



Uni-Verse

January 2009

"Providing a safe and inviting space for religious freedom"
 UUFBF Vision Statement

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Big Flats
P.O. Box 103
Big Flats, NY 14814
Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association
607-562-3017 www.uuonline.net

Sunday Services:

10:30 a.m. at the Fellowship just off Hibbard Road, located on the north side of Interstate 86 between exits 49 and 50.

All are welcome for coffee and conversation following the service.

Children's Religious Education Classes:

10:45 a.m. Sunday mornings, September through June.

Sunday Service Schedule

January 4	Roll-Out to the Congregation Board members will present an information and feedback gathering session around three vital concerns : the sanctuary expansion project; worship service program selection and idea generation; and current building stewardship issues. Get up to speed with the board's thinking and help create the 2009 fellowship action plan.
January 11	Jennifer Johnson will offer a musical program of drumming and Native American flute, stories about nature and the cycle of life and introduce Greensprings Natural Burial of Newfield, NY.
January 18	Barbara Ramsdell will present the story of John W. Jones, famous for his work to secure passage for hundreds of black slaves passing through the Underground Railroad station that was Elmira in the 1860s.
January 25	To be announced.

President's Ponderings

Leslie Potter and I went to find out what's in the Fellowship's bank box earlier this fall and found the original copy of our incorporation document with Chemung County. It was dated April 12, 1959, so that means that 2009 is the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Big Flats! What a great year to celebrate and to mark the next phase of our growth with our sanctuary expansion plans. Don't miss the congregational roll out from the SET Forth (Sanctuary Expansion Task Force) committee about their research this fall and plans for 2009. I'm bargaining for a year unlike any other I've experienced in the 20 years of my membership with the fellowship. Momentum is building and leaders are stepping forward to take us into the future. I'm so grateful to find board members and committee chairs that are consistently moving forward. I've included the first of five installments of fellowship history notes with this edition of the Uni-Verse. Each month I'll give a snapshot of a decade of our history. And this spring I hope that we will offer a whole new chapter to our community - an expanded opportunity for a safe and welcoming place for religious freedom and spiritual growth. Now is the time for us to grow - like we've been talking about for over ten years. In this time of renewed hope, authenticity and social justice, we can give ourselves the green light. "If you think change is hard --you'll like irrelevance even less." Our fellowship and its ideal are goals worth supporting and will contribute to the integrity of our community, our lives and our grandchildren's lives. See you next Sunday! *Jenny Monroe*

Fellowship News

Board Shorts

At the December 7th meeting, the Board recognized Leslie and Frank Potter for their work with outreach events (Octagon Fair & Sparkle) and Kevin and Michael Deery for their community work with the Project Hot Seat - Global Warming Community Actions. As of January 1 our little office building will not be rented. Tamara reported for the Set Forth Committee about current research into solar panels for fellowship roof, round sanctuary design for placement due north of current meeting space, accessible restroom, and three-year phased timeline. Congregation will receive update on January 4 so that board can finalize 2009 work plan and preliminary budgets. In addition topics of program ideas and building issues will be given to the congregation at that meeting. Planning for growth application was submitted 12/1. Leslie, Colleen and Jenny attended a stewardship workshop on 12/1 and formulated a plan for 2009/10 pledge and canvas activities. Membership committee will be combined with stewardship efforts this spring. Corey will facilitate January Adult RE with book by John Buehrens. Next Board meeting will be held, Sunday, January 4 at 9:15 a.m.

Hurray for our Kids!

Congratulations to the children and youth for the Dec. 14th performances. What a joy it was to see how each of you contributed to a diverse, entertaining program for all of us. Thank you for your generosity in offering this gift to the congregation - and thanks to the parents and teachers who helped it to be a first class production!

UU's For the Birds

Bird lovers are encouraged to bring black sunflower birdseed or hanging suet cakes. The birdseed should be brought in a coffee can or screw top jar. There is a labeled container in the kitchen for such items. We also encourage you to fill the feeder and hang the suet!

Children's RE

Thanks to all who supported our Faith in Action project to Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF. We raised \$70.07 which may be used to cover the cost of immunizations for four children protecting them against the six leading child-killing diseases: measles, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and tuberculosis. That's a lot of shots!

