



**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Missoula –
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News From the Chair:

Hi all. I wrote this for the November newsletter, which never got published. However, since UUs believe in reduce, reuse, recycle, I decided it would be appropriate to use it for December. So – I realize it may be a little dated, but I still think the message is relevant.

My son and I recently drove to Moscow, Idaho, to visit my mother. It was a nice chance to connect with my son, although like many teenagers, if he is not driving, he is sleeping, and since I drove over, he slept. He did drive quite a bit of the way back, and I think he stayed awake for that!

In Moscow, we had the chance to spend some time with Mom and with my brother. It was nice to renew some family connections. As usual when I stay with Mom, I went to church with her on Sunday. It was nice also to connect with UUs from outside of Missoula. We went to the second service, so coffee hour for us was before the service. I spent some time talking with an old friend of Mom's. I have shared with some of you that I had heard how political UUFM was before I ever set foot in the door, and Mom's friend is why. Her daughter, who was raised Unitarian in Moscow, and her son-in-law, who I understand is quite conservative, moved to Missoula few years ago. They did attend a couple of services, but some parts of the discussion made the husband so angry that they never came back.

The UUCP – Unitarian Universalist Church of the Palouse – does have a minister, who I believe is full-time. However, she only does about half of the services, and on this morning she was the celebrant and the sermon was given by a lay member of the church. The title of the sermon was *Beyond the Ballot Box*. There were many excellent points to the sermon, but the one that really struck me was that UUs are **called upon** to help restore civility in this country – no matter the outcome of the election. I'm sure the man giving the talk cares deeply about who does win, but the point he wanted to make was that we need to listen respectfully, especially to those we disagree with.

That afternoon, Eric, Mom and I went to see the movie *Religulous*. For anybody who doesn't know, the name is just a combination of the words religious and ridiculous. It is a quasi-documentary by Bill Maher. I had seen him talking about the movie, saying that

his point was to show how it is ridiculous to be certain about what happens after death. I am glad I saw the movie, and I found much of it to be very interesting, but as Mom said when we were leaving, that's NOT listening. Maher obviously intended from the beginning to find the most easily-mocked religious theories and practices, and make them look as ridiculous as possible. (By the way, I wrote most of this letter before the Saturday *Missoulian*, with its article about the movie, came out. For another view of the movie, check out the religious page.)

I did find several scenes he did with his sister and mother to be touching, and thought-provoking. Early in the movie, there was such a scene. Maher was talking about their childhood, and how he and his sister would go to the Catholic Church with their father, and never talk about the fact that their mother didn't go with them. He said he must have known it was because she is Jewish, but didn't remember them ever discussing it. His mother's response was "Every family is dysfunctional." That stuck with me, because I have said those same words myself, and I think it applies equally to organizations. I think a better way to put it would be that every family, and every organization, has some dysfunction, but most learn to manage around that dysfunction. Of course, some do a better job than others, and some have larger areas of dysfunction. Perfection does not exist. We can use that as an excuse not to try, or we can accept our human weaknesses, strive to do better, and develop compassion for the imperfections of ourselves AND others.

I had penciled out the points I wanted to make in this letter, and then I picked up the mail at the fellowship one morning this week. There was a truly repugnant mailing from an organization calling itself *The Judeo-Christian View*. On the front of the mailing was the banner "Same-Sex Unions and Child Sacrifice: Obama, McCain, Jihad & The Judeo-Christian View." I assume that every church in town probably received the same mailing. This is the type of situation where I believe we must act as UUs, and hopefully in concert with other liberal religious communities, to stand and say this is wrong. However, we must do so from a sense of compassion. I have contacted the Western Montana Spiritual Development Council about this issue, and believe a joint response will be planned. Please share any ideas you might have on what that response should be.

Finally, why don't we follow the lead of our younger members, who have been busy helping others? Let's make the first Sunday of each month be a "special collection" day, and donate whatever goes into the basket that is not specifically labeled as part of somebody's pledge, to a local non-profit. We all know in these tough economic times, more and more people will be turning to them for help.

***Take care-
Mary***

Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the January 2008 newsletter will be December 28, but if you want to get things in early, great. You can email your input to carolnhero@msn.com or send it snail mail to Carol Marsh, 420 E. Front St., Apt. 2, Missoula, MT 59802 or hand it to me at the Fellowship. Thanks!

Upcoming Sunday Services

12/07/08 – A discussion of the UUA Draft Statement of Conscience on “Peacemaking” which is provided at the end of this newsletter. It can also be seen at the Web site <http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/peacemaking/121606.shtml>.

12/14/08 – Ty Clement on “Being Ourselves: Awakening to Our Fundamental Identity”

12/21/08 – Music & Readings of the Season

12/28/08 – Meditation

01/04/09 – Tammy Ravas on “Letting Go”

Housekeeping

It has been suggested that a way to get the general housekeeping done each month is to set times to gather and do some cleaning and light maintenance. We will still have our Spring and Fall clean up days, but for all the little tasks that need to be done more regularly, let's try setting the 2nd Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and the fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon as cleaning days. No, nobody is expected to make it to every cleaning day, but if everybody could try to come once every other month or so, a huge amount of work would get accomplished. And yes, those times were just arbitrarily set, and are certainly open for change. In fact, why don't we just skip the December Saturday, since that is often such a busy week anyway.

