

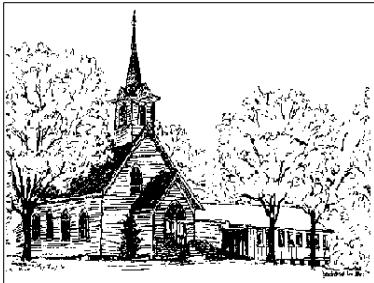


MERE LYS newsletter

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

December 2007

VIEW FROM THE HILL



Two related but separate topics are before us as we begin this final month of 2007.

First, what does it mean in these multicultural, postmodern one-world order times, this "holiday season" thing? Is it still a Thanksgiving/Christmas deal, or has Hanukah finally made it to the big-time American holiday radar screen? And if so, how about the recently completed Ramadan – the Muslim observance of the revealing of the Qu'ran, complete with daylight fasting? Then there's the more recent, Afro-centric, Kwanzaa. Is Kwanzaa now part of what we call the holiday season?

These pesky questions might not mean as much here in the southern part of the state as, say, the Twin Cities. By and large, we live, work and worship with white folks who, if affiliated with any faith tradition, tend to be Christians. So why all the soap boxing about holidays that aren't even popular in these parts?

Sometimes a pesky question just raises more pesky questions: Are we Unitarians or are we Unitarian *Universalists*? I don't mean to sound pious, it's just that the Universalist side of our blended religious family tells us that transcendence is at the heart of the manger scene narrative (especially when not taken literally), but also in the marathon oil of a lamp, the mysterious completion of a holy book and the retrieval of an ancestry stripped away by captivity and slavery.

Maybe the holiday season began in September, when orthodox Muslims began fasting, and maybe it won't end until the last Kwanzaa candle is lighted on New Year's Day. Our Universalist ancestors believed many roads lead to the holy. Maybe they were right.

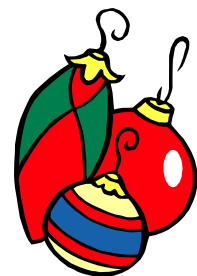
The second topic is that of our venture to New Ulm as the initial (but by no means only) part of our long-range plan for Nora Church. Our Board Chair, Sheldon, talks in detail about that program in this newsletter, so I'll just list the basics for you:

- Title: "UU & You" ("3-U")
- Where: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 125 S. Broadway
- Begins: December 23, 10:30 A.M. (special time & service)
- January: Just one service, January 19
- Regular Dates/Times: First and Third Saturdays, 6:30 P.M., February-June 7

As Sheldon mentions in his column, this is an effort to introduce ourselves and our way of religion to religious liberals in the New Ulm area. 3-U is not intended to be a second congregation. It's being done on a trial basis. It will be relatively informal and interactive. And your help is needed.

So, a true happy holidays to you. And here's to a bold experiment in ministry!

Peace,
Don



“HONORING OUR FAITHFUL”

Starting this month, we're resuming the "Honoring Our Faithful" program. We'll be honoring three or four Nora long-timers each month between January and June, recognizing each for their dedicated service to our liberal religious community. Each honoree receives a frame-mounted certificate of appreciation, as well as having her or his name added to the plaque at the rear of the sanctuary.

Our honorees for December are Carol & Alon Chambard, and Algot and Bonita Blomquist. Congratulations and thanks for your dedicated service!

ANNE RIEKE STEPS DOWN

After four-plus years spent leading our RE program, Anne Rieke will end her tenure as Nora's RE Coordinator on December 9. While Anne will continue to help us as a parent and supporter of our program, we'll miss her good leadership. She's left us a foundation for our future programming even as she's served our parents, children and youth. Thank you, Anne, for all you've done to further our program and our church!

HOLIDAY FUNDRAISER

The Hill is alive with the sounds of the season!! Join us for a musical extravaganza on Saturday, December 15 at 7:00pm at Nora Church. Featuring Muffy and Jordan Rathman, Rebecca Aadland and Don Rollins with some of the holiday's greatest music. Cookies, candies, coffee and cider will be served. Be sure to tell your friends!!

