

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
Sarah Oelberg, Minister
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Address Service Requested



Sunday Services

May, 2003

Social Hour: 10:00 A.M. Worship Service: 10:30 A.M.

May 3 - "Bells, Bells, Bells." Today our partner church in Transylvania dedicates its new church bells. We will share their joy with our own bell celebration.

Servers: Wayne Weinshank; Norma and Roger Breu

Musician: Mimi Kamleiter

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

11:30 - CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AND BUDGET HEARING

Sarah meets with Coming of Age youth.

Potluck Lunch (Contributions to go to our partner church in Benced.)



May 11 - MOTHER'S DAY - "Motherhood." Mothers come in many forms, yet there is something universal about the experience of mothering.

Servers: Wayne and Janet Johnson; Ellen Byro

Musician: Ardelle and Doug Becken

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Board of Trustees Meeting

Happy Mother's Day!

May 18 - SYTTENDE MAI - No service at Nora.

Join us in the park in Hanska for a community service, led by Nora church at 10:30. The theme is: "**One World, One Heart.**"

May 25 - "The Living Legacy of Ralph Waldo Emerson." Today marks the bicentennial of Emerson's birth. We will look at how his legacy continues to speak to us.

Servers: Nancy Dickson; Sandi Bengé; Jean Wenk

Musician: Muffie Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Sharing Thoughts About Nora Church

submitted by Jeanie Hinsman and Janet Rosenbloom

Between March 21 and March 30 six dessert and coffee get togethers were held to discuss the church's budget and pledge drive, to share survey results, and to share thoughts about the church's future. Forty members attended these gatherings. Following are some of the thoughts that were shared and questions that were raised. These are not consensus statements but simply what was voiced by individuals. Together they provide food for thought as we carry on with the process of defining our church community's strengths, weaknesses, and needs.

Belonging

From Comfrey: "We are a family." From Hanska: "We are an oasis, a liberal oasis." A common theme is the presence this church has for its members and the connectedness we feel within this close knit community. The acceptance and nurture that members feel is vital to the life of this church. From New Ulm there is an interest in more discussion of members' spiritual growth. There was also high regard for Sarah's commitment to ministerial visits for those in need. Several members shared their experiences of their initial visits and how important first impressions of greeting and welcoming are. Clearly our belonging to this church is expressed in our caring for each other.

Ministerial Relations

Several members shared stories of past ministers, ministerial searches, and periods of difficulties. Resiliency, the church's ability to adapt and adjust to changing circumstances, was affirmed. It was also felt that the congregation is accepting and nurturing to different ministerial styles. There is no denying the challenges we will have to face on many levels as we adjust to Sarah's departure. There was also the realization that this transition for the church will be filled with sadness and opportunity.

Some discussion focused on an interim minister's role in fostering the healing process, focusing the church on its identity, mission, strengths, and weaknesses. Some questions were raised about the duration of the interim ministry, availability and cost. "Will an interim really be able to whip us into shape?" Survey results indicate 26 prefer ministerial time of three Sundays a month and 25 preferred four Sundays a month. Questions were raised can we/should we go it alone without yoking to Mankato? What is our responsibility to Mankato? Sarah has done a lot to help us recognize our unique, rich character. "We shouldn't sell ourselves short when looking for another minister." Other previous ministers also have spoken highly of their times in Hanska.. This may help us in getting a good word around in U. U. circles. We can offer an attractive situation for the right minister. Members with experience in past ministerial searches stated how unpredictable the process can be. Sometimes doing everything "by the book" has been successful. Sometimes it has not. Some ministers who have had successful stays here were not located by traditional guidelines.

Growth

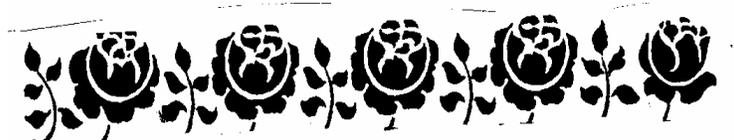
The most obvious concern of a large number of members is toward growth. Only four survey respondents were under the age of forty. 65% were over sixty years. Younger members particularly felt a need for more families in the congregation and more children in religious education. Baby sitting service would make it easier for parents to attend church and would facilitate better age groupings in Sunday morning children's religious ed. Preferences were voiced for a growth oriented, youth oriented climate with a variety of programs. There was also discussion about the presence Nora Church should maintain in the larger surrounding community. One positive outreach mentioned was the attractive and informative website that Gil Hanson has developed.

What Now

We need to continue the dialogue! There are fervent emotions and ideas on many issues that need to be shared. Our solidarity is in wanting the long term viability of this church. The process of listening to each other's viewpoints as we clarify ideas and priorities and focus on shared goals helps ensure that viability. To provide more opportunity for this to happen adult discussion on Sunday mornings in May (9:00 a.m.) will focus on these topics.

