



## Blue Hills UU Bulletin

December 2011

Next issue March 2012

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

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### The Dead Tree of Life

by Bob Hasman

It's November. Outside the leaves of the trees cover the yard, the trail, the creek bed, the woods. The understory, large bushes, still have their leaves: the dull red-purple leaves, brown leaves, green leaves: the life-death-dying mix.

I'm reading an article by Patricia Motley, who conducts the annual Winter Solstice ritual at the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore. She writes about the dying year, the necessary dying that prepares the new life, and the tribal shaman whose job was to help the tribe accept this universal dying. The shaman's soul was believed to leave the body and become the bridge between the physical world and the spiritual world (the heavens or the underworld). The Tree of Life was his soul's means of travel:

"with its roots deep below the ground, its trunk solidly on the earth, and its branches reaching into the heavens, it [the tree symbolic of connectedness] was seen as the Tree of Life. The World Tree, the cosmic axis that connects the human to the divine."

According to Motley, the shamans brought back messages about what to plant, when to harvest, where to hunt, often serving as "environmental protection agents harmonizing the behavior of their people with the natural world." She concludes the piece in this way:

"It is we ourselves who must don the shaman's mask. It is we who must journey deep into the realms of the spirit. It is we who must return to teach the celebration of the Dance of Life."

\*

On my property are three large trees that serve as the Tree of Life. All three are dead. One is a large maple (maybe a foot and a half in diameter) uprooted more than forty years ago when I bought the property. It now serves as a rabbit sanctuary. Probably a root fungus weakened the roots, and a storm pulled them out of the ground. The root tangle is such that owls, fox, dogs (even raccoons) can't penetrate it.

The other two are oak. Both were snapped off by a violent storm that passed through Cumberland two years ago. One, the largest oak on my place (more than three feet in diameter), continues to house a colony of ants. Heart rot weakened the trunk, enabling the ants to enter. The hardwood surrounding the heart rot is their shelter. The other oak, about the same size as the maple, was snapped off about six feet from the ground. The trunk is still in the air, but the branches, which hug the ground rather than reach toward the heavens, provide shelter for grouse all year long, but particularly in the winter, when the branches are snow covered.

*(continued on next page)*

They keep me here. I like it here--with the rabbits, the ants, the grouse, and with trees both living and dead.

The dance I see is a couples dance. The dance of both life and death. That's my spirituality. It's a November spirituality. My shamans are the evolutionists and ecologists whose ethics and esthetics include all of nature--the peaceful and the violent, the healthy and the rotten--and they see beauty in the mix. I listen to these voices because I don't know much about nature, just a limited amount I have experienced on my daily walks in the woods.

I hear David Carroll's voice at this moment--an individual who bonded with a turtle when he was nine, fell in love with wetlands, and has been wading, struggling, falling in them for more than fifty years. In his first book, *Swampwalker's Journal: A Wetlands Year*, he writes of the co-evolutionary dance of the turtle and the raccoon, the dance of life and death: the turtle with her specialized shell and the raccoon with his specialized manipulative forefoot. The raccoon finally is successful in managing to pull the turtle's head out--a typical natural world drama.

Carroll says this of our role in the drama: "the human being and the human spirit do not exist outside the co-evolutionary design, the framework of the natural world."

I feel spirituality in that design.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Membership Committee

Our Membership Committee has two members: Bonnie Namtvedt and Lynda Sirianni. Our duties include checking for messages on the answering machine, sending thank you cards to visitors, keeping track of contact information for members, friends, and visitors, sending out reminders for Greeters and Coffee, and organizing new member classes.

### Outreach Committee

Some months ago the idea of having a bigger presence on the church page of the *Chronotype* was proposed. The Board approved placing ads, one each month for four months, to see what kind of response we might get. Our first ad, containing our logo and text, appeared in the *Chronotype* on Nov. 2, inviting people to attend our Discussion Forum and Service. We hope the exposure will bring folks to see what BHUU is all about. We know they will be impressed.

The motivation behind this idea is the belief that many people in the community are unaware of how we are different from other churches, or even unaware of our existence. Our Fellowship enriches our lives. If it didn't, we wouldn't be part of it. We will not be pushy in spreading our faith, but we believe it is good to let people know about us. Our listing on the church page of the *Chronotype* is useful for those who know about UU, but provides little for those who do not. The cost of this ad, about \$42 per insertion, is not trivial, but for the moment at least, seems worthwhile.

The Outreach Committee also has prepared several version of BHUU business cards that members can give out. Various themes are printed on the cards--our Seven Principle, the history of UU, an explanation of our faith. We also have a supply of foldover UUA cards that explain what we believe. Pick up a few from the table in our meeting room and keep them handy to pass out at any appropriate opportunity!

