

AUGUST 2012

# The Chronicle

MARQUETTE  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION



"We - families, boards, committees, councils, and congregations - can all learn from the metaphors of the playground and especially the teeter-totter, as we strive to get the job done in balance with wise choices and compassion."

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## The Balancing Act

As a child, I loved to swing,\* stretching my toes to the tree branches at the Hayes School playground in Lakewood, Ohio. I enjoyed the slide, too, except when you'd get stuck and couldn't get a smooth glide. The teeter-totter was fun but more challenging because of the need to cooperate with the person on the other end. The trust we needed to have in each other was vital so that if I wanted a little bounce, the friend at the other end needed to not descend too hard, to ensure our safety and well-being. We had to communicate carefully, especially when it was time to get off, so that one person wouldn't go crashing down.

We - families, boards, committees, councils, and congregations - can all learn from the metaphors of the playground and especially the teeter-totter, as we strive to get the job done in balance with wise choices and compassion.

I don't want any of us getting too dizzy spinning out-of-control on our merry-go-rounds or hanging on for dear life on the monkey bars. So back to my favorite in the 50's: the swing. Sometimes it felt good to jump off. I didn't jump off and disappear through a hole in the middle of the ground. I was headed on for other adventures.

**Mike White** and **Cathy Church** have completed their terms on the MUUC Board. We see signs around town, literally, of Cathy's aspira-

tions; and I think you'll find Mike chillin' in the MUUC kitchen this year, doing some dishes. They gave "their swings" to gg gordon and Barb Michael. Amy Fletemier has jumped off to go running and to spend more time with her family. Amy has given "her swing" to Cherokee Helms-Gleason. **Beth King** jumped off to go sailing and also to spend more time with family. She gave up "her swing" and up stepped Sarah Redmond... and Michelle Halley's still on the swings with the rest of us!

I am so very appreciative of the good work that last year's Board members did. Thanks to all of you for serving!

Following the July Board meeting, the new MUUC Board expressed hope in keeping a good balance for the coming year. (Board minutes will be posted on the divider by the mail slots near the kitchen.)

I wish you all a wonderful August on the playgrounds, which reminds me of *Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum, UU minister and author. He includes: *Play fair...say you're sorry when you hurt somebody...live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work everyday some...when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together. Be aware of wonder.*

*Barb Michael*



Dear Friends,

Before turning my computer back on this morning, I smudged myself with sage I gathered in Oregon this summer. I offer these words from Robert Eller-Isaacs as a sort of smudge for us all as we begin a new year together.

For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference

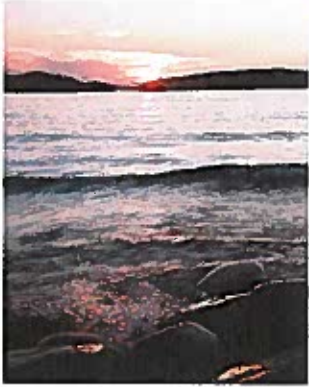
For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible

For losing sight of our unity; For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle which have fueled the illusion of separateness

*We forgive ourselves and each other, we begin again in love.*

With love and hope for a growthful year,

Nancy Irish, MUUC Celebrant/Coordinator



**Next Board of Trustees meeting:** August 15th at 6:30 at the Meeting House. All members are welcome to attend.

Anyone wanting items on the agenda should contact Sarah Redmond by the Aug. 8th.



**Don't forget** to bring your Econo sales slips, used ink jet cartridges and used cell phones to the meeting house. We collect these items and get cash for the congregation in exchange!



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## Camp MUUC 2012 • Register Now!

We welcome your family to participate in the **fourth annual Peace Camp** hosted by the Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation (non-members welcome) **August 24-26**. This is a day camp running from Friday noon to Sunday noon for 7-14 year olds, 2:00-6:00 on Saturday afternoon for children ages 2-6. Families have the option to camp for the entire weekend.

**Please register ASAP!** When Camp is full registrations will no longer be accepted. We are an intentional community for the weekend. We intersperse the principles of cooperation, appreciation for the web of life, living gently on the land, and mindfulness into a fun array of activities: experiential

nature activities, woods, field and stream exploration, arts and crafts, cooperation and team building games, yoga, mindful community meals (with an emphasis on local and environmentally friendly food), camping, campfires and music.

