



THE CHALICE NEWS

Unitarian Society of Menomonie
A Welcoming Unitarian Universalist Congregation

March 2023 Newsletter

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance to one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

CALENDAR

**10 AM IN OUR MEETING ROOM
(ZOOM CONNECTIONS WILL BE PROVIDED)**

March 5 – Service with Dennis Peters, “Who am I?”

Most of the human theological stances define me as body, mind, and spirit (or soul). Is that true? Where in all of that do I reside? What part of that is me? Am I still there after a traumatic brain injury? Or Alzheimer’s? After a couple of personal experiences with close friends, it’s time to explore this topic.

March 12 – Service with Dennis Peters, “Proposed Revisions to UUA Article II: Principles and Sources”

The UUA proposed to redefine our Principles and Sources, which have stood since 1985. It is up to us as members of a UU society to understand the proposed changes, and be prepared to voice our support or concerns. Let’s take March 12 to think about these carefully, and talk about them. (See resources on page 3)

March 12 -- Board Meeting after the service

March 19 – Book Discussion: Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

The discussion will be led by Juliana Schmidt and Sherry Hagen. We will discuss the last two sections: Braiding Sweetgrass and Burning Sweetgrass.

March 26 – Spring Equinox Service with Jack and Sherry Hagen Celebration of the turning of the Wheel. Bring your thoughts of Spring and what it means to you.

DAVE WILLIAMS, Death and Religion



In a recent column in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, columnist D.J. Tice focused on a working paper from three economists, entitled “Opiates of the Masses? Deaths of Despair and the Decline of American Religion.” The paper is authored by Tyler Giles, Daniel M. Hungerman and Tamar Oostrom. Their premise is that churchgoing in America has dropped while deaths of despair have risen, and asks if those might be connected.

We’ve heard repeatedly about the decline in church attendance, to the point that the “Nones”, those claiming no religious affiliation, are now about half of all Americans. At the same time, these deaths of despair (suicide, drug poisonings and alcoholic liver disease) have reduced American life expectancy for the first time in decades, the

authors claim.

I’ll share some excerpts from Tice’s column as he explores this possible linkage between declining religiosity and rising despair. Tice notes that the increasing mortality rates are primarily among “less educated white Americans. This deplorable trend among a group once labeled ‘deplorables’ has inspired a good deal of attention.”

Tice notes that the loss of faith and the rise in despairing deaths are trends not occurring in other countries. He mentions that Europe’s secularization came much earlier than ours here in America. And variation among states seems to support the hypothesis as well. “States with high levels of religiosity have suffered less from mortality due to alcohol, suicides or drug poisoning,” the study reports. “And states that experienced larger decreases in religiosity have had the largest gains in the rate of deaths of despair.”

The study authors also examined the repeal of “blue laws” in the U.S. Blue laws essentially enforced the Sabbath, Tice notes, prohibiting many activities on Sundays. Most blue laws were repealed in the 1960s and onward. The paper “zeros in on the year 1985, when three states, Minnesota, Texas and South Carolina, became the last to broadly repeal many blue law restrictions. The researchers wanted to see whether setting free more alternative Sunday activities had reduced churchgoing, and whether any change in mortality rates followed.”

Tice commented that while the calculations are complicated, the verdict is not. “We show that the repeal of these laws lowered religious participation,” according to the three authors of the paper. “We find that the repeal led to an increase of deaths of despair compared with states that did not see a sharp change at that time in religious observance.”

“Interestingly, ‘Opiates of the Masses?’ reports little evidence of dramatic change in reported levels of ‘spirituality’—frequency of prayer or some form of belief in God,” Tice reports. It is churchgoing, rather than personal spiritual habits, bringing about the results, he concludes. The paper’s authors summarized their thinking: “Whether other types of voluntary or community activities could have similar large-scale effects on health outcomes is unknown... the literature suggests that the primary benefits of religious participation for life satisfaction are difficult to replicate with other forms of social engagement.”

For us Unitarian Universalists, it’s probably easy to say, “Well, yeah, that’s about them, those less educated sorts.” And go merrily on our way—to church on Sunday, of course. But it does raise a societal issue more on our wave length since the book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Robert D. Putnam, copyright 2001) chronicled the decline of social connection in America. What is our responsibility toward those succumbing to deaths of despair? Is there anything we can do?

And maybe the next time you think about lounging at home instead of attending one of our Unitarian Society of Menomoneie services, should you perhaps at least consider the danger you’re flirting with?

Alano Thrift Sale

The Alano Club is having a thrift sale on March 24 and 25. If you have items you would like to donate, please bring your gently used items by March 23 to our meeting space. The Alano folks would also like volunteers to work at the sale. Money raised from the thrift sale will go to replace the carpet in our meeting space. Contact Anne Ganong, 715-505-0206, for more information.

