



# The Leaf

May / June 2009

The Newsletter of the First Universalist Church  
of New Madison, Ohio, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation

## Sunday Services 10 AM

**May 3: John Graham**

**May 10: Richard Venus**

**May 17: Chuck Thomas**

**May 24: Richard Venus**

**May 31: Mike Short**

**June 7: Richard Venus**

**June 14: Richard Venus**

**June 21: Derek Parker**

**June 28: check the website**

[www.uuchurchnm.org](http://www.uuchurchnm.org)

## Upcoming Events

### **FISH Offering Sundays**

May 3

June 7

### **Food and Fellowship**

May 3

June 7

Lunch at Ft. Black Buffet after Sunday services! All are invited.

### **Board of Directors Meetings**

Everyone is welcome!

May 19, 7 PM

June 16, 7 PM

## **Richard's Reflections**

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign which read: "I am blind, please help." There were only a few coins in the hat. A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some words. He put the sign back so that everyone who walked by would see the new words. Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy. That afternoon the man who had hanged the sign came to see how things were. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, "Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?" The man said, "I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way." What he had written was: 'Today is a beautiful day and I cannot see it.'

I'm not sure where I first read this story, or who wrote it, but I have come to appreciate the point: The second sign was a reminder that the passersby were not blind and to be thankful for what they have. I write this to remind us of a similar truth: we have much for which to be thankful even in scary economic times such as these.

Many of us have lived through rough times and we have survived. While this may sound simplistic, what was most helpful in those tough times was the support we received from family, friends, and church. So it is with us today. I confess that I am worried about my bank account being reduced, my savings not being enough to care for Marcia and me, with my future more cloudy than it once was. However, several of you have reminded me that the First Universalist Church of New Madison has survived such times before and its members have remained faithful to its mission to care for one another no matter what. And so we continue to do so.

Recently Margaret Schryver has written: "Here for GOOD." — That phrase has several meanings when you're talking about First Universalist Church." In this issue of *The Leaf* she explains eloquently what she means. She has done us a great service and helped us understand what we have, in some ways, taken for granted, that there is much this church has done, is doing and will continue to do for ourselves and for the larger community we are called to serve, in times like these and in times not like these.

## First Universalist Church of New Madison — “Here For Good”

by Margaret Schryver

I am continually amazed at this little church that I’ve discovered in New Madison. I became aware of its existence several years ago when I was invited to be part of a flute trio that performed at Richard Venus’ installation ceremony when he became your new minister. I was so impressed with the welcoming, kind people of First Universalist that I decided to come to some services — and I’ve been coming ever since. I’m “here for GOOD.”

“Here for GOOD.” — That phrase has several meanings when you’re talking about First Universalist Church.

First of all, the welcoming Congregation and its exploration of UU Principles keeps its members coming back week after week for stimulating UU Services with poignant sermons, beautiful music, lively discussions, and fellowship. Those dedicated members are “here for GOOD.”

On another level, First Universalist hopes to be “here for GOOD.” With such a small membership (only 34 at last count), there is real concern that we might have to close our doors in the not-too-distant future if new members cannot be found to carry on. That fact was discussed at some congregational meetings a couple of years ago, when we were in the development stages toward a more structured approach to community outreach activities. The community outreach efforts would have a dual purpose — to provide aid and support to the needy in our community, as well as get our name out there to attract new people to Unitarian Universalism and, specifically, to our congregation.

That leads me to what I feel is the most important meaning of “here for GOOD” as it refers to First Universalist Church. We truly ARE “here for GOOD” — the challenge of any UU church is to bring GOOD into our World. First Universalist meets that challenge admirably. With so much bad news in the media lately, First Universalist is a beacon of hope, showing that there still are people out there who really do care about those less fortunate and who are willing to do something about it.

Recently I was asked to write an article for *The Leaf*. This article was to outline what the Community Outreach Funding Program of First Universalist has accomplished during its two-year existence. I began writing about just the Committee’s activities but soon realized that this Church has a LOT of caring people who have done so much GOOD, that my article grew far beyond the scope of *The Leaf*! I would have needed a whole *Tree* to tell the story! So.....

