



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.

June 2017

Next Issue, September 2017

Why I Chose Unitarian/Universalist

Jude Genereaux

During the recent high holy days surrounding Easter, someone close to me asked me what made UU different from other denominations? And what drew me to it? After stumbling through an off-the-cuff, scrambled response, once my solitude was restored, I do what writers do: scurried off to my keyboard to put together a more coherent answer. Perhaps it's worth sharing.

Loosely raised Presbyterian, it was enough to retain a belief in God (God is *Love*) and Jesus as our Christian mentor, even as I don't carry a dogmatic concept of heaven, the after-life, or resurrection. I do stay open to that, knowing there are realms of unseen possibilities and far

more to life than we can see. It's worth trying to understand the mystery of it. I appreciate that UUs are open to all possibilities as we mesh our beliefs with science.

I tend to view the Bible as a collection of early writings helping humans understand how we came to be, although, particularly because it's been translated over 300 times, I don't take it literally.

Feeling it important, and engaging, to seek meaning and discovery of truth, I chose Unitarian Universalists in 1971 after being pressed to be "born again" or else be considered irrelevant as a Christian. It made sense to me that UUs honor the varying concepts of belief, including God, Jesus, Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist faith, agnostics and atheists as well. Some of us subscribe to a spiritual world (I do), while some of us do not.

I do not accept that one church or religion has

all the answers. And I felt distressed, frustrated with traditional services offered captive audiences every Sunday, when Pastors had opportunity to *tell us something* to help us through 21st Century life. Yet another repeat of “Lot and the Pillar of Salt” or other mythology offered up as sermon or bible study never helped me. And I balk at dictates pressed by traditional churches that make no sense to me, a good example being “original sin”. The Catholic church came up with that – not God. Not Moses. Not Jesus.

I found UU pastors using scripture, the Bible, and other holy texts bring meaning to it, making the message pertinent to life today. I’ve found abundant education and meaning attending UU services, and in particular when first hearing Rev. Phillips Sweet (to be our guest July 30th), I actually began taking notes!

What I find additionally important in UU is the emphasis on social justice and active participation in societal issues as we attempt to live what Jesus taught, in tandem with the search for “truth and a deeper awareness of the meaning” of life.

"The Bible says we are dust and shall return to dust.

But we are much more than dust.

We are energy interchangeable with light.

We are fire and water and earth.

We are air and atoms and quarks.

We are dreams and hopes and fears

held together by wisdom

and driven apart by folly.

So much more than dust.

What the Bible should say is:

You are a miracle and will return to the mystery from which you came."

Rev. Phil Sweet

Why I Garden

Geri Nedland

Yes, I am proud to say gardening is a 3 season activity for me and 4 if counting the inside plants and herbs.

It started out as an activity on the family farm with siblings and parents as a means of providing food throughout the year. We children did not always enjoy the weeding part but always enjoyed the end results of eating peas off the vines, ripe tomatoes, pickles that my mother made and other produce harvested.

Now fast forward 50-60 some years. I still garden and have to admit even enjoy (?) some weeding. It is a way of being outside enjoying the seasons, watching plants grow as well as providing and preserving food when out of season here locally. Gardening gives me a sense of accomplishments and self gratification.

My gardening practices have changed over the years as my knowledge of the environment and ecology have increased. Although I do not mind weeding, learning that mulching with leaves and covering between rows with newspapers breaks down adding to soil and keeps weeds from growing. Using scraps and grass clippings turns into compost which can be used as fertilizer. The bees and other pollinators making homes in the garden are a joy to see while also contributing to the growth of the plants. Over the years the garden has also provided homes for snakes, toads, and salamanders which help control undesirables and also kind of fun to see.

The gardening tradition is being passed on—even though my sons, who did not enjoy weeding, but enjoyed eating fresh peas, tomatoes, pickles, and other produce preserved for out of season produce, now have their own gardens.

What's an Old Lady like Me Doing on a Stage?

Pat Shifferd

Since retiring from my “day job” in 2006, I have appeared in several plays put on by the Theater in the Woods group, based at the Erika Quam Theater in Shell Lake. Given my age and gender, I often get asked to play “old lady” parts. These roles have varied from silly to serious, from one of “The Crazy Ladies in the House on the Corner” to Rebecca Nurse in “The Crucible.” I have been a Mother Superior in the farce “Drinking Habits” to, most recently, Scrooge in the play with too-long a title.

