

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
Sarah Oelberg, Minister
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Mere Lys

(More Light)

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<http://www.nora-uu-church.org>

Address Service Requested



Sunday Services

April, 2003

Social Hour: 10:00 A.M.

Worship Service: 10:30 A.M.

April 6 - "Drawing on the Divine." Public prayer has become so commonplace that we tend to take it for granted. Is there too much "holiness" in our nation's political discourse?

Servers: Julie and Ron Peck; Joy Rathman

Musician: Ardelle and Doug Becken

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

11:30 - POTLUCK LUNCH

Members of Coming of Age class meet with Sarah

April 13 - "Food for the Future." Feast and famine are both present in the world. What is our moral responsibility around food?

Servers: Doug Becken, Jean Wenk

Musician: Muffie Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Board of Trustees meeting

April 20 - EASTER SUNDAY. Dr. Val Webb will speak on: "Florence Nightingale; the Making of a Radical Theologian." Dr. Webb is a professor at Augsburg College.

Servers: Alon and Carol Chambard

Musician: Sally Hanson

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

**EASTER
BLESSINGS**



April 27 - CLEAN-UP SUNDAY! This is the time to bring

your rakes, shovels, cleaning supplies, etc. and be prepared to spend the day (or as much as you can) beautifying the building and grounds of Nora Church. A snack to share would be nice, also. We will start around 9.00 am and go as long as there are things to do and people willing to do them!

Servers: Mimi Kamleiter, Sandi Bengel

Now I am scared. My brother called me the other night. He wanted to tell me that he was alright, in case I had by chance seen him being beaten by five policemen on TV at the peace demonstration in New York. I had not. Then he told me the whole story.

Nathan and his wife, Nancy, were toward the front of a very large (25,000 or so) group of people quietly walking down the street in New York carrying signs protesting the war in Iraq. It was a legal and peaceful demonstration, with many police present. Nathan, who is a poet and dancer, had incorporated a mask he used in dancing into his sign, and mounted it on a stick. Suddenly, a policeman came up and yanked the stick out of his hand, saying, "No sticks allowed." Nathan had not known that there was a new regulation against signs on sticks. He asked the policeman if he could please have his mask back, as it was a prop for his dancing. The policeman responded by grabbing Nathan's arm, twisting it behind his back, throwing him down on the street, and placing his foot on his neck. Soon four other police officers joined in, and they beat him quite badly. One had his knee on Nathan's head, hitting him with a nightstick, while others stomped on his back and legs. Then they handcuffed him behind his back, with the cuffs so tight there was no circulation in his hands, which became blue and swollen. He was then thrown, along with some others, into a van with two metal seats along the side and entirely metal inside surfaces, with sharp corners and protruding rods. For two hours, they were driven around, over bumpy roads, with quick starts and stops, throwing them against the metal walls. Finally, they were taken to the "tombs," the notorious prison in New York.

After a long time, Nathan was thrown into a cell with forty men - no other "demonstrators," but suspected murderers, thieves, drug dealers, drunks, etc. The cell had no seats or beds, only a hole in the corner in which to relieve oneself. There was not enough room for more than a few at a time to sit on the concrete floor. Here he was held for 20 hours, still painfully cuffed. He was allowed no phone calls, no lawyer, and no medical attention to his wounds. During that time he was given one bowl of sugary dry cereal, one bologna sandwich and a glass of milk.

After 20 hours, he was taken out, uncuffed, and charged with assault and battery on a police officer. He was then moved to another, similar cell, but there were other demonstrators in this one. Most of these had been arrested at the end of the demonstration, during what the New York Times called "a small riot".

According to those arrested, when the time on the demonstration permit expired, instead of telling the group to disperse, the police suddenly started backing their horses into the crowd, spraying them with pepper spray, and arresting them. Some tried to protest, saying they were leaving peacefully, but were arrested anyway. Those "in the know" said the police try to brutally arrest a few at the beginning, to make an example of them, and then make sure the demonstrators leave as soon as the time is up, by arresting and spraying others.

All in all, Nathan was held for 70 hours. At one point, he struck up a conversation with a guard. Amazingly, the guard said to him, "I don't know why you are protesting the war. You ought to be protesting what is going on in here." When Nathan asked him what he meant, the guard said that before 9/11, they were only allowed to hold people without charges for 24 hours - now they can do it for 72 hours. And no phone calls, lawyers, etc. now. Even the guard was disgusted at the loss of civil liberties in the name of "freedom" and "safety." He was obviously having a hard time being part of this new system, but he needed the job to feed his family.

I spoke to Nathan again yesterday. He says most of his cuts, bruises and abrasions are healing, but his spine and kidneys are still very painful. Worst are his hands, which are still puffy and numb. Still, he says he suffered less than most because, being a dancer, he was able to move and resist some of the bumps and hits. Others had broken bones. He said the women had it worse, because they were put into "isolation cells" and couldn't talk with other demonstrators, so they had no support and no way to know what was happening.

