haimanuta* means "confidence, firmness, or integrity of being. From the roots, the word indicates a connection of the sacred life force through its many outer forms in a way that is rooted, yet constantly renewing and healing." It implies "a sense of certainty or rootedness, a 'staying within' that allows one to be unshaken by phenomena outside oneself." Just sit with that for a moment before you read on... integrity of being... connection of sacred life force... many outer forms... rooted... constantly renewing and healing... unshaken by outside phenomena. Of course, this beautiful word was used by the very first Unitarian Universalist, Yeshua a.k.a. Jesus!

In the King James Version of the Bible, in the Book of Mark, chapter 11, verse 22 we see Jesus saying, "Have faith in God." Did you know that Jesus didn't use the word *God*? The Aramaic word *Alaha* is very different in meaning from the word *God*, which is based on a Germanic root meaning "good." *Alaha* means variously: Sacred Unity, Oneness, the All, the Ultimate Power/Potential, the One with no opposite. A reading of Mark 11:22 would more accurately look something like this:

Remain within yourselves—live in a place of rooted confidence in Sacred Unity.

May each of us be people of faith, having confidence and integrity of being. May this truly be a faith community, one which recognizes the connection of the sacred life force through its many outer forms. May we be a community with integrity, a community that is rooted, yet constantly renewing and healing. May we individually and as a community, be mindful of Unity which is healing and brings certainty, allowing us to be unshaken by what may lie ahead and outside of ourselves. May each and every one of us, in this new year, live in a place of rooted confidence in Sacred Unity.

*Blessings,
Persephone*

Welcome Our New LRE Assistant!

Christine Price from Yellow Springs will officially join us in January as our new LRE Assistant. I couldn't be happier! Chris is the Director of the Mills Lawn After School Care Program in Yellow Springs. She has extensive experience working with children, is smart, wonderfully creative and has lots of energy! She enjoys drumming, art, the outdoors, and kids (she has two of her own). We are blessed to have her with us!

—*Persephone*

Community Class

The Community Class is an adult group that meets every Sunday morning from 9:30—10:45 AM in the Founders' Room for fellowship and thought-provoking discussion. This is a chance to speak your mind or say nothing at all, without criticism. Let your hair down! Please join us—you will be welcome!

Sunday, January 1

"Personal Highs and Lows of 2005" Rather than enumerate our 2006 New Year's resolutions that probably won't materialize, we'll look back on our outstanding events, accomplishments, insights and failures of the past year.

Moderator: *Lindy McDonough*

Sunday, January 8

"Our Favorite Books of 2005." We'll share our thoughts on outstanding books we read last year. They can be the latest on the best sellers list or date back to the Dead Sea Scrolls—fiction, nonfiction, humor, whatever. Be prepared to give us the title, author, publisher and publication date, so we can share the list with the rest of the fellowship.

Moderator: *Elfi Purkey*

Sunday, January 15

There will be no Community Class because of the **Congregational Meeting**. The worship service will be early this day, starting at **10:00 AM**, with the meeting immediately following.

Sunday, January 22

"Money." Benjamin Franklin said "*Money* has never made man happy, nor will it, there is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more of it one has, the more one wants." And according to Albert Camus, "It is a kind of spiritual snobbery that makes people think they can be happy without *money*." What do you think about money?

Moderator: *Anne Harvey*

Sunday, January 29

(Rescheduled from October 16.)

"The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century." We'll discuss the book by New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman that demystifies and updates the often bewildering process of globalization unfolding before our eyes: what it means to countries, companies, communities, and individuals; how governments and societies can, and must, adapt.

Moderator: *Bill Ross*

Smart Choices

There's a change in plans for January. Smart Choices will meet on the *second and fourth* Mondays in January.

For both meetings in January, we will be bringing a personal treasure to "show and tell" with the group. The dates for the meetings are **Monday, January 9 and Monday, January 23**.

We meet at the Fellowship at 7:30 PM and we finish at 9:00 PM. Anyone may join us and all are welcome.

