



Blue Hills Bulletin

The Blue Hills Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is a multigenerational congregation, guided by the principles and liberal traditions of Unitarian Universalism, that promotes an environment of acceptance, inspiration, and action in order to create a sense of greater community.

March 2017

Next Issue, June 2017

Energy Audit

Rick Wilhelm
Building and Grounds

Recently an energy audit was performed on our building by On Site Performance Testing Co. out of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The following recommendations were sent to us in order of priority:

- I. Install R-30 blown cellulose over existing insulation in the attic.
- II. Cover the inside walls of the basement furnace room with Thermax Sheathing.
- III. On the outside east wall, along the kitchen, drill and seal the concrete basement blocks with an injectable foam.
- IV. Install dense packed cellulose in the exterior walls on the main floor. This will include removal and reinstallation of the exterior siding.

David Woods, Eau Claire Insulation, met with myself and Colton Schmidt last week to offer suggestions and a bid. Later that day we met with Bob Brueggen, owner of his Remodeling Company. We received a bid from Eau Claire Insulation and are awaiting a bid from Bob Brueggen.

This is a very basic summary of the work to be done. There are several things that we can do ourselves to make the building more energy efficient. For example, we could seal the windows and doors with caulk.

Quote

"As UU's, we are grounded in the transcending mystery and wonder from which we all come. What each of us knows about God is a piece of the truth, and we don't have to seek it alone." Dr. Phil Lund

New Fellowship Coordinator Position

By Dana Lind

Since November, I've been enjoying the role of Fellowship Coordinator at BHUU. Every week, I keep the weekly schedule updated on Facebook, the BHUU website, and the LED sign in the front window. I have made flyers of our regular Sunday schedule that can be seen posted around Rice Lake. More will be made to publicize our guest speakers or special events, for which I will also be writing articles for the Chronotype's religion section. Also, because so many people look to facebook for information and insight, I have asked Colten Schmidt to keep it active with upcoming events and thought provoking articles. He is definitely bringing our presence to life on social media.

I'm also looking forward to expanding our community outreach by organizing and publicizing non-sunday programs, such as a weekday discussion group or outdoor events. In particular, several members from BHUU have decided that Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexual education is a need in our community, and I will help make that a reality with communication and advertising. If there is anything you'd like publicized or if you have an idea for non-Sunday programs, let me know!

The Dead Tree and Me

Bob Hasman

In his Land Ethic, Aldo Leopold illustrates the difference between two kinds of conservationists: “man the conqueror versus woman the biotic citizen; science the sharpener of his sword versus science the searchlight on her universe; land the slave and servant versus land the collective organism.”

(I have edited the quote so as to give equal time

to both sexes. Personally, I think it's an accurate improvement.)

In the Land Ethic Leopold also argues that land is a community, not a commodity and suggests a science of community: ecology.

The land as a community includes waters, soils, plants and animals (human and non-human), humans acting as plain members of the land community. And today, in my twilight years, I pay homage to two members of the land community: to a grand woody plant, an oak tree, and to two human animals, two ecologists.

First, the oak, who—whether rooted firmly in the earth or uprooted, continues to be a benefit to the entire land community. Living, the oak provides acorns, food for many animals and insects including forgetful squirrels that bury/plant acorns, eating some and leaving others to become oaks (providing they are lucky enough to survive the hungry rabbit); oaks provide shelter (oak galls, housing for larvae, that not only become beetles but also provide for woodpeckers.) Dead, oaks provide shelter for racoons and grouse as well as shelter for the eggs and larvae of insects which become food for chickadees. I respect and admire the oak.

I also respect and admire two human animals, two ecologists—for two reasons: 1. they write letters. I repeat, they write letters. 2. they are rooted in the earth, like oaks. And they ponder, perhaps unlike oaks, questions of death and religion.

I recently came across a letter of one to the other—as well as the response of the receiver to the letter sent. I quote from the letter and the response.

The letter writer has been diagnosed with a “serious” illness and wants to be assured that he will enter the forever after appropriately. His request—that he be buried in a shallow enough grave so that his “highly concentrated animal nutrients get spread over the land by the exodus of beetles, flies, etc.” (Recycling at its best.)

Death, he suggests, “is a wild celebration of renewal with our substance hosting the party.” He ends the letter this way: “Offering oneself to the ravens when the time comes is to me religion at its best.”

The other ecologist, the receiver of the letter, agrees: “a casket would be for you...an unacceptable cage for our otherwise free ever recycling molecules that would soon become incorporated into Earth's ecosystems. . . . The coffin is a last attempt to place a boundary between ourselves and nature.”