Suggested reading: "How to Get the Death You Want: A Practical and Moral Guide"

A comprehensive manual for those reaching the end of life, and for their friends, relatives, advocates, and caretakers. Abraham describes in detail the challenges faced by those who wish to avoid months or years of painful treatment after losing hope of ever recovering any reasonable quality of life. Subjects include:

- the nature of physical death;
- legal documents to clarify one's wishes;
- the need for a strong advocate to have the patient's wishes honored;
- moral issues that must be considered;
- means of dying painlessly once the decision is made;
- and much more, including how to respond to reluctant doctors, and the value of humor in communicating with a dying patient.

"My experience as an Episcopal priest led me to believe that I would never want to suffer the way I saw so many people die: in isolation, abandoned and with great existential suffering. I would never want to be in an intensive care unit, hooked up to all kinds of machines."

Rev. John L Abraham M.Div. (from the cover)



THE ACOUSTIC CAFÉ GALLERY
presents

Sherry Hagen

Solo Art Exhibit

Women's History Month
Celebrating the Goddess Within
March 1- March 29, 2023

Opening Reception

*Art Talk * March 4, 2023 * 5-7pm*

The Acoustic Café * 102 Main St. W. * Menomonie, WI, 54751
YT:Sherryhagen IG:sherry.hagen.5

Mark Your Calendars!

Our annual meeting is May 7 at 10 am. At that meeting, members of the board are elected, a budget is adopted, and we review the past year. If you are willing to serve on the board, please contact Juliana, 715-505-3525. There will be a potluck after the meeting.

Proposed Revisions to UUA Article II: Principles and Sources

Resources for March 12's discussionThe pdf from the study group can be found [here](#). Please read it, and please attend on March 12. Also, check out other online resources, such as:

- <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission>
- <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/about-article-2>
- <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/charge>
- <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/resources/small-group-ministry-guide>

THE ANNUAL MEETING IS MAY 7 AND WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Our Unitarian Society of Menomonie bylaws require an annual meeting each May and ours is set for May 7, 2023. There are several items of business at the annual meeting, including election of some offices and most importantly, approving a budget for the next program year.

At the end of this newsletter is a pledge form. Your review of the form, and your response, are both vital to the continued functioning of the Society. The first part is a financial pledge form, on which you can tell us what level of monetary support you will offer next fiscal year (Our fiscal year begins July 1, 2023 and ends June 30, 2024). The other is a time and talent pledge form, whereby you can indicate the different ways you're willing to help keep the Society active and vibrant.

Please print the form out, complete both parts, and mail it to Dave Williams, Treasurer, Unitarian Society of Menomonie, P.O. Box 214, Menomonie, WI. 54751 by March 10, 2023. You could also email it back to Dave at williamsda@uwstout.edu. The board will then use all the responses to plan a budget and the work of the fellowship. Thank you!

Have content for the next newsletter?

Please email events, news, poems, stories by the 25th of the month to be included in the next newsletter to kwiersgalla@gmail.com.

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MENOMONIE
2023-24 TIME AND TALENT PLEDGE

“All members are expected to make a contribution of record in the form of financial, service or other donation, on a yearly basis.” USM Bylaws

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

I understand that financial commitment is essential to the life of our Unitarian Society of Menomonie, and I pledge \$ _____ to the USM for the fiscal year July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024

NAME _____ DATE _____

TIME AND SERVICE COMMITMENTS

In addition to my financial commitment, I will also do the following (check all that apply:

___ Serve as a member at large on the USM board

___ Serve as an officer on the USM board for a 2 year term

___ President. ___ Vice President ___ Other Office _____

___ Assist in the following areas:

___ Create an annual budget. ___ Backup the Secretary if absent

___ Serve on the Program Committee

___ Serve as Membership Coordinator

___ Provide child care if needed ___ Serve as a Greeter

___ Facilitate a service.

___ Participate in Affinity Groups (quilting, needlework) _____

___ Provide articles and items of interest for the newsletter

___ Take photos of events for newsletter and website

___ Help with management of the USM website

___ Assist with social action activities (which?) _____

___ Serve as a liaison to the Alano Club

___ Host a summer program (which?) _____

___ Assist with set-up and take-down for Sunday meetings

___ Lead a book discussion or other program (Which?) _____

___ Assist or lead a special event program

___ Help with Adopt-A-Highway cleanup (twice yearly)

___ Organize the annual family Holiday Gift program

___ Provide coffee (regular and decaf) for meeting coffee hours