In addition to the survey of members' opinions, the UUA recommends a canvass of members to assess what kind of financial commitment the congregation is willing to make. At the meetings, the proposed budget was discussed and pledge cards were distributed. Friends and members who were unable to attend will be approached in person or by mail. When the pledge cards are returned, we will have a clearer picture of what Nora Church's future might look like. Because of the uncertainty about whether we will be able to get an interim minister, and the possibility that the pulpit may be unfilled for a time, it is difficult to present a complete budget at this time. The Board of Trustees set Sunday, May 4, for the congregational hearing on the proposed budget.

Special thanks to the hosts of the meetings: Ann and John Makepeace, Noah and Janet Rosenbloom, Wayne and Janet Johnson, Joy and Gerard Rathmann, Ardelle Becken, Doug Anderson. Thanks also to those who took the time to attend and share their opinions, and to the presenters: Janet Rosenbloom, Jeanie Hinsman, Doug Anderson, Marge Teig and Gil Hanson



TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Jonathon Wiger will be graduating from the University of Minnesota this month with a degree from the Intercollege combining psychology, public health and social work. Commencement is May 10th. He will be relocating to the Washington D.C. area following graduation.

Invitation:

You are invited to an open house celebration honoring the 25th anniversary of MBW Company, Saturday, May 3rd 4-7 PM at the Senior Center (Community Room) in New Ulm. Program at 5 PM. Everyone is welcome. Refreshments served.

NORA WOMEN'S SOCIETY

The NWS will have its monthly meeting and potluck lunch on Friday, May 9, in the social hall.

We will gather again on Wednesday, May 14, at 9:00 AM to make meatballs and prepare for serving Syttende Mai dinners on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Carol Chambard has lined up workers, but if you are available, let her know.

Thanks to those who brought food for the food shelf. We will not deliver it this week, so you can still bring donations next Sunday (May 3).

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

The Lunch Bunch will meet on Tuesday, May 20, at LeMay's restaurant in Lake Crystal. LeMay's is one block west of the main street. We will gather at 11:30 - but come when you can!

DENOMINATIONAL DOINGS

It is not too late to register to attend the General Assembly, which will be held in Boston this year from June 26-30. If you need more information, please contact Sarah.



IRAQ RELIEF

Some of you have asked me where I would recommend sending relief funds for Iraq. There are many organizations already in the area, and more poised to go as soon as they can. My preference, as always, is our own UU Service Committee. Although they are not involved programmatically in Iraq, they have the international connections to identify colleague agencies that have humanitarian relief expertise in that part of the world, and share similar values. There is great concern that many of the organizations planning to enter Iraq in the aftermath of the war for the purposes of providing relief are fundamentalist and Evangelical groups who will engage in Christian proselytization.

If you wish to contribute to the relief effort in Iraq, you can make a check payable to Iraq Relief Fund and mail it to:

Iraq Relief Fund
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
P.O. Box 845259 Boston, MA 02284-5259

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As we wind down our church year, the children are enjoying the outdoors. It was good to see several of our young people helping at clean-up Sunday!

We want to thank those who helped out this year. Brenda Wiger, our long-time loyal head teacher, has been wonderful! She has been assisted by Anne and John Makepeace and Anne and Sheldon Rieke.

Next year we will be needing teachers and substitutes. If you can offer some time, please talk to either Brenda or Sarah.

IT S PLEDGE TIME AGAIN

The pledge drive for fiscal year 2003-04 kicked off with the area meetings. Attendees were informed about the proposed budget and given pledge cards and also discussed the congregational survey results.

Letters and pledge cards are being sent to those not able to attend the meetings. The Finance Committee is asking that pledges be returned by June 1 so we have an idea of our financial outlook before the Annual Meeting on June 8.

OREN SHELLEY MEMORIAL SERVICE

At 2:00 PM on Saturday, May 3, there will be a memorial service for Oren Shelley held here at Nora church. Following the service, cake and coffee will be served. Although Oren lived his entire adult life away from Hanska, he returned whenever he could, and visited and loved the town and Nora church.



An Apology.... And, An Opportunity... Del Jackman, President

One of the basic tenants of our shared faith is that of activism and involvement throughout our lives to the service of our family, friends, church community and society as a whole. As we encounter opportunities to exercise ourselves in these ways, we must first recognize them. Once recognized, we must assess our interest, our ability to contribute, the time required, potential impact on our lives and other obligations.

Opportunities exist through the Fellowship for each of us to practice this service to our faith, but too often, it is easier to call on the same individuals, rather than contact others or publicize a need. This can frustrate newcomers who like what they see but cannot see a way to become involved. For my part in this tradition, I apologize and would like to invite all of you to share in:

- The pleasure of working together toward a common task or goal.
- The creativity required to publicize our faith to the larger community.
- The excitement of selecting the theme, topics and speakers for our Sunday services.
- The vision of choosing and teaching the children's religious education curriculum.
- The imagination required to design activities that enhance personal contact among our members.