Outreach Committee members are Brian Rude (chair), April Nielsen, Rick Wilhelm, and Bonnie Namtvedt. Suggestions for the text of either business cards or *Chronotype* ads are always welcome.

*How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.*

--from Psalm 133

## **It's time to welcome a Guest at Your Table!**

**by April Nielsen**

On Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, we opened our Guest at Your Table program with a multigenerational worship celebration.

When we bring home our Guest at Your Table boxes and stories of hope and place them prominently where we regularly gather, our families and friends have the chance to learn about how UUSC advances human rights in the United States and around the world.

Every year as we celebrate this holiday season, UU congregations around the country participate in the Guest at Your Table program to raise awareness and support the work of our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. In its work advancing human rights throughout the world, UUSC engages in eye-to-eye partnerships with grassroots organizations to promote economic rights, advance environmental justice, defend civil liberties, and preserve the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis.

Consider making it part of a mealtime ritual to read through one of the stories and discuss its meaning and how we can help. Sharing our blessings through Guest at Your Table ensures that UUSC's human rights work continues. Please consider making a contribution that meets membership levels. Since UUSC is an independent organization that receives no funding from the UUA or the U.S. government, UUSC members are vitally important.

And, thanks to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y., gifts of \$100 or more are eligible to be matched, dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of your support!

If you missed picking up your Guest at Your Table materials on November 20<sup>th</sup>, you can find them on our social action table or by talking with April Nielsen.

We will gather our Guest boxes and UUSC contributions on Sunday January 15, or you can give your contribution to our treasurer, Brian Rude, anytime before then. Please make checks payable to BHUUF with UUSC/GAYT in the memo line.

## **NEWS OF OUR FELLOWSHIP**

A member of our congregation, Pat Shifferd, will be appearing in the Theatre in the Woods Christmas production *An O. Henry Christmas*. Based on the stories of O. Henry, including the iconic *The Gifts of the Magi*, the play follows a group of street people as they pass the night of Christmas Eve in story-telling with a mysterious stranger who appears in their midst. Performances will be at the Erika Quam Theatre in Shell Lake Friday and Saturday evenings, December 2,3,9,10 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday afternoons, December 4 and 11 at 2:00. Tickets are \$10 and \$8 for students and seniors. Tickets may be reserved online at <http://titw.org> or by leaving a voice message at 715-468-4387.

## **BUY, SELL, BARTER, GIVE, RECEIVE**

Anyone with items/services to buy, sell, barter, give or receive, please send information to Pat Barry, 715-234-1010, [leadpjl@gmail.com](mailto:leadpjl@gmail.com) or Judy Barisonzi, 715-205-5598, [Judith.barisonzi@uw.edu](mailto:Judith.barisonzi@uw.edu) We'll include a column for these exchanges in our next issue.

## **THANK YOU!**

Special thanks to the following UU members and friends:

--to Rick Wilhelm for the beautiful new landscaping around our building.

--to Bonnie Namtvedt and Cora & Dick Ayers for our 2011-12 membership booklet.

## SEEDS FOR THE SOWING

by Dorothy Atchley

On Nov. 4 and 5, members of small UU congregations in Prairie Star District gathered to listen to the Rev. Andrew Paluka and other speakers addressing challenges facing small congregations.

Andy is a Unitarian minister working in northwest London for a congregation with two locations about a mile apart. He is a native of New York and received most of his seminary education at Andover-Newton, so he could speak with understanding of the US context as well as the situation at his UK congregation. One of the buildings where his New Unity congregation meets has been a Unitarian church since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet the congregation is lively and clearly up to date.

In 2001, the New Unity congregation had 6 members, only two of them under age 35. That year they called a minister with the help of the UK Unitarian organization. They became active in the local community and the national anti-war movement. The minister was a good preacher, and many of the friends he and the congregation invited stayed with the group.

In 2006, when they called Andy to serve as their minister, there were 35 members, with the same two young adults. They engaged in the community in a variety of ways, from face-painting on to lawn to joining local improvement groups to joining a hula-hooping class. All these activities were heralded via print, website, face book, twitter, and even U-tube.

New Unity became the first UK congregation to declare that no marriage would be recorded there until marriage equality was achieved for GLBT people, and they publicized that stand. New Unity's website introduces them as "The church for Atheists and everyone else." They run several spiritual group classes and hold a regular evening service of poetry and meditation. In less than 5 years, the congregation grew from 35 to 100 signed

and pledging members, about half of them aged 18 to 35.