Soon you’ll be able to read the whole amazing story of how First Universalist is “here for GOOD.” Watch for a special handout that will be distributed as part of our upcoming Pledge Drive. I hope you will be as inspired by your fellow church members as you read the article as I was while I was writing it. You are truly an amazing group of people who, for such a small congregation, have accomplished a lot of GOOD.

And, because of you, I believe I’m “here for GOOD.”

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### Religious Education Classes

Amy Jones has initiated a religious education class for children and adults using the UU’s *I Believe* curriculum. RE will meet on Sunday mornings at 11:30, following church services. Amy hopes that her class will interest visitors and current members alike. Please feel free to come and participate.

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## 1859...150 Years Ago

by Christel Brooks

In 1859 the Universalists chartered a church in New Madison, Ohio.

What else was going on in Darke County at that time? Think about just how different things were in 1859. The county itself was just 50 years old and growing rapidly. Its population had burgeoned to about 26,000 people, approximately double the population of twenty years earlier. And about *seven times* the population counted in the 1820 census.

With all that growth, the landscape and the population were undergoing a metamorphosis. The Treaty of Greeneville had taken place in 1795, sixty-six years prior. To put things in perspective for today's citizens, the Treaty of Greeneville was as recent in 1859 memories as World War II is for us today. The Treaty marked a key point in the "Indian Wars" as settlers spilled into the area and military forts moved farther west. Farmers replaced forests with plowed fields. Native Americans would be almost entirely gone from the area by the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1700's Ohio was 85-90% forested. Letters from early settlers talk about how rare it was to see the sky; light was filtered out by the trees. By 1900, less than 20% of the land remained wooded.

In 1859, railroads were becoming important. The Ohio & Erie Canal, completed less than 30 years earlier, was already being replaced by iron roads. You can almost close your eyes and imagine the activity and ferment of the day.

The ferment was not limited to clearing land and building towns. In 1859, the United States had been experiencing a long period of political tension. Since the Missouri Compromise in 1820, the issue of slavery was renewed each time another state entered the Union. Things were heating up. And citizens of Darke County were,

no doubt, following the news of the day. The Lincoln-Douglas debates had taken place the year before. And in 1859 abolitionist John Brown made his ill-fated attack on Harper's Ferry. By 1860, Abraham Lincoln would be elected president. By 1861, the nation would be at war, and Darke County men would be fighting to save the Union.



In 1859, the town of New Madison was fresh and new, and probably still a bit raw, having been founded just two years earlier. If you look at the cornerstones of the buildings at the center of town, it appears that the major brick structures probably didn't come along until the early 1900s. Universalists, like the town and like the State of Ohio, were growing and full of energy when they chose to plant a new church in New Madison.



In the next issue of *The Leaf*, watch for a history of our congregation over the past 150 years.

**MAY BIRTHDAYS:**

28 Barbara Moore  
31 Amanda Behee

**JUNE BIRTHDAYS:**

1 Rob Williams  
7 Paula Godsey  
16 Kimberly Searls  
18 Martha Andrews  
19 Becky Grimm  
20 Tammy Ketring

**MAY ANNIVERSARIES:**

10 Byron & Wilma Rutan  
30 Mark & Linda Searls  
31

**JUNE ANNIVERSARIES:**

2 Tye & Vickie McMahon  
10 Shawn & Deetra Huntington  
13 Laura & Andy Willis  
20 Claire & Rob Williams  
21 Dick & Christel Brooks  
28 Lori & Dan Lucas

**Music!**

What would a Sunday morning be without music?! And isn't it especially nice when Lloyd Ketring and Roberta Feltman pair up on the piano and organ while Margaret Schryver joins in with her flute? Now that the weather is nicer and church windows are open, you may be doubly blessed by hearing them practice as you approach the church on Sunday. We probably don't say it often enough: THANKS, Lloyd, Roberta and Margaret! We appreciate you and we appreciate the music. You add beauty to our lives.

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**[www.uuchurchnm.org](http://www.uuchurchnm.org)**