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE BOXES

Just a reminder that the GAYT program asks us to place a box in each home during the holiday season. The idea is to put in the box all the change we bring home from Thanksgiving through Christmas. The boxes can be turned in at our first service in January.



FOOD FOR ALL

Reminder that our next opportunity to help distribute food to those in need over in St. James on Saturday morning, December 8th. This is Nora's commitment to provide people resources. We leave around 8 a.m. and have historically been back

home by around noon. This is a great inter-generational activity. If you'd like to be a part of our volunteer effort please call Darrell Hinsman at 359-7494. Remember, also, that our loose offering on the second Sunday of each month goes to Food For All.

AREA FOOD SHELF

The following items are needed for the New Ulm Area Food Shelf: baby diapers, toilet tissue, dish soap, pudding mix, pancake mix and syrup, tomato soup and canned fruit. There is a container in the entry for contributions.

The food shelf serves rural areas of Brown County including Hanska and Comfrey.

LUNCH BUNCH

LUNCH BUNCH this month will be on Wednesday the 12th at Divine Providence Nursing Home in Sleepy eye. We'll be having lunch with Bob Schmitt, who is a resident there. Same time as always...11:30. See you there!

UNICEF Inspired Gifts

Try something your friends will always remember. *Unicef Inspired Gifts* make incredible holiday presents for your friends and for children struggling to survive.

It's simple: just pick your gift, tell us who you're giving the present to, and we'll send your item from the UNICEF warehouse where it can help a child the most. Then we'll tell your friends you made an *Inspired Gift* in their name.

- For \$15, you can send two [Insecticide-Treated Mosquito Nets](#) to protect children from malaria carried by mosquitos.
- For \$30, you can send two cartons of [High-Energy Protein Biscuits](#) to nourish malnourished children.
- For \$176, you can send a [UNICEF School-in-a-Box Kit](#) (pencils, erasers, scissors) to set up temporary schools for up to 80 children in crisis situations.

P.S. Help us make *UNICEF Inspired Gifts* the "must-give" holiday gift this year.

GIFTS TO CLF

Gifts to the Church of the Larger Fellowship make possible the programs, ministry and services that help pass along our UU faith. When you give, even while the CLF is impacting your own life, you are playing an invaluable role in helping the CLF reach the world.

Every gift counts. Every gift is a treasure. And as the year comes to a close, we hope we can count on your goodwill.

If you are over 70 ½ years old, US legislation allows you to donate traditional or Roth IRA assets up to \$100,000 to the CLF in 2007—tax free!

CLF's mission is to provide a ministry to isolated religious liberals, and to offer a spiritual home within the Unitarian Universalist movement.

The Church of the Larger Fellowship promotes the understanding and growth of Unitarian Universalism and institutes programs to that end.

HOLIDAY UU GIFTS

Available from the Church of Larger Fellowship
www.clfuu.org

Visit the CLF website to view and purchase gifts for friends, family & volunteers...like UU-themed note cards for all occasions. Or several styles of chalice jewelry for all genders and all ages.

ESSAY FROM A STUDENT

The following is excerpted from an essay written by one of our youth, Henry Kunerth, as part of his work in an English class at Cathedral High School, New Ulm. Thank you for sharing part of your two-tradition journey with us, Henry!

Much can be credited to one's childhood home. Few great authors, leaders or thinkers go through life without giving ample credit to the communities in they were raised and the people who make up these communities. Years spent maturing and growing toward adulthood are perhaps the most diverse and influential part of a life, having a great effect on what a person will do the rest of his or her life.

As I grew up (and am still growing up) I have had the chance to experience a unique, two-tradition

upbringing. I go to school at Cathedral High School, a Catholic school. The [original] choice to attend this school was my parents', both of whom attended Catholic schools as children, and I believed that I should have the same opportunity. The option for a transfer to a secular, public school was always left open.

Since I began in the parochial system when I was five years of age, my spiritual beliefs have undergone a change, and I can no longer call myself a member of the Catholic faith. This, however, is irrelevant to this topic. It is merely necessary to include so that I might explain how I now spend my Sundays in attendance at Nora Unitarian Universalist Church, located in Hanska, Minnesota.

