

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
Sarah Oelberg, Minister
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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://www.nora-uu-church.org>

Address Service Requested

Sunday Services November, 2003
Social Hour: 10:00 A.M. Worship Service: 10:30 A.M.

November 2 - "Lost Souls." Today is All Souls Day. We will remember all the people who have died during Sarah's tenure at Nora Church.

Servers: Elroy and Ardis Wellmann; Wayne Weinshenk; Julie and Ron Peck.

Musician: Sally Hanson

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

11:30 - POTLUCK LUNCH

November 9 - "Defending Liberty." As we celebrate Veteran's Day, we will look at the state of our liberty at the present time.

Servers: Algot and Bonita Blomquist

Musician: Ben Marti

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

Board of Trustees Meeting

November 16 - "Imagining Nora's Future: An Introduction to the new ministry of Nora Church."

A celebration of everything we are and what that means to our future; what we've learned about the impending interim period; and how the transition to a new minister will determine Nora's future. By the search committee.

Servers: Ardelle and Lorraine Becken

Musician: Ardelle Becken

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

November 23 - "Fasting, Feasting, and Famine." As we prepare for the Thanksgiving feast, and Islamists end the fasting during Ramadan, we will look at the role of food in our lives and world.

Servers: Julie Grathwohl and Laurie Kunerth

Musician: Ben Marti

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

November 30 - "Ministers, Ministry and Ministering." At the end of a long ministry, it is appropriate to look at ministry and how it is achieved in congregations.

Servers: Wally and Beverly Jean Wellmann

Musician: Muffie Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

SARAH'S CORNER

The middle of October is sometimes an "iffy" time to have the annual Prairie Star District Minister's retreat, given the vagaries of the weather.

This year, however, it was gorgeous! We spent three days at Shalom Hill Farm, a rural ministry and retreat center north of Windom. The combination of warmth, wind and wisdom can't be beat! We relaxed, took long walks, enjoyed this special place, ate wonderful home-grown and home-cooked organic food, enjoyed one another's company, and even had some workshops. Since I am retiring, I gave my Odyssey, which was very cathartic for me and seemed to be enjoyed by all.

Although these "retreats" are mainly for the ministers from the eight state district to connect with one another and talk about common interests and issues, we build in a lot of relaxation and worship and even some serious stuff. I was not too sure about our main topic of "Ministering in times of Grief and Loss" at first. It seemed like kind of a downer, when we were all looking for restoration and recreation. As it turned out, it was just what I needed.

The presenter was one of our own - a UU hospital chaplain from Kansas City. She did a marvelous job of helping us realize why we grieve, and what loss and attachment are. I realized as she spoke that I was suffering from grief over the loss of my role as a minister, the place we have been living for over 12 years (twice as long as I have lived anywhere else in my life!), relationships with people I cherish, and being in community with folks I like - two communities, actually.

She talked about some of the elements of grief. I was experiencing most of them - numbness, loneliness, emptiness, the anxiety of separation, fear of the future, guilt at putting my own desires over the responsibility of continuing my ministry here, some disappointment at the actions of some people (which I now understand is due to their grieving my leaving), and sadness. I was so busy looking to the future, making plans for what I would do next, that I was forgetting to grieve, even though I know that grieving any loss is both healthy and helpful.

Letting go is hard, whether it is because someone has died, or there is a rift in a relationship, or even when someone leaves for happy reasons. We still have some time together, but it is getting less and less. We need to speak to each other about our feelings, and talk about our past together, even as we plan for the future. It seems strange to call this process grieving, although that is a component of it. So let us call it leaving, and celebrate it as we all envision wonderful things in the months ahead.

SMORGASBORD 2003

Despite the weather gods smiling down on us for our big day, we experienced a decline in attendance from 2002. NWS treasurer Bonita Blomquist reported 370 tickets sold (including workers) as compared to 402 in 2002. It seems as if we are competing against more events every year.

However, we still made a profit, probably more than \$3,000, and the coming together of church members and friends to honor our Norwegian heritage is valuable in itself. Thanks to everyone who worked Saturday and Sunday to help things go smoothly. And thanks to all who worked at home to prepare Norwegian specialties and other treats for the diners and the Country Store. The Country Store again was a big success raising more than \$1,000.

