

New Hope

MARCH 2010

A Unitarian
Universalist

Congregation



New Hope- A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
57885 Grand River, New Hudson, MI
www.newhopeuu.org (248) 474-9108

Minister Writes



“Be careful what you hope for, you might get it.”

Rev. Suzanne Paul

The quote is “be careful what you wish for....etc” but since we do a lot of hoping around New Hope, I thought it appropriate to change the words just a bit. If nothing else, New Hope has perfected being hopeful. We have, as a congregation, remained hopeful through some harrowing times – when others would have thought the situation quite “hopeless” – we soldiered on.

The hope of growing our congregation and becoming a real force for peace and justice in Lyon Township has always been first and foremost on our wish list. How would we attract new people to New Hope? How would folks know we are here? How long would it take before the message of our “good news” would spread?

In our four years together, we have worked very hard to be welcoming and inviting. I believe that we put our priorities toward growth in the correct order. We worked on making our physical space as warm and comfortable as possible - including the curb appeal project last summer. Not only did the front of our building look spectacular for our Charter Sunday celebration in September, 2009, but we are enjoying access to our building this winter that was not possible last year. Some of you may remember that we had to “walk the plank” to avoid getting a soaker coming to church during the snow and rainy seasons. So our building and grounds, while not palatial, is bright, cheerful and clean.

We have also created two very important programs that attract and keep new people who come to New Hope. An outstanding music program with a really fine choir and a superb religious education program that the children enjoy. Religious education and music are two elements that New Hope does really well. Anyone visiting New Hope has to be very impressed with how well we

do both within the confines of a small congregation. So when visitors come on Sunday morning, they are impressed with our music and how well organized our RE program is.

The Membership Committee has been active for two years and has contributed greatly to our overall outreach to the larger community. They have involved New Hope in several events that put our name out into the community and kept the local media apprised of our activities. I have tried to assure both our Board of Trustees and the Membership Committee that the process of becoming known in a community just takes repetition and time. And hope. Hope that if we do all the right things, our efforts will be rewarded with increased awareness of Unitarian Universalism.

Well, I most happily report to you that during the months of January and February of 2010, New Hope has had visitors every Sunday. This is a wonderfully hopeful sign that people are beginning to “find us.” We have a new web site, we are on Facebook and Twitter and best of all New Hope

is linked into the UUA web site. Of course, we continue to run our paid ad in the Milford and South Lyon papers. We continue to reach out to the community by supporting Active Faith and other local organizations. We are doing all the right things – and we have raised awareness for New Hope and Unitarian Universalism.

I am so proud of New Hope for so many reasons, but perhaps most all, when I hear our visitors say “the people here are so nice.” “I felt so welcomed.” “My kids had such a good experience in Sunday school.” “This is such a cozy building.” “The choir rocks.” Honest – those things were said to me, and I’m beaming.

2010 is going to be the banner year we **hoped** so hard for. I guarantee it.

In love & peace,

Rev. Suzanne



Sunday Celebration of Life Schedule for March 2010

Religious Education for Children and Child Care available for Pre-schoolers
Kathy Silver, Director of Religious Education



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2010 10:30 AM
REV. SUZANNE PAUL

“CAREFUL WHAT YOU HOPE/WISH FOR....”

What would New Hope look like if every pew were filled on Sunday morning? It might be a reality before we know it. Are we ready? What will change? Please join us as we discuss what happens when dreams come true.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2010 10:30 AM
REV. SUZANNE PAUL

“CRISIS OF FAITH”



Harvard University, founded in 1636 as a training ground for Christian ministers, no longer offers “religion” as an academic subject. What happened? Why are they dismissing the importance of the study of faith and world religions? Please join us.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2010 10:30 AM
REV. SUZANNE PAUL

“WE WILL OVERCOME”

Better days are coming – but while we wait, our faith community should become all the more significant in

our lives. Please join us as we celebrate our beloved community.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2010 10:30 AM
REV. SUZANNE PAUL

“SUPPORTING OUR SEVENTH PRINCIPLE”

Green in the color of hope. New Hope awaits spring by rededicating ourselves to our place in the interdependent web of which we are a part.