People often ask me one of two questions about this?

How do you remember all those lines?, or
How do you get the courage to stand up there in front of people?

These are actually good questions, since I am generally a pretty risk-adverse person. And I don't think I have a particularly good memory. So why on earth do I take the chance of embarrassing myself in front of people? Performing in a play really puts a person in the position of quite likely forgetting what should be said and done, not only embarrassing oneself, but putting others in the uncomfortable position of having to improvise to cover for the mistakes. Yikes!!

There are long, often tiring, rehearsals over many weeks, requiring, in my case, a 60-mile round-trip. The play has to be ready by that unforgiving deadline, opening night. Moreover, as in any group effort, there are the inevitable tensions which occur when people try to work together.

I could say I do it because it's fun. But that doesn't explain anything. Some people find bungee-jumping fun and other find playing chess, or going shopping, or any number of things “Fun.” What is fun for one person is scary or boring or actually repugnant to others.

From a personal perspective, I think that struggling to memorize lines and remember entrances helps keep my “little gray cells,” as Hercule Poirot would say, functioning fairly well as I age further.

But for me the main benefits of doing drama are social. The cast of a play, like the members of a musical ensemble or an athletic team, are a cooperative group. They have to work together in order to reach the goal; and this goal is a community goal. Sure, I feel good when people tell me I did a good job. But the main benefit is that WE worked together to create something that challenged or entertained or inspired others. And that is fun for me.

Finally, a theater production, like any of the arts, raises the question of what it means to be human in our world. All of the arts—literature, music, visual art, drama—create worlds within which we can and should examine the really, really important questions of our existence here on this planet at this time. And it is fun for me to play a part in this.

Medicaid and the ACA: what is it and why should you care?

By Linda Tollefsrud

Much of current political debate concerns the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Medicaid program, both of which greatly impact individuals with physical, mental, or developmental handicaps. The ACA current requires that certain "essential health benefits" be covered. These include ambulatory (outpatient) services, emergency treatment, hospitalization, mental health and substance abuse services, autism therapy, prescription drugs, rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices, laboratory services, preventive

and wellness services, chronic disease management (like that for diabetics), and pediatric services, including oral and vision care. While the first attempt to repeal and replace the ACA failed, further attempts are imminent. You may want to let your legislators know which of the above services you believe should be retained in any new legislation and/or which is/are not "essential."

Another issue is whether states should accept Medicaid "expansion," promote a block-grant option, a per-capita cap option, or conduct business as usual. One in five persons in Wisconsin is currently a recipient of some Medicaid funding, although it goes by many different names: IRIS, BadgerCare, COP of CIP waiver, WI Chronic Disease Program, Katie Beckett, ADRCs, Senior Care, HealthCheck (EPSDT) Community Support Program, Birth-to-3, Well Woman, MAPP, Children's Long Term Support, Comprehensive Community Services, Forward Health Card, SSI Managed Care, and Family Care Partnership. These programs serve children with disabilities, adults with disabilities, elderly citizens who need help in their homes, families living in poverty, and individuals residing in institutions.

A block-grant option would reduce federal funding to states, which would then need to decide whether to increase state funding for Medicaid services, cancel one or more of the above programs, make across-the-board cuts to all programs, require cost-sharing, and/or change eligibility requirements. Governor Walker (as noted in *The Washington Post*, 4/2/15) hopes to change eligibility requirements by requiring that single adults seek employment and, also, by requiring drug testing for Medicaid recipients who are "reasonable suspected" of illegal drug use. If Wisconsin were to receive a block grant for Medicaid, which of the above options would you recommend to legislators?

Governors are starting to worry that the block-grant option will be problematic, given the aging of the U.S. population. Problems might also ensue during a recession, for instance, if more people lost their jobs and thus qualified for Medicaid support. An alternative being discussed is the "per capita cap" or

PCC option. This option sounds better up front, since federal funding could increase if more individuals were enrolled. However, there would be a cap on the average spending allowed within each group of individuals (disabled children vs. blind adults, for instance). That spending would increase at the general rate of inflation (typically 1-2%) but would NOT increase at the rate of inflation for health care (historically, closer to 7%). Thus it is likely that state spending for Medicaid services would need to increase an average of 5% per year or services would need to be cut that same amount each year. With this option also, we arrive at a similar question: what should legislators do in this instance - allocate more \$\$ to Medicaid funding, cut programs, reduce eligibility, or introduce across-the-board cuts?

