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Sunday Program and Service Leader Schedule

7 February

9:00—Adult R. E.—Topic for group discussion is announced each week.

10:40—**Rev. Edward Frost**, “Huckleberry Finn and the Awful Sacredness”

Service Leader—**Norm Horofker** Opener—**Chris Nix**

Closer—**Paul Lee** Greeters—**Marge Hall & Nikki Rohrs**

14 February

9:00—Adult R. E.—Topic for group discussion is announced each week.

10:40—**Debbie Swenser**, “Three Years of Proselytizing in Russia”

Service Leader—**Paul Lee** Opener—**Paul Lee**

Closer—**Barry White** Greeters—**Barry White & Bill Edwards**

21 February

9:00—Adult R. E.—Topic for group discussion is announced each week.

10:40—**Mona Crawford**, “So You Think You Know Jah?”

Service Leader—**John Nix** Opener—**Barry White**

Closer—**Rick Spradlin** Greeters—**Nancy Awtrey & Ann Newland**

28 February

9:00—Adult R. E.—Topic for group discussion is announced each week.

10:40—**Juanita Thomas**, Vista Care Hospice, “The Last Days”

Service Leader—**Katy Clyde** Opener—**Rick Spradlin**

Closer—**Pat Hart** Greeter—**Mona Crawford & Tanya Davis**

Happy Birthday!

19 February Chris Rohrs

22 February Chris Nix



The Fellowship wishes that you all have a joyous and fun filled birthday celebration!

Movie Night

Comfy chairs, large screen, friends and family, snacks, drinks and great movies are just a few of the things you will find when you come to Friday at the Movies. The movie selected for February is Food Inc. This movie won several Movie Critics Awards. It was directed by Robert Kenner. It is a look inside America's Corporate controlled food industry. It shows where our food comes from, how it is raised, picked, transported and sold. This movie is a must see for those concerned about genetically modified food, humane treatment of animals, and the local foods movement. One reviewer of the film said, “that after you see this film you'll probably not shop for food in the same way”. The movie will be shown on 26 Feb., 2010 at 7 pm. Bring your favorite snack and beverage with enough to share.

Spring Yard Sale

A yard sale is planned for Spring, just in time for spring cleaning. The exact date will be announced later. Members are asked to start locating those white elephants that would be just the thing some smart buyer would want.

Sermon by Milton Jones

Bill Edwards, who teaches speech at CSU, will tell you to never start with an apology. So being the contrarian I am (I think being a contrarian is what led me to UU's), I want to apologize for talking this morning on much the same subject as Ron Ussery did last week.

The way this came to pass is a few weeks ago, John Nix asked me to take the programs for one month this year. I immediately declined, for I have had all the experience I need in trying to line up speakers.

I had done it for a year when I was a young lawyer back in the early '60's for the Columbus Junior Chamber of Commerce and later for the Kiwanis Club, with disastrous results, including even a drunken magician.

However, I felt badly about turning John down and called back and told him that while I would not be responsible for scouting up speakers for a month, I would agree, with one condition, to present 2 or 3 programs during the year.

The condition was that I had found several sources of good sermons and that I wanted to use them as the basis for my remarks. The Atlanta UU's have a great website with hundreds of their sermons. A few weeks ago, Rev. Gail Seavey of First Nashville UU Church was here, and their website contains many sermons. Shortly thereafter, Ed Wilson brought a message entitled "Kephart Woods" in which he referred to Rev. David E. Bumbaugh, Jr. and something he had written.

I went home and Googled Dr. Bumbaugh and found that he is former minister and teaches at the UU-affiliated Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. He has a website with many of his old sermons, which are truly fabulous.

I told John I would like to use some of those sermons that appealed to me and modify them with my thoughts if I could get permission from their authors. John agreed, so I started making calls. All of this was taking time, so the first draft of this month's bulletin listed my subject as "tba"—to be announced.

The sermon I wanted to do first was one given by Dr. Edward Frost of the Atlanta Congregation over 20 years ago entitled "What to Tell Auntie" which deals with what to tell friends and family about UU. However, by the time I received permission from Dr. Frost, Ron had decided to speak on "explaining UU."

I decided to go ahead anyway for this subject appealed to me so strongly. I have fairly recently come to UU—only a little over a year ago—and this problem is fresh upon my mind.

