



The Free Spirit

News from the Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship • Helena, Montana

May 2007

Our Generous Community

This is an excerpt from Tom Owen-Towl's book, *Growing a Beloved Community*.

"Over the years I've asked congregants to list their highest ideals for Unitarian Universalist character development. Love is duly noted as central to our faith, but so is justice, because love turns sentimental unless grounded in fairness. Trust keeps us going in a world soaked in cynicism. And acceptance embraces friends and makes building bridges with foes possible; what's more important than that? Then there's the unsung virtue of serenity, or equanimity, that anchors us amidst life's turbulence. And courage—who would attempt the religious pilgrimage without sufficient bravery? And, of course, there are always votes for joy and forgiveness and humility as well.

But there's one virtue without which one has little or no claim to religious living, without which congregations and societies don't sustain the path toward the Beloved Community. And it's often ignored or underrated, not even appearing on congregants' lists until they are reminded of it. That virtue is generosity—openheartedness, the cardinal ability to give lavishly of yourself to others, to the world around you, to the divine communal spirit in which we live, move, and have our beings."

Growing a Beloved Community and other books are available for loan in our church library. Ask a board member or greeter if you want to visit the library and check out a book or two.

Generosity is the flower of justice.

- Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)



New board member, Membership Committee Chair, founder of affinity group *Men Eating Breakfast*, and lay leader Nick Hopkins ... oh yes, and Elly's husband and father of 3-year old Emma.

Sunday Services & Other Events May 2007

Wed., May 2 - Knitting for Peace.

Sunday, May 6 - Flower Communion Ceremony. Led by Karrie Fairbrother and Cynthia Overturf. First Sunday Potluck! Bring a flower to put in the vase and take another one home with you. If you forget to bring a flower, there are plenty to share. Greeted by the Clarke-Forker family.

Sunday, May 13 - Men Eating Breakfast. Join other UU men at 9:00 a.m. at Perkins Restaurant for casual conversation and breakfast before the service.

Sunday, May 13 - Mother's Day - Honoring Mom. Led by Padric McCracken. Greeted by Patti Borneman.

Wed., May 16 - Knitting for Peace.

Sunday, May 20 - A Return to the Commons: Creating Justice. Led by Steve Loken. Greeted by Tim Wheel and Sharon Doyle.

Sunday, May 20 - Circles of Eight Dinners in five UU homes. 5 p.m. Call Carolyn Lacey for more information.

Tuesday, May 22 - BSUUF Board Meeting. All are welcome. Lower level of church, 6:30 p.m.

Friday-Sunday, May 25-27 - Wild Places and the Human Spirit Family Retreat - Billings UU - Red Lodge (*see article inside*).

Sunday, May 27 - Memorial Day Service led by Mary Jo Olson. Last Sunday Potluck. Greeted by Jeanne Powell.

Wednesday, May 30 - Women's Clothes Swap at Jennifer Forker's home. Check your email for details.

See inside for details about our summer schedule. We resume regular Sunday services at the Christian Science Church on August 26.

Sunday services begin at 11:30 a.m. at the Church of Christ, Scientist, 1800 Highland, Helena, Montana. Come at 11:05 to warm up your singing voice and learn the day's hymns.

Knitting for Peace - May 2 and 16

First & Third Wednesdays, 7 - 9 p.m.



Come to knit, needlepoint, crochet, embroider, whatever your needlework passion may be, join other UU women in fellowship and friendship. We may listen to a sermon or just discuss what's on our minds. Chocolate and other treats are always part of the social offering.

During March and April we made pink scarves for Breast and Cervical Health awareness events. Other projects are underway. Join us on the first and third Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. at Lynda Saul's home (unless otherwise noted).

Check your e-mail for notices or call Lynda at 461-2838.

Montana's UUs stand together to support Pride Celebration



Standing on
the
Side of Love

Montana's
Unitarian-Universalists
WELCOME YOU

BILLINGS
uubillings.googlepages.com

BOZEMAN
uu.gomontana.com

HELENA
bigskyuu.org

KALISPELL
glacieruu.org

MISSOULA
uuf-msla.org

On June, 15, 16, and 17, 2007, Billings is playing host to the Montana Statewide Pride Celebration. This celebration takes place in order to honor our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender and Two Spirit families, friends and allies and will bring folks from across the region to the Magic City on June 15th through June 17th.

The celebration will bring the community together to stand in support of diversity, proving once again to the world that Billings and Montana will

not allow discrimination. This year's theme is "From Silence to Celebration."

For more information, visit <http://www.prideinbillings.org>.

The ad shown above will appear in the program for Pride members coming to Billings for the annual celebration. A sign of future collaborations to come between the five active UU fellowships in our great state of Montana? We hope so!

Book Lovers Unite!