The only good news in all this is that, since Nathan was the first to be arrested, someone got it all on video tape, which is why he thought I might have seen it. It seems that this kind of thing happens so much that a cadre of volunteers accompany marchers to video what happens. The old man who got Nathan's arrest on tape will give it to him so it can be shown at the trial. Nathan goes before a grand jury on June 8. The charges are ridiculous, but, as the guard told him, "That's about right. They charge you with what they do to you."

Now, are you scared, too? What are we losing in the name of security? I am glad the UUA resolution for discussion this year is civil liberties. The guard is right — we need to be protesting actions like these.

--- Sarah.

TO KEEP IN TOUCH

A new legislative act will make it very difficult to pass on information about church members who are in the hospital from now on. HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) goes into effect this month. The regulations are to protect patient privacy, but will also bring some inconvenience.

From now on, Ministers will not be able to find out if you are in the hospital unless you have approved that as you enter, or unless you (not a relative or friend, but YOU) tell me yourself. When you enter the hospital, you will be asked whether you would like to be listed with your religious preference. If you say yes, your name will be on a list that I can have access to only if I go to the hospital that day and look at the list! Obviously, I cannot visit every hospital in the area every day to see if someone is there!

Also, I am no longer able to give out information on someone else's health or hospital visit unless that person has told me I can. I will not longer be able to announce from the pulpit or light a candle telling of a person's health or hospital stay unless that person specifically tells me I can do that. And, we can no longer put health information in this column unless you ask us to do so.

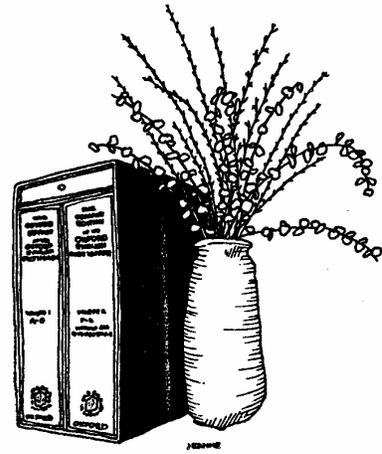
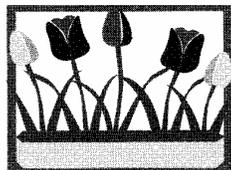
This is going to make it much more difficult to know when people are ill or hospitalized. It will make it harder for us to be a loving and caring community. It means that, if you want visitors or cards when you are ill, you will have to let us know when you need us. So please, tell me if you go to the hospital, or are ill, and tell me it is alright to share that information at church or in the newsletter.

-Sarah

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

The **Lunch Bunch** will gather at the 20th Street Grill on Tuesday, April 22 for food and socialization. We begin about 11:30 am, but feel free to join us later. Everyone is welcome.

There will be a Budget Hearing after church on May 4 to discuss the budget for next year.



NORA WOMEN'S SOCIETY

The Nora Women's Society will meet on April 11th in the Fellowship Hall for a noon potluck.

During the month of April, the NWS will be collecting food items for the local food shelf. Please bring canned or packaged items and place them in the box in the foyer.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

The King's Kids at First United Methodist Church in New Ulm will be presenting the musical, Go, Go Jonah! on Sunday, April 6, as the postlude to the Community Ecumenical Prayer Gathering which begins at 5:00 PM.

This is more than a "big fish that got away" story. It's more about a prophet and a message that couldn't get away. Come and celebrate the Good News with young and old.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Will the members of the Coming of Age Class please meet with Sarah after church on April 6? We need to meet one another and discuss how we can proceed with the class. Please try to come.

Children of the church are invited to come and take part in Clean-Up Day on April 27. As a previous project, youth have created the shrub garden and planted trees. This year, we will help with putting additional plants in the "wild garden." When people comment on how nice our grounds look, it is good to say, "Yes, our young people helped with that."

DENOMINATIONAL DOINGS

Homecomings, the annual UU Bed and Breakfast directory, is again available. Cost is \$17 from Homecomings International, PO Box 884, Venice, FL 34284. The book lists hundreds of UU hosts across the U.S. and Canada, and some in other countries. Many have enjoyed visiting with scattered UUs as they travel.

The Unitarian church in Des Moines is starting a peace garden on their property. It will be dedicated on April 13. They are asking that each church in the district send some object made of wood or paper to include in the garden. Some suggestions are: Folded paper cranes; a small prayer flag or peace banner with a poem, picture or saying on it; a letter to express your wishes for peace; a picture of what peace looks like to you; a photo of someone who works for peace, or is serving in the war in Iraq.