My journey may be quite a bit different from some of yours, but perhaps not. I grew up in the Christian tradition, fell away from it in college and early adulthood, and came back to the church as our children got a little older, "to give them exposure."

This came about when we bought a farm about halfway between Columbus and Atlanta in the early '70's. Shortly thereafter I found myself drawn to a small white, wooden church beside Georgia highway 85 about 2 miles north of Woodbury. Some of you may remember it from your drives to and from Atlanta before I-185 was constructed.

It looks like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting and is a Congregationalist church, part of the UCC or United Church of Christ. For those of you who may not know, the pilgrims were Congregationalists and the biggest church in nearly every New England town will generally be the Congregationalists. Starting in the 1950's, they joined with several other smaller denominations to form the United Church of Christ, a very liberal denomination. This liberality appealed to me, though I admit that our small, rural Georgia congregation does not particularly follow orders from headquarters very well.

I taught adult Sunday school for over 20 years, and learned more about the Bible than I had ever known before. The more I learned, the more trouble I had with a lot of it, particularly any literal interpretation, and specifically the doctrine of the trinity. However, my class of generally older country folk were very loving and did not burn me at the stake as Ron mentioned last week. (Or, perhaps they weren't listening.)

Then, one day in 2002, I was listening to Public Radio and heard a review of a new book, *Out of the Flames* by Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone. It is the story of Michael Servetus, one of the most remarkable people I have ever met between the pages of a book. He was an outstanding scientist, having discovered pulmonary circulation in the human body, and a freethinking theologian. Among many other books, he wrote the *Restoration of Christianity*, a work questioning the trinity and even calling it heretical. He was burned at the stake in Geneva by John Calvin in 1553. When I finished that book, I knew I could no longer even pay lip service to the trinity.

But the precipitating factor that made me finally call Ed Wilson about the UU's in late 2008 was what I considered the hijacking of the Christian religion by the Christian Right. Hopefully, without being too political, I feel the Jerry Falwells, Pat Robertsons, et al, and their right wing politics were so repugnant to the teachings of Jesus as to make me question whether I could in good faith be associated with them.

I can still attend a Christian church service and do from time to time with family, and I can go to Christmas music programs, but I no longer recite the Apostles Creed. (I had pretty well quit doing that some time ago). Nor do I believe in nearly any of the things that would be mandatory to be considered a Christian.

Someone said in one of our discussion periods within the last 6 weeks or so that it bothered them to go to a Christian church because it seemed as if they were "testifying" to those beliefs by their presence. That statement unsettled me, for I, too, have those same reservations.

However, I still love my friends and family in the Christian Church, and will go with them on occasion. I do believe in the historical Jesus of Nazareth and particularly the lessons he taught. I strongly believe in social justice, which I think in the final analysis was Jesus' main point.

However, by maintaining my Christian connections I do get maybe a little more questioning, rarely confrontational but probing never the less, such as: "What do you believe?" "What about the afterlife?" "Do you believe in heaven and/or hell?" "Do you still pray?"

Because I face these questions on a regular basis I decided to go ahead and talk about it only one week after Ron, but today from MY perspective—aided by frequent and extensive quotes from the sermon entitled "What To Tell Auntie" by Dr. Edward Frost, an emeritus minister of the Atlanta UU Congregation.

Dr. Frost began "What to Tell Auntie" by stating that organized religion was never a part of his family's life, and was thus never an issue. However, one of his grandmothers was the exception. He says:

"Was she ever religious! A spiritualist as a young woman, she was converted by the Jehovah's witnesses and was still knocking on doors, handing out literature and telling people about the coming end of the world a year before she died at the age of ninety-six She simply wanted you to have eternal life. She wanted you to inherit the new heaven and beautiful new earth she believed with all her heart was in store for those who believed. Ah, there's the rub. That new heaven and beautiful new earth—that salvation—was, for her and in her faith, only for those who believed. My grandmother's decades-long sadness, shadowing the bright glory she believed awaited her, was that none of her family would be with her"

Dr. Frost continues:

