



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Potluck: Promise and Purpose

By Clint Nicely

"Food is our common ground, a universal experience."
James Beard

For a kid growing up in rural Virginia in the 1950s, almost all social interactions outside of just family were centered around the activities of the church and the local Ruritan Club. One of the most enjoyable experiences from those childhood years was what is referred to throughout the American South as "dinner on the grounds." And though I did not realize it—nor did I fully understand it—back then, those church-based functions were also among the most impactful and deeply meaningful experiences of my childhood.

Whether it was the annual Homecoming at my father's boyhood family church at Fancy Hill in Alleghany County, or the monthly summer Fellowship Picnic at our local church in Lyndhurst, "dinner on the grounds" was always a big deal. Neither of those old wooden country churches had a kitchen or a social hall, but both were surrounded by large trees, closely spaced, with board-tables between them, nailed to supporting braces on the trees. Most of us kids sat on the ground to eat, but for the grownups there were folding chairs and even pews carried from the sanctuary. Everyone was excited for those outings, and every family brought a variety of dishes. Those old makeshift tables were always weighted down with food. Kids played, teens flirted, adults talked and laughed, all shared in the feast. Everyone saw those

fellowship picnics as among the most meaningful of the church's communal gatherings.

Over the past several decades, I have attended a variety of communal type meals—family gatherings, of course, and organizational outings, teacher picnics, and the like. In the past few years, however, I have been fortunate enough to be introduced to a new fulfilling and meaningful iteration of "dinner on the grounds:" the monthly potlucks at UUFW. The setting and environment are different, more convenient, more comfortable; but the purpose and the spirit are the same—friendship, fellowship, and community. The unstructured fellowship of the weekly after-service coffee and snacks time—a sort of potluck in miniature—is apparently a long-standing Unitarian-Universalist tradition, as I first encountered that custom after a UU service in South Georgia nearly half a century ago. That intrinsic paradigm of fellowship has become a hallmark, a cornerstone of the UU communal philosophy, one that provides us an additional avenue toward our goal of living up to our UU principles of love and sharing. These traditions

of communion and fellowship we all appreciate, relish in, and are grateful for.

Whether for the purposes of celebration, ritual, or tribute; whether for family, social or religious groups or entire communities;



throughout all societies, cultures, and nations, the breaking of bread together, in all its sundry forms has, since prehistoric times, been an integral part of the development of community among humankind, and an essential part of every community. Sharing a meal upholds and sustains that core element of human existence. The UU Potluck is an example of one such sharing among community, a manifest example of our weekly recitation of "From you [we] receive, To you [we] give, Together we share, And from this we live."

For us it is one of our means to connect with each other, to reaffirm our values, and to reenforce our commitment to our Unitarian-Universalist principles. It is, let us remember, more than just a shared meal; it is a reiteration of a custom as old as humankind itself. When we gather for our UUFW Potluck, we are adding one small link to the chain of the human community, a link that James Beard refers to as "a universal experience."

Membership Team News

By Florence Ferguson, Team Leader

The UUFW Membership Team is off to a busy start this year. We have improved our greeting/welcoming procedures, taken steps to expand our social media presence, and are beginning to plan a major recruitment activity after the new year.

To improve our response to visitors, we have updated our UUFW information brochure, and ordered more UUA materials that tell the UU story. From now on, visitors will be given an envelope with several of these items to help them get to know about us more quickly. Greeters/Welcomers are encouraged to ask visitors to enter their information into one of the two electronic tablets, instead of the paper visitor

form (which will still be available). The information entered into the tablets is automatically recorded in our new visitor database that has made it easier to ensure all visitors receive a follow-up note or email. If you are a regular Greeter/Welcomer, or if you would be willing to become a greeter, be sure to review the [revised procedures](#) that incorporate these changes.

We have two upcoming membership events. On Sunday, we will have our traditional welcome ceremony for new members, and on November 18 Rev. Paul and the Membership Team will offer our next "New to UU" orientation for prospective new members. We have a list of recent visitors to invite, but if you know of someone who may be interested, be sure to let me or Rev. Paul know.

I thank everyone who seeks out visitors after the service and makes them feel welcome. It is so important that our visitors leave with a warm feeling and the knowledge that we strive to live our values.



The Social Justice and Membership Teams joined forces last Saturday to be a presence at the Staunton Pride Fest. We gave out information and talked to many people about UUFW. At least two of them attended the LGBTQ service on Sunday.

