

UU Chronicle June 2011  
Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
1510 M-28 E, Marquette, MI 49855

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From Our Celebrant and Coordinator, Nancy Irish

Dear Friends,

Spring winds of change are blowing through our UU community and my life as they always do at this time of year, when a new Board of Trustees is elected and the budget for the coming year is hammered out at the annual meeting. As I've written elsewhere in this newsletter, this year the change includes a significant reduction in hours for my position as Celebrant and Coordinator. While it's not a change I would have chosen, I'm determined to make the best of the situation. In fact, I'm warming up quite happily to the idea of having a long summer break to regroup and rejuvenate.

Most of you know by now that I'll be spending the month of July in Ghana, as one of two program leaders for a group of American exchange students doing community service in an orphanage near the capital city of Accra. We'll also be delving into a dark moment in world and American history when we visit some of the forts along the coast that were used as holding tanks for the slave trade. I'm excited as a little kid to have been chosen for this all-expenses paid service trip to a part of the world I've never experienced. Given the state of fossil fuel depletion and climate change I know that my international trips are numbered; I am very aware of the extravagant privilege such travel represents, and feel unspeakably grateful.

It's difficult to articulate how much this trip means to me, but suffice it to say that it calls to a vital part of my being that doesn't find sufficient expression in my daily life. If I had to name two archetypes I was born to express, it would be those of bridge builder and cultural creative. On my clear days I consider myself an artist; culture is my medium. Experiencing other cultures helps keep me alive and in tune with my own. I believe that during those moments or days or periods when we feel most alive, that feeling often stems from responding to the call of our inner archetypes. So picture me alive and happy, dancing with children to the beat of Ghanaian drums!

In short, please don't spend any of your precious energy feeling badly for me that my work time has been cut this year. This is an opportunity for me to tune into neglected aspects of myself, and to practice my faith in non-attachment I've learned from Buddhism and Taoism...the "isness" that Meister Eckhart said is God. I'm gratified to learn once again that my faith is strong. I am fine.

My faith is strong not only in what I've learned from great spiritual traditions, but also in our community. The conversations I've had and observed among us during this past month of change and challenge have given me courage and hope. We are fine.

May we all take full advantage of this growing season. I look forward with delight to seeing you all in September, when we can again share the fruits of our respective harvests.

With good cheer and much love,  
Nancy Irish  
Celebrant and Coordinator

## Celebrant/Coordinator's Work Reduction -> A Call to Collective Action

Among other budget cuts necessitated by the shortfall for Fiscal Year 2011-12, which begins on July 1, is a 13% cut in staff hours. For me, this represents going from a .8 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to a .61 FTE, or from 52 weeks (4 days per week) to 40 weeks, with 12 weeks unpaid. During the school year it is nearly impossible to do the job in less than 4 days per week. Furthermore, I'll need blocks of time to pursue other possibilities. Thus, I will be taking the majority of the reduced hours as unpaid leave during the summer months.

To thicken the plot, I was planning to take my accrued vacation days around July for leading a month long exchange student service mission in Ghana, but the Board and I have concluded that in light of the reduction in my time this coming year, I need to take my vacation days before the end of the fiscal year on June 30. This means that I am currently on vacation until the end of June, and then will be on unpaid leave for July and August, plus four more weeks spread out during the school year.

One of my concerns about this change is that Nancy Sullivan, Chair of the Community Development Committee, doesn't end up with the work that is usually covered by me. Especially important is connecting with guests and newcomers to our circle, which is a pleasure to anyone who enjoys meeting new people. If you are willing to help with this important function, especially during the summer months, please contact Nancy Sullivan or myself.

Nancy Irish

## From Our Religious Education Coordinator, Melissa Middleton

We've completed another fun and fulfilling year of Religious Education for kids at the MUUC. Participation was up again from the previous year and we managed to staff three age appropriate classes all year, thanks to the amazing RE volunteers who make it possible. On the final day we played the game Jeopardy with the questions being about the three religions we studied this year and UUism. I was so thrilled that they knew all the answers. Thank you to the May volunteers Sarah Johnson, Kim Frost, Michelle Harrison, Michelle Halley, Sari Embley, and Morgana Penglase. A special thank you to Kim Frost, g.g. Gordon and Sarah Johnson for being the mainstays RE Sunday morning classes for the year.

This past month we planted trees for and with the Green Team, and completed our commitment to the Tourist Park annual clean-up (thanks to Alice McMahon).

We also enjoyed the annual Celebrating Children service.

During the summer we'll be busy making plans for Camp MUUC and the fall curriculum.



Camp MUUC is families to connect in community with nature in a mindful way. It will be hosted at the Irish-Villa property August 19-21. Kids ages 7-14 of members and non-members are welcome.

We would love the commitment of a few volunteers for this year's RE. We will continue our study of world religions. It is important to offer age appropriate classes so that older kids and toddlers have separate classes. The past 3 years we have had one volunteer to take one of the classes for the whole year. That made it possible to offer the strong program that we have. We are looking for that individual for this fall so let me know if you are interested. OWL will be offered as well every other Sunday October through May.