"One of my colleagues speaks of his sister-in-law who told the entire family how deeply sorry she was and how much she would miss everyone, because she was going to be sitting in heaven watching the rest of the family roast in hell. How is it that religion tears people from each other's love? It always has. Bible believers can point to those passages in the Christian scriptures in which Jesus, speaking of the last days, says that without warning, one working in the fields will be taken and the other left. Where two women are grinding corn, one will be taken and the other left. The faithful will be separated like sheep from goats. The early church stressed the primacy of the faith over family when it told the story in the Christian scriptures of Jesus' rejection of his own mother"

Later on, Dr. Frost says:

"When we wonder how family members can separate themselves over matters of belief, we must keep in mind the overriding power of faith to convince the believer that nothing is more important than the beliefs — in God, Allah, the guru, the community of fellow-believers . . ."

"In the light of all this, it is not surprising that our friends and families act as if we'd sprouted horns when they find out that we have joined something called a Unitarian Universalist congregation. They may be angry. They may be hurt—hurt that you could abandon the faith you were born into, the faith you followed together as a family, perhaps the faith in whose house of worship you were married. And friends and family may be sincerely and deeply afraid for you. If they believe that you are involved in some rank heresy — as perhaps their pastor or priest has told them — they may be afraid for your very soul."

"What, then, shall we say to Auntie — or to our parents or our friends — about this faith we have embraced or are coming to embrace? What shall we say when they tearfully or angrily tell us we must return to the faith of our fathers or that we must be saved for the sake of our children? First, I would urge you not to respond to your family and friends on their own terms—that is, do not argue the merits of their religion and faith. You will get nowhere on that track. You are not going to be converted back to your family religion by argument, reasonable or otherwise, and your family is not going to be argued out of their faith. . . ."

"Second, I recommend that you respond to religious judgments or entreaties positively. 'Bless those that persecute you,' as, ironically, Jesus said. Say to others, 'I'm really happy for you that you have beliefs and a faith that makes your life meaningful and that gives you hope for the future.' Then you can go on to speak positively, not defensively, about your own religion and your own beliefs."

That is well and good, but what do we say about our own religion and our own beliefs? After all, we have no creed or dogma or litany to expound. However, we are not without guidance. The purposes and principles of Unitarian Universalism are printed on the back of our welcoming pamphlet. Doctor Frost says they help articulate our faith. He says: ". . . Affirming and promoting the ' . . . Inherent worth and dignity of every person . . . ' is faith—it assumes that humankind is inherently good apart from race, color, faith, social position. Our faith begins with the bedrock positive commitment to the un-provable faith proposition that we are inherently blessed—not damned, blessed— yes, saved.

"Oh, we don't believe we are saved by Jesus' blood, Auntie, but our religious principles teach us that we have freedom— freedom of will, freedom to choose our own ends, the freedom to live by values, principles and ideas that we believe bring us and others alive. Tell your family and friends that your religion encourages you to trust your personal experience, your conscience and your reason beyond any authorities in religion.

He continues: "Again, avoid religious argument and debate, especially with your own family. Whenever you enter a discussion about religion, do not enter it to win. No one ever wins an argument about religion. Our understanding of the world and of who we are is too tightly bound to our faith assumptions to give them up and declare another to be 'right.' "

“True believers, fervent believers—perhaps like some of your family and friends—experience their religion as being primary in their lives. They talk about their religion. Maybe they talk about it a lot—more than you like to hear. But, consider this: If you have nothing to say about your religion, if you are quiet about the values, principles and convictions that constitute your faith, others can conclude that you don’t have a religion to speak of. Concluding that, they feel perfectly free to try to give you something you apparently don’t have . . .”

“Remember this, though: Others can talk so much about their beliefs because—whether we agree with them or not— they know what their beliefs are. They can proclaim their faith because they know what their faith is. You will not be convincing if you are trying to make something up as you go along. Calling yourself a Unitarian Universalist is not having a faith. Even coming here to services regularly is not having a faith. You have to do the work of learning about your religion and of setting yourself on a path of religious discovery.”

Breaking away from Dr. Frost for a moment, I mentioned earlier our welcoming pamphlet and the purposes and principles of Unitarian Universalism. There are several other very good little brochures on the rack back by the front door, which you might find helpful in articulating your faith. I know I need to do this, for as I heard someone say last weekend, “We have become experts at what we don’t believe.”