Not only was Andy's story inspirational, so were the stories of participants at the conference. I talked with folks founding new congregations with only 6 or 8 members. I particularly enjoyed a conversation with a committed UU teen whose RE classes most years have consisted of only 2 kids. After all that inspiration, I hope again that Blue Hills UU will be and be known as a lively and loving community for people of all ages.

## PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT!

To keep our Fellowship operating in a strong and spiritually gratifying way, we very much need your pledge of support, both of time and money, for the current year. The budget for the church is very modest. It represents what is essential if we are to continue to be an open and welcoming community for those who are on a path of spiritual discovery.

Pledges are extremely important. They allow us some degree of certainty as we plan how to provide services, religious education, a community of action, and a clean well-kept building.

So if you haven't already indicated the amount of money you are able to pledge and wish to do so, please contact Brian Rude, Fellowship Treasurer.

## WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?

In an effort to build community, we're planning to start a new Circle Supper group. Open to anyone connected to BHUU who would enjoy sharing good food and fellowship with other UU's. Circle supper is a potluck meal; hosts provide main dish. The first one will be at Geri Nedlund's house, date to be determined.. Call or e mail Pat Barry if interested, even if you can't make the first one or attend on a regular basis. 715-234-1010 or [leadpljb@gmail.com](mailto:leadpljb@gmail.com)

## A NEW FLOOR?

The BHUU Board has prioritized the replacement of the carpet in our main upstairs room, hopefully by beautifully refinishing the underlying hardwood floor. The cost of this project is approximately \$3,750, and the Building & Grounds Committee will be setting up a special building fund for the floor. Please consider contributing to this project that will enhance the experience of our meetings and services. Give your contribution or make your pledge to Treasurer Brian Rude.

## DANCE CLUB KICKS UP ITS HEELS

The second Friday of each month from 7 to 8 pm is the time for dancing at BHUU. Brian Rude provides the music, and Judy Barisonzi leads us in easy community dance. No experience needed; dancers of all ages are welcome. Next dance club session is December 9. Contact Brian or Judy for details.

## SILENT AUCTION IS COMING

Chase away your winter blues at the BHUU silent auction, coming in January. Please contribute services or homemade objects (purchased items also accepted) for this fun event to raise money for our general fund. Bring donated items to BHUU at any time, or send a list of your donated services to Charlie Mayo, 715-419-0941, [cwmtwo@gmail.com](mailto:cwmtwo@gmail.com) by January 2 (earlier if possible). Please include your name, phone/email, brief description, and suggested minimum price. The silent auction will be set up and ready for bids between January 8 and 22, and the winners will be announced at the January 22 potluck. Share your creativity and special skills with your UU friends, have fun, and raise money all at the same time!

## POETRY CORNER

Here's a poem for your reflection. We'll discuss it at a forum later this winter. It's by May Swenson.

### *Question*

Body my house  
my horse my hound  
what will I do  
when you are fallen

Where will I sleep  
How will I ride  
What will I hunt

Where can I go  
without my mount  
all eager and quick  
How will I know  
in thicket ahead  
is danger or treasure  
when Body my good  
bright dog is dead

How will it be  
to lie in the sky  
without roof or door  
and wind for an eye

With cloud for shift  
how will I hide?

## CONCEALED CARRY POLICY

Blue Hills UU is a place of peace. No concealed weapons are allowed.

## CANCELLATION POLICY

If winter weather conditions seem threatening, Sunday activities at BHUU will be cancelled and a group e mail will be sent out by 7:15 am on Sunday. Or, if you have questions about whether we are open, call Bonnie Namtvedt, 715-234-3715; April Nielsen, 715-790-2243; or Sondra Lewis, 715-354-3008 after 7 a.m. Please drive safely.



P.O. Box 614  
Rice Lake WI 54868  
715-234-6637  
www.bluehillsuu.org

Meeting at 230 West Messenger St.  
Rice Lake, Wisconsin

<b>WORSHIP GATHERING EVERY SUNDAY</b>	<b>10:30AM</b>
<b>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SEPTEMBER-MAY</b>	<b>10:30AM</b>
<b>ADULT FORUM AND DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER-MAY</b>	<b>9:15AM</b>

#### DECEMBER SCHEDULE

##### December 4

Forum: Joseph Campbell, "Power of Myth," video & discussion  
Service: April Nielsen, "Chalica: A Uniquely UU Holiday"

##### December 11

Forum: April Nielsen & Sondra Lewis, "Envisioning 2012"  
Service: Dorothy Atchley, "Scattering Seeds"

##### December 18

Forum: Joseph Campbell, "Power of Myth," video & discussion  
Service: Pat Shifferd, "Solstice Stories"

##### December 24

Christmas Eve service at 5 p.m: music, candles, and joy! Bring cookies to share; hot cider provided.