As for religion, he says, “the one and only true religion that I in good conscience honor is one that encompasses the Earth we walk on.”

The letters of the two ecologists made me feel good. They underscored the science that is the “searchlight on the universe—in all its beauty, intricacy and diversity.” They underscored the notion that the human is not the conqueror of nature, the “improver” of nature, but a biotic citizen of a land community that is a living, growing organism. They underscore the notion that the earth ought not to be abused but used to nourish oaks, squirrels, beetles, woodpeckers, and humans.

Reflecting on my journey in 2013

By Ken Hood

I don't need to be saved, because I'm not damned.
It's as simple as that.

If there is a "higher power" out there which desires to have a relationship with me, then I have a really hard time believing that this being's method of gaining my trust and adoration was to author a book full of contradictory information and horrifying threats.

Or maybe . . . maybe God really does meet us

where we are. In which case what I know of God at present time is *nothing*. God has met me *nowhere*. Which means that my position must be "*nowhere*" as well. Am I stuck in some sort of spiritual parking garage? Last year, close to this time, I lost the knowledge that I *thought* I had of God. One week the experiences I had of God were real and authentic, and the next week questions were pouring through my brain, questions which I could no longer ignore or dodge with convenient answers. These questions had existed long before I was born, yet they played an important role in my life.

If God met me, then he* met me in my questioning this year. He taught me how to use the mind that he gave me in order to study the Bible and its history. He taught me that some prayers do go unanswered. He taught me that life doesn't have to mean anything in order for it to be full of meaning. He taught me that truth and beauty can be found in many religious traditions. He taught me not to fear the unknown, but to embrace it. He taught me the real odds of Pascal's Wager and revealed the fallacies within the proofs of his existence. He showed me the absurdity of my dogmatism and exposed the layers of assumptions which crowded my mind. He inspired me to keep digging, keep learning and to not simply accept the easy answers. He taught me about false dilemmas. I realized that I could have goodness without a god, happiness without Christianity, love without Jesus, and hope without an afterlife. Best of all, I discovered that what religious people call "the divine" lives within each of us. I don't need to go "out there" in order to find it. I don't need to call out to the cold stars above. It is here, present within me; no holy book, pastor or program is needed for me to experience a deep connection with the universe. This is where I belong.

It's where I've always belonged, but I just didn't know it. I was taught to view myself as "salt and light" to the world. This place was broken and God was coming back to fix it in a radical way! Only he could fix it, for it was he who had created it and it was us, the free-willed humans, who had defiled it

with our rebellion. As long as we remained separate from our God, the world must suffer disorder and chaos. Oh, how vastly different my thoughts are now. I have no need to see the earth as a special creation of God. I see the stars, and I realize that there are innumerable worlds and galaxies far beyond our reach. Earth is but a speck in the cosmos. It is not the center. It is not the stage of some grand morality tale. If there is a play, then most of the actors are simply silent forces. The universe churns on, oblivious to our wars and divisions. I belong here, on this "pale blue dot" floating in the endless ocean of space.

**The pronoun "he" is used simply out of convention here. I don't mean to imply that any concept of the Divine must be gendered or that a masculine gender is clearly superior. I could write these statements as "she taught me" as well, but using the masculine pronoun fits in much better with how I am used to talking about God . . . it is easier and more natural for me to speak this way.*

The old me

by Ken Hood, September 2015

Sorting through
books and journals.

The old me, boxed away,
dusty on a shelf,
no longer to speak.

Who will I be,
tomorrow?

Editor's note: This is the religious view of one of our members. Others are encouraged to submit their views to the BHUUF Newsletter.

Poetry Submitted by Jude Genereaux

A Limited Degree

Leonard Cohen

As soon as I understood
(even to a limited degree)
that this is g-d's world
I began to lose weight
immediately
At his very moment
I am wearing
my hockey uniform
from the Seventh grade.

Poetry Submitted Judy Barisonzi

The Presence

By Maxine Kumin

Something went crabwise
across the snow this morning.
Something went hard and slow
over our hayfield.
It could have been a raccoon
lugging a knapsack,
It could have been a porcupine
carrying a tennis racket,
it could have been something
supple as a red fox
dragging the squawk and spatter
Of a crippled woodcock
Ten knuckles underground
those bones are seeds now
pure as baby teeth
lined up in the burrow.

I cross on snowshoes
cunningly woven from
the skin and sinews of
something else that went before.

