

REPORTS TO THE CONGREGATION FROM THE COMMITTEES

May 17, 2009

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Accomplishments:

- *Finished the walls for the RE rooms.
- *Placed heat tape on gutter to take care of the ice dam problem over the front door.
- *Put in a new “on demand” water heater and we are now considering a small storage tank to preheat water to room temperature.
- *Repaired toilet.

Goals for next year 2009/2010

- *Insulate the attic after air sealing the ceiling. Refinish ceiling and paint.
- *Paint south and west eaves.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY – MINISTER EVALUATION

This is an abbreviated summary of the 2009 minister evaluation. One of the members of the COM had a family emergency to deal with. The complete summary will be made available as soon as possible.

Penny received positive responses in all areas of her ministry. Overall, people seem to be quite pleased with her performance. Her strongest areas appear to be Congregational Ministry (9.1) - integrating new members, creating a welcoming environment, encouraging a sense of community, supporting a broad variety of programs, involving others in planning, nurturing lay leadership and professional appearance - and Worship (9.3) - preparing and presenting Sunday services.

Her lowest rating (8.3) came in the area of Outreach - leading the fellowship in advocating for community and social justice issues. Comments in the survey, however, indicate that this is not considered a weakness. People understand the limitations of being half time and living in another state. Other comments said the fellowship was handling this well and were generally positive.

The survey made it evident that the congregation is somewhat unaware of Penny’s activities in several areas of her ministry. Those areas include Administration, Teaching, Personal Goals and Denominational Activities. Penny is aware of this and will be providing more information to the fellowship in the future. The Committee on Ministry will also work to correct this.

Thanks to all who participated in the minister evaluation, and in other ways provided input.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY – COMMITTEE REPORT

In January, Penny and the COM met in Colorado with other UU member representatives from various Fellowships.

The speaker, Nancy Bowen, addressed (among other topics) the need to improve interaction within a committee as well as between committees. These were her suggestions:

1. Improving communication through restructuring, by using new technology.
2. Meetings would be held via computer connection.
3. New technical programs are now available to set up this form of communication, and are being evaluated.

4. This would eliminate the need for meeting at one location, thereby making it more convenient for members with children, or for members with transportation problems, as they could remain at home.

5. Increasing the amount of sharing between committees on a regular basis, in order to keep each committee up-to-date on each other's progress.

The COM has discussed the need for increasing the money paid to visiting ministers. Other churches in the area pay more, and it is felt that a more appropriate amount should be offered to our guest speakers, to bring us up to the average stipend.

A new method of announcements was attempted, in order to better facilitate the Sunday service. Publishing them in the Sunday Order of Service was tried for several weeks. It was generally well-received, but after discussion with the Board, it was decided that an effort will be made to try to improve this system.

An evaluation of Penny's ministry was obtained through the Annual Survey, and the results are included in the COM report.

Ralph Garrett's term is finished, and a new member of the COM is to be elected on Sunday, May 17th.

Ralph Garrett, Nancy Lockwood, Barbara Naughton

CARING COMMITTEE

The Caring Committee's basic functions are to help Fellowship Members celebrate significant events in their lives and to aid in situations of distress, such as illness, death of a loved one and other crisis experiences. In this past year, in contrast to previous years, we have not had to assist with memorial services and there have not been weddings. In order to facilitate an awareness of the caring committee's activities and a sense of how the Fellowship can become more active in becoming a caring community, the committee presented a Sunday Morning program. The importance of congregants' alertness to needs of their fellow participants and sharing those needs with members of the caring committee was stressed.

This year a fifth member, Donna Hodder, was added to the caring committee. This should increase the sensitivity of the caring committee with more feelers out there to pick up on situations needing attention. Catie Ballard donated a supply of occasion cards that can be picked up at the church to facilitate recognizing important events in the lives of our members.

Your members of the caring committee are Catie Ballard, Ralph Garrett, Donna Hodder, David Perry and Sue Wedel.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Wedel.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee has been reorganized with the objective of matching tasks to individuals.

We have out-sourced the 2 main databases (Members/Friends and also the Visitors' List) to Cameron Wright. Currently, the Chair handles the computer forms, meetings, minutes, greeters list, visitors' cards and packets. This may change as new members of the Committee may want to do this kind of administrative work. The remainder of the committee members follow-up with members and visitors; contribute to strategic planning; donate time and talent for social events and new member meetings.

