

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
Sarah Oelberg, Minister
12333 155th Avenue
Hanska, Minnesota 56041-4310

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit Number 2
Hanska, MN 56041

Mere Lys

(More Light)

norachuu@prairie.lake.com
http://nora-uu-church.org/nora/

Address Service Requested



Sunday Services

February, 2003

Social Hour: 10:00 A.M.

Worship Service: 10:30 A.M.

February 2 - "Heroes and Heretics." Who are the people we look up to - and why? It seems they are often those who are considered heretical.

Servers: Darrell & Jeannie Hinsman; Clayton & Shirley Olson

Musician: Ryann Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

11:30 - POTLUCK LUNCH



February 9 - "Spirituality without God." What do we mean when we talk about 'spirituality.' Does it need to be rooted in a belief in God?

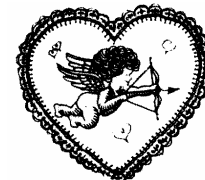
WE WILL WELCOME NEW MEMBERS DURING THE SERVICE.

Servers: Gene and Georgine Tepley

Musician: Mimi Kamleiter

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Board of Trustees Meeting



February 16 - "Sandburg, Lincoln, and Unitarian Universalism," by Rev. Wesley Hromatko.

Servers: Sheldon and Anne Reike

Musician: Ryann Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

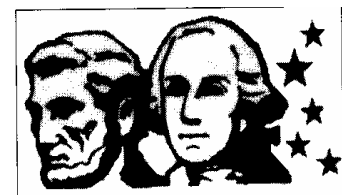
February 23 - "Evangelical Liberalism." We have 'good news' to share. How can we spread our message to the world?

Servers: Laurie Kunerth, Vicki Sieve

Musician: Doug and Ardelle Becken

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Congregational Meeting immediately following the service!***



SARAH'S CORNER

The results of the congregational survey will soon be in, and I am looking forward to seeing what they show about how our congregation has changed in the last 15 years. I suspect we may be in for some surprises! The Ministerial Relations Committee will be analyzing and graphing the results in the weeks ahead. The Committee has been doing an admirable job in preparing and processing the survey, and getting us ready for the next stage of preparation for the future.

As we analyze the survey results, we will begin to be able to make some of the important decisions we need to make before we enter the formal "search" process. Basically, there are three BIG questions we need to resolve as soon as we can:

1. How much ministry do we want/can we afford? It has been suggested by some that we might want to return to "full time" ministry; but what we might want and what we can actually afford may be different. The determining factor will be how much money we raise, and how much we are willing to allocate to ministry. Therefore, before we can answer the question of "how much ministry," we will need to have a thorough, every-member face-to-face canvass this spring, to get a realistic picture of our resources.

It is suggested that a minimum of 100 pledging members is required to support full-time ministry. We recently certified to the UUA that we have 71 members. This is 21 fewer than we certified last year, but is a more realistic figure. We have to pay the UUA and Prairie Star District what amounts to "dues," and the amount goes up each year. It now costs us about \$60 per member (\$120 per couple, if both are members) just to pay our dues. Other costs of membership, like receiving the newsletter, add more. And, of course, the true cost of membership is the entire cost of running the church, divided by the number of members! We decided we could not continue to "carry" people who do not pledge or pay anything, so we put them on an inactive members list. We have some work to do to get our financial house in order, especially if we want to increase the amount of ministry in the future. And, we need to be recruiting new members!

2. The second big question is how much we can offer a minister. Before we can even post our congregational information, we need to be able to state a salary range. One of the first questions any prospective minister will ask is "how much." So--back to the canvass and money question.

3. The third big question has to do with what happens in the immediate future, right after I leave. The UUA strongly recommends that, after a long-term ministry, the congregation have an interim minister for a year or two. My leaving in January would suggest that 1 1/2 years would be a good time, since the pool of available ministers is greater for a start in August.

However--there is a caveat here, too. Interim ministers are only available for full-time positions. This means that it would be to our advantage to maintain the current "contract" with Mankato, so both congregations can, together, get an interim. The two Boards will be meeting later this month to make a decision about this, and we will discuss it at the congregational meeting on the 23rd. If you have input, please let Christopher or someone on the Board know your feelings. Experience shows that when a congregation does not get an interim minister, the next minister that comes will, in fact, become an interim and stay only a short time.

After these big questions are answered, we will know better how to proceed. Meanwhile, it is time to let the UUA know we are in transition, and ask for the district settlement representative to come and meet with the congregation and Board to advise us how to move forward. Then the Board will appoint the actual Search Committee, of which the Ministerial Relations Committee members will be a core. If you are interested in serving on the search committee, please let Christopher know. There is a lot to be done -- but this is an exciting time in the life of Nora Church. Let us work together to make the future a bright one.

TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Bud Anderson is trying hard to stay away from the hospital, and is home enjoying the bright weather. He would like visitors, of course -- and did you see the wonderful article about him in the Hanska Herald?

