



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Nil Nissi Bonum?

I had planned to preach my first sermon of 2025 on the topic of how to respond to the reality that we often are around people whose vote and politics result in policies that are harmful to us or to those we love. Instead, I preached on joy. After all, we all need as much joy as the universe can manage. But a few days ago, I was reminded of the original topic in the context of the death of a public figure who, for a period in the 1970s was the face and the voice of American homophobia.

I have never been comfortable with a dogmatic application of the ancient dictum "Don't speak ill of the dead." If that alone guided our actions, we would not easily be able to talk about large swaths of history. Could we say anything meaningful at all about Richard Milhouse Nixon, for example, without taking into account his ethical lapses that led to his resignation from the presidency of the USA? Maybe it's enough for us to tell the truth without rancor, free of judgment and condemnation of the deceased, not letting anyone off the hook, but not belittling the one whose life included highly visible and harmful wrong turns.

When the delayed release of the news of Anita Bryant's death came late last week, the memes mocking her quickly started flowing through cyberspace. The video of her getting a pie in the face and commenting that at least it was a fruit pie got replayed a lot. People said plenty without a touch of grace. Some just wanted a cheap laugh. The obituary in *The Oklahoman* didn't mention Bryant's high-profile campaign against

equality for gay people at all, but major news outlets spoke openly of the way her anti-gay spokespersonship destroyed her successful career and left her no option but to file for bankruptcy. Some specialty news outlets appear to revel in the fact that the most high-profile homophobe's own granddaughter married a woman. I mean, the wedding is something to celebrate. But using it as a new pie in the face of the grandmother of one of the brides feels like too much. News outlets are in the business of selling themselves, however, and controversy sells.

When someone dies who made discrimination against others a centerpiece of their life, my mind goes back to a line from Flannery O'Connor's story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." After O'Connor's character The Misfit shoots an old woman, some of his gang are laughing about it, but he shuts them down, saying, "She would of been a good woman if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."

Anita Bryant wasted her talent, her career, and her economic wellbeing trying to deny fellow citizens' the same rights she had. And she was of her time and circumstance, unable to accept the growing movement toward a more equal society. I don't believe in hell other than the hell that people put each other through in this life and the hell people have to endure because systems of less enlightened, less humane times take a long time to disappear into the ether, even when we work really hard to birth a more

ethical world. So, I neither proclaim Anita's postmortem punishment nor wish for it. She did harm as the face and voice of a movement unwilling to accept the humanity of some of us. The struggles against the positions she took are not yet over. But we live in a different time, with progress made despite her opposition a half-century ago.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Workshop

By Nancy Lay, Director of Religious Education

The UUFW Religious Education Program is offering an "Our Whole Lives" (OWL) sexuality education series of classes for children in kindergarten and first grade. We will also consider enrolling some second graders. The OWL program was developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association in conjunction with the United Church of Christ. It contains sexual education for lifelong learning, beginning with young children and continuing through senior adults. The session we are offering is for the youngest children and includes a variety of topics. The first workshop explores our bodies, including the proper names for all our parts. Following that, we talk about gender as well as body boundaries including good touch and bad touch. We look at families and discuss what makes a family.

From there we move into how babies are made as well as what happens during pregnancy. Finally, we explore babies and how we welcome and care for them. These lessons are all presented in respectful, positive, accurate and developmentally appropriate ways. Each workshop includes a HomeLink handout/email

that connects families to the session topics and supports further learning. HomeLinks are based on a primary premise of OWL: that sexuality education begins at home. Our RE program has also purchased a number of picture books used in each class and which can be borrowed to be used at home.

Our parent information session will be on February 2, 2025, immediately after the service in the Chalice House. There will be childcare available at that time so parents can attend. The following week, February 9th, will be the first session with both parent and child attending. It will start at 10 o'clock and go until 11:30. The remainder of the classes will be held at the same time and include only the children. Our teachers will be Shannon Mills and Savannah Fersner. Both women have been trained, along with me, to be facilitators of this important sexual education program. "Our Whole Lives" is offered free of charge to any family who wishes to enroll. Please contact me at dre@uufw.org with questions about enrollment.

New Art Show at UUFW

"Country, Town, and All Around" is the title of our new art show. It will be on our walls from January 12 through February 23. Local artist



Cheryl Bragg is a UUFW member and sister of Lorain Harouff. She worked for 33 years as a secondary level art teacher in Augusta County. Cheryl received a BS degree in art and minor

in education from JMU, where she also studied psychology. Since retirement in 2005, she has been able to devote time to her first love, watercolor painting. The opening will be on Jan. 19th, when Cheryl will talk about her art journey.