First Thursday Theological Society

The First Thursday Theological Society will meet at 7:30 PM in the Founders' Room on January 5 to begin a series of discussions of Jack Mendelsohn's book, *Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age*. The book is available from the UUA Bookstore online and from other online bookstores such as Amazon.com. The first three chapters will be discussed at the January meeting. New participants are welcome. Contact *Ann Snively* if you would like more information. (Also call Ann or *Jay Snively* to check on meeting cancellation if there is bad weather on January 5.)

Evening Book Discussion Group

The Evening Book Discussion Group will meet at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 10 at *Mary Anne Frey's* house to discuss *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser. In February, the meeting will be on the 14th at *Diane Dover's* for a discussion of *Gone to Soldiers* by Marge Piercy. The March 14 meeting will be at *Kathleen Pennington's* for a discussion of *All Souls: a Family Story from Southie* by Michael Patrick MacDonald. All are welcome to join this group. Contact *Ann Snively* for more information.

Children's Charity

Our young people in Religious Education are collecting money each week in their classes to help homeless children in the Dayton area. Please help your children remember to bring their donations on Sunday morning. Coins are welcome and add up surprisingly quickly. We will be collecting for this until the January congregational meeting, when the children will vote on a new charity to support.

We are also continuing to collect beverage pull tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, which provides support to families of hospitalized children in the Miami Valley. We have donated approximately seven gallons of tabs so far. Thank you!

MVUUF January 2006

Bring fresh produce, baked goods, canned and packaged food and diapers to donate during Second Offering every Sunday!

Sun	1	Men's Group 9:15 AM Women's Group 9:30 AM Community Class 9:30 AM <i>Change-0—Martha Hodges 11 AM</i> Remember Second Offering Donation
Mon	2	Music Committee 6:45 PM Social Concerns 7:00 PM
Tues	3	Worship Committee 7:30 PM
Wed	4	Choir Practice 7:30 PM
Thurs	5	Panini Ministry (Panera) 11 AM First Thursday 7:30 PM
Fri	6	
Sat	7	
Sun	8	Women's Group 9:30 AM Community Class 9:30 AM <i>Power of Story—Jim Farinet 11 AM</i> YRUU 6:30 PM Remember Second Offering Donation
Mon	9	Storage Room Clean-Up Smart Choices 7:30 PM
Tue	10	Evening Books—offsite 7:00 PM
Wed	11	Activities Meeting 7:00 PM Articulating Your Faith 7:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM
Thurs	12	Panini Ministry (Panera) 11 AM
Fri	13	
Sat	14	The Other Place Meal 11:30 AM
Sun	15	No Morning Classes—Early Service You, Me, Them & Us—Martha 10 AM Congregational Meeting follows Cinemaniacs—Neon Movies 5 PM YRUU 6:30 PM Remember Second Offering Donation

Mon	16	FORUM DEADLINE Martin Luther King March 11 AM (offsite) Governance 7:00 PM
Tues	17	
Wed	18	Daytime Book Club 10:30 AM Articulating Your Faith 7:00 PM INTERWEAVE 7:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM
Thurs	19	Panini Ministry (Panera) 11 AM Board of Trustees Meeting 7:00 PM
Fri	20	
Sat	21	
Sun	22	Women's Group 9:30 AM Community Class 9:30 AM <i>Giants' Shoulders—Martha 11:00 AM</i> Congregational Conversation 12:30 PM Storyteller's Workshop 2:00 PM YRUU 6:30 PM Remember Second Offering Donation
Mon	23	Social Concerns 7:00 PM Smart Choices 7:30 PM
Tues	24	
Wed	25	Articulating Your Faith 7:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM
Thurs	26	Panini Ministry (Panera) 11 AM
Fri	27	Game Night 7:00 PM
Sat	28	Fellowship Gourmets— <i>Amber Rose</i> 6 PM
Sun	29	Women's Group 9:30 AM Community Class 9:30 AM <i>Forgiveness—Rich Robinson 11 AM</i> Fellowship Gourmets— <i>Asia Café</i> 12:30 PM Poetic Insights 1:30 PM (Wince's) YRUU 6:30 PM Remember Second Offering Donation
Mon	30	
Tues	31	