Adult Religious Education

Our Adult Religious Education Program returns from its holiday break beginning in January with a discussion of John Buehrens's book *Understanding the Bible: An Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers, and Religious Liberals* (Amazon link: http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0807010537/ref=sib_dp_pop_toc?ie=UTF8&p=S008#reader-link). We will meet January 11, 18, and 25 from 9:15-10:15. Please plan to read the "Before We Begin" section (pp. 3-42) for the first meeting. We will have a sign-up sheet at the Fellowship beginning Sunday, Dec. 14. Please sign up so we can get an idea of how many people are interested. Diane Muffley has graciously offered to coordinate childcare for these meetings, so childcare will be provided. If you have any questions, contact Corey McCall (mccallcor@gmail.com) or Carolyn Scopelliti (cjh1959@yahoo.com).

RE & OWL Retreat Dates:

June 13th - June 15th

Fees:

Adults: \$75 per person

Youth (8-17): \$50 per person

Children (2-7) \$35

About RE & OWL Retreat:

Camp Unirondack is pleased to offer a weekend of relaxation and fellowship for leaders in UU religious education. We will hold a couple of roundtable discussions on RE topics of your choice on Saturday, but there will also be ample time to enjoy the outdoors, have a campfire by the lake, make a crafts project, play games and enjoy each other's company. We look forward to offering this time of relaxation and celebration after a long year of working in our churches' religious education programs. We hope you will experience some of our Unirondack traditions, enjoy our hospitality, and glimpse some of the wildlife that lives around us.

To Register

Please go [here](#) or contact the camp director at director@unirondack.org or 845-675-9001 to have a registration form mailed to you.

1959 – 2009 Fifty Years of Unitarian Universalism in the Chemung Valley

Part One: 50 Years Ago

In 1956 a group of religious liberals held an organizational meeting at the Mark Twain Hotel in Elmira. They met with Rev. Ralph Halverson of the First Unitarian Church of Ithaca and Monroe Husbands of the American Unitarian Association of Boston. At this meeting, the Chemung Valley Unitarian Fellowship was organized. Meetings were held initially at the Elmira YMCA under the leadership of Dr. John Joy, with average attendance of 15 to 20. To attract more, meetings were moved to the third floor of the old Corning Library, however attendance fell to about six per week and the fellowship was discontinued.

In 1957 the fellowship was re-activated and rented space at the Jewish Community Center in West Elmira through 1958. A Sunday school was started and the fellowship grew with their first budget set at \$1,000 for the 1958-59 fiscal year.

In 1959 the fellowship rented a farmhouse on the Steuben–Chemung county line on Route 352. It was hoped that this would make travel from Corning and Elmira easier. Arthur Baker was to have been president and the night he was to officially take over, he complained that he was not feeling well. He left and died of a heart attack on the way to the hospital. The fellowship felt a deep sense of loss at his untimely death at age 35. Dr. Kenneth Moore, vice president, assumed the presidency and led the fellowship through their first successful year.

The fellowship began to grow and purchase furnishings for the farmhouse meeting place, the Sunday school and kitchen. Incorporation papers were filed with Chemung County on April 12, 1959. There were 58 members recorded in 1960. Renovations of the cellar of the farmhouse occupied members during the summer of 1961 to add religious education space. All went smoothly until the spring of 1963 when the farmhouse was put up for sale. Long discussions about what to do next commenced. A building committee was formed to look for land.

But where to look? The search for land would split the fellowship and tempers flared and resignations were tendered, all over where the fellowship should build. Had we hindsight, we would have bought that farmhouse. While the committee looked throughout Big Flats, Horseheads and Elmira for sites, the fellowship had to move in the fall of 1963 to new rented quarters in the old Big Flats Methodist Church. No space for Sunday school however and as winter approached they realized that the furnace was inadequate and snowflakes could find their way into the sanctuary through cracks in the outer walls.