Unitarian Universalism is the second of the two traditions I have known since I was young. I'm positive that the people, customs and beliefs I have found at the small church I am now part of will greatly influence my future decisions. The church is as much a part of me now as I am a part of it, and I feel that its values and presence in my choices are deeply ingrained within me.

...The church houses many of the friendliest, kindest and most intelligent people I know. All are gathered for a common purpose: to learn and grow spiritually, intellectually and to aid in finding solutions to problems in the world, country and community. The congregation is one of freedom, acceptance and tolerance; one will never feel out of place in this atmosphere. The wisdom is passed down, from the older generations to the young; I can personally claim benefit through this tradition. (An ideal example is an experience of this transmission [of values] directly from an older member to me: I was taught the art of ringing the great bell that sits atop the lofty steeple of the church. Perhaps a day will come when I'll pass on the techniques to toll the great bell, but for now it's my time to sound the beginning of service each Sunday.

Every member of the congregation seems to truly care about each other's well-being...

Other values have been given to me as well: tolerance, acceptance, freedom, spiritual exploration, to name a few. I can see the effects of these morals as I live each day...I can only wish that everyone is able to find a place as exceptional to them as Nora has been in my life...Anyone who goes to this place with an open heart and mind can find meaning there. I know that I have.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

NEWS FROM TRANSYLVANIA

We will have a follow-up meeting for all parents of children in Sunday School and for all people interested in teaching Sunday School this year on Sunday, December 2nd. during potluck. We had a good session when we met in November and want to build from there.

December Sunday School Schedule:

2nd: Practice for the Winter Children's Service. Anne and Sheldon Rieke will be with the kids. One of the high school students will watch the youngest children in the nursery.

9th: Children's Winter Service: *Christmas Symbols*. Please join us.

16th: The school age children will attend the service. There will be someone to watch the younger children in the nursery that day. Please join us for the Christmas Eve service on the 24th..

Dear Friends of Nora Church,

It is with great regret and sorrow that I will resign as RE Coordinator from Nora UU Church effective, 12/9/07. There are numerous reasons for this decision. The most important - I need to have more time with my family. The time I spend preparing lessons, events and activities for the youth at Nora takes time away from my own children. My priority is with them right now.

There will be guidance from the Board and the Committee on Ministry for the RE program. I hope to assist with this transition, and will still be involved with the RE program as a parent volunteer.

Thank you for allowing me to serve the children and families of Nora Church for the past 4 1/2 years.

*Most sincerely,
Anne Donnelly-Rieke*

The following is a letter recently received from our partner church in Transylvania. It was fun to hear from them. In addition to the email, they have recently sent pictures of the minister and the woman who wrote the following email as well as a booklet that includes pictures, and lots of information. In the middle of the booklet there is a picture of what I assume are present young adults from the community. There are several names that correspond with names we were pen pals with 7 to 10 years ago. Fun to see. If anyone would like further information please give Brenda or one of the other Social Justice committee members a call.

I am soooo happy, that you contact us. As you know we, Benced become, an Independent Congregation. The website is just our, Benced's website. We are working on to make the english, and romanian version. I am the president of the Foundation from Benced, and since last year I am working together with Ildiko (the present minister). I wrote this year 4 grants, which I earnt for Benced. I would like to write more grants, but the Foundation had-n't money. We must write the grants in the name of the foundation, the church mustn't write grants like these, which become from money of the government. We organized the cleaning of the whole village on Earth Day, the cleanest village got presents. We organized summer camp for children., programs for old people, cultural programmes, appeared the Monography of Benced. I redact and print, and multiplicat the newspaper of Benced which appear monthly. So in 2 years we evoluated a lot! Since 2005 I am working for Benced, in grants, in other activities for the community. For example this year I redacted another newspaper just for old peapole, with big letters. They got this year from grants presents with food etc. Yes, I'd like to get the contact, this week I will gather the e-mail address of the children, and I will ask them to write about them. If they don't have email address, I can be the person, who will send you. You with children will choose, the persons. Or you can send on my post adress: 537311 Benced 75/AJud Harghita Romania Another good thing it would be, if you with the children will come next year on our third summer camp. The main theme of our camp is english, and ecology. So our children will have the possibility to practice english, your children to learn hungarian and to see our beautiful place. What do you say?