Membership has also received approval for two Membership policies concerning:

1. Becoming a member
2. Change of Status

This last policy is particularly important when determining the "fair share" of monies we contribute to Boston and the MDD for support based on the actual number of current members. It is also important to know the actual number of members before the Annual Meeting in order to determine a quorum for voting on any issues and candidates.

Membership sponsored the following social events during the 2008-2009 year:

1. A welcome-back potluck in September
2. A music/wine/cheese evening in October (specific members and visitors were personally invited)
3. New members/visitors brunch in March

This year we had 2 joining-Sundays and 5 individuals joined the Fellowship: Matt Williams, Jason Nichols; Rich Walton; Lea Yandow and Marian Bursten

We have renewed our efforts and continue to look after our members, friends and visitors with visits, calls, e-mails and social events. We work with the Caring Committee and Rev. Rather to make sure we provide a caring and welcoming Fellowship for everyone.

MUSIC

Music continues to add to the life and spirit of our Laramie UU Fellowship. Our ever-present pianist, Dave Parry, contributes his time and talents to nearly all of our services for congregational hymns and offertories. Rev. Rather has been introducing some new music from MDD for us to sing. The UU Choir under Jim Erdelyi's direction contributed six choral anthems to this year's services. With 23 members currently on the choir roster, he has great success in rounding up at least 15 to 18 singers for each performance, creating a full, rich vocal sound. We have fortunately added Junko Garrison as our new soprano soloist this year. She performed two solo parts with the choir, and we hope she'll continue! Instrumental music grew this year with Marian Bursten contributing her talents on the oboe, as well as the Reiners giving us their piano, trombone, and clarinet skills. The Christmas Family Service included a number of our youth and their instrumental talents, and the Fellowship was again treated to a Christmas Eve musical event with our Youth and Young-at-Heart Ensemble playing three numbers at that service. Sara Gorin is the organizer of that event.

Music is a rich part of our church life here at the Laramie Fellowship. May it continue to grow. Thanks to all of you for adding your talents!

Jim Erdelyi

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Our 6 member program committee this church year met once a month, planning for two lay led services a month and working with Rev Rather on coordinating all Sunday morning programs. We generally found, within our own ranks or from the larger Laramie community, engaging, interesting speakers who were happy to speak to our religious community. Because of our budget, these folks spoke for free.

In addition to finding good speakers, committee members put together the orders of service for lay led Sundays and often took leadership roles during these services. Thanks to Clarine and Linda for making sure these orders of services were put together and run off, to David Perry who played keyboard almost every Sunday, to Jim Erdelyi who organized and superbly led our increasingly strong and vibrant choir, and to Jeff Lockwood, Catie Ballard, & Bren Lieske, who led programs and/or took on leadership roles for services. Several other Fellowship members not on our committee led or helped lead Sunday services. We are grateful for their contributions. We also appreciate Social Action committee's help in leading the programs this spring on Earth Day and the Caring Committee leading a program as well. We've had several "panel" type presentations which were very well received.

Clarine continues to coordinate the Sunday refreshments. Finding volunteers has been somewhat frustrating, especially this spring. We encourage all members and friends to please take a turn at hosting.

Summer programming has traditionally been an hour earlier but depending on members input, we may keep it at the 10:30 time. There are reasons for keeping it the same as regular church year and for moving it up earlier. We would like to continue to offer programs in the summer but need a few more volunteers to offer and lead programs in the summer.

Finding stimulating, appropriate speakers on lay led Sundays is always a challenge. We welcome members who have ideas for programs to please come to a meeting or speak with a committee member. Our meetings are fun. Join us!
Linda Goldman for the program committee

Jeff Lockwood, Bren Lieske, Clarine Dunder, David Perry,
Catie Ballard, Nancy Lockwood

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

The publicity committee members include: Cheryl Drake, Linda Goldman, Bren Leiske and Catie Ballard. The committee decided not to run an ad in the UW student newspaper this year, but rather to man tables in the Student Union breezeway and answer questions from interested individuals. Bren and Catie participated in this several times and had a great time as ambassadors for the fellowship. Plans for the summer include a UUFL table at the July 4th celebration.

The Laramie Boomerang publishes a church directory periodically which includes a listing for the fellowship.

The website uularامية.org averages around 600 visits to the site each month from countries all over the world.

