



The Univoice

2009 Reading Pride Festival: Fun in the Sun!

The third annual Reading Pride Celebration was a celebration of the unity and diversity in the community of Reading and Berks Count.

The celebration was held at historic Centre Park on Sunday July 19th, wrapping up a weekend of Pride Events including an Inter-denominational Faith service and screenings of the film documentary Freedom to Marry. 18

members of First UU came out to celebrate our wider community and to bask in the sun and fun!



Nadine Smet-Weiss having fun in the sun, participating in the Reading Pride Fest.

Central PA's Silent Witness, a 2009 First UU Special Plate Collection donation recipient, supported the community by



Armed only with their rainbow umbrellas and uniforms, the Silent Witnesses help protect our community from protestors. Pictured above: Doug Wray representing UU at this years Reading Pride Fest.

providing a silent buffer between the festival's participants and anti-gay protestors. In what is becoming an annual tradition of First UU Berks, many of our members did at least one shift with Silent Witness during the day, helping the community to have a safe and peaceful day.

~ Kim McGarvey

Church Office Hours:

The church office is open from 12-5pm, Tuesday through Friday, but please call ahead to ensure access.

If you need to get in at other times, contact the office manager to arrange for a temporary key.

Rev. Fees has office hours by appointment. To schedule, please call the church at 610 372-0928 or email sandrafees@verizon.net. Monday is Rev. Fees day off.

Univoice Submission Guidelines

Email submissions by attaching a Word file or including your material in the body of an email message to univoice@uuberks.org. You may also put typewritten submissions in our mailbox in the deBenneville Room. The deadline is the 15th of each month. Please include the date, time and location of events, and the full name and phone number or email of contacts.

~Meghan Klumpp

Editor

Unitarian Universalist General Assembly

We were pleased to represent the Church at the 2009 GA in Salt Lake City, UT. Caroline and I have been attending the annual GAS since 1985, we have only missed two years due to health problems. This year's Assembly was noteworthy in a number of respects:

UU University - This program is several years old, but had been set early, before the regular GA started. This year's assembly made an integral part of the programming. Several tracks were established: issues of Stewardship, Multi-generational concerns, Governance, and Theology, to name a few. We attended the Theology program, which considered "Theology for a Secular Age"; (among other things, investigating what it means to be a religious community.)

Elections - The only "contested" election was that for President; the office being won by the Rev. Peter Morales.

Our UU Purposes - This was a "sleeper issue" of sorts. It proposed to change the familiar wording, (which we see weekly on the back of our Order of Service, for example). The discussion was lengthy and sometimes heated. For us, the issue was nicely summarized by the Delegate who commented, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" We agreed; the motion to start the change process failed by about six votes!

Seeing old friends, making new, worship services, singing, the exhibit area, and eating were some of the highlights, all in all - a wonderful experience. Please see back page for Simonson's service schedule on the GA. ~ NELSON SIMONSON

From Sandra's Study

Living and Worshipping in a Post-Verbal Culture

We live in a post-verbal culture in which our most powerful messages are visual. In our visual world, TV, movies, and the internet have become second-nature to most of us. They can move more quickly than live theater can, and they do it from different angles at the blink of an eye. Even our billboards are electronic, enabling us to be bombarded with moving images even when we are on the road.

Wherever we go, we find a landscape dominated by visual images. Even churches and faith institutions are exploring the power of the visual. They are installing large screens, incorporating PowerPoint presentations, and employing film and other visually-oriented media.

And why not? We need to incorporate whatever can help us more fully experience the divine presence, whatever can help us explore our faith more deeply, whatever can provide the tools we need to create meaning and significance, and whatever brings us greater insight into

ourselves and our world. Actually, it should come as no surprise that in a post-verbal culture, we need to be a post-verbal church. We need to do so to attract and retain young people as well as new people who are discovering our spiritual community. But honestly, we need to do it for all of us – young and old, newcomers and long-timers. Most of us find we are more fully engaged by multi-sensory experiences, including the visual, than by the word alone. I've spent a lot of my life with words, and yet I find I'm just as visually focused as the next person.

So beginning this fall, we'll experiment with new uses of the visual – in worship and adult education programs. I'll be offering a film and theology class, and occasionally using PowerPoint presentations in worship. From there, anything's possible. If you're

inspired by these creative possibilities and want to get involved, let me know.

Yours in faith,

Sandra



Splinters from the Board:

PA UU lobbyists to meet in our building

UPLAN, a new Pennsylvania group that lobbies for UU projects and principles, will hold its first annual meeting in our church all day Saturday, Sept. 12.

The Board of Directors of First Berks at its monthly meeting on July 11 approved renting our building to this new state-wide group at the reduced "members rate" of \$100 for the day. Noting the group's low budget, President Joe Plageman recommended the special rate.