This sharing requires your participation. Yes, we do need your pledge but just as important is you; your energy, your enthusiasm, your strength, your knowledge and your judgment.

The Fellowship attempts to operate through its committees, each of which offers opportunities for your participation. If one peaks your interest, please let a Board member know. If you have a new idea that you would like to pursue, others may wish to share it with you; please let us know. Our committees include:

Adult Programs - A variety of activities from adult religious education (i.e., Cakes for the Queen of Heaven), poetry writing, singles group, etc.

Buildings & Grounds - Upcoming projects include placing concrete for a bench near the main entry, improving lighting, repair of stucco damage, replacing furniture, etc.

Fellowship - They organize the dinners, after church luncheons, support for those with loss, etc.

Financial – Conducts the annual pledge drive and assists the Treasurer in the overall management of Fellowship finances.

Membership – Works with publicity to present ourselves to the greater community and explain our principals to those who are interested in joining.

Personnel – Administratively, responsible for part-time staff including administrative assistant, children's RE coordinator, and child care positions.

Ministerial – Serve as a personal, confidential sounding board for the minister. This year they will also serve as the core of a Ministerial Search Committee.

Sunday Program - Organizes and arranges for speakers on the Sundays that Sarah is not present.

Publicity – Responsible to get the UU and UUFM names out into the greater Mankato area community.

Children’s Religious Education (RE) – Develops curriculum guidelines, sets policy and supervises the Religious Education Coordinator. Parents are good but we also need non-parent teachers to reinforce our teachings.

Social Concerns – Seek ways for the Fellowship and its members to extend our actions beyond our own doors to the greater community through support of our sister church in Transylvania, the church in Dublin Ireland, Cada House, the petition on Iraqi, Multichurch center meals, etc.

Welcoming Congregation – Seeking opportunities like Pride Fest in August to demonstrate our openness to the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, trans-sexual (GLBT) community.

Committees can always use your talent and energy, even if it is only for a single project or event. At present, we need individuals willing to chair or co-chair Personnel, Social Concerns, and Children’s RE. I welcome your participation.

Grieving a Loss? It may be a “Time for Healing Words”

Hospice Chaplin BJ Lindeman, who has spoken here, will conduct a workshop on healing from losses through writing, meditating and reflecting here at the Fellowship each Monday from June 23rd to July 28, 10:00 to 11:30. Registration is required by June 20th by calling 507.345.2936.

SARAH'S CORNER

This year Nora church will be leading the community church service in the park in Hanska, as part of their Syttende Mai Celebration. May 17, 1814, is Norwegian Constitution Day. The Constitution was signed in Eidsboll, Norway, and marked the beginning of Norway's history as a modern, democratic nation. On the centennial of the signing, May 17, 1914, Minneapolis and indeed much of the state of Minnesota had big celebrations. President Coolidge spoke, and there was a parade with 6000 participants in Minneapolis!

Interestingly, it was not until June 9, 1905 that Norway gained its independence from Sweden- a rather recent event, given the long histories of the countries. Kristofer Janson and Bjornstern Bjornson were among those who fought for Norwegian independence. In a way, one wonders how important it was to have a constitution, if the country was still under the rule of another nation. Still, Norwegian immigrants throughout the world mark this date-May 17 - as the beginning of freedom and democracy in their homeland.

I suppose every nation has important days in their history that they celebrate. We have our Independence Day to mark our freedom. And there are other important dates in our nation's history which we remember in various ways, from Columbus Day to “D” Day.

I wonder if, a hundred years or so from now, Iraq will celebrate April 2003 as Iraqi Liberation? Will they see the recent war as the beginning of their independence, freedom, and beginning of democratic government? Or will they experience it as humiliation, occupation, or colonization, as some are describing it already? It will be interesting to see how this "war of liberation" will be written about in the history books of the future. Many countries have several “Independence Days”.

On May 3, the people of our partner village of Benced in Transylvania (Romania) will also be holding a

celebration. During WW II, the church bells all over Romania were taken down and melted into bullets. Romania has been “liberated” many times. Benced was able to get a small used bell in the early 50s, but it fell and broke irreparably this winter. Even before that, they wanted another bell, as the churches there typically have two, which is necessary for the purposes of communication the bells serve the small villages.

Thankfully, partly using money we had sent them for the gas line (which still cannot be connected to the main line because the big village between Benced and the main has not yet raised enough money) and mostly with money they raised themselves, the people of Benced have purchased and installed two new bells in the church tower, which they will dedicate on May 3. Now the bells there can also ring out to signify their freedom from the repressive communist regime of Anton Ceaucescu in 1989. Freedom from tyrants is something to celebrate everywhere.

As other nations celebrate their freedom, however, let us not lose our own in the name of security. Eternal vigilance is, indeed, the price of liberty.