

The Oracle

“You need not think alike to love alike.” Francis David, 1568

March 8, 2010

Unitarian Universalist Church of Meadville

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Our mission is to offer a welcoming and safe community that reaches out to and receives spiritual seekers. We provide a voice for religious diversity and encourage personal transformation as we strive toward a better world.

Our covenant is to be a loving, joyful community that nurtures spiritual growth and promotes compassion, social responsibility, and service in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Sunday Services

Services begin at 10:30 AM unless otherwise noted.

March 14

The Stories We Tell

What stories do we tell, and how do we tell them? The choices we make have consequences – not just for our understanding of our past, but in the the unfolding of our future.

The Rev. Betsy Scheuerman

March 28

Miriam Dancing

This Passover, I want to focus on the role of Moses’ older sister, Miriam, in this ancient story of liberation from slavery.

The Rev. Betsy Scheuerman



Thursday, April 1, 8 PM

Tenebrae Worship Service

The Dark Night of the Soul

Usually worship is a celebration: an affirmation of light and joy. Yet in our psyches are shadow sides ignored at our peril. Naming, acknowledging and facing these shadows is important. Featuring special music and the choir, this worship service draws upon the story of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane – but that story has applicability for all who have been in dark and lonely places. “Tenebrae”, by the way, is Latin for shadows.

Last year, this service was sparsely attended, but those who came found it powerful and deeply moving. Come if you are able, and invite others.

The Rev. Betsy Scheuerman

From Your Interim Minister

Winter is not my favorite seasons. This time of year, especially, I’m tired of the white, gray and black winter palate. I yearn for spring: green grass, leafing trees, blue skies, yellow forsythia.

And yet, in the aftermath of the most recent winter storm, I saw:

snow-laden branches, charcoal tree trunks, pewter skies, soft cottony white blanketing the earth. And I thought, “How beautiful.”

Maybe it is because I am a minister, but I am conscious that this is the Christian season of Lent, a somber period that looks ahead toward the joy and new life of Easter. And in the Jewish calendar, this is a time of preparing for Passover: the period *before* liberation.

The challenge, I think, is to feel the yearning for a coming time of freedom and new life, the hope of the vision of a better future. And yet, simultaneously and paradoxically, to find a way to be present to what *is*, to appreciate and to love what we have right now. It is hard, when one yearns for spring, to appreciate the beauty of winter. And I suppose it is hard (not that I would know!), if one is totally content with winter, to long for spring.

Carolyn McDade, in her hymn *Spirit of Life*, finds another way to express this paradox: *Roots hold us close, wings set us free*. In our faith, in our church, in our life, may we all find both roots and wings. May we appreciate what is, and may we desire more: More peace, more justice, more joy, more love.

Blessings,

Betsy

With sadness we inform you that Aimee Reash’s grandmother, Irene F. Reash, 86, of Country-side Convalescent Home, 8221 Lamor Road, Lackawannock Township passed away Monday March 1. Condolences can be sent to Aimee at 794 Leslie Road, Meadville, PA 16335.

It is with sorrow that we announce the deaths of William Arthur Yeany, Jr. who passed away February 10, 2010 and William Arthur Yeany, Sr. who passed away February 19, 2010. Both of Rimersburg, PA, they were the father and grandfather respectively of Sharyla Yeany, a friend of this church. Condolences can be sent to Sharyla at 756 N. Main St. - Apt 1, Meadville, PA 16335.

From the Search Committee

Last *Oracle* we explained just what a pre-candidating weekend is all about, and told you a little bit about going to neutral pulpits to hear our candidates preach. Each of the UU churches in the District that we have visited has been so kind and welcoming. It’s a little difficult to hide our purpose – seven visitors all from Meadville – even if we do not sit together, we tend to stand out. We’ve gotten advice, sympathy, encouragement, directions and war stories.

Each of the churches looks different, and does things a little differently. We’ve been to two fairly modern sanctuaries with large windows behind the pulpit and lots of greenery both inside and out that catches your attention. We’ve seen beautifully handcrafted chalices and chandeliers. We’ve been to a Beaux Arts church built in 1909 where there is a fireplace in the parlor that leads to the sanctuary, where the rows of pews curve in a semi-circle and the order of service is a laminated staple in the pew next to the hymn book. It took us a few minutes to recognize that the hymns for the morning were listed on a wooden board on the front wall of the sanctuary and it was up to the speaker to make sure we

knew who wrote the passage or reading selection. This was also where we saw a commitment ceremony for a corps of pulpit assistants who had been through several weeks of training and were being consecrated as lay leaders of the congregation.

