



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Whose Shamrocks?

The other day in Kroger, the flower section had pots of shamrocks. I couldn't tell you the last time I saw a shamrock. Time was when I saw them frequently. My Grandma Gillson always kept multiple varieties of shamrock in her house. She didn't have Irish ancestry. I guess she just liked shamrocks. I know she gave no thought to St. Patrick in relation to them, devoted Protestant lady as she was.

We're coming up on that saint's day, though. So, shamrocks pull me into a host of memories. In elementary school, the custom was to wear something green on St. Patrick's Day or get pinched. And since I wore hand me downs in those years, I got pinched. Even the people with Irish in their lineage thought of themselves as just American in that area and those years. But the teachers taught a brief lesson about St. Patrick's driving the snakes out of Ireland and his teaching about the Trinity by using the shamrock leaves' division of each leaf into three. My classmates seemed to like the pinching. And the cupcakes with green icing. Now we know that there never were any snakes in Ireland for a saint to expel, and it is unlikely that he ever used the shamrock to teach the idea of Trinity, as the teachings of the Church held all explanations of the Trinity except the words of the Athanasian Creed to be heresy. Most of what you remember about St. Patrick was probably not true.



Then I went to a university that had a strong Chicago presence among the student body. And Chicago is the city that dyes their river green for this holiday. And downstate, the campus town bars served green beer for Chicagoans away from home under the theory that everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day – at least according to one ethnic stereotype.

Grandma Gillson wasn't Irish, and I have a mere smidge, but my partner Walter has lots of Irish ancestry in his family tree. Even though it is distant ancestry, Walter has always liked to have colcannon or corned beef and cabbage on St. Patrick's Day. His ancestors in the old country would have made sliced back-bacon and cabbage. But the relative cheapness of corned beef on these shores trained immigrants in substitution.

Many times, people know what they are talking about because of the way the recipe or the custom was handed to them, even though many customs are recent adaptations... Which brings me back to Grandma Gillson's

shamrocks and the pot of them I bought at Kroger. In case you were wondering, those shamrocks are not something our Irish ancestors would have known at all in their Ireland. The shamrocks of Ireland were *Trifolium dubium* (lesser clover) or *Trifolium repens* (white clover) – you know, the clover that grows weedlike in many American lawns. But the plants in Kroger and the ones my Grandma tended in her home were not any variety of *Trifolium*, but a few species of the *Oxalis* genus. These are nonculinary plants related to wood sorrel.

That doesn't mean tradition is wrong. Adaptation is key when the situation changes. We're talking about grounding, enriching, and ever-malleable culture. But no pinching!

Peace and Blessings,
Rev Paul

We did it!

By Florence Ferguson, Treasurer

The UUFW has met its pledge drive goal for the first time in many years. This is due to the many generous pledges from our members and friends. So thank you one and all.

As your treasurer, I can attest to the fact that many of you have increased your pledges to help sustain our beloved Fellowship for another year. It is looking like we will be able to meet our obligations without having to make major budget cuts and without having to come back to you and ask for more.

Pledges make up most but not all of our needed revenues. The Board's Stewardship Committee, under the leadership of Susan Clark, is planning some exciting new

fundraising initiatives, which you will be hearing more about in the near future. In the meantime, let's celebrate our collective generosity and love for the UUFW.

The Mountain

The mountain awakes:
the flowers will move.
The stream brings more and more life
to grow the pretty gift
of the earth's true heart.

When the birds are flying high above,
the sky gives them the reign.
The mountain gives and lives a love.
The sky is full of turns and dips,
this, the birds can understand.
The sky is giving to the land,
and birds are in tune with the demand.

No small breathing life is so small
that earth doesn't give a spice or scent,
to blend in the meadow wind.
The mountain must grow the true effect,
to what the sky has given to it.
So, only the bird that flies above knows
what the mountain really grows.
The sky has shown the earth a root
that cannot be grown except in truth.

The wind is passing through the peaks;
the mountain only shifts and creaks.
This is not the only way a mountain learns
and teaches life.

Paul Rabinowitz