KATHY SILVER,
DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DEBBY TYLER, MUSIC/CHOIR DIRECTOR

*Our Services are held on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Services last until 11:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend regardless of faith, race, age and sexual orientation.

We hope that you'll stay for coffee and conversation after the Services.



Joys & Sorrows - March, 2010

March Birthdays: Brian Tyler, Pat Hatfield, Renee Champagne and Bruce Gray. We extend our congratulations and best wishes to you all.

Several members and friends in our New Hope family have shared during our Sunday Joys & Sorrows that they have close friends and family who are gravely ill right now. May we continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

Many thanks everyone for your generosity throughout the month of February with your contributions of food for Active Faith. We extended our collection of

canned goods and non-perishable items into the first week of March. Last collection date will be Sunday, March 7. Again, thank you for your generosity.

Many, many thanks to Charlie Paul for the new design of the New Hope web site. It's awesome!

Standing on the Side of Love bumper stickers are available in the Hospitality Room at New Hope. They are \$2.00.

(Email Rev. Paul with any Joy or Sorrow you would like included on this page)



March

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Service 10:30 AM Congregational Meeting 11:45 AM	8 Board Meeting 7:00 PM	9	10	11	12	13
14 Choir 9:45 AM Service 10:30 AM Membership Mtg Sing-A-Long 4:00 PM Winter Blah's Party 5:30	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18 Men's Group 7:00pm	19	20
21 Choir Practice 9:45 AM Service 10:30 AM	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 Choir Practice 9:45 AM Service 10:30 AM Palm Sunday	29	30 Passover	31			



President's Message

A Special Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 7, 2010 immediately after service. It is important that all New Hope members make every effort to attend this meeting. It is necessary to get the congregation's input and wishes in deciding what steps we take in acquiring our building. The board has worked diligently to check into all options available in order to present the best possible recommendations to the members.

New Hope has hosted it's first Men's Group meeting, thanks to Bill Strable and Jack McMahon. All New Hope men are invited and encouraged to attend this new, monthly get-together scheduled for the last Thursday of every month.

On behalf of the New Hope congregation, Kathy Silver, Joan Finken and myself attended the 10th anniversary celebration of CUUB's affiliation with the UUA in order to extend to them our most heartfelt congratulations and best wishes.

Our next board meeting is Monday, March 8 at 7:00pm. This meeting is open to any New Hope member who would like to sit in and listen as the business of New Hope is conducted.

Respectfully,
Brian Tyler

The Armchair Philosopher's Group

Beginning on Thursday, March 25 from 3-4:30 PM, Rev. Paul will offer a class entitled "Questions of Value." Our lives are filled with everyday questions of fact and finance. But the really fundamental questions of our lives are questions of neither fact nor finance. The really fundamental questions are questions of *value*. These are the deep questions that apply to every aspect of our lives. What gives something genuine value? What things are really worth striving for? What is it that makes life worth living? Are there values that transcend cultural differences? Can we have ethical values without religion? If the universe operates in terms of deterministic laws, how can there be real choice? Is all value subjective? "Questions of Value" is a course for anyone who has ever felt the tug of such questions or who wants to fine-tune their ability to see how deeper questions of ethics and values apply to the choices that make up their lives. The class will be held every month on the last Thursday. The first of this 24-lecture series will begin on March 25th. All are welcome. For more information contact Rev. Suzanne Paul at Suzanne@crpaul.com.

Musically Speaking...

All music is folk music. I ain't never heard no horse sing a song."
— *Louis Armstrong*

"The work of work, of having a job and earning a living,
is often the stuff of folk music."

—*Linda Ronstadt, singer ("The NPR Curious Listener's Guide to
American Folk Music", 2004)*

"Folk music comes from the people and goes back to the people.
That's what it is."