Budgets are boring, right? Yet, twenty percent of the people you know benefit from one of these programs. It may be a child with autism, an adult who is blind, an elderly grandparent. The decisions made about the ACA and/or Medicaid affect all of us, for good or for ill.

Poetry

Submitted by Judy Barisonzi

No Pie By Mark Turcotte

And I remember my mother's pearl-white hands twisting the lid from her secret Mason jar. Her pearl-white fingers pulling the silvery coins from her secret Mason jar. A chilly day. We were going off the rez, all the way to Bottineau, just to have a piece of pie.

And I remember my mother's pearl-white fingers tapping on the counter at the diner as we waited

to be waited on. Below the tall stool I knocked together the dangling toes of my tattered sneakers. The waitress ignored us until my mother said, as sweetly as she could, *we'd like a piece of apple and a piece of pumpkin, please.* The woman glared at us from beneath the pile of her tilted hairdo, filterless Pall Mall hanging from her cherried lips. *We are all out of pie today,* she coughed. I glanced over at the pie case, the fat pies lined up neatly behind the glass. The woman hacked again, *we don't sell those pies by the piece. Do you want to buy a whole pie?* My eye twitched as my mother's pearl-white hand dipped deep into the pocket of her coat, counting the silvery coins.

And I remember my mother's pearl-white knuckles trembling on the steering wheel as we crossed back over the border. I knocked together the dangling toes of my sneakers, staring at my small brown fists. Her gaze was fixed hard on the road, while I turned to watch the world speed by, both of our mouths filled with tears.

When Life is Messy

It's easy to pray when the sun shines
And we are grateful for another glorious day of being.

It is hard to party when wind and rain and thunder
Plague our every step and spoil our every plan.

It is easy to be virtuous when life goes well
And our existence is a journey from bliss to beauty and back

It is hard to be virtuous when life assaults us
And our very being is a pilgrimage from bad to worse to worst.

It is easy to be cheerful when health bursts in us
So that we can feel the very pulse of life.

It is hard to be happy when pain and fatigue beset us
And we wonder if we can go on.

It is easy to do good when our goodness is rewarded

And we feel the power of pride in accomplishment.

It is hard to do good when we suffer for our efforts

And are troubled because we have been misunderstood.

It is easy to feel religious impulses well up inside us

When inspiration lives at our elbow and walks on our path.

It is hard to feel religious when we are tired with work to be done.

And discouragement seems to mark our every move.

O God of order and neatness, we give thanks for all that is good.

We are grateful for manifold blessings bestowed upon us.

O God of chaos and disorder, be with us also when life is messy.

Bless our coming in our going out from this day forth.

Richard S. Gilbert

The Holy Quiet Of This Hour, 1995

Page 70, Day of Promise, Collected Meditations, Volume One, Kathleen Montgomery, Editor

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BHUUF Summer 2017 Schedule. All programs at 10:30 a.m.

June 4, 2017 Service, The End of the World
Judy Barisonzi

June 11, 2017 Service, Dealing with Historical Grievances as third parties, Brian Rude

June 18, 2017 Workshop Green & Cheap Household Cleaners Nadine Wetzel-Curtis

June 25, 2017 Activity Walking the Labyrinth
Sheila Manor

July 2, 2017 Service How Christian Should UU Be?
Brian Rude

July 9, 2017, 2017 Forum Talking to People You Disagree with, Part 2
Colton Schmidt

July 16, 2017 Forum Fairness: A Basic Value
Pat Shifferd

July 23, 2017 Forum Fake News
Irene & Judy

July 30, 2017 Service to be announced
Rev. Phil Sweet, Sister Bay

August 6, 2017 Service to be announced
Waldo Asp

August 13, 2017 to be announced

August 20, 2017 to be announced
Linda Thompson

August 27, 2017 Service Elizabeth Gaskell
Marty Sozansky, Duluth UU