While Smorgasbord is organized by the Nora Women's Society, it is the cooperation of all members who contribute in whatever manner that makes it

possible. Because this is an all-member effort, it is only fitting that the profits help the Women's Society pay its church pledge of \$3,500. It's our way of saying thanks to all of you.

LUNCH BUNCH

The Lunch Bunch is going to try out the new Applebee's restaurant in New Ulm for its next get-together. We will meet at noon on Tuesday, November 18.

Special Congregational Meeting

The Board of Trustees has called a short congregational meeting following the service on November 16. The purpose of the meeting is to consider granting emeritus status to Rev. Oelberg for her long and distinguished service to the church.

MINISTER PROFILE

We are searching for a minister who will have an appreciation for the location of our church; who will seek us in part because of the rural setting. Nora Church has been known throughout its history as a “spark on the prairie” and “an oasis for liberalism.” The minister we seek will believe it is important to increase our presence and to articulate our values to the larger community. One of our goals is to increase our membership. We believe we have an important message to share with others. The minister we want would see this as a challenge and an opportunity to “spread the word”. We, like other rural churches, face a shrinking local population. However, because we offer a religious view different from the mainstream, we attract people from a wider area. We strongly believe that with the minister and congregation working together, there is real potential for growth.

The Sunday worship service is very important to everyone. We want a minister who is knowledgeable, well read, curious, and comfortable speaking his or her mind with tact and respect. We want Sunday services to engage our minds, touch our hearts, stimulate our social conscience, and deepen our spirit. We want to be challenged and prodded “to make of our lives, a story worth telling.” We do not need or expect all of these every Sunday, but we do need through the sermon, prayer or meditation, readings, etc., something we can ponder during the week, and from time to time, we want a real “hummer.” We want someone who enjoys (for the most part) preparing and delivering worship services and takes pride in them.

We need someone with whom we can face tragedies, difficulties, and challenges. We do not expect the minister to have all the answers, but we do expect him or her to have listening skills and to be able to relate genuinely. We want to be able to share our failures and successes. The person we seek would be comfortable with us as we are laughing and celebrating our joys, and at ease with our tears.

Our minister will support families and youth programming. Despite the preponderance of seniors in our congregation, our vision is to the future. We recognize the challenges today’s culture brings to parents wishing to provide spiritual direction to their children and we hope to create an atmosphere that is welcoming and inviting to youthful exploration.

The minister would be comfortable with his or her imperfections, as long as there is honesty and would accept the members of the congregation as the imperfect individuals we are. This is not to say that anything is acceptable---it is to say that whatever problems arise, we will deal with them directly and would expect the minister to do the same. In other words, a relationship where there are “no games.”

We are looking for someone who will partake in the area’s social activities, those of the minister’s choice. There is an area ministers’ group, which meets regularly, we would expect our minister to be a part of that. We look forward to saying with pride, “We’d like you to meet our minister...”

The person we seek would be able to come to an understanding or at least an appreciation for the depth of feeling and dedication we hold for the heritage and uniqueness of Nora church. This is due in part to the roots some feel through family ties, the beauty of the site itself, and the ideas and ideals the church represents. For many who attend, the fellowship among church community members and the feeling of finding a home for their beliefs is paramount among the reasons for belonging.

We understand we will not find the “perfect” minister, nor are we a “perfect” congregation. We look forward to nurturing a caring relationship with a new minister and in so doing both minister and congregation will become stronger and more vital.

Description of the church group

We are a church community with roots that sink 122 years deep. We have traditions that nurture a deep sense of belonging among members. Like the rural demographics in general, we are dwindling in numbers, as our average age grows older. Yet, we are driven by our desire to support one another in pursuit of our Unitarian Universalist principles. We give and receive through our strengths and capacities influenced by our understanding and interpretation of time and place. That is how we have earned our reputation as the liberal oasis on the prairie.

Our humble, soft-spoken nature and strength of character is born out of a reality tied to the bounty and famine of the land and animal. Through cooperation and a shared destiny, Nora members breathe life into the spirit of community. We have created and sustained a free sanctuary for us to honor the rites of passage. We provide a place of shelter when the need for nurturing arises; a place of joy when events call for celebration.