Dr. Frost closed with a portion of a letter from a woman in his congregation to her sister regarding the sister’s antagonism toward her Unitarian Universalist religion:

“I have always respected your beliefs and the life you have chosen. Your faith serves you and you serve it admirably; I would never question its rightness for you. I am very proud of the career you have made for yourself in teaching –you and your daughters. All that you are shines in your children and your children are awesome. They are beautiful, bright, kind and gentle, happy with themselves and each other.

“My family and I are equally committed to our faith; It is right for us and it gives our lives direction and meaning. We are all committed to growing in our faith, to learning more, and living more fully in it. My congregation is my other home and the people in it my larger family. It has been my congregation and my faith for almost thirty years. I cannot imagine my life without it. This is also not open to challenge or questioning. In my understanding one person cannot possibly presume to know another’s personal relationship with God, much less judge that relationship.

“So perhaps now we know each other just a little bit better and so can love and respect each other a little bit more.”

Dr. Frost concludes: “The letter begins by affirming the faith of the other and showing respect for recognizing its value for the other. It then proceeds to affirm her own faith, showing clearly that it, too, while different, is equally valuable and central in her life and in the life of her family. The letter demonstrates a life filled with faith where others might have previously assumed an emptiness. And it closes with the understanding and the sincere hope that in sharing the differences of their faiths in respect and understanding, rather than in judgment or self-righteousness, they can come to know each other in important ways that may be the foundation for renewed love and friendship.”

I have to admit that what Dr. Frost says is difficult for me. I practiced law for over 40 years. I have been in politics on a fairly active basis for a significant portion of my life. I am used to the give and take of argument and attempting to explain and persuade. It is part of my nature. I even enjoy it to some extent.

When someone asks me something, I want to not only answer but convert them to my point of view. If they ask me how I can be so stupid as to believe something, I want to ask them if they have seen any talking snakes lately.

But, as Dr. Frost says, “No one ever wins an argument about religion.” All we do is pile more rocks on the walls which separate us. By taking my preferred way of arguing, I am practicing intolerance rather than tolerance. As Dr. Frost says, two wrongs do not make a right.

I am the one who needed to hear this, so that is why I chose to stick with the subject. Now that I have talked the talk, I need to see if I can walk the walk.

Update on your UU Building Committee January 2010 by Norm Horofker

In 2009 we launched a long range planning process for the Fellowship that was to involve quarterly “Working Socials”. The intention was to invite every member and friend of the Fellowship to attend a dinner meeting at the Fellowship, once every 3 months. After a good meal and conversation we would then have a workshop to make plans for the future of the Fellowship.

We had three such meetings and the results were very positive. We established a system for ensuring that visitors to our Fellowship were greeted and felt welcome. We set up a procedure for follow up for visitors and friends who might want to become members and we integrated this with our process for welcoming new members. Finally we established a Building Committee to investigate alternatives for the day we outgrow our present facility. The Building Committee is charged with investigating our alternatives and reporting the implications of each back to your Board. The decision will then be up to the Board as to how to proceed.

Your building committee is chaired by Norm Horofker and includes Tanya Davis, Rick Spradlin, Pat Hart, John Nix and Ed Wilson. To date the committee has met with banking officials to investigate financing and with city zoning officials to understand requirements. We have also looked at property and existing church buildings for sale in Columbus and we have investigated the possibility of expanding on our present site. We have one more step in mind before we call our next “Working Social Meeting.”

We are preparing for a meeting with a building contractor who specializes in Church construction, so that we can understand all the issues related to construction of a church building.

After that meeting, we will be ready to update the membership at a "Working Social." At that meeting we will do two things: First, we will provide a summary of the findings of the building committee as to our options for a new facility. Second, we will lay out the consequences for the Fellowship if we decide to move forward. For example, how many new members will we need to support a new structure and how will we handle the transition from where we are now to where we plan to be.

I am hoping that we will be ready for our next "Long Range Planning Working Dinner Social" by early March. Please watch for more news. Also keep talking to your committee members and Board members to let them know your thoughts and interest in this project. If you would like to be more directly involved please talk to me or any committee members.