What made the largest impression on us, however, were the bells. Sometimes our candidate brought them, sometimes they were a fixture in the church, but almost without fail there were bells. Really, just a single chime that rang out and reverberated either strongly, to call the congregation to worship, or a note that rang out to begin meditation, and then another softly to bring us back to the present. I’m sure the musicians within our group can describe the various timbre of the bells in better detail – but in a word they were moving parts of Sunday worship. We are hoping that we can try a bell chime now and then in Meadville.

Many of the ministerial candidates will be pre-candidating through next weekend. Therefore, to be fair to the ministers and the other congregations in search, the UUA has asked each search committee to refrain from making an offer until noon on Monday March 15. We will be poised to hit that last number before 12:01 PM! Even if we make an offer and it is accepted, we cannot announce our candidate to the congregation until we have completed our last round of references and checks, and we have a contract acceptable to both the Board and the candidate. The contract signing should not be a difficult process. The last question we always ask our pre-candidates is whether our contract is acceptable. The answers we’ve received have indicated to us that the contract was well prepared by our Board and carefully read by the candidates.

All this is contingent on the

vote to call our new minister at the special congregational meeting tentatively scheduled on the last day of our candidating week which we still hope to be April 11-18, 2010.

This has been quite a journey. Thank you for trusting us to do our best to find you a new settled minister. This is a decision as much of the heart as it is the mind, with the future of this church always at the fore.

Joyce Milberg, for the Search Committee

RE News

Appreciative Inquiry

Have you benefited from RE? Have you or your kids been in Sunday RE classes or OWL classes? Have you taught an RE class? Have you attended adult discussion classes during the week? Then we want your input!

The RE committee will sponsor an Appreciative Inquiry on Saturday, March 20 from 11 AM until 3 PM – lunch provided!! We'd like to hear your "RE stories" about the experiences that meant the most to you and how these meaningful experiences came about. The goal of the afternoon will be to identify the strengths of our program and to think about how we might use these strengths to move our RE program forward.

For the Appreciative Inquiry to provide an accurate picture of our RE's past and future, we need to hear as many voices as possible. Your experience and your voice are unique and need to be heard. Please take the time to join us in writing the next chapter in our congregation's RE story.

Please RSVP by calling Deb Lehman @ 814-337-1232.

Youth Nuus

The Youth Group has been very busy this winter. We have spent a lot of time working towards building a healthy community within the group and establishing respect and trust for each other.

Membership and regular attendance have been established due to a regular meeting time that works for most members and weekly format that allows for some structure, but a lot of room for tangents as well!

We have big things coming up. On March 21, we are hosting the Youth Group from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie. We will be attending the service together, sharing lunch and spending some time having conversations about how we would like to grow our Youth Groups.

April is going to be a big month for us. We have two service projects planned. Our first project will be geared toward Earth Day and involve an intentional interfaith component and our second project will be a sleepout as an awareness effort and fundraiser for an organization yet to be decided.

Finally, we are having conversations about working on a Sunday service for sometime this summer. There is a lot of musical talent within our group, so we look forward to working with Aimee, our music director, to build something that focuses on music and movement. We hope to have a gathering at the end of the summer to celebrate our accomplishments this year and plan for next year.

Stay tuned for updates on our progress and details on how you can get involved.

Kristin Schroeder

Seder?



Passover begins at sundown, on Monday, March 29, and continues until Monday, April 5. If you are interested in coordinating a Seder dinner, let us know. Contact Carole, in the church office.

Thanks!

Easter Flowers

Flowering plants for the Easter Sunday service may be dedicated in memory or honor of someone. Please sign up in the parish house by March 31. Cost is \$15, and you take the plant home after the service on Easter.



New Directories

Starting March 7, 2010, the old directory will be displayed at coffee hour for members and friends to review. Please check your information for accuracy and make any changes necessary by March 22. Changes may also be sent directly to the church office via email at church@uumeadville.org. The directory will then be updated and will be sent out via e-mail by the end of the month. A few paper copies will be available in the Parish House as well.

Thank you for your cooperation & assistance!