In the spring of 1964, the fellowship moved for the fifth time to the basement of the Horseheads Grange. Despite a very noisy overhead heater, making it difficult to hear the speaker, the fellowship met weekly while the building committee continued its search. Two land plots were brought up for a vote – one located in Horseheads and one in Big Flats. The vote was close, only one more ballot cast for Big Flats than the Horseheads option. After the decision, many members resigned. The remaining members continued with the purchase in Big Flats of two and a quarter acres, purchased for \$5000 from Marion, Hilda and Esther Rhodes. The site was adjacent to an exit planned for NYS Route 17.

Now with the land a building design was the next agenda item. The fellowship wanted something different than a conventional-looking church. The first design publicized in the local paper was a circular building with the roof suspended by cables from tall concrete pylons. But these dreams were shattered when no contractor could be found willing to undertake the building of such a structure. Back to the drawing board for 18 months to create a two part structure with patio area in between. A fellowship space and religious education classrooms on the highway side and larger sanctuary building to be sited behind, all connected with a walk-through passage on the east end of the two wings.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on May 15, 1965 with president Bruce Simson officiating. The whole fellowship turned out on a bright, sunny day to witness the first shovelful of dirt turned, with a gold plated pick and shovel. Now it's really going to happen, thought the members. However, the contractor took his time and it was another 18 months before the building was completed.

In the next installment...a new building and its soggy parking lot, even before the flood of 1972.

From *The Unfinished Story of the Chemung Valley Unitarian Fellowship* compiled by James W. Farrell, 1987.

Community Events	
Sunday January 4 th 5PM-8PM Islamic Association of the Finger Lakes Big Flats	Al-Ghazali - The Alchemist of Happiness This movie will be show on a big screen at the IAFL Center. TIME: 5:00 PM - Snacks/Dinner 6:00 PM - Movie (Run time 80 min.) 7:30 PM - Discussion 8:00 PM - Isha Prayer Exploring the life and impact of the greatest spiritual and legal philosopher in Islamic history, this film examines Ghazali's existential crisis of faith that arose from his rejection of religious dogmatism, and reveals profound parallels with our own times.
Tuesday, January 6 7 PM First United Methodist Church Corning	Science & Religion Discussion Group Jenny Monroe will lead a discussion of <i>A New Earth</i> by Eckhart Tolle.
Sunday, January 18 4 PM 171 Cedar Arts Center Corning	Making Real the Dream This free performance features Guy Davis, the ultimate blues musician who is traveling with New York State residents Kim and Reggie Harris, two vibrant, superbly talented and engaging performers with 25 years as singers, songwriters, educators and storytellers.
Sunday, January 25 th 4 PM Big Flats Presbyterian Church	Corning Vicinity Faith Communities (CVFC) Annual Meeting will feature music and movement performance and audience participation with Jody Kessler and ensemble of Ithaca

FELLOWSHIP HOSTING SCHEDULE - Hosting is a service that we provide each other. If you are unable to host on a day that you are assigned, please make arrangements for someone else to take your place.

DATE	HOST
Dec 28	Stevenson, Swarhout, Cowles
Jan 4	Martin/Glen, Muffley, Brenner
Jan 11	Allen, Dodson/Miller, Young
Jan 18	Halm/Maloney, Divens-Bruffey
Jan 25	Wosinski, L&J Potter, Mann
Feb 1	Spicer, Deery, Scopelliti
Feb 8	Monroe, McCall, Edwards

Board Members		
President	Jenny Monroe	607-524-8439
Vice-President	Corey McCall	607-846-2574
Secretary	Lori Dodson	607-737-8082
Treasurer	Leslie Potter	607-739-9624
Director	Dave Muffley	570-835-5133
Director	Gary Swarhout	607-377-2967
Uni-Verse Editor	Jeni Paquette jpaquette@stny.rr.com	607-937-9809