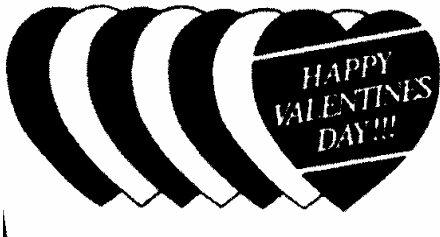
Al Swanson is leading Dorothy around as her eyes return (we hope!) to good vision again after more surgery. We hope he doesn't lead her astray!

LUNCH BUNCH

The Lunch Bunch will meet on Tuesday, February 18, at 11:30 am at D.J.'s restaurant on North Broadway in New Ulm. We had 17 people last month in Hanska! Can we beat that this month?

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

- Feb. 2 - Potluck after church
- Feb. 7 - Nora Women's Society potluck lunch
- Feb. 9 - New member Sunday
- Feb. 18 - Lunch Bunch at D.J.'s
- Feb. 23 - Congregational meeting



COMMUNITY EVENTS

New Ulm's Life Living Series continues with "Touched by the Muses," presented by the Tilting at Windmills Theatre Group, Feb. 3; and "Good Grief," a journey through change and the loss of a loved one, on Feb. 10. Both are at the NU Middle School at 7-9 PM, and are free.

Take credit at tax time! Earned Income and Family Working Credits are available for families and individuals with low incomes. Look for these credits on your federal and MN income tax returns to see if you qualify.

NORA WOMEN'S SOCIETY

Since we had to cancel our last meeting due to the cold and the painters in the foyer, we have moved our February meeting up a bit. We will have a potluck luncheon at noon on Friday, Feb. 7. Bring your favorite valentine (card, that is) to share with the group.

PARTNER CHURCH NEWS

Since there was not an overwhelming response to the invitation to participate in a church trip to Transylvania, but a few people have expressed some interest, Sarah has arranged for up to five Nora/Mankato folks to join with a group going from Unity Church in St. Paul. This group will leave Budapest on July 23, and then go by bus to Kluj-Napoca to see the Unitarian headquarters and historical sites there. Most of the time will be spent in the partner village - about 10 days. There can be some interesting side trips from our village during that time. The bus will return to Budapest via Deva (where Francis David was martyred) and other interesting sights on August 8 or 9. Since we would meet the group in Budapest, it would be possible to spend some time before or after the trip seeing this beautiful and interesting city. The cost is not yet set.

NOW - if this sounds interesting, please let Sarah know, so we can make arrangements. Unity church will not want to hold spaces for us indefinitely.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Rev. Oelberg is beginning a "Coming of Age" (confirmation) class with our youth ages 12-15. Because the youth are so spread out, it is going to be done mostly through the Internet. The class will run through next November, with "confirmation" in early December. We have a good group of girls participating.



RUNNING COLD

- from the Kansas City Unity Church Newsletter, by Judith Walker Riggs.

During the bitterly cold weather a few weeks back, my colleague Bucky Mckeeman's wife was out with the car. But he needed to do some last-minute shopping, so he climbed into the camper, which usually only "stands and waits". He turned the key. Nothing. Not a cough. Not a tremor. Not a flickering light. Nothing. The battery was dead.

This got Bucky thinking about how many of us treat our religion, our faith. "Many's the person," he writes, "who leaves his/her religion sitting idly in the corner (for) an emergency -- a crisis, accident, or untoward happening" (like war). "Comes the crisis. You leap to your religion and turn the key. Not a whimper. Not a cough. Not a shudder. Nothing."

Now, had the camper been in regular use, there might have been no problem (the battery being regularly trickle charged by the activity). And Bucky can't help wondering if that's not one of the reasons for going to church each Sunday -- to keep your religion trickle charged, up to speed and strength, ready for those emergency starts when they come.

Perhaps it's no accident that the mechanic says you have to run a car once a week to keep everything in good order, and the minister says just about the same thing about coming to church.

You never know when you're going to need strength in your faith, as the events of the last weeks have proven to many of us.

So if you come to church to charge your batteries, you aren't far wrong! See you soon.

NOTE: The article on the back of the calendar was brought in by Tarrie Swenstad. She suggests it is an opportunity for us to do a little something that might make a difference!

OBSERVATIONS FROM PUNDITS

What is the new loyalty? It is, above all, conformity. It's the uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of America as it is - the political institutions and social relationships, the economic practices. It rejects inquiry into the race question, or socialized medicine, or public housing, or into the wisdom or validity of our foreign policy. It regards as particularly heinous any challenge to what is called "the system of private enterprise," identifying that system with Americanism. It abandons evolution, repudiates the once popular concept of progress, and regards America as a finished product, perfect and complete.

Henry Steele Commager

I think that the influences towards suppression of minority views- toward orthodoxy in thinking about public issues- have been more subconscious than unconscious, stemming from the tendency among Americans to conform... to be safe and sound and not to deviate or depart from an orthodox point of view; to have not much original thinking..., to be safe and not get into controversial issues...

William O. Douglas

The media... on which people most depend for facts and information- the press, the movies, radio and television- have been used to reduce the people to conformity and dumb acquiescence. (The media)... bear a large share of the responsibility for the climate of fear and hysteria which has enveloped our country and which has become such a threat to our freedom.

William Y. Evjue