A Stark Raving Socialist

By Brian Rude

I have many times called myself a socialist. And I am not kidding at all. There are many definitions of socialist. When I say I am a socialist, I usually follow that with something like, "I have shared a house and a joint checking account with another person for over forty years." There I am defining a socialist as someone who wants to share, and is capable of sharing. Sharing is not always easy. There are many ways of sharing that a lot of people are simply incapable of. When I become aware that a married couple does not have a joint checking account, I try not to assume that it is because they cannot share a joint account, but I'll admit that thought crosses my mind. Perhaps that simple basic form of socialism is beyond their abilities. I consider it a compliment to be called a socialist in that way. In that way I plead guilty to being a stark raving socialist.

In many contexts it would be misleading for me to call myself a socialist, so I do not do so in those contexts. But when there is a possibility that a serious discussion will ensue, I will call myself a socialist, and mean it. There are many definitions of socialist, and I definitely fit some of those definitions.

A socialist can be defined as simply wanting government control of something. By that definition I can call myself a socialist because I believe in, and am a product of, socialized education. I went to government schools. And I like socialized roads. Valerie can tell you how I grumble when we're traveling and come to a toll road. It's not the money, I complain about. I don't like the inconvenience, and I don't like the complications it entails. I like the convenience and simplicity of government roads. I'm a stark raving socialist in that way.

I even like public libraries. What in the world was Ben Franklin thinking when he advocated for the establishment of public libraries? Doesn't that violate copyright owner's rights? I don't know, but I like public libraries. Again, call me a stark raving socialist.

And I like socialized police protection. I think in lots of places in the world everyone knows that if you are a victim of a crime, it is your family's responsibility

to take revenge. How else could crime be responded to? So call me a stark raving socialist, but I am glad we have police to call when crimes are committed.

So what kind of socialist is Bernie Sanders? I don't know. I suppose he is not a socialist in the classic sense. In the classic meaning of the word, socialism means the ownership and control of the means of production by the government. I'm not sure that's what Sanders wants or not. Cuba is a good example of this classical idea of socialism. Under Castro private ownership of production was essentially outlawed. I've done some reading on Cuba, enough to know it's not a worker's paradise, it's a hell hole. Cuba under Castro has been decade after decade of grinding tyranny and poverty. It's a brutal dictatorship. Being a brutal dictatorship, I think, has nothing to do with socialism. But a lot of brutal dictatorships cling tightly to the label of socialism, as Castro has always done. It helps sell the product. Lots of people will argue, "oh, but that's not real socialism". But Castro's government fits the classic definition of socialism as government control of the means of production, unless things have changed very recently.

So Castro was a socialist, and I am a socialist. But I am not that kind of socialist.

And now, of course, we have the example of Venezuela.

So again, what kind of a socialist is Bernie Sanders? And what kind of socialism does he advocate? So far as I know, nobody cares. It's more fun to throw around the labels, I guess.

A friend once told me that young people, at least a lot of them, think they know exactly what socialist means. It means you're sociable, and they're all in favor of that. So I guess once again I'm a socialist.

Public Service Announcement

If you see an empty shopping cart in a handicap parking spot, please take it into the store so that it is out of the way of the next user of the handicap parking spot.

P.O. Box 614
Rice Lake, WI 54868
715-234-6337
Meeting at 230 W. Messenger Street
Rice Lake, WI



Upcoming Schedule

March 5, Forum, Discussion of the UUA's
Common Read: The Third Reconstruction
Service: Norsk Myth & Predictions of the Future,
Waldo Asp
Board meeting: all welcome

March 12 Forum, Common Read discussion
continue, Service? The Measure of All Things,
Rev. Bruce Johnson

March 19, Forum and Service combined: Before
the Flood, Video and discussion

March 26 Forum: Transcendentalism #10,
Theodore Parker, Service: Myth, Magic and
Folklore, February Sky

April 2, forum, TBA
Service: The Shaman, the Scientist & the Swamp
Walker, Bob, Hasman.

April 9 Forum, adaptive equipment, Valerie
Rude, Service: Waldo, TBA

April 16 Forum: Transcendentalism: the 19th
century legacy, Service: Stealing Jesus, Valerie
Rude

April 23 Forum, Transcendentalism: The 20th
Century and beyond, Service, Reflections from
Seneca Falls, Mary Sozansky, Duluth UU

April 30 Forum: Review of Budget &
Priorities, Service, Milton's Satan, Ken Hood

May 7 Annual meeting

May 14, Forum Societal Health, Brian Rude,
Service: Julianne Lepp, Eau Claire UU

May 21, Forum: Poem from newsletter, Judy
Service: Rev. Nels OAS, TBA

May 28, Forum: Home Safety, Valerie, Service:
Bob Hasman, TBA