UUFM Membership Class

Have you been thinking of becoming a member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Missoula (UUFM)? Or would you just like to learn more about Unitarian Universalism?

For anybody interested in becoming a member, the requirements are very simple. You just need to sign our membership book, signifying that you believe in the seven principles of the UUA, and are willing to strive to live according to the UUFM covenant. To maintain voting privileges, you must make a pledge during the annual pledge drive. That is also the way to stay on the mailing list for the UU World magazine.

You are strongly encouraged to find out a little bit about UUism before committing to membership. To help you, we will be offering two “Getting to know UUs” sessions. The first will be a summary introduction to the roots of Unitarianism and Universalism. The second will focus more specifically on UUFM. We will look at what is expected of members, and ask what expectations potential members bring. One of the mainstays of the UU religion is that it is forever evolving. We cannot be all things to all people, but we need to be responsive to filling the needs of those seekers who find their way through our doors. Attendance at these sessions is **not** mandatory to becoming a member. Also, current members are very welcome to come and perhaps learn, and perhaps teach. Everyone is welcome to come to one or both sessions. We have not fixed a date or time for the sessions, so if you have a preference (weekend day or evening or weekday evening), please share that with a member of the Participation Team: Joyce Clarke, Margery Fels-Palmer, or Mary Nordhagen.

UU History Corner

In December 1912, the Advisory Council to the Department of Religious Education of the American Unitarian Association voted to proceed in conjunction with the representatives of the Massachusetts Universalist Sunday School Association in the development of Sunday school material to be used by both denominations.

Forty nine years later the two separate church associations consolidated to form the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Candidates for New UUA President

A new UUA president will be elected at the the 2009 General Assembly (GA) in Salt Lake City. The two candidates are Rev. Peter Morales and Rev. Laurel Hallman who bring different conceptions for the future of our religious movement. A neutral online forum has been created where their platforms can be discussed publicly in a civil manner at <http://uuapresidentialdebate2009.wordpress.com>. A webcast of a forum with the candidates was held in Worcester, Massachusetts on October 18th. Please see <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/president/121758.shtml> for that and for additional information on the details of the election. The video offers a most illuminating picture of the complementary strengths yet strikingly contrastive approaches of Rev. Morales and Rev. Dr. Hallman. Since several of us are planning to attend this relatively close GA, it will be fun to have a say in this election.

To you who gather in this hall
We greeting give, and welcome you
To glad mid-winter Festival
As ancient custom bids us do.

With Yule log, candle, mistletoe,
With holly, gift and singing
And stories of the long ago
Let hearts with joy be ringing

Anonymous

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Peacemaking: A Draft Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience,

November 2008

War is abhorrent. Violence is reprehensible. Human history has been marked by both. Religion has been a catalyst for war and for peace, sanctioning behaviors individual and international. What is our religious response as Unitarian Universalists to the historic habits of war and the timeless challenges of peace? Should we reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war and affirm a commitment to seek just peace through non-violent means? Should we continue with the more conventional practice of seeking peace through application of "just war" criteria? Are these our only options as we seek to promote "a world community of peace, liberty, and justice for all?" This Statement of Conscience results from widespread deliberation and presents an approach arising out of our history, theology, and understanding of human nature for building a peaceful, just, and sustainable global future.

Theology and History

Our theology affirms the holy as that which demonstrates love, compassion, and inclusiveness. Peace is an extension of this affirmation; war is abhorrent to it; violence is in conflict with it. Our principles and purposes are consonant with this understanding and have emerged from a long history of prophetic discernment, but they have not led to agreement on issues of war and peace. It is community in covenant that sustains us across these differences.

Covenant lies at the core of our religious belief and aspiration and is grounded in a commitment to persuasion over coercion. This commitment to persuasion is evident in our promotion of "a world community of peace, liberty, and justice for all," which is closely aligned with the covenantal charter of the United Nations.

Persuasion doesn't always work, as 20th century Unitarian Universalist theologian James Luther Adams witnessed while residing in Germany during the early years of the Third Reich. The Nazis chose violence as the tool of state, with the aim of world domination. Adams advocated U.S. military action to meet this demonic threat, a position counter to the pacifist stances of 19th century Universalist Adin Ballou and 20th century Unitarian John Haynes Holmes. Holmes, affirmed by his congregation in New York City, maintained his pacifist stance over against the American Unitarian Association's threat to withdraw support from congregations not committed to the war effort of World War I. A half century later, the Unitarian Universalist Association witnessed widespread congregational discord over the Vietnam War, with so many Unitarian Universalists

being against the war. Amid the harsh realities of war and peace, there are no easy answers.