—*Jim Page, folk singer, (Rudolstadt, July 3, 2005)*

This month, New Hope is sponsoring it's second community sing-along, which we've decided to call "Make a Joyful Noise." Perhaps the most familiar place this quote can be attributed to is the Bible's book of Psalms (translated as "song of praise,") where one is commanded to make joyful noises with the trumpet, lyre, and voice. Music is seen as one of the many paths to "god" or spirituality, expressing our joys and praises from our heart.



I'm sure most of us have experienced that tug at our heart, that warm feeling, that sweet joy that comes from a piece of music that stirs up certain emotions in our souls. If you've ever sung in a choir, or played in a band or orchestra, then you have also experienced that sense of awe from being a part of a larger musical sound. If you have had any of these experiences, then you will not want to miss the next sing-along. If you have not had any of these experiences, then you will not want to miss the next sing-along. The sense of

community, of camaraderie, of joy and warmth, are special gifts that come from sharing the joy of music with others. Please be sure not to miss this opportunity at "Make a Joyful Noise" on Sunday, March 14, 2010 at New Hope, and please invite your friends, neighbors and family to share in this special joy.



At New Hope, all music - whether it be gospel, traditional, spiritual, contemporary - is integral to the celebration of life service we have each Sunday morning. In the hymns and special music that are chosen for each service, much thought is given to choosing those songs that support the sermon and the time of year - whether it is a holiday, a change of seasons, the start of school, or a presidential election. It is hoped that you "feel the thought" with the help of music at New Hope each Sunday morning.

The choir is open to anyone who has an ability and desire to sing and to participate in the ministry that is both given and received by their participation in choir. You don't have to have singing experience or any particular level of singing ability. Just the ability to carry a tune and have fun!

I hope that any of you who have suggestions, ideas, or comments will feel free to share them with me. It's always so helpful to be given fresh ideas or perspectives!

In harmony,
Deb Tyler

Women of Hope

"Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born." *Anaïs Nin*

Women of Hope is group of women dedicated to the well-being of ourselves, each other and our community. We meet to enjoy each other's company, to participate in discussions of mutual interest, and to contribute to our community. Our regular, monthly meetings are held the 3rd Wed. of each month at 6:30 pm at New Hope.

View from the Bleachers



Good Fairies

Last month Suzanne presented a sermon discussing the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. What struck me about the place, beyond the poignant silliness of the whole thing, was that whoever built it managed to raise tens of millions of dollars for their cause. It reminded me of a story Rabbi Sherwin Wine once told. As you may recall, Rabbi Wine founded Humanistic Judaism and pretty much expounded on the philosophy over the course of four decades. He said that his mother, a tiny practical woman who emigrated from eastern Europe, once suggested to him that if only he believed *a little bit* in god that he'd have a much easier time building a congregation. So much easier.

It's difficult not to be envious of the Creation Museum not to mention all the mega-churches with their shopping mall-like architecture, satellite broadcast networks and ... can I say this with all candidness ... ministers who drive Rolls-Royces. By paddling down the main stream they've attracted millions of adherents willing to open their wallets which is so much easier than opening their minds. Without having to worry about the mundane requirements of rent or salaries and all the other expenses associated with a successful church, these huge operations have reached what's called a *critical mass* that sustains continuous growth. From their solid financial foundations they can offer members programs ranging from home loans to health insurance plans, educational classes to group therapy sessions, not to mention regular Sunday services that compare nicely with Broadway productions.

If you look at where these institutions came from, you'll often find a good fairy. That is, there's always one and often more devoted individuals motivated to make substantial financial contributions. This funding attracts additional contributions which put the organizations on the path to greatness. We've spoken in the past about how there is a *business* component of running a church in addition to the *philosophical* side that we all share with each other. Keeping the building warm, the grass mowed, and the employees paid are as vital to crystal palaces as they are to more humble cinder-block structures like ours at New Hope. But when a good fairy steps up the game changes. No longer does the congregation struggle with the search for filthy lucre. It can concern itself with more challenging issues

like counting the number of angels dancing on the head of a pin.