UU Book Club meets Thursday, May 24



A long-time dream has become reality. We've launched a UU book club! Donna Davis has offered to organize a group of book lovers to meet every fourth Thursday of the month through the summer and possibly continuing throughout the year. And, at our first planning meeting, about 15 people signed up! Two books clubs might actually come out of this first meeting.

The first book chosen for the book club is *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace... One School at a Time*. In this memoir, Greg Mortenson, and acclaimed journalist David Oliver Relin, recount the unlikely journey that led Mortenson from a failed attempt to climb Pakistan's K2, the world's second highest mountain, to successfully building schools in some of the most remote regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. By replacing guns with pencils, rhetoric with reading, Mortenson combines his unique background with his intimate knowledge of the third-world to fight terrorism with books, not bombs, and successfully bring education and hope to remote villages in central Asia.

Three Cups of Tea is at once an unforgettable adventure and the inspiring true story of how one man really is changing the world—one school at a time.

For more info, visit: www.threecupsoftea.com.

The book will be discussed at the first meeting of the book club on Thursday, May 24 at Joyce Kronholm's home. Consult your Members and Friends Directory for Joyce's address or call Joyce at 457-8246.

If you have questions about the book club, contact Donna Davis at 449-7766.

"Winter Soldier" Documentary - screening postponed

The public screening of the 1972 documentary, "Winter Soldier," scheduled at the the Lewis and Clark Pulbic Library on May 30 has been postponed to allow organizers more time to plan this community outreach event.

Welcome New Members!



During our New Member Sunday Service on April 15, we welcomed nine new members to the Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. From left to right, Nick Hopkins (with daughter Emma), Jay Johnson, Woody Hines, Rebecca Hargis, and Ryan Grandy and Magalie Belanger (Ryan is holding their son, Bastien). Not present for this photo but honored this day were Nisan Burbridge, Padric McCracken, and Steve Loken. A delicious cake and coffee followed the service. Many of our new members have joined or agreed to chair committees, and at least one new member is already on the board—what an enthusiastic group they are!

On our minds, in our hearts - Survey Highlights

In late March we launched an online survey with five short questions to get a sense of our progress since last year when so many changes were taking place. The survey ended on April 30 with 21 responses. If you didn't have a chance to respond, don't worry, we'll do another one next year. Thanks to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts. If you want to read the complete, unedited responses, they'll be on display in the church foyer through May 2007.

1. Preferred meeting time:

10:30 a.m. (11) 11:30 a.m. (7) 4:30 p.m. (1) 7:00 p.m. (2)

2. Christian Science Church location:

Great (8) Good (12) Fair (1) Poor (0)

3. If you could change anything ...

Change the meeting time ... install a kitchen ... bring back the coffee hour after every Sunday service ... create a choir ... move the flag ... get movable chairs ... easier access to the lower level ... more space ... more UU presence ... more time for discussion after the sermon.

4. What brings you to church or if you're not coming, why?

- The UU message is right and true for me.
- The fellowship offers a circle of family not found elsewhere.
- Spirit of group, lively discussions and networking of people on similar missions of growth, acceptance and social action.
- I am so excited and delighted to see us growing ... with the addition of energetic new members, esp. young families.
- It is great to be with a group of like-minded people.
- I very much enjoy our meetings. Our community.
- I come regularly for the fellowship of fellow seekers and social activists, stimulating sermons, discussions, meaningful rituals.
- I don't come more often because of the time.
- I love being around all the wonderful people who attend UU. The services are interesting and thought provoking.
- The previous, earlier time worked better for me.
- Spirit, intelligence, and heart. Stimulating and thoughtful lectures.
- I come for the feeling of fellowship, to be with others who are searching for meaning in their lives.

- Sermons have been excellent and there is much more of a feeling of actually having been to church than I ever felt at the Waterford.
 - I come to worship with like-minded people in a supportive liberal community. I also like to see my friends. I come to give something back in service to my congregation and the community.
 - It is both a spiritual and social home for us.
- ### 5. What are your overall feelings about the fellowship?
- Would like a growth goal of hiring a half-time minister.
 - I regard the Christian Scientists as members of my fellowship.
 - We need to latch onto the momentum of growth and keep it going. More/better advertising and promotion.
 - I appreciate the newsletter, the web site, and e-mail announcements.
 - I enjoy the willingness of the members to change, to experiment—to take risks in doing so. The Circles of Eight and the move to the CSC are good examples.
 - I am energized by the new folks and the commitment of those of us who have been long-time members. We've come a long way in the last few years.
 - It's diversity in the midst of community, and most people's willingness to remain open to each other's truths.
 - I think the fellowship is a great group of people, very welcoming to new visitors.
 - It's the first church I've ever joined!
 - The Fellowship is great. The Board is doing a fine job -- kudos to all! The circle dinners are fabulous.
 - I feel very fortunate to be with this group.