We have become in many respects geographically dispersed; yet we receive from one another the intergenerational strengths of energy and innocence from our youth; wisdom and security from the elders.

We are a church with members who are soldiers and defenders of justice; for those who are disenfranchised our members are builders of support networks; developers strengthening the mind of tomorrow's leaders and citizens; tillers of the soil; shepherds of livestock and keepers of the harvest. We are nurturers of children, elderly and infirmed; artists who enrich the esthetic qualities of our community; historians and storytellers bringing meaning, perspective and sometimes humor to life; merchants and builders; deliverers of our region's goods and needed services.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

Thank you to everyone who contributed prizes to our Fish Pond and Pick-a-Pop games. We made \$47.00, and the kids can decide what to purchase for Santa's Closet. In October, we learned more about the second principle, learning to be fair during game playing. We also heard the Bible story about creation and created our own worlds.

In November, we will take a look at the third principle, make a Thankful Tree (donated by Shirley Olson), make holiday ornaments, and talk about different ways to answer commonly asked questions about our religion. Keep your eyes open for a surprise this month.

In December, we will be doing the church service on the 21st. Please be thinking of ways you can contribute your talents.

FIRES RAGE THROUGHOUT THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST

(Boston, MA - Oct. 27, 4:00 PM EST)

As fires rage throughout the San Diego, San Bernardino and Los Angeles areas, the Pacific Southwest District Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association has launched a fire relief fund. The fund, to be administered through the PSW District, will provide aid to affected congregations, their members and communities.

UU congregations in a number of fire-affected communities are involved, including Poway, San Diego, La Mesa, Montclair, Riverside, Santa Paula, and Thousand Oaks. In addition, the deBeneville Pines Camp and Conference Center operated by the district, has been evacuated. Margo McKenna, minister of the Chalice UU Congregation in Poway, indicated that "two members had lost homes, and possibly another four." In addition, McKenna said that "approximately twenty-five families have been evacuated from the Scripps Ranch, Ramona, Escondido, and Poway areas of San Diego."

If you wish to contribute to the Pacific Southwest District Fire Relief Fund, please make checks out to: PSWD Fire Relief Fund.

Mail your checks to:
PSWD Office
12355 Moorpark St.
Studio City, CA 91604

TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Trevor Gaede, son of LeAnn and Tom Gaede and grandson of Luella and Kenneth Chambard of Sandstone graduated from East Central High School and is attending U.M.D. in Duluth.

Kent Chambard of Rice Lake, WI, son of Luella and Kenneth, recently received a plaque for 25 years of employment with Lamperts.

Kenneth Chambard of Sandstone retired from the local volunteer fire department after 31 years of service. Ken also served 15 years with the Hanska fire department. When working at the Federal Correctional Institution he served on the staff volunteer fire department there, making a total of 53 years of volunteer firefighting.

In recognition of Marjorie Teig's commitment to the community and her volunteer service, the 3M Foundation has donated \$200 to the New Ulm Medical Center on her behalf.

Earle Webb, brother-in-law of Fran Anderson, died on October 18 at the age of 87. A private grave side service was held at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

NORA WOMEN'S SOCIETY

At its Oct. 17 meeting, Rev. Oelberg raised the issue of preserving church history. She said in her preparations to move, she has come across photographs of church members and events that aren't identified or stored properly. She noted that other area churches have displays of photographs relating to church history and fears that Nora's rich history is being lost. Sarah suggested using the NWS meetings to work on identifying and getting the items ready for display or storage. The women decided to begin this project at the Nov. 14 meeting. They will meet for a noon potluck lunch and begin the work of sorting and identifying items. Plan to spend the whole afternoon.

In other business, the NWS voted to donate \$50 to the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center for holiday gifts for the residents. Also the NWS will collect winter clothes for the Salvation Army. There is a drop site at Minnesota Furniture Warehouse, 1704 N. State in New Ulm

What's in Imagining Nora's Future?

Doug Anderson

The program planned for the 16th of November is going to be an especially interesting one. Those present will hear fellow Nora members describe the possibilities our future holds; along with how we came to believe that Nora's future is so hopeful. We have reason for optimism and believe that increased personal fulfillment will be an added benefit. These possibilities are available for all of us now and all who join us in the immediate future. Action has been underway on three fronts.