From the Board

So, what has the Board been up to lately? We have a few things to report. First, we are eagerly awaiting, as I'm sure everyone is, the results of the search process for a new minister. The Search Committee has been hard at work, and we are looking forward to hearing whom they will recommend to us! Second, as you may recall, we passed a substantial revision of our bylaws at the last Congregational Meeting. The new bylaws are posted on the "Leadership" page of the church web site; the direct link is <http://www.uumeadville.org/By-Laws-revised-dec09.pdf> if you would like to take a look at them.

Third, the Membership Committee has provided the Board with a draft "Disruptive Behavior Policy." We do not currently have such a policy, and it seems reasonable that creating a policy proactively (and hoping, of course, that it will never be needed) is much better than trying to create a policy in the aftermath of some kind of event. You can find the draft policy at http://www.uumeadville.org/Draft_disruptive_policy_proposal.pdf, and if you have comments about it, please contact either Deb Lehman or myself.

We have several other items of business we are discussing these days, such as how to continue our strong Youth Group program, the need for a new dishwasher or sanitizer for the kitchen, and the reorganization of our Stewardship/fund-raising structure, and we will continue to keep you informed of new developments in all these areas. In the meantime, as always, if you have comments or thoughts on issues that the Board should be addressing, please let me know. See you in church!

Josh Searle-White, Board President

Board Briefs February 8, 2010

Present for our pre-fete de St. Valentine gathering were: Josh Searle White, President; Laurie Parendes, Vice President; Ron White, Treasurer, Cynthia Burton, Secretary; Deb Lehman, Mission and Outreach; Cheryl Burkey, Stewardship, and The Reverend Betsy Scheuerman, Minister. The meeting began at 7:03 PM with opening words from Josh.

Secretary now inserts a mini clarification for the edification of the members and friends: since we have a new structure, it may help to remember that the "Vice-President serves as liaison to the Board for the administrative functions of the Church, including Properties, Public Relations, Informational Technology, and Leadership Development."

Vice President Laurie Parendes reported that David Perry has agreed to chair the Religious Education Committee. This elicited a round of applause. Deb Lehman reported that Jill Hyatt and Rebecca Hecking have agreed to serve on this committee. Deb Lehman scheduled a meeting of the Mission and Outreach group for Feb 17. Issues to be examined by RE: How do we serve those who are here now? What are our future staffing needs? What resources are available to us? What areas of overlap are there with other committees in mission and outreach?

Laurie Parendes reports from Amelia Carr (leadership) that Jerry Almes has accepted the position of Annual Fund Chair. He will be back in PA by the end of March. He would like a copy of the current by-laws.

Action: Josh will send Jerry by laws. Josh will ask Christian Maher to post the by-laws on the website.

New financial resolutions

The board approved the removal of Vanessa Shafer, the retention of Patrick Hecking, and the additions of Cheryl Burkey and Ron White from the Wells Fargo and Vanguard accounts.

Dishwasher/sanitizer update

Laurie Parendes (in role as Properties liaison) talked with Bill Miller, Properties Chair, about the proposal to replace the sanitizer. He would like a broad study of the need for such expenditure. He recommends a full "audit" of the kitchen to see what other requirements exist in order to sell food to the public and for renters. The board received a written report from Sue Mallick summarizing the considerable work that has been done so far on this project. Her report also raises a question about one of the stoves in the kitchen which will be referred to properties.

Action: Josh will put together a task force to clean up the issue.

Treasurer's report

(Copies of the reports were distributed at the meeting)

The final report for 2009 was accepted by the board. The January 2010 report was accepted by the board.

Ron pointed out that the moving expenses for a new minister do not appear in the current budget.

Disruptive behavior policy

The Membership Committee has asked that the board endorse a disruptive behavior policy. For now, the board has decided to put the draft policy on the web, make paper copies available in the parish house, and invite comments from the members.

Board procedures (new structure)

How do we want to keep up with what committees are doing? Do we want a minister's report? A DRE report? Do we want to receive minutes of any committee meetings?

Search Committee schedule for candidating week

Keep the week of April 11-18 open. There will be many gatherings in many places with many hors d'oeuvres, comestibles, libations, potages, and concoctions. A review of the food pyramid may be in order....

Other ...

OMD Assembly is March 26-27, 2010 in Claresville, OH. Meg Riley is the keynote speaker.

The lockbox combination has been changed. Carole will email us with the new combination.