The conference...It will be a very good way to keep in touch, to make closer contact, if we cannot go outside, in Hanska, beacuse of money... To be honest, we would liek to arrive there...

Thanks for your interest, and I hope that this relationship will grow up. Sincerely Krisztina

Adult RE & Growth

The Spirituality Study Group will be meeting at 6:25 PM at Nora Church each Thursday through December. During these initial sessions, the group will be looking at various meditation traditions and techniques.

The Open Meditation will be held in the sanctuary at Nora Church at 7:00 PM each Thursday through December. This hour-long offering will be largely silent, providing among other things, time to unplug from the pressures and stress of daily life not to mention the holiday season, and find a quiet space to let some peace and tranquility enter the mind and heart.

Both of these offerings are open to members and non-members of Nora Church, and people need not attend both in order to participate in the session that is of interest to them. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Christopher Olson, either via e-mail at kitakis@aol.com or by phone at 507-995-7059.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

On Saturday November 17th, the Board and the COM met again with Lyn Burton (the consultant we plan to work with as we prepare a long-range plan for your input, feedback and, hopefully, approval). We met to continue the work we started at that first meeting when we identified this goal: "to sustain and grow Nora through a UU presence in New Ulm."

I know there have been concerns about what this means. Let me tell you first what it does NOT mean.

This is *not* intended as a permanent presence. This is not intended to be a branch office or second congregation. Nor would Don have less time in the pulpit at Nora in Hanska. Our intention is to give the people of New Ulm (the largest source of potential members) a chance to try us, to sample us, and to hear our story; this trial-basis ministry is intended to provide good ministry - so good that folks will be willing to make the trek out to Hanska and join with us on Sundays.

This program will not offer the same worship service they would get here at Nora the next day. It might be a movie with discussion. It may be a more

"contemporary" service on the same subject. It may focus on music. It will likely be more interactive. There are many possibilities.

A committee has been organized to work with Don on what we are calling "UU and You." They will work on advertising, logistical support (childcare, food, hospitality, service preparation) and assessment - i.e. is it working? If you are interested please join Pat Kunerth, Kristine Paulson, Julie Peck, and me on the "UU and You" committee. You can join by contacting Pat, Don or me.

At this point, the program is intended to run more or less through the rest of the church year in June. But it will be running hard. By the time you read this we will have walked in New Ulm's Parade of Lights handing out flyers about Nora and our services in Hanska and the "UU and You" program in New Ulm. Then, if the arrangements fall into place, we will have our first "UU and You" program on Sunday, December 23. (This will be at 10:30 a.m. at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 125 South Broadway in New Ulm. Our regular schedule is to hold two Saturday evening services per month, beginning at 6:30.) We'll meet on the *first* and *third* Saturdays, save for January. So, our first service for 2008 will be held on Saturday, January 19. We'll continue with two programs a month through June. There will be an ongoing attempt to look at what is working and what isn't, with a discussion at the end of the year to evaluate our progress.

For this to work, we'll have to bring the incredible Nora experience to the people of New Ulm. The 3-U (the acronym for the service) will take many hands for it to work. Everyone is invited to come to programs, serve food, to listen to and greet newcomers. But if you never come to a New Ulm program, you still have an important job here at Nora each Sunday. We must meet, greet and listen to the stories of these newcomers. We must provide childcare and RE for additional children.

If you have any questions please talk to Don, me or any of the other members of the Board or the COM. This attempt to grow as we provide hospitality is important. We aim to prove to the people of New Ulm that what we offer here at Nora is worth the drive.

We want to tell our story, and listen to theirs. Please come join us on this important work.

Sheldon Rieke
Board Chair, Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL DAY

Sunday, December 9th, 6:30 - 8 p.m. Candles will be lit by families and friends around the world in memory of children who have died. Candle lighting will begin in New Zealand and end on the West Coast of the United State, illuminating the globe in a 24-hour wave of light.

This will take place at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 150 Stadium Court, Mankato. Families are invited to attend and may also bring a framed photo of their child for display.

Sponsored by Immanuel St. Joseph's and in part by One Bright Star.

*Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white.*

*Children we remember
Though missing from our sight.
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night.*

*All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space,
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?*

*Oh angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love.
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above.*

*Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow.
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow.*

*We will not forget.
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As we remember.*



FIBROMYALGIA SUPPORT GROUP

You are invited:

WHO: persons with chronic health conditions who would like to share information, uplifting activities, and fellowship with others who have adapted their daily lives due to health issues.

WHAT: a support group for persons with chronic conditions such as fibromyalgia, arthritis, heart issues, multiple sclerosis, and depression...or other temporary limiting conditions.

WHERE: Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1400 South State Street, New Ulm

WHEN: 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 10:30 AM (not Dec. 26th). For more information call Pastor Joyce at 211-4430 or Nancy at 354-8049

2008 STAFF OPENINGS AT CAMP UNISTAR

Would you like to spend the entire summer on an island in Cass Lake, northern Minnesota? WE are looking for mature individuals with skills in cooking, life guarding/waterfront, children's program, maintenance, who can serve on the staff at Camp UniStar late May through August 2008. We are also looking for an individual with the experience and skills to fill the summer Director's position.

Become a part of the UniStar community where you will assist campers in experiencing the wonders of this peaceful, rustic, quiet UU island retreat. The application process is open until January 31, 2008 with positions filled on a rolling a rolling basis. Applications are available from personnel chair, Steve Spyres, 785-234-0126 or moospys4@aol.com or www.campunistar.org

WE MISSED YOU!

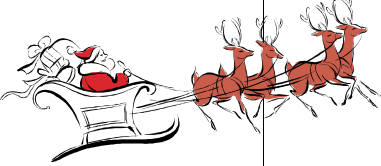

The other day someone asked about a fellow member whom they have not seen for a while. It was suggested that they give that family a call, and guess what, they did and the family was in worship the next weekend. Maybe you are thinking about someone you miss in worship or maybe you are someone who is missed. If you find that you are missing someone, give them a call. If you miss being here, please know that we miss you, and we would love to see you back.

NORA CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2007

Parsonage: 507-439-6240
Don's cell: 507-276-8464



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 9:00 Choir 10:00 Coffee Time 10:30 Service POTLUCK RE meeting w/ parents & children during pot-	3	4 HANUKAH begins	5	6 6:25 Spirituality Group	7	8 Food for All Presbyterian Church St. James. Meet at Nora - 8 AM
9 9:00 Choir 10:00 Coffee Time 10:30 Children's RE Holiday Service	10	11	12 Lunch Bunch	13 6:25 Spirituality Group	14	15 Concert Fund- raiser, Nora church
16 9:00 Choir 10:00 Coffee Time 10:30 Service	17	18	19	20 6:25 Spirituality Group	21 WINTER SOLSTICE	22
23 10:30 UU & U Holiday Service at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, NU	24 5:00 PM Nora Church Holiday Ser- vice	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 KWANZAA begins	27 6:25 Spirituality Group	28	29
30 No Service	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE					

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES
ARE DUE BY THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH.

WEEKLY BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS
ARE DUE BY THURSDAY NOON

cindymo@sleepyeyetel.net

please be sure to include "NORA" in the subject line

(507) 439-6380

20894 County Road 6, Hanska, MN 56041
Thanks for your help in getting articles to me.
Cindy Mosenden, Office Administrator



DON'S SCHEDULE

Monday is his day-off and Fri-
days are reserved for sermon
writing. While he continues to
have other set commitments,
don't hesitate to call to schedule
an appointment.



Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
12333 155th Avenue
Hanska Minnesota 56041-4310

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Happy Holidays!



EMAIL
Nora church @ sleepyeyetel.net

WEB SITE
<http://www.norauuchurch.org>

Nora Church Sunday Services DECEMBER 2007

Social Hour 10:00 AM Worship Service 10:30 AM

December 2 "The Theology of Worship: Why We Do What We Do"

December 9 "Christmas Symbols : Children's Christmas Program"

December 16 "The Grinch Revisited: Why Hope Must Die"

December 23 "Christmas for Religious Liberals (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, New Ulm)"

December 24 "Christmas Eve at Nora Church"

December 30 No service – Happy New Year!