Pacifism and Just War

Pacifism and just war are multi-dimensional strategies and stances in opposition to war. Pacifism can be absolute, conditional, or selective. Just war is a centuries-old framework for taking a moral stance on a particular war. Common just war criteria include: just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportionality, and probability of success. The last resort criterion, for example, is a judgment regarding the exhaustion of all non-violent means for preventing war. Proportionality is a consideration of the ratio of good presumably achieved over the suffering unleashed. "Just war" itself is a misnomer. No war is just. The operant term is "justifiable." Just war criteria are invoked to determine whether a particular war is justifiable in re-establishing peace and justice. Conscientious objectors span pacifist and just war positions. Pacifism and just war are both stances of conscience and reason. Both acknowledge our human inclinations toward competition and cooperation.

Human Biology

Human violence reflects our evolutionary history. From distant times, the stronger and more violent have often prevailed. Anger and violence leap full flower in each of us from an early age. Physically and mentally we have an evolved capacity for violence that can result in physical, emotional, economic, or environmental injury. Violence occurs across all levels of human interaction. By adulthood most of us have learned to restrain our use of physical violence. Yet violence among nations occurs with regularity and commonly achieves desired ends unless circumscribed by law or mores. Humans also have an evolved capacity for cooperative behavior, resulting in our development of morals, laws and institutions to minimize the use of violence. Cooperative behavior is the foundation of nonviolence and peace. It is the basis of trust. Intentional nonviolence paired with cooperative behavior encourages compassionate communication and peaceful resolution of conflict.

Just Peacemaking

Building a culture of peace at all levels of human interaction requires a transformation of consciousness, individual lifestyles, and public policies. At the heart of this transformation is the will to understand the truths voiced on all sides from a stance of empathy and love.

We are called to stand on the side of love. We are also called to stand on the side of justice and against the violence of oppression in all its manifestations. When a conflict or the threat of a conflict emerges in our world, we as Unitarian Universalists draw on our history as champions of both nonviolence and justice, informed by a diversity of views. As a faith holding covenant over creed, we eschew claims of absolute truth, so we need an approach to conflict—including the horrific conflict that is war—which transcends the dichotomy of pacifism vs. just war. We need an approach that honors affirmations

common to both pacifist and just war traditions, affirmations of "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and of "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." Just Peacemaking is this approach. Just Peacemaking calls us to understand peace as normative and violence as aberrant, while evaluating the prospect of violent conflict by balancing the goal of peace preservation with the desire for war prevention. The former just war criteria become Just Peacemaking guidelines. With each guideline, we must ask not what justifies war, but what justifies the humanitarian preservation or restoration of peace. If force is ever to be used, it must be in the service of ending violence of much greater magnitude. We support our military personnel who have made the decision to engage in such service.

Our Unitarian Universalist values commit us to work toward a culture of peace that makes war and all other forms of violence avoidable and universally recognized as reprehensible and ineffective for honoring human rights and human dignity. Just Peacemaking melds love and justice in moving us toward a culture of peace at all levels of human interaction.

Calls to Action

Just Peacemaking calls for action at all levels of human interaction. To be effective, our actions must be incorporated into existing structures and institutions and new systems must be created.

International Peacemaking

We covenant as an Association, as congregations, and as individuals to advocate vigorously for policies that move the United States toward collaborative leadership in building a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. These include:

- Supporting the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office in advancing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the Earth Charter, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in ending the use of torture and addressing structural violence in all its forms;
- Supporting interfaith groups such as the Center on Conscience and War in advocating for the right of conscientious objection, including education and resources on the availability of this option; and
- Supporting the establishment of a national network or working group among Unitarian Universalists to identify and disseminate information on peacemaking programs and resources.

Societal Peacemaking

We covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of structural violence. We do this through:

- Supporting the socially responsible investment of our Association and congregational assets;
- Supporting Association and congregational initiatives aimed at eradicating racism, classism, and other forms of cultural and economic oppression; and
- Supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in adopting life styles and polices that promote harmony with our natural environment.

Congregational Peacemaking

We covenant to take up peacemaking as part of our mission through worship, religious education, and social action by:

- Developing Peace Teams to provide training in compassionate communication and conflict resolution and engage the congregation in multi-level action toward a culture of peace;
- Working through congregational governing bodies to develop and honor behavioral covenants in all aspects of congregational life;
- Working through our lifespan religious education structures to provide workshops on conflict resolution and compassionate communication, to encourage understanding and participation in social justice ventures, and to utilize Unitarian Universalist resources such as "Peacemaking in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for All Ages;" and
- Becoming a peacemaking resource within our communities in cooperation with other faith traditions.

Interpersonal Peacemaking

As individuals we covenant to:

- Learn and practice the skills of compassionate communication;
- Honor the behavioral covenants of our congregations; and
- Adopt lifestyle changes that reflect reverence for the interdependent web of all existence.

Inner Peacemaking

We covenant to develop spiritual practices that impart internal peace.

In reverence for all life, we covenant to practice peace by minimizing violence at all levels of human interaction.