Send your contribution to: Kenda Lindel, First Unitarian Church, 1800 Bell Ave., Des Moines, IA 50315.



KNOW A UU SERVICE MEMBER?

Navy Chaplain Eric Johnson, who directs the UU Military Ministries, is developing a Wall of Honor to recognize and provide services to those UUs who are actively serving in the U.S. military services, or those who are veterans. If you, or someone you know, is a UU and an active member of the military, or if you know of UUs who are related to those in the military, or a UU who is a veteran, you are invited to contact Eric. We are proud to support the work of the UU Military Ministries in recognizing and providing ministry and care for military members and their families in these difficult days.

You can contact Chaplain Johnson at unavychaplain@aol.com. Also, if you are serving in the U.S. military and wish to join a UUA-hosted email list of others currently serving, further information is available at:

<http://www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/uumil>.

FOODSHARE FACTS

The members of the church donated \$250 to the Minnesota Foodshare during the month of March. Thank you to all who contributed. This money will be matched and distributed among the various food shelves throughout the state.

In 2001, 1.32 million people visited Minnesota's food shelves. This is a 10% increase over the previous year, and we are well on our way to record increases for 2003 -- many shelves are already experiencing 50% more people needing assistance. Food shelves distributed over 29 million pounds of food in 2001, and will need much more this year due to rising unemployment.

Nearly half of the hungry people who use the food shelves are children. Hungry kids have difficulty learning and have more medical problems and absenteeism than children with adequate nourishment. 20% of all food shelf clients are elderly.

Although 43% of food shelf clients work, they do not make enough income to cover their basic needs: only an average of \$8.36 per hour. Low wages without benefits, child care expenses, skyrocketing housing costs, and high out-of-pocket medical expenses make working families vulnerable to hunger. In the past ten years, the average worker's salary rose 9%, while housing costs rose 34%.

The poverty rate (\$18,100 for a family of four) is an annual income number used to determine federal and state benefits. It has not been updated to reflect today's actual cost of living. This means many families in dire straits cannot qualify for housing and child care subsidies or food stamps. The minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour does not even approach self-sufficiency.



Report to the Members of Nora Church

The Board and Ministerial Committee have met with their counterparts from Nora church (Hanska) to plan for the period following Sarah's retirement in December. Sarah and Chris Greene, the Prairie Star District (PSD) liaison, also participated in the meetings. Many issues were discussed including the division of time between the two congregations, the options that each congregation has and the financial requirements of supporting professional ministry.

Two actions were taken by the joint Board:

It was passed that the two congregations would continue a relationship into the future after December 31.

The exact distribution of time, the residency location, and division of cost were discussed but not defined. All these items will require further negotiation, possibly with the individual selected.

It was passed, that together we (Nora and UUFM) would approach the PSD and the UUA for a full-time "Interim" minister to begin as soon as possible after Sarah's retirement, with the possibility that it could be several months.

An "Interim" minister is NOT simply a fill-in. They are specially trained and have skills designed to help a congregation take inventory of itself (desires, talents, needs, ambitions, etc.), assess the greater community and assist in developing a profile for a minister that would fit. That profile becomes what we would advertise for as a "called", permanent minister.

The Interim would work with each congregation individually and together. It could happen that during this discovery period, the two congregations take separate courses in the pursuit of professional ministry.

By voting to continue a relationship beyond December and that together we can afford a full-time minister, we make available the resources of the PSD and UUA to find a trained Interim. (Those resources are directed to full-time positions.)

The purpose of this interim period is to define what we want our future to be, under the guidance of a professional Interim minister. Given the typical church year calendar, it could be July, 2005 before a "called" minister would start.

The Board welcomes your opinions on the actions taken so far. Verbal discussion is useful, but written comments are easier for one Board member to share with another.. The email address for the Church is "mailto:norachuu@prairie.lakes.com" "norachuu@prairie.lakes.com", or mine is "mailto:kitakis@prairie.lakes.com" "kitakis@prairie.lakes.com". Although the current time-line anticipates that we would make formal request to the UUA for the Interim in August or September, we need to hear from you soon.

The work completed so far by the ministry committees with the survey will be useful in presenting to an Interim, a cross-sectional view of the congregations to better direct his/her efforts. Our thanks to Jeannie Hinsman, Doug Anderson, Mark Wiger, B. J. Wellmann, Kris Paulson and Ron Peck.

OTHER BUSINESS

The key element in all that is discussed above, is dollars. We have begun the pledge drive for the 2003-2004 fiscal year and we must have the monetary commitment, which we can count on. Also, a part in seeking an Interim or called minister is having direct contact with each member during the pledge process. This is an opportunity for you to tell us what is right and wrong at the individual level, not just averaged into the graphs and statistics from the survey.

Thank you for your time and energy.

Chris Olson, President 3-23-03