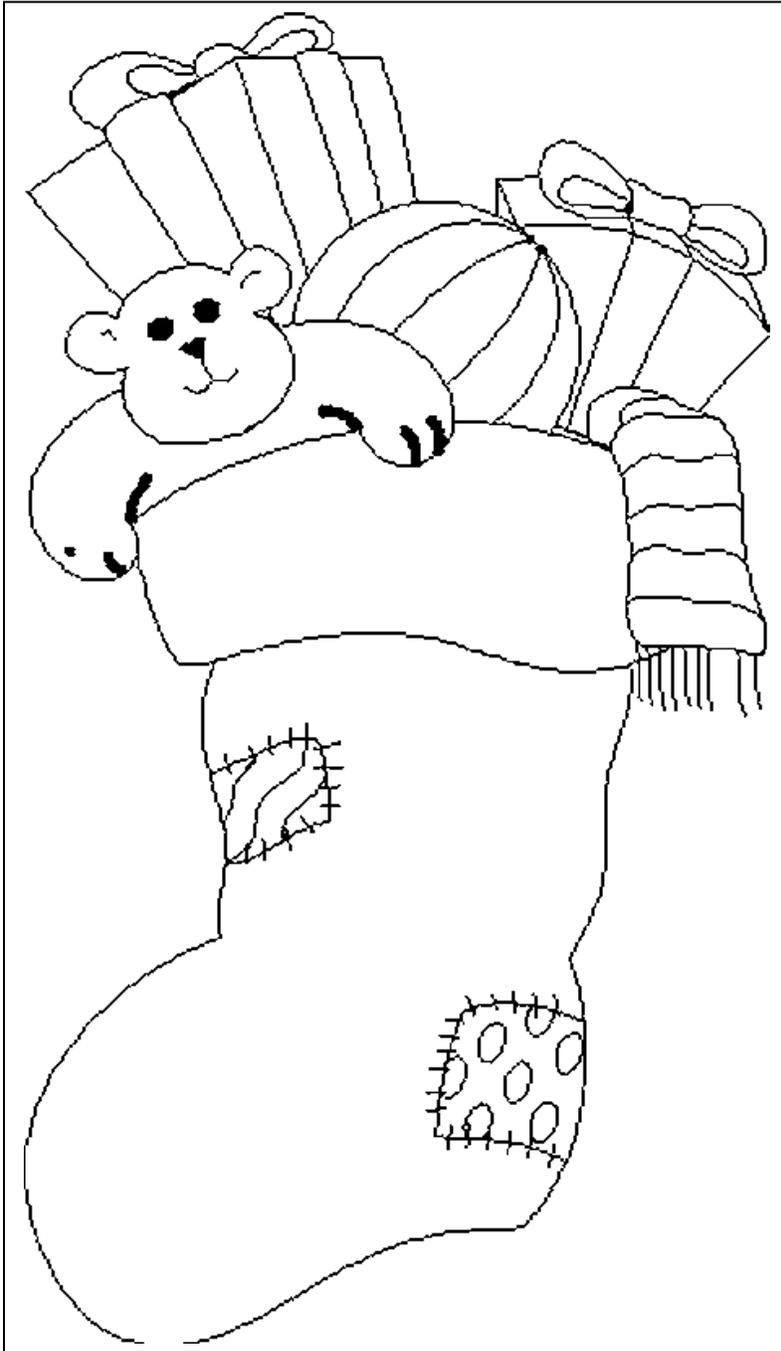
Uni-Verse is published monthly at \$6.00 for one year (12 issues) by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Big Flats. Submissions are due by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the following month's newsletter. Editor reserves the right to use and edit submissions. Permission to reprint in whole or part with proper citation granted.

I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality.

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child--our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

-Thich Nhat Hanh, "Miracle of Mindfulness"

Thanks to Sara Hurley for submitting the above. The editor welcomes all contributions – inspirational, poetic, and artistic!



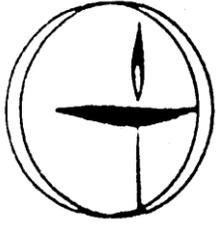
Caring and Concerns Corner

In future issues of the Uni-verse, we hope to share the joys and concerns of the Fellowship. If you have something you would like to share with the Fellowship in this space, contact Diane Muffley or send an email to Jeni Paquette, jpaquette@stny.rr.com.

Kids Page

I hear that at least one child has missed the coloring page! I welcome suggestions for making the newsletter more interesting for our younger members.

Address correction requested



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Please check here _____ and return if you no longer wish to receive this mailing. Thank You