I will be working on MUUC matters on a very limited basis through the summer, planning and coordinating Fall RE and Camp MUUC programs. I look forward to re-uniting with you and your kids at Camp MUUC August 19 and/or this September when we continue our exploration of world religions in RE.

Thank you for another great year!

Melissa Middleton

OWL parent orientation meetings planned:

We are hosting parent orientations for the 2011-2012 Our Whole Lives (OWL) class that starts next fall for 6th-9th graders. Please attend if you have children you are considering enrolling in OWL this year. (Attendance at an orientation meeting is required for all parents of OWL participants.) Please share this invitation with other families.

Two parent orientations to be held:

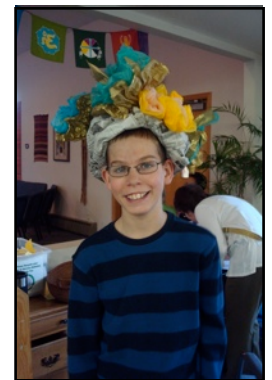
June 14, 6:30 p.m., at the UU meeting house,

Late Summer-early fall date to be announced.

OWL is an amazing program providing young teens with much-needed information and skills for moving into the years in which they become more aware of their own, and others', sexuality. The focus is on values-driven decision-making, abstinence and respect for others and self.

We are looking forward to another great year of OWL!

Contact: Melissa (906) 236-4433 or [mlmelissa@live.com](mailto:mlmelissa@live.com).



### OWL Marketing:

Please help us spread the word. The RE Committee, staff and OWL volunteers appreciate your assistance in marketing the OWL program. It is free to Marquette area 6th to 9th graders. A poster advertising the parent orientations for OWL is attached. Please forward this to parents of children who may be eligible. Please print it and post it or contact Melissa for hard copies (236-4433).

### Summer Childcare:

The Religious Education program for kids has ended for the summer. Informal Sunday morning childcare is provided by volunteers and intended to run itself. A sign up sheet with instructions is posted on the door to the community room. Please sign up there. A copy is attached to this email so you can compare dates with your schedule. The next dates volunteers are needed are June 12 and June 19. The parents thank you.



### Meet our New Member, Don Robison

#### Part I: Religious Journey

Don Robison grew up in a rural area in lower Michigan, between Flint and Port Huron. His first experience with a church was through a well-meaning neighbor woman who stopped by on Sunday mornings to "snatch" him up and take him to a free Methodist church. His parents, except for weddings, funerals and church plays, never attended church. As a child, he was not interested in the sermons, but he went to Sunday school which was "kind of fun" as he met kids his own age. The minister and his wife, who was also a minister, took turns preaching and stopped by Don's house now and then for a visit. There was always a huge scramble when his family saw them coming to pick up any beer bottles and empty any ash trays if need be. Years later, he realized that he did like the music in the Methodist church, with memorable tunes like Old Rugged Cross. They made a lasting impression on him.

When Don was 7 or 8, the family moved, and he did not attend church for a few years. When he entered junior high school, he began going to the local Methodist church. His mother had gone to the nearby church when she was young as did Don's grandparents. In junior high, his on-and-off girl friend also went to the Methodist church as did some other neighbors with kids Don's age. Except for one instance, Don quit going to church when he was 13. Once when he was out with a college girl some years later, she complained all evening about her church (Catholic), so he suggested she go to another one, such as the Episcopal church. She hesitated but the next morning called him early, and they headed for the Episcopal church. That was the last time he attended church until many years later.

When Don was in his early twenties, he interviewed his grandmother. He was a history teacher by then and was interested in family history. He asked his grandmother why, with all the very religious and conservative people on her side of the family who went to church, did she stop going. She responded that her father was quite religious and read the Bible to them everyday. At some point, when she was a child, her father had some kind of dealing with the minister who beat him out of 5 dollars over a calf or sheep, and he quit going to church.

His grandmother was very anti-catholic. When Don's mother was young she wanted to have a sleepover at one of her friend's house. Don's grandmother would not allow it because the next day was Sunday, and they went to mass on Sunday. Needless to say, his mother did not think much of the Catholics after that. Ironically, both Don's sisters married Catholics, one very practicing and the other not.

Don became aware of the UU's during his days in Farmington, MI, when he was teaching government and history. In 1968, a volunteer speaker, a lawyer, came to his class and spoke on civil rights. He was quite liberal. When he was not talking to Don's classes, he was talking to Don about his membership in the local UU church. Although Don had studied Ralph Waldo Emerson and had read about UU historically, he had never encountered anyone who was a Unitarian. This fellow made a very persuasive argument for going to UU but for various reasons (fairly long drive to the congregation, didn't want to give up his free time on Sundays and his long history of not attending a church) Don never made the trip. But the seed was planted, and he knew that if he ever went to church again, it would be to the UU congregation. In the various places where he subsequently lived, he kept his eyes and ears open for a UU congregation but never encountered one.