**New this year we are offering facilitated opportunities for parents and volunteers to cultivate relaxation, renewal, and peace while the children are engaged in activities.**

Please register **NOW** as space is limited. Contact: Melissa Middleton at [mlmelissa@live.com](mailto:mlmelissa@live.com) or [906-236-4433](tel:906-236-4433).

### Covenant Groups - Create Connections, Deepen spirit

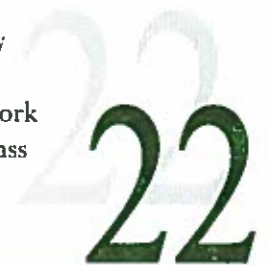
A covenant group is a small group that meets regularly and develops their own set of guidelines — a covenant. These groups can provide an intimate setting to get to know other UUCF members, share stories, explore spiritual ideas, discuss social concerns, and turn those ideas and concerns into action.

Covenant groups will be forming in coming months, if there is enough interest. You will be hearing more about this in the fall months. Society can be a better place when people know how to listen deeply to each other and care for one another. There are few places in people's lives where they are invited to share deeply and listen without judgment. The world is hungry for sharing 'soul to soul.'

### Newsletter Deadline

As an experiment to find a workable newsletter deadline, beginning in August, the newsletter deadline will be the 22nd day of the month. This date will be after the monthly Board meeting (unless the Board also tries to experiment with its dates). If you are not able to have your contribution in final form by the deadline, at least tell me how much space you will need: one page, half page, quarter page, and when you'll get it to me. I will work with contributors as much as possible but will reserve the right to pass on items not submitted by the 22nd.

Dave Stensaas, Newsletter Coordinator



## Getting to Know...Dave Stensaas • Submitted by Rachel Crary; by D.Stensaas



My very first UU experience was probably about twenty years ago when I visited the UU church in Flint, where my oldest brother and his family had become friends or members. My impression was that it was sort of interesting as far as being open to many ideas, and non-evangelical, which I liked. But it was not particularly exciting either. At that age, it would have had to be a pretty exciting scene to make me want to be involved. I was not attending any church regularly, had no real spiritual practice and probably had only been in a handful of churches since I was very young.

For two or three years when I was growing up in Ishpeming, I was sent to Sunday School at a Lutheran church, but there was not much expectation at home for me to absorb any Christian teachings. My mom, whose parents came from southern Italy, was an excommunicated Catholic (she married a divorced man in the late '40s) and didn't really care too much about religion by that point. She sent all five of her kids (I was the youngest by seven years) to the Norwegian Lutheran Church, where the Stensaas clan had attended church. It's complicated, but I didn't have a father in any normal way. Once I discovered, around age seven, that I could get away with skipping Sunday School and also spend the 25 cents weekly donation on candy, I rarely attended the church anymore, and I began pushing my boundaries.

We attended the UU church in Spokane, a church with two Sunday services and over 500 members. At the time there was a new, dynamic minister from New York City who gave the church experience an exciting feel. Liam was born in Spokane; he took many bike rides with me the summer after his first birthday, and he was back-packed on many hikes with us. We enjoyed living in that part of the world a great deal, but we could not stay after I finished grad school, despite my attempts to find a local job. When I did find a job, through a former classmate, it required a move of about 2,000 miles.

We landed in Evansville, Indiana, in early 2006, and it was a rough change, but we adapted and made lots of friends over the course of nearly five years. We began vacationing in our homelands of Michigan and Wisconsin. We also became regulars at the UU church in Evansville, another small congregation that had two interim ministers and a settled minister (who has since relocated to the UU church in Flint), interspersed with many lay-led services. This was my first experience with a lay-led church and having now had considerable experience with both, I can say that I prefer a church to have a minister, as it facilitates a spiritual current in each and every service.

While we were in Marquette on vacation in July 2010, I stopped by City Hall to inquire about local planning for bicycle facilities, which was my specialty in Evansville, and found out that there would be a job opening for a planner in the fall. So that was our opportunity to both come back north to a place that promised better schools and beautiful surroundings and to leave a place we did not love (though we left dear friends). I lived in Marquette in the late '90s as an "adult" NMU student and really enjoyed the town and surroundings.

