



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Equinox, Fall, Back to Learning

I am writing this first newsletter column of the church year, on the first day of fall. Like all our days in the dominant culture, the first day of fall began at midnight and has 24-hours duration, more or less. The first day of fall is an approximation required because we haven't really figured out how to begin days in the middle of the arbitrary 24 hours of our days. But the autumnal equinox, which is the reason fall begins when it does is more precise. So precise, in fact, that it doesn't exist.

At 9:03 PM Eastern Time this first day of fall, the earth is at the point in its orbit where the equator moved directly under the sun. From a terrestrial point of view, it appears that the sun is directly over the equator. It doesn't stop and linger there, though. It is a matter of constant motion. The equinox does not last a day, an hour, or even a nanosecond. We pass a perceptual road marker. But it does not last. At the precise moment we note it, it is behind us.

What does last is the season. Fall. This has always been my favorite season. I grew up on the Illinois flat land, where trees were typically not very colorful. Summer leaves could be lush green. The twelve full-grown silver maples in our yard were most beautiful to the eye in a summer thunderstorm, when the underside of the leaves would turn into view, showing the color that gives them their name.

Still, what my brothers and I looked forward to was the time when they shriveled and turned a dull, crunchy brown. Twelve trees gave lots of leaves to pile up and play in. Fall began in late

September, but we had to wait till nature was ready for the leaves to fall. In those days we eventually burned them, but because we didn't live in a suburb where neighbors scowled if your leaves weren't quickly removed from view, we had some time for one of life's simple pleasures.

Summer was too hot to truly enjoy, living in an uninsulated, unairconditioned farmhouse, with lots of outdoor chores to accomplish in the heat of the day. But when the heatwaves were over, it was time to enjoy life more fully. Not instantly, but we could feel the shift in our pores and were ready to enjoy well before fall felt like fall.

Our climate is quickly changing to less hospitable patterns, but for now, the seasons here provide us beauty and greater physical comfort for many of us as we come into fall. On our church calendar, September has been a month of transitional services, as usual. Our activities seem designed to draw out for many weeks the equinox's turning us toward a new season of enjoyment, beauty, and learning as the season's activities give us opportunities to be together again.

Be on the lookout for email from me planning for and announcing a Fall adult class on American histories of achievement, struggle, and growth that were often hidden from us. I have details to work out and will probably need a co-leader for the class for a few times I will need to miss. I'm looking forward to settling into a new season of learning with you.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

Our Afghan Family's Latest Milestone

By Suzy Huston

As most of you already know, the UUFW has a Home Team working with a family that was evacuated from Afghanistan last August. It has been a very rewarding and yes sometimes exhausting experience for the eight-member team.

Recently, with the help of Church World Services, we were able to get the family prepared for an asylum interview in Arlington. On September 6, three members of the team, Ingrid Meadows, Otis Huston and I, in a rented 15-passenger van, took the parents, their six children and a brother of the father to their interviews.

The first interview was scheduled for 8:30 a.m., which meant we would need to go to Northern Virginia the night before. So that the children would miss only one day of school, we didn't leave until 4:00 p.m. We booked a very convenient hotel for the 12 of us and arrived there at 7:00 p.m. We were greeted by Gerda Keiswetter from the UU Church of Arlington. Her husband Allen was waiting for us at a nearby Afghan restaurant where he had made arrangements for us to have a wonderful meal. The half-mile walk to the restaurant was a much-needed chance to stretch our legs and allowed the children to burn off a little energy. To them, this was a great adventure, and they were very excited. The Keiswetters not only paid for our meal but also gave a personal check for \$200 to help with some of the costs of our trip. They were so lovely and gracious to us all.

After dinner we decided to drive a few minutes to the National Mall area to see the monuments all lit up. The father especially wanted to see the Capitol Building. We were able

to find a parking spot, and everyone piled out of the van for a photo. It was after 10:00 p.m. when we returned to the hotel.

The following morning, we were up early for our walk to the Asylum Office. Things didn't start out smoothly because when we arrived, we found out the computers were down, and the 7:30 a.m. group were still in queue. Around 3:00 p.m. everyone except the brother, including the four oldest children, had been interviewed. So, we walked to the Afghan restaurant for our first meal of the day. The children were remarkable. We returned to the hotel that so kindly allowed us to hang out while we waited for the brother to finish his interview. At 5:15 p.m., we piled in the van, and in rush hour traffic, headed for home. Ingrid, who has lived in Northern Virginia, was our fearless driver. Through heavy traffic and often heavy rain, she safely brought a very weary group of travelers safely back to Stuarts Draft.

There are still many hoops to jump through before we know if our Afghan family will obtain asylum, but they feel very fortunate to have made this first big step.

Member News

Nancy Lay, our Board President, had a fall while she and Steve were out camping. She dislocated her shoulder and fractured a bone in her upper arm. She is back home and still in a lot of pain. Nancy will be learning the extent of the treatment she needs next week.

Pat Patterson is already home from the hospital after having aortic valve replacement surgery on Tuesday. She is feeling great and extends her thanks to everyone who sent cards, emails and healing thoughts.