President's Notes from Board Meeting on January 18, 2010 by John Nix

1. Treasurer's Report

- a. Our Treasurer Nikki Rohrs reported that for the month of December 2009, we had a surplus in our Operation Funds (ordinary income and expenses) of \$2,815.56.
- b. For calendar year 2009, we had income of \$34,035.26 and expenses of \$27,097.04, leaving us with a surplus of income over expenses of \$6,938.22 in our operating account at the end of the year. Part of this surplus at the end of the year is apparently the result of some members who pledge making advance payments in December for tax purposes.
- c. Other Fellowship assets include: Generous Fellowship Fund: \$1,574.64; Reserve: \$12,846.11; and Building Fund: \$9,748.00.
- d. Our third Sunday collection in the amount of \$635.90 was sent to the UUA fund to be used for the assistance of the people of Haiti, who have suffered devastating losses as a result of the earthquake. Thanks to all for your generous contributions!

2. Maintenance

- (a) Leak in kitchen - Larry Johnson, local repairman, fixed a cracked roof shingle, which was the apparent cause of a leak in the kitchen ceiling. We paid Mr Johnson \$75.00 for repair work.
- (b) Electrical repairs - The Board authorized our administrator Brenda Stevens to hire an electrician to make the following repairs: (1) install two landscape lights on either side of sign in front of building and repair or replace timer; (2) repair light in kitchen (after ceiling was dried out from water damage, light would still not come back on); (3) install a timer on light which shines on stained glass window; and (4) repair motion light on back of building.

3. VP, Programs - The Board approved the nomination of Marge Hall to serve as VP, Programs. We had no candidates for this position when we met in early December to elect officers for the year 2010. According to our bylaws, the Board may later nominate a member to fill a vacant position, but the general membership must vote to approve the nomination. The bylaws also require that notice of any general membership meeting must be given at least two weeks in advance. (Notice of the general membership meeting was given to the members on January 23; accordingly we plan to vote to fill the position of VP, Programs, during our service on February on February 6, 2010; any other nominations from the floor will be considered at that time.)

4. Religious Education - In a recent meeting the Religious Education Committee, chaired by Rick Spradlin, determined our children's RE should follow a curriculum from the UUA, "What We Believe". This class will cover children ages 5 through 15. We have volunteers who are willing to assist in teaching this class, and Rick plans to establish a schedule for the instructors. The Religious Education Committee recommended that we resume the practice of involving our children in the first part of the main service. Details are to be worked out, and we may try different formats over the coming weeks. Anyone interested in helping this committee should contact Rick. The next RE committee meeting will be held after the Sunday service on February 14.

5. Purchase of tools - At the request of the Board, Paul Lee purchased an assortment of basic tools for routine maintenance tasks for our building. He also purchased a rake, 50-foot electric cord, and electric hedge trimmer. At his suggestion, the Board has also authorized Paul to purchase an edger. The Board anticipates our administrator will keep account of the tools, so they will be available when needed. Total cost of the tools is expected to be about \$150.00.

6. New chairs - The Board recognizes that based on recent increased attendance, we need to purchase additional chairs for our meeting area. Julie Bouchard has agreed to investigate this issue along with other members of the Decor Committee. Julie will report back to the Board with her recommendation as to the purchase of additional chairs. If you have any information or suggestions about the purchase of chairs, please contact Julie.

7. UUA Mid-South District Board Meeting on February 27, 2010 - The Mid-South District Board plans to meet at our Fellowship Hall on Saturday, February 27. Paul Lee and Pat Hart have agreed to coordinate refreshments and a luncheon. They will likely ask members to volunteer to provide specific dishes for the luncheon. Please let Paul or Pat know if you are willing to help out. (Norm Horofker, our point of contact with the Mid-South Board, has indicated that local Board members will be invited to attend the luncheon to discuss informally any concerns which affect our Fellowship directly; let the local Board members know about any issues you want to be discussed with the Mid-South Board.)

8. Certification of members to UUA We have certified to UUA that we had 46 members at the end of the year 2009. (This number does not include the three new members who joined later on January 24, 2010.) We certified that we had 42 members for the previous year. This number is important because it determines our "fair share" contribution in the amount of \$72.00 per member which we send to the UUA and Mid-South District each year.

Members may contact our administrator, Brenda Stevens, to obtain a copy of the official minutes for this meeting.