On making Gerber Room more user friendly

The committee that has been working on how to improve our Gerber Room discussed with the Board on July 11 some of the ideas it has come up with, such as:

Removing radiators and plants, installing sound panels on walls and/or ceilings, refinishing hardwood floors, moving piano to

Chalice House and replacing bulletin boards.

With encouragement from Board members, Committee Chair Cindy Mock agreed to seek donated funds to pay for the changes she and committee members Cheryl Gallo and Stephanie Elliott would like to see made in to the much-used room, which will continue to accommodate our after Sunday-service coffees and other large gatherings.

Treasurer could use some help!

Treasurer Jeanne Hey told the Board that pledge income for the 2008-09 fiscal year that ended June 30 fell \$13,000 short of what was expected, and she is concerned that donations are also down for the current budget year. So, fellow pledgers, you know what we have to do to wipe that frown from Jeanne's pretty face. Let's all make her day by coughing up our first payments on our 2009-10 pledges (and hope the air conditioning will still be on when we return to First Berks from our summer breaks!).

~GENE GOODWIN

Dear Friends,

I hope you and your family are enjoying the golden days of summer. My family has had fun seeing friends, swimming, visiting the beach, and staying up late. Of course, there are also jellyfish stings, bug bites, skinned knees and those "I'm SO bored" moments, but there is just something special about summer.

August will be a very busy month for the RE committee and our volunteer teachers as we gear up for the new church year, which begins on September 13 with our traditional water communion service. Regular Sunday School classes resume on September 20.

Enjoy the rest of your summer,

Elizabeth
and the RE Committee

RE Committee
Lisa Wilder, Chair
Emily McNulty
Susan Stewart
Kent Gutzler
Tracy Brant
Celeste Galanos,
Youth Representative



*Elizabeth Kaufmann, Director of
Religious Education*

Why is Sunday School registration important?

In the coming weeks, you will have an opportunity to fill out registration forms for your children for Sunday School. Why is registration so important? The forms help us to gather information about your child, contact information for your family, and information about allergies, medical and developmental conditions. Having this information is important so that we can keep you informed about upcoming activities and schedule changes, set up class groupings with a manageable number of students, and keep any children with health or developmental issues safe and comfortable during Sunday School classes. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this form!

Re Events

August RE Series-- Exploring the "Dark Side" of the Interdependent Web of Life

During our Sundays together in August, we will learn about some of the more mysterious strands of the web of life, including slugs, worms, snakes, and other reptiles and discover why they are important to all of life on earth.

Sunday, August 16--Who's living under that rock?

A shovelful of soil may not look like much, but it is actually teeming with life. Soil is full of creatures, visible and invisible, that make life on earth possible. We will examine some soil samples and see what we find and talk about why healthy soil is so important.

Sunday, August 23—Prehistoric Berks County

Church member Mike Szajna is a research associate for the State Museum of PA, with a focus on paleontology. He has discovered many interesting fossils and knows a lot about life in prehistoric Berks County. Come check out some items from his collection and get some tips on local fossil hunting.

Sunday, August 30—Reptile Show and RE Open House

Don't miss this chance to get up close and personal with snakes, lizards and other fascinating reptiles! Local reptile shop, Reptile Canyon, will bring animals from their collection for us to meet. Afterward, check out the new RE classrooms in Chalice House and take a few minutes to fill out your registration forms for Sunday School.

Week-day Events

Thursday, August 6—Weaver's Orchard—Fruit Picking! Let's meet at 9:30 am and see what is in season! For a harvest schedule and more information, go to www.weaversorchard.com.

Thursday, August 6—Food Pantry

Middle and high school students are reminded that their assistance with the monthly food pantry would be greatly appreciated. Please consider helping for an hour or so anytime between 8:30 am and noon. For more information, contact Liz Eshelman.

August Volunteers



Coffee Corps

- August 2 Randy Newnham
- August 9 Stephanie Elliott & Mark Burton
- August 16 Karen Nierle
- August 23 Joe & Paula Plageman
- August 30 Judd & Mindy Bortz

August Ushers

- 8/2 Axsmith/Thibault
- 8/9 Debroux/McLeish
- 8/16 Showalter/Tyson
- 8/23 Orts/Brownstein
- 8/30 Plageman/Szajna

UU Books

We will be meeting again starting September, on the 2nd Sunday of every month, 9:15 a.m. at the church.

The book for discussion on September 13th will be *Wom-enomics* by Claire Shipman and Katy Kay. The authors assert that women's influence as consumers and earners gives them the clout to begin changing the workplace to suit their needs – the right/ability to ask for flexibility in their work lives, to negotiate effectively getting their needs met. The book inspires readers toward creating a flexibility-driven work environment, benefitting all women and men, families and workforces.

Since we are beginning a new season we need suggestions, from members, of books to include for reading/discussion.