Submitted by
Cheryl Drake, chairman

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE - CHILDREN

Deb Bass and Diem Pham have done an amazing job with the RE kids this year. Deb was the lead RE teacher while Diem spent much of her time with the younger children. In addition, Deb wrote a newsletter piece every month. Thimithri Fernando and Sarah Norek taught a few of the weeks when Deb wasn't there. Attendance, as usual, was sporadic, but did include Kimberly and Lief and Jasmine Molvar, Lucie Gordon, Ansel and Ezra Visser, Sheldon and Ethan and Cara Williams, Jordan and Max DeYoung, Evan and Kian Naughton, Rhonwyn and Kai Edwards, Ross McIntosh, and others.

RE lessons this year concentrated on learning about Judaism and Christianity, as well as UU principles. The kids also did a community day in which they recycled anything brought in by the congregation. They made a sukkah and tasted traditional foods throughout the year. The kids made a book containing all of the songs that they have been singing. They made mini-chalices with battery-powered "candles", Thanksgiving centerpieces, and Mother's Day bags.

Social Action sponsored a "Reverse Halloween" in which the children handed out mini chocolate bars (Organic, fair trade, of course, bought by the Social Action committee) to the congregation during the last service of October.

Penny worked on program documents (an RE flyer, handbook, and lesson plans...) that really helped to focus the RE program for the next few years. Certain changes were made to include the children, ensuring that they are called in in time to the Shalom Circle. The ritual of singing the children out has been appreciated by the children, as well as including them in the beginning of the service. These changes were made to address the problem of children feeling excluded, especially when the Shalom song is sung without them.

Parents participated in Children's Religious Education meetings on Sept 23 and Dec. 8. Bobbie Poole, the former DRE from Loveland, lead us in a discussion on Sept 23 that gave us some insight into some of the underlying issues that have been challenging our RE Program, gave us some hints and ideas, and

added an outsider's perspective. As Penny has transitioned out of the larger role in children's RE we discussed the plans to keep the great program we have begun going as well as addressing the needs of the older children. This included a district middle school overnight program at our Fellowship in January.

Diem and Thimi both graduate this May. We are also losing Deb as she is moving to Salida, CO. Deb's friend, Sarah Norek, will be submitting a CV to Amy and Leann as she is interested in teaching the RE program next year. We will need to find someone to help her and watch the younger children in the play room.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE - ADULTS

Fall 2008

Buddhism Seminar

Open to all. Mondays, Sept. 8 & 22 from 11:15 - 12:15pm

Women's Buddhism Group

Every Tuesday. 11:30 - 1:00pm.

Yoga*

Most Wednesdays taught by Lisa Muller 5:30pm

University of Wyoming - Fall Seminar Series - Religion and American Politics

Rev. Rather is one of seven Laramie religious leaders who will be presenting at this important series. Come hear how people of different faiths approach issues of faith and government. A brief schedule is included here. You can find more details in the Community Enrichment fall brochure or by contacting Penny directly. The format of each session will be one hour of presentation from a leader discussing these issues from a specific perspective, and one hour of facilitated discussion. Each seminar will run from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Fee: \$49 for the series; \$15 per session. Monday seminars are in the Medicine Bow Room of the UW Beta House, and Tuesday seminars are in Engineering Bld. Rm. 3070.

Monday, September 22 "Separation of Church and State: Blessing or Curse?"

The Rev. Mary Beth Mankin, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Laramie

Monday, September 29 "Religion and Politics: a Mormon Perspective"

Matthew Crowson, LDS community of Laramie

Tuesday, October 7 "Religion and the Political Arena: A Catholic Perspective"

Father Carl Gallinger, St. Paul's Newman Center: University Catholic Community

Monday, October 13 "Faith and Politics: A Buddhist Unitarian Universalist Perspective"

The Rev. Penny Rather, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Laramie

Monday, October 20 "Life in Two Kingdoms: A Lutheran Perspective on the Arena of Religion and Politics"

Pastor Marcus Zill, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church & Campus Center

Tuesday, October 28 "Political Positions of American Muslims and Jews in the 2008 Election"

Dr. Seth Ward, UW Program in Religious Studies

Monday, November 3 "Media, the Faithful, and Voting from Conscience"

The Rev. Sally Palmer, United Church of Christ and UW Program in Religious Studies

Awakening the Dreamer Symposium

Saturday, October 11, 2008 from 1 pm to 5 pm at the Fellowship Building. The intention of this initiative is to bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on the planet. Not a debate about whether or not there's a problem, this 4-hour experiential program is designed for an informed audience ready to explore what this intention means to each of us in the context of community. The symposium works in a way that by the end, all of us stand in a place of optimism, a sense of possibility for the future that's greater than the crisis at hand.