News from the Worship Committee

By Pad McCracken

I just finished rereading for the first time in nearly twenty years Dolores LaChapelle's essay "Ritual is Essential." Dolores was a truly inspirational human being and she died this past January. In the essay she makes the point that the most stable and sustainable societies have been the ones with the richest ceremonial lives.

One of the wonderful paradoxes I see in Unitarian Universalism is the need for non-dogmatic ritual. How do spiritual progressives reconcile with the need for ceremony and ritual that connects us with each other and the Earth?

I guess like so many things we strive for balance, and I see that effort taking place on our Worship Committee. Being lay-led, we want to provide both the space for the individuality and diversity of those willing to facilitate a service, as well as a fairly predictable service that honors our members, our guests, and the work of those who coordinate with the worship service (i.e. the Welcoming and Religious Education committees).

This is the rationale for providing the Worship Service template we ask that our lay-leaders use to design their services. The worship committee has tweaked the template a bit in the last six months with the intent of maintaining this freedom within a meaningful flow of our services. Your input is desired and welcomed, and I am envisioning a service early on next fall that serves as both a walk-through of the BSUUF Worship Service and an opportunity for discussion.

There has been interest in maintaining a bit more deliberate connection among the Fellowship over the summer, and we have scheduled three informal outdoor services:

- Sunday, June 3, 11 a.m. at the Masonic Site on Mullen Pass. If weather is inclement, we'll meet in the lower level of the church.
- Sunday, July 1, 11 a.m. at the White Earth shelter on Canyon Ferry (near Winston)—there will also be camping the night before for those interested at the White Earth group site!
- Sunday, August 5, 11 a.m. at the Cave Point shelter on Canyon Ferry on the other side of the dam at Cave Bay Campground.

More details to follow on these services—regular services will resume on August 26.

Pad McCracken is our incoming Worship Committee chair, picking up where Lynda Saul will leave off this spring. You can access the Worship Service guidelines and template on our Web site. If you're interested in serving on this committee, contact Pad at padmccracken@hotmail.com or call 443-8208.



Circles of 8 Dinners Sunday, May 20 - 5:00 p.m.

Get Acquainted with Fellow UUs, Laugh,
and Enjoy While Sharing a Meal Together

We need two more hosts! If you are not yet signed up, you can still be included in our Circles of Eight (or Six) Dinners taking place Sunday, May 20. Contact Carolyn Laceky at 443-4267 or e-mail cdottiel@hotmail.com.

Web site visits soar in April



All through April this ad, with the smiling faces of Grace and Hope Clarke, ran on the Helena Independent Record Web site (helenair.com) and a review of our site statistics shows visitors doubled to 946!

The newspaper recorded 141 "click-throughs" or visitors who saw the ad and clicked on it to visit our Web site; and our ad was viewed 31,864 times during April. Nice going Clarke-Forker family!

If the Board agrees, we'll likely run the ad again in late summer as we gear up for our return in the fall. Did you learn about BSUUF from the Internet? If so, let us know!





Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

A LAY-LED WELCOMING FELLOWSHIP IN HELENA, MONTANA
PO BOX 816
HELENA, MT 59624



The 7 Principles of Unitarian Universalism



The inherent dignity and worth of every person.

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our conversations.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

May 25-27, 2007 Second Annual "Wild Places and the Human Spirit" Family Retreat

This is a UU retreat put on by MusEco Media and Education Project, in collaboration with Billings UU Fellowship. Especially for families! The events take place Friday to Sunday evening, May 25 - 27, 2007, south of Red Lodge at the Timbercrest Girl Scout Camp. Speakers and workshop leaders include:

- Dr. Janine Pease (Crow Astronomy)
- Gary Ferguson ("The Promise of the Wild: Lessons from Nature about Living Well in the World")
- GERAL Blanchard ("Grizzly Bears and Other Relatives")
- Donna Davis ("Poetry and the Wild")
- Dr. Walt Gulick (World Views and Wild Places)
- Ralph Scott (Insect ID and Digital Photography)
- Elizabeth and Dave Klarich (Yoga)

... plus many activities and workshops for kids! Visit www.museco.org to download a brochure and registration materials, or send an e-mail to Kris Prinzing at kris@museco.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

- May 2 and 16 - Knitting for Peace!
- May 20 - Circles of 8 Dinners. Sign up today!
- May 22 - Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- May 27 - Last BSUUF service before summer break.
- Sunday, June 3 at the Masonic Site on Mullen Pass.
- Sunday, June 24 - Potluck Brunch at Becky Warren's home to bid farewell to Clark/Forker family.
- June 20-24 - UUA General Assembly in Portland, OR.
- Sunday, July 1 at the White Earth shelter on Canyon Ferry (near Winston)—camping the night before for those interested at the White Earth group site!
- Sunday, August 5 at the Cave Point shelter on Canyon Ferry at Cave Bay Campground.
- August 26 - First BSUUF service after summer break.
- October 12-14 - MDD Annual Conference, Billings.