Josh thanked all for their work, read closing words, and adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM. The next meeting is March 15, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Burton, Board Secretary

Women's Group March Meetings

- **When?** First and third Fridays (this month, March 5 & 19) 7:30 to 9 PM.
- **Where?** The Parish House Living Room.
- **What?** A time of ritual, with a reading, silence, and sharing.
- **Why?** To re-imagine, re-myth, and re-claim herstories and theologies; to share our own stories; and to connect with one another.
- **Who?** Any woman who is interested and willing to

commit to participating as able.

Contact Rev. Betsy Scheuerman, if you would like more information.

Grey Pilgrim

The sights you see when you haven't got a camera – such as a zebra wandering along an Alabama highway.

While we're not likely to see a zebra in downtown Meadville, there is still plenty of nature to be enjoyed. We often forget that many of the local birds winter over, so as I was talking to a tree-load of robins back in January, people going by stopped to wonder what they were doing out so early. When I explained that they wintered over, you could see the joy slide off their faces. Two weeks ago at Ponderosa I watched out the window as a flock of about 20 assorted sparrows, chickadees, etc. attacked the feeder near their porch. This morning as I waited for the bus, two small birds carried on a conversation in a spruce tree across the street. I couldn't see them, and I didn't have my list of bird songs with me, so I'm not sure what they were.

Even in January and February, the trees are full of birds if you know where to look. Of course, there are always jays and cardinals with their bright colors, but there are plenty of lbb's (little brown birds) too, even in the cold weather we've been having. If lbb's come, can spring be far behind? So there, Phil.



Mary-Lib Whitney, just me

Upcoming Druid Events

The Druids of Snow Water Grove, ADF will be celebrating Ostara (The Spring or Vernal Equinox) in a Norse style at the Meadville UU Parish House Dining Hall on Sunday March 21, 2010 at 5 PM. This is a public event, all are welcome. For those that plan ahead, we will celebrate Beltane on Sunday May 2, 2010.

Also, don't forget that the Earth Based Religion Study Group meets the 2nd Friday of every month at 7 PM at the Parish house, with the next one on Friday March 12, 2010, open to everyone (no ritual involved).

For further details, please see Rachael or Grey, email info@snowwatergrove.org, or call 814 406 9794.

Grey Whitney, Snow Water Grove, ADF (Senior Druid)

Ferry Beach

The first conference of the season at Ferry Beach on the coast of southern Maine will be June 20-26 – it's an affordable week for the whole family *because*: this is a work and play week, and in exchange for working on Ferry Beach projects each morning (and playing in the afternoon), participants pay for meals only!

Morning work projects will include carpentry, gardening, sewing, general cleanup, painting, and other items. In the afternoon you choose from many optional programs. Morning and afternoon children's programs will be provided. All the Ferry Beach traditions will also be a part of the week – vespers, campfires, cookouts, friendship circles etc.

You may register by calling 207-282-4489; or fbregs@maine.rr.com; or www.ferrybeach.org.

Assignments

Here is your ‘heads-up’ for the next two weeks. Thank you, everyone, for your participation!

Greeters

Mar 14: David & Cheryl Burkey

Mar 21: David & Cheryl Burkey

Ushers

Mar 14: Bruce & Marty Thaeler

Mar 21: Bruce & Marty Thaeler

Coffee Hour Hosts

Mar 14: Mary-Lib Whitney

Mar 21: Herb & Peg Klions, and Jan Day



As always, if you are not able to serve on this date, please make an attempt to find someone to replace you. Thank you.

Oracle Deadline

Next deadline for submitting items for the newsletter is **Friday March 19, 2010**. You may email your articles to mthaeler@zoominternet.net; or leave items in the *Oracle* folder in the parish house **by noon** on Friday. The hard-copy or email at hand on Saturday morning will appear in the subsequent *Oracle*. When emailing material, please write “oracle” in the subject line. Phone: 877-580-3760. Thank you.

2010 Church Officers

President: Josh Searle-White
Vice-President: Laurie Parendes
Secretary: Cynthia Burton
Treasurer: Ron White
Coordinator of Mission and Outreach: Deb Lehman
Stewardship Chair: Cheryl Burkey

Church Staff

Interim Minister: The Rev. Betsy Scheuerman
R.E. Director: Kristin Schroeder
Administrative Assistant: Carole Schenberg
*Office Hours: Mon-Tue-Wed-Fri 8:30-12:30;
Sunday 10:30-12:30*
Music Director: Aimee Reash
Custodian: Doug Schenberg