The facilitator for the program was Leila Bruno Buddhist practitioner from Shambhala Mountain Center.

Spring 2009

Women's Buddhism BookGroup*

Monday, March 9th & 30th, 10:00 - 11:00am

Women's Group*

The group is now closed to new members to foster connection and confidentiality.

Covenant Group Beginning

There is still room in the upcoming Covenant Group that will be meeting from 6:00-8:00 Sunday evenings the weekends when Penny preaches. March meetings will be March 8 & 29 if at least five people are signed up. Please sign up by emailing Penny at penny_rather@hotmail.com.

Introduction to Buddhism

Begins Monday, March 30, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Several newcomers have asked Penny to repeat her five-session Introduction to Buddhism, so this class will be offered Mondays when she is in Laramie beginning March 30. The remaining classes will be April 13 & 27, and May to be determined.

Awakening the Dreamer Symposium

UUFL member Madeline Dalrymple will lead the spring 2009 symposium.

Upcoming Reconciling with Your Religious Heritage

Dan Birdsall & Catie Ballard are offering this (5 week) course. Time & date to begin are flexible. We would like to start in late March., We will adjust the time/day of the week to meet the needs of those that are interested.

Please email Dan at dbirdsall@bresnan.net or Catie at cdonbdoc@bresnan.net if you are interested.

Revelation: An Encore Presentation! - The Rev. Penny Rather

Tuesday, March 10 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Back by popular demand! Penny will lead a Unitarian Universalist Bible Study on the New Testament Book of Revelation. Several people who missed this study session last year have asked that it be repeated. Revelation is a complicated and controversial book, and there are many references to it in literature and contemporary religious discussions. No previous Bible Study required.

Non-Violent Communication Group*

We meet at the Fellowship hall, every other Thursday at 5:00pm to eat and then begin our session at 5:30 p.m. Allan Linde is our group facilitator. If you have any questions about NVC please call Bren at 745-8532.

Yoga*

Most Wednesdays taught by Lisa Muller 5:30pm

* Classes with an asterisk are ongoing or are full. Prior to coming, please contact the leader of the class to see if there is available space or a time for joining in.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Social Action Committee 2008-2009 Members: Melissa Murphy, Leann Naughton, Sue Wedel, Ralph Garrett, Madeline Dalrymple, Rosemary Bratton, Joanna Orr, Bob Strayer

This year the Social Action committee has continued several programs initiated over the last several years. Each month we take up a collection for Change for Change which benefits a non-profit organization--usually local. This year's recipients include Interfaith Good Samaritan, the Downtown Clinic, Friends of the Animal Shelter Spay and Neuter Program, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, Community Holidays, and Habitat for Humanity.

Over the holidays, the committee facilitated our participation in the Christmas Family program which provided one family with gifts and necessities for the holiday season.

We have also continued the Equal Exchange Coffee program. We order organic, fair trade coffee for friends and members as well as supply the Fellowship for coffee hour.

Social Action serves as a link between our Fellowship and the national UU social action network through the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. We facilitate the Guest at your Table program which provides financial support for the national and international work of the UUSC. We also participate in the UUSC's Justice Sunday program. This year we combined Justice Sunday with the ideas of Awakening the Dreamer--an international organization which encourages and supports social justice, environmental stewardship, and spiritual fulfillment. We also facilitated two Awakening the Dreamer symposiums which took place at the Fellowship.

Social Action designed and printed t-shirts with our seven principles to sell to Fellowship members and others. We hope that this will help us present ourselves as a coherent group during activities such as the Interfaith and Habitat Walks, as well as promote our principles in the community.

In January our Fellowship hosted a regional middle school conference. The Social Action committee advised and supported the youths on social action opportunities in our community.

Over the summer the Social Action committee plans on designing a proposal for the Fellowship to pursue designation as a Green Sanctuary. We also hope to support and/or lead our re-commitment as a Welcoming Congregation.