First, the Trio of Jeanie, Doug, and Kristine (all members of the Nora Search Committee) went to GA looking for answers and greater understanding relating to the search process, the interim period, and growth. We got it; and we are anxious to tell you about it!

Second, on the 16th, we will also roll out plans for the new year. A joint meeting of the Board and Selection Committee met this summer and formed an Interim Steering Committee. This group has met and chosen an interim consultant. The Committee includes, Wally Wellmann, Darrell Hinsman, (from the board) Doug Anderson, Mark Wiger, (from the search committee) and Kristine Paulson, (from the program committee). We will not be having an interim minister but we think the alternative selected gives us ---the best of all worlds! The goals and means to reach them include every one of us. Those who have met with the Minister who will guide us through this are impressed and eager to share the news with everyone!

Last, Kristi Bodick, Darrell Hinsman, and Doug Anderson went to an intensive and fast-paced workshop on "Growth for Small Congregations" in St Cloud last month. The information left us equipped with lots of ideas and ways to achieve them. We have cause for optimism about Nora's growth possibilities and we'll tell you about them. We will also share our own stories about developing a statement of our own personal ministries. There's a lot to be hopeful about at Nora. Join us November 16th so you can be in on the ground floor. As they say in show business, there will be no repeat performances!

SEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted by Jeanie Hinsman

The search committee (Doug Anderson, Jeanie Hinsman, Anne Makepeace, Sheldon Reike, Beverly Jean Wellmann, Mark Wiger) began its work in earnest in June by meeting with Sue Schiess, the Prairie Star District Settlement Consultant. We had an organizational meeting in early July followed by a retreat/supper meeting later that month. These early meetings focused on understanding the process, designating roles within the committee, and developing a level of trust and appreciation for each other's abilities, spiritual histories, and personal identities as UU's. In August we dove into the actual questions from the Congregational Record which we must compose for prospective ministers. The Congregational Record (CR) is a thirteen page document that addresses Nora Church history, demographics, congregational strengths and weaknesses, theology, worship practices, leadership style, governance, priorities in ministerial duties, financial strength, discussion of pressing issues, and ministerial needs. At each of the six meetings we held in September and October, we would brainstorm/discuss our response and then assign the writing of various questions to specific committee members. At subsequent meetings we edited and reviewed each written draft until we had consensus that it expressed an honest, thoughtful, and pertinent characterization of Nora church life.

Two portions of the CR, the congregational profile and the ministerial profile, are included in this *Mere Lys*. We feel our CR is near final completion. It has been shared with the board. We welcome your feedback to these items or your questions regarding any other portion of the CR. We are presently waiting for Sue Schiess to review it. With her approval, it can be made available to prospective ministers via the UUA website.

Our second task will be to create a "packet". When a minister has expressed interest in us, and we likewise have reviewed his/her resume, and are also interested, then an exchange of packets will occur. The packet is not as formal as the CR but actually can be even more in- depth as we create our own tool to sell Nora Church. The packet will be more personal in nature regarding the members of the church, the attributes of life in southern Minnesota, a thorough discussion of the congregational survey completed last winter, a description of our interim consultancy, and any other components we believe will enrich the picture of who we are. Your input and suggestions are also welcome in the creation of our packet.

I must add a personal remark. I have found the process of working on the search to be challenging, sometimes taxing, but overall very energizing. I believe the committee has worked hard and diligently to "lay bare the soul" of Nora Church. We have felt a deep responsibility to demonstrate the faith and devotion that members have expressed toward our church's future and its importance to each of our lives. In our work we referred to Nora as the "beacon on the prairie". That beacon stays lit because of the sparks we each bring to feed the flame. Let's keep it burning bright.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Nora church will be showing a documentary film about the life and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Pastor and Theologian who was executed by Hitler's Nazi regime in April, 1945. The acclaimed documentary will be shown at 7:00 p.m. on November 17, at the assembly room of the New Ulm Public Library. There is no charge. This is something people of all religions will find interesting, so invite your friends!

On November 7, CAST is sponsoring a conference for family caregivers. Chaplin Mary Pauluk will speak on "The Spirituality of Caregiving." At the New Ulm Community Center, 600 North German Street, from 2 - 6 PM.