My UU journey started in earnest after my wife Teri and I partnered. At our first home near the Washington-Idaho border, there was a UU congregation just eight miles away in Moscow, Idaho. It was a smaller church with a settled minister, in a town quite similar to Marquette in many ways. I began to learn about the UU principles and found that they perfectly suited my own principles. It was at this church that one of the homilies ended up having quite an impact on my thinking and led me to my present career as an urban/city planner.

The message that changed things for me was, to paraphrase, "choose to be large when you have a chance to grow." That has nothing to do with my expanding waistline, but was a call to try to do something important in one's life and rise to opportunities to expand one's reach or powers, especially in ways that help others. At the time I was considering a career change. The constant field work and travel with my Forest Service job was wearing me down and was not going to work if I were going to have a family. City planning was one of the careers I was considering, but I had reservations. This message to grow was the push I needed to commit to applying to graduate school and to embark on a new and challenging career field in which I thought I could make a difference.

Teri and I were married ten years ago this July 27th, in Nelson, British Columbia. Nelson is a funky little town in a spectacular glacial valley and was a place we thoroughly enjoyed as a regional getaway. We moved to Spokane, Wash. after I was accepted into graduate school.

So far it has been a good place to live for all of us. Liam likes his school and Teri seems very at home here. And I am still searching for some kind of spiritual grounding, although I honestly don't search all that much. Sunday School stories seemed interesting, but for some reason, I just couldn't quite believe they were true. Looking back on it, I think that I was confused about the conflicting messages of compassion and harsh consequences that were found together in so many of the lessons. As a young adult, I went through a period of Bible reading and found that I could not agree with blind faith or understand the harsh consequences of non-adherence to "the lord's" doctrine. But I have high regard for anyone who would model his or her life on that of Jesus, but I also think the same of Buddha or Muhammad.

I feel my connection to something bigger than what meets the eye most when I immerse myself in the natural world, where I feel part of the river of life. Music also resonates with the river of life for me, and I feel that music is embedded with mystical elements of the human experience. Spending time with a guitar every morning helps me keep balanced, as does listening to music. Witnessing the growth of my child increases my spiritual awareness too, and having a child that reminds me of my former self as much as Liam does is sometimes transcendent.

I am attracted to Buddhism somewhat and think that given enough time, I will begin meditation practice and learning more about other Buddhist spiritual practices. In this moment I am grateful to be a father, to be a husband and to have life. These are all gifts, and I am trying to be mindful of that, which seems easier with each passing month. It is good to be here in Marquette and to have a UU congregation to bond with. I am optimistic of remaining grateful for that as well.

**MARQUETTE  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION**  
MEETING HOUSE LOCATION: 1510 M-28 E. Harvey, MI • PHONE: 906-249-9450

**SERVICE AND FORUM SCHEDULE**

DATE	SERVICE: 11:00 A.M.	FORUM: 9:45 – 10:30 A.M.
AUGUST 5, 2012	All UP - UU Gathering Van Riper State Park	NO FORUM
AUGUST 12, 2012	“Reflectors of the Future” Paul Wright, Service Leader	“What Is Fracking And How Would the Proposed Initiative Petition Amendment to the Constitution Affect Michigan ? Host: Sarah Redmond
AUGUST 19, 2012	“Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher” Joan Steindler, Service Leader	TBA
AUGUST 26, 2012	Service Leader: Paula Kiesling	TBA

**Board of Trustees :**

Barbara Michael, President; GG Gordon, Vice President; Sarah Redmond, Secretary; Michelle Harrison, Treasurer; Shirley Zimmer, Bookkeeper; Cherokee Helms Gleason; Michelle Halley

**Staff:**

Nancy Irish, Community Coordinator & Celebrant; Melissa Middleton, Religious Education Coordinator

**Other Positions:** Tom & Nancy Sullivan, Building Use Coordinators; Sarah Johnson, Religious Education Chair; Tom Sullivan, Program Committee Chair; Michael Erdmann, Building Committee Chair; Nancy Sullivan, Community Development Committee Chair; gg gordon, Stewardship Chair; Teri Rockwood, Gary Stark, Paul Kiesling - Mediation Council; Gail Griffith, Social Action Chair; Dave Stensaas, Newsletter Coordinator; Vacant, Music Coordinator.

**Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

P.O Box 687

Marquette, MI 49855



**To:**