Don came to the Upper Peninsula in the 1980s. In early October 1990, he saw an ad in the newspaper announcing the UUs were meeting in the chapel of the Episcopal church. When he saw the ad, he decided to go. He joined the congregation that year. The Gorski's, Schwitzgoebel's, Griffith's and Lindsey Griffith made up the congregation along with Kathy Mellenbach, who dropped out a little later. Don brought the number of members up to nine. The McLean's joined a few months later.

This group continued for a few years and met in the chapel of the Episcopal church. They could not meet in the morning in the chapel since it was used by the Episcopalians, so they met on Sunday's at 1 p.m. Not everyone liked the afternoon services. Eventually they found they could meet in the basement of the hotel on Third Street, now Beacon House, and the gatherings moved there. The congregation began to grow a little.

Don was in charge of publicity, his first position in the congregation. He understood that they had to get their name out in the community. He made sure the UUs were included in the Mining Journal's Saturday listing of churches in the area.

At one point, they got a student minister, Bill Sasso, from the Meadville Lombard UU Seminary, who came twice a month. Bill was a student in a Chicago seminary; this experience was similar to an internship for him. Gradually a few more people came to the Sunday services. Don's publicity work was paying off. A couple came with a child, the only child they had in the congregation. There was still a solid core of 12 or 13 members. After years of resisting, Don

became a member of the board; he lived in Deerton, and it was a long commute for him. Jon McLean was president and Henry Quinlan was VP and was being groomed to succeed Jon.

By then there were more students and children coming to the services on Sunday. The Sullivans had joined, and the McLean's were a driving factor. Suddenly Henry announced he had been transferred (he worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service) to Superior, Wisconsin. The whole succession chart was upset as Henry was supposed to take over as president. Marilyn Gorski did not want to be president so suddenly Don found himself in "the shocking position of being president of the congregation."

That year took a toll on him because he fundamentally does not like to go to meetings. He had unending meetings at the high school and was burned out. When his year was up, it was about the same time that the church moved again to Brickyard Road, near Menard's. Don went a few times, but the drive was longer now, and he was teaching all day as well as a course in the evening at Northern. He loved working with the college students and did not want to give that up; nor could he afford to give up his day job, so he just stopped going to UU. He took a five-year leave of absence. Then one day, he heard the "happy news" that the UUs had bought our current meeting house, coming half way to his place in Deerton. He had missed a lot of the people and was glad to be back again.

Next month: Don Robison, Part 2: Teaching Career, Years Overseas and the U.P.

Rachel Crary

## From Social Action Committee

UUA, UUSC's Joint Trip Brings 10 Seminary Students to Haiti

Eco-Village Project to Provide Homes for 40 Haitian Families

In response to Haiti's devastating earthquake, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) continue their joint relief effort to ensure recovery for Haitians. Starting May 24, an eco-village building project began helping 40 Haitian families rebuild their homes and their lives.

This past year, members of the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP), one of UUSC's partners in Haiti, set aside several hectares of land on Haiti's Central Plateau for families fleeing the destruction in Port-au-Prince. The eco-village planned for this spot, says MPP's Executive Director Chavannes Jean-

Baptiste, will provide not just shelter but a means of livelihood from cultivating the land. In addition, the vision includes making the eco-village a center for new technology, where farmers can test and adapt energy and resource-efficient modes of operation.

Ten UU seminarians will work alongside members of MPP to help construct homes. UUA President Rev. Peter Morales and former UUA President and current UUSC President Bill Schulz will provide spiritual and social-justice leadership as they work side by side with the participants. This delegation also will meet with some of UUSC's social-justice partners in Port-au-Prince.

As this social-justice sojourn unfolds, check out on-the-ground updates on the [UUA](#) and [UUSC](#) websites, offering photos and reflections on how service work and the shared experience in Haiti connect to the basic tenets of UU faith and ministry.

Read about the journey on the UUA International Office's blog, [Faith Without Borders](#), and the UUSC's [JustWorks blog](#). Also follow the latest updates on this inspiring trip on Twitter at [@UUA](#) and [@UUSC](#) and on the [UUA's](#) and [UUSC's](#) Facebook pages.



### Traditional UU Flower Celebration June 12!

Each person brings a flower to be placed in a basket or vase before the service. If you forget, don't worry; there will be extras. The children will bring the flowers forward at the beginning of the service, where the consecration of the flowers will be read. You'll hear the story of Norbert Capek and the first flower communion and understand why you take home a different flower than the one you brought. Music and meditations will be centered on our appreciation of the big and little spots of color that greet our eyes at this time of year. It's a special Sunday which UU congregations around the world celebrate on different Sundays throughout the spring. Do join us!

### Services and Forums for June

<b>Date</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Forum</b>
June 5	"Evil, Suffering, and Satan." Service Leader: Tom Spencer	"Nuclear Power: Lessons From Japan." Host: Martin Steindler
June 12	Flower Celebration. Service Leader: Kathy Klos	"Privacy in an Electronic World." Hosts: gg Gordon, Shaun Devlin, Tom Sullivan
June 19	Father's Day. Service Leader: TBA	TBA
June 26	"Solstice." Service Leader: Paula Kiesling	TBA

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