I'm not implying that good fairies are all bad. On the contrary, they are essential. Nor am I suggesting that the entire future of any congregation rests on one individual's generosity. Often there are many good fairies whose total contributions add up to a critical mass. Regardless of how it's achieved, a solid financial foundation is essential.

New Hope has, from its very beginning, taken a kind of arms-length approach to fund raising. Most UU congregations, for example, follow a somewhat vague "pledge" concept in which members promise to contribute a suggested amount each year. Depending on how members respond determines whether or not the church budget requirements are met. If they are, great. If not, programming is cut. New Hope takes a different approach by providing a "dues" structure with various categories such as single adult, families, and so forth. It makes the whole budgeting process far more manageable and business-like. Most UU churches pause during Sunday services to pass baskets for "offerings". We've chosen to not break the flow of services by asking for contributions, but simply leave a basket by the door to the meeting room. And, our formalized fund-raising efforts, while important, are nowhere near as constant nor guilt-ridden as are typical in other churches. We simply expect members and friends to be generous without overtly reaching into their pockets all the time.

New Hope is rapidly coming to a vital crossroad that is all about finances. While it may be possible to continue rolling along as we have been for these past few years by taking our somewhat laidback approach to generating income, it's more likely we will be looking for one, two or potentially a dozen good fairies to fly in and solidify our future. Depending on when you're reading this you may or may not have yet learned about the owner of our building. If you have, hopefully you agree that making our current rented home more permanent is an exciting and rewarding goal. Reaching that goal will require each of us to make some serious commitments to our congregation's future.

It would make it so much easier if we only had to worry about things like dinosaurs on Noah's ark.

C. R. P.

What to Do About Religion?

By Don Skiff

A recent opinion piece in the New York Times by Nicholas Kristof, "The Religious Wars," was about the spate of books in the past few years openly critical of religion. He mentioned specifically Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris, who "all published best-selling books excoriating religion and practically inviting lightning bolts."

At the other extreme, he mentions the Left Behind series of novels depicting the end of the world according to those who read reality in apocalyptic writings like the Book of Revelations in the New Testament, and the interpretations of the tenets of Islam that call for violent conflict with non-believers.

We of a more liberal persuasion might wonder where we can fit in this sometimes conflict. Whether or not there's a god doesn't seem to be the main issue. It's how we negotiate the rapids of modern culture. Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris present views of reality that might seem accurate to humanists, if a bit over-sharpened. Daniel C. Dennett, a philosopher (*Breaking the Spell*, Viking Penguin Group), shares their cognitive point of view but is interested more in how, scientifically, we sort out the claims for truth on both sides. Karen Armstrong, a former nun (*A Case for God*, Knopf), pleads for communication among the varying groups, to search for ways that we can live together. She won a contest recently on TED, an online ideas forum, proposing a series of conferences including Christian, Islamic and Judaic leaders to seek ways to reduce the violence and rhetoric among the major religious traditions.

Nicholas Kristof is looking for a peaceful resolution of the controversy. Recent events seem to threaten our security, as Islamist extremists attempt to obtain respect among the differing value systems of the world through violence, and global commercial interests seem interested only in bottom-line capitalism. An economic free market is not the same as mutual respect of moral values.

Karen Armstrong speculates about the religious significance of the caves of Lascaux, France, where ancient, elaborate drawings reveal to us something of the religious life of humans from far in prehistory:

"Like art, the truths of religion require the disciplined cultivation of a different mode of consciousness. The cave experience always began with the disorientation of utter darkness, which annihilated normal habits of mind. Human beings are so constituted that periodically they

seek out *ekstasis*, a 'stepping outside' the norm. Today people who no longer find it in a religious setting resort to other outlets: music, dance, art, sex, drugs, or sport [or, perhaps, writing?]. We make a point of seeking out these experiences that touch us deeply within and lift us momentarily beyond ourselves. At such times, we feel that we inhabit our humanity more fully than usual and experience an enhancement of being."