Contact Nadine Smet-Weiss. with book ideas or questions.

Food with Spirit

Several times each day, every one of us enters into a unique bond with the planet earth from whence we come, and the vastness of the universe which supports it. Whenever we eat, we are united with soils encovering the globe, the complexities of seasonal changes, and the sun's energy raining down upon us. Together these seemingly disparate elements produce the very nutrition upon which our survival depends.

The Berks UU congregation actively supports a Food Pantry program, making food available to neighbors in our city community who are unable to fully provide for their family's needs. To meet these goals we include a line in the annual budget, and during the year individuals contribute financially, donate bags of food items, and give their personal time and effort to make the Pantry a success.

On the morning of the first Thursday of each month, 8:30-9:30 AM, congregational volunteers begin to gather at the church. In the next 1 1/2 hours they transform the Gerber room into a small mini-market, using racks with shelves containing items from all the major food groups. After setting up, the team of volunteers breaks into attending to sepa-

rate tasks – signing in clients, explaining the selection process, breaking empty boxes for cardboard recycling, restocking shelves, and so on. At noon, having served 100+ people, we join in cleaning up and returning the Gerber room to the original décor familiar to coffee/conversation after Sunday services.

But beyond the logistics challenges volunteers must deal with, by their very presence they are also communicating UU principles, "The inherent worth and dignity of every person," and "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."



Randy Newnham with other volunteers at Food Pantry.

In July, Walter Axsmith began hands-on as Food Pantry Coordinator, to resolve whatever problems arise during Pantry's action-packed 3 hours, and with the volunteers, keeping the line of clients flowing smoothly. We served 115 persons, representing a total of 432 household members who benefitted from our Church efforts.

The next Pantries will be held on Thursday: August 6th, September 3rd, and October 1st. Volunteers are always needed, come join the team! For more info, contact Walter Axsmith (610-488-6838, or w2axsmith@comcast.net). ~KELLY HARTMAN

August 2009



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6 Weaver's Orchard 9:30 a.m. see page 3 Food Pantry	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 RE Who's living under that rock? see pg.	17	18	19	20	21 Drum Circle 7p.m.	22
23/30 RE Prehistoric Berks/Open House and Reptile Show see page 3	23/31	24	26	27	28	29

Memorial for Isabelle Keller

Mark your calendars for a Celebration of Life Service for Isabelle Keller to be held on Sunday, September 20, 2009 at 2 p.m. in the church sanctuary. A reception will follow in the Social Hall. Isabelle who was a member of the church died on April 11, 2009.

PUC Fall Meeting

The fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention will take place on September 26-27th at the Athens/Sheshequin Unitarian Universalist Church. This church is located in very beautiful Bradford County.

Anyone interested in attending as we celebrate Universalism as both our heritage and our future, interested in attending as a delegate, or just wanting more information about the PUC or this meeting please contact Joe Plageman, FUUBC PUC trustee.

August Service Schedule

August 2 So, What's Your Story ~Kate Diller

We are all born into a story and as we live in our story we all become part of each other's stories. What makes a story true? Since the 16th century enlightenment we've placed more importance on fact, on certainty, on critical thinking, science and reason. Something was true if the facts could be proven. Otherwise it was "just" a story. Without basis in fact, a story could not possibly be true. More recently, people have been returning to story as a way of relating and connecting in community. However there are different perceptions--what is true or untrue depends on how my story and your story are interpreted. How can we recover and tell "our" story, while honoring the particularities of our own stories?



August 9 Report on General Assembly ~Nelson and Caroline Simonson

The Simonsons will share inspiration and insights they gained as our delegates to this year's UU General Assembly in Salt Lake City.

August 16 The Unseen Web ~Rev. Sandra Fees

We talk a lot about the interconnected web of life. In this service, we will consider the lesser seen and less obvious aspects of the web, and explore their place in our interdependent world.

First Unitarian Univesalist Church

of Berks County

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Reading, PA 19602
(610) 372 0928

www.uuberks.org

Address Correction Requested



August 23 Roots and Wings ~Rev. Sandra Fees

What grounds you and allows you to take flight? This morning we will explore the roots and wings of our lives and consider what gives our spiritual lives both roots and wings.

August 30 "We Are Running" ~Rev. Sandra Fees

In her poem "We Are Running," Lucille Clifton urges us "to pray that what we want is worth this running." When do you run? What are you running toward or from? Have you ever collapsed from exhaustion after running? Join us as we explore where all our running takes us.

September 6 Befriending Your Belly

~Joanne Groebel

We live the life that is ours instead of the life we think we should live, not by thinking our way there, but by gut feeling. An aspect of living from our center involves awareness of our literal center...our much judged and maligned belly. Together we will compassionately honor the shining soul power of our bellies.



Welcome back, Sandra!

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