



# The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist  
Fellowship of Waynesboro

## The Power of Our Stained Glass

By Clint Nicely

Sitting in the Fellowship one evening before a recent TrUUvel presentation, and after the presidential election, I was stunned at the sight of our beautiful stained-glass window. In preparation for TrUUvel, the Fellowship had minimal lighting, and outside it was pitch dark. The resultant effect was that the window seemed darkened, almost black, as all the normally vibrant colors appeared as different shades of blacks and dark grays. My initial reaction — thankfully, only a fleeting, momentary one — was that the darkness of the window was a bad omen, portending disastrous times ahead.

Staring at that darkened window, I recalled a service last January when the choir graced us with the song “Shenandoah.” As for familial history, my ancestral connections to this valley and these mountains run deep, predating the American Revolution. I suppose that deep connection is why that window scene holds such special meaning and power for me. And “Shenandoah,” along with our national anthem and a few other songs, always brings tears to my eyes. That recollection of the choir’s moving performance, together with the accompanying message, spurred my memory, bringing our beautiful window back to life, in all its colorful majesty.

Listening that cold Sunday morning as the choir sang “Shenandoah,” I sat engrossed, gazing at the beautiful stained-glass above them, and as I stared through moistened eyes, that window became for me a microcosm of this valley and my

roots in it. I understood, or at least felt profoundly, perhaps for the first time, the full weight of the mournful lamentations of the lyrics. As the service continued, our guest minister, Rev. Jennifer Springsteen, gave an insightful and inspiring message titled “Winter Restores” about the interdependent web of life, including not just humanity, but the totality of nature in all its complexity, the earth and its environment, as well as the universe, both physical and spiritual. Indeed, it was a message centered around the seventh UU Principle, but it also seemed generally inclusive of all our principles, perhaps of all UU-ism in its entirety.

As I listened to the speaker’s message, staring all the while at that beautiful stained glass, the window came to life in my imagination as a sort of interactive contemplation. First, the flames of the chalice began to dance, flickering strands of yellow and orange and red gently leaping and weaving in and out around each other, creating a braid of fire and light. And then, somehow, the Chalice seemed to step out from the glass, still in the scene, yet at the same time a piece apart, casting its luminous glow of protection over the scene behind. And then, birds soared over the mountains as the clouds drifted by. And as our speaker continued, deer and racoons and foxes emerged, playing along the verge of the forests. The blues of the rivers rolled and bobbed and rippled as fish leaped into the air and then plunged back into their watery home. And in the fields, livestock grazed, farmers with horses worked the land, and the vegetation radiated its rich green shades. That brilliant window

depicted a scene of harmony — a unity of plants and animals and people and the land itself, the rolling hills of color, in hues both light and dark, rich and fertile, a scene perhaps of the ideal “purple mountain majesty.”

As Rev. Springsteen concluded her message, I watched the Chalice — that all-important symbol that is to Unitarian Universalism essentially as meaningful as the cross is to Christianity — step back into the scene, and I realized that what I had thought were sashes and ribbons were actually roots, living roots of the Chalice twisting and winding their way into the valleyscape of the window scene, indeed, anchoring themselves into and through the walls of our Fellowship, straight into the earth floor of our beautiful valley. I realized that our beloved stained-glass window is more than just a window; it is the ultimate and permanent piece of art on our walls. It is, perhaps, in great measure, our own perfect variation of the Sistine Chapel ceiling — full of life and love and meaning intrinsic to our UU principles and values.

Now when I look at that window, I see more than just a beautiful work of art depicting the essence of our locale; I see an active, living portrait of our valley environment with all of its interdependent web of existence. I see the essence of the values of Unitarian Universalism: I see the absolute antithesis of darkness and disaster. And if there are darker days ahead, I will look at our beloved window and be reassured that, whatever storms may come, we will, as UUs, weather them through love and with a steadfast adherence to our values.

### MUUSIC Sing-a-Ling Program

By Susan Clark

The Sing-a-Ling sessions, which I along with Bill & Lorain Harouff have been leading, are proving



to be very successful and enjoyed by 15-18 people for each of the three sessions so far.

People attending have spoken about how singing with others is just plain fun and helps them have more positive feelings about themselves and their outlook on life in general. Song leaders Bill Harouff, Nancy Fruman and Gene Blackmer have interspersed the songs with interesting facts about the composers, original performers and era of the songs. Many of us have added our personal memories of a song.

Some side benefits have occurred. People new to UUFW have joined in, and the sessions have put all three Patterson brothers (each of whom have wonderful voices) in the same room. Of course, hearing people’s reactions to songs and their memories enriches our friendships.

In addition, there is psychological evidence that singing has many benefits. Learning new songs and singing oldies challenge the brain and improve memory and concentration. Singing releases "feel-good" hormones like endorphins and oxytocin, which help reduce stress and anxiety. And group singing has been shown to decrease cortisol, a hormone linked to stress, promoting a relaxed state of mind. In fact, we laugh and are often downright silly. Most of us feel lighter and happier as we drive home. Come join us! Our next session is Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2:00-4:00 at the Fellowship.



*UUFW members and friends enjoyed another cold but invigorating New Year's Day walk.*