That urge to relate to some concept of ultimate existence has led over the years to elaborate and widely diverse philosophical interpretations. As these are infused into local cultures, they become part of the moral and political fabric—and, thereby, lose much of their vitality.

A friend of mine seeks relief from "labeling of ideas," which fix our attention and divert our personal inquiries. "I see a world," he writes, "that can only be arrived at in peace, and with open wonder. I see eternal and universal light, reached through a doorway beyond doubt and dogma, that we may pass through only in innocence, when absolutely free."

He is, indeed, "stepping outside the norm." The irony of using words (labels) to describe his dream is not lost on him. About his own writing about early Americans, he says:

"If I can bring "one" original settler to life, it will be to bring other lives (contemporary ones) better into their own, lovingly. Much dogma will have to be observed ... for it was rampant in Samuel's time. I hope to treat it not merely with skepticism ... not just with doubt (for these give the dogma way too much credit.) All such words will be found insufficient, man-made, obstacles to discovering the "incredible lightness" (just words, alas) ... the unspeakable truth of being, a restless wonder, a hope and a dream.

"It's not easy, this letting go of "things"—words, symbols, concepts—long enough to sense the immensity of reality, "beyond doubt and dogma." Forums to introduce us to each other can't be all bad, but in the end the only place to fully see is in the infinite darkness of the individual mind.

Religious Education

Last month I told you about the new children who have been participating in the Religious Education Program during the last several weeks. I also wrote about the benefits of bringing children to church and what I hope that they receive from their experience.

Today I want to share with you my thoughts on what it means when a Religious Education Program and a church really start to grow. In RE, as in New Hope in general, we have been a small group of dedicated attendees who have gotten to know and understand each other well. Though of different ages and genders, we have become a "faith community" and it is good. On Sunday mornings, our children's class is often adjusted at the last minute depending on who arrives and how they are feeling. With a small group, we can do this.

As you might imagine, as our group grows we will lose some of the flexibility and spontaneity of our current RE program. We will more than make up for our losses by the richness of new personalities and myriad experiences which our new young members will bring to us. However, a larger group will demand a more organized and well-planned approach.

Sometime soon, we will probably have to divide our group into two or three smaller classes of similar ages in order to provide deeper and more meaningful sharing and learning. Having more than one class will mean that we'll have to broaden our adult participation to volunteers who are non-parents. Though parents have the greatest vested interest in the religious education of their children, all members of our church have a responsibility to our children. The children are the most vulnerable members of our congregation and the future of Unitarian Universalism. They should be a primary reason for our existence. I'm confident that as New Hope RE grows, so will the cadre of volunteers who give so lovingly of their time and energy.

As we expand and serve more people, so will our church year expand to cover every single Sunday. We've made great strides in this with the help of Terry Madden, who led our services in January, so that Reverend Suzanne could take a well-deserved winter study break. Terry will again be with us in



July. We are grateful for his assistance in helping us to grow. As the number of adult services increase, so will the Religious Education

classes. In the summer months, we will have a more informal nature centered program, but we'll try to have something for the young people each Sunday.

This is an incredibly exciting time to be a New Hoper. We are all filled with anticipation for a busy growing season. Come help us plant the seeds of Unitarian Universalism in South Lyon and New Hudson.

See you soon in church!

Love, Kathy

NEW HOPE DINNER PARTY/FUNDRAISER

New Hope's monthly *Dinner Party Auction* started in May, 2008. Over the past months we have had several people host meals at their home. The fun is that, you the host, decide the date of your party, number of guests you can accommodate, and what type of a meal you will serve. If you wish to "show off" your gourmet skills or just order in pizza and salad, it doesn't matter. What matters is that we make a little money for New Hope and people get the opportunity to enjoy a meal with friends. So whether you are Julia Childs or Cuisine Challenged – no worries. Join in the fun. The Dinner Party Auction is generally held on the last Sunday of the month.