

The Skylight

February 2016

Ohio Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation
66166 Kirkwood Heights Road, Bellaire, Ohio 43906

Phone: 740-377-8868 or 740-377-UUOV

web site: www.ovuuc.org

Rev. Renee (Maurine) Waun

Minister of Record

412-731-2834

OVUUC 2015-2016 Board of Trustees

President – Jeff Madzia

Vice-President - Worship Committee Chair – Pat Jacobson

Secretary – Janet Smith

Treasurer - Meg Geroch

Trustees - John Milam, Drusilla Ice, James Wodarczyk, and Paul Cameron

Nominating Committee: Harriet Parsons (chair), Liz Watkins and Denise Williamson

Message From the President

Each year when the calendar turns to the month of February, I automatically think of the odd little holiday that we celebrate on the second day of the month. Of course, I'm thinking of Groundhog Day; not the 1993 classic movie starring Bill Murray, but the day in which we all pretend that a small mammal in western Pennsylvania predicts for us whether or not we will experience another six weeks of winter.

This year was no different. When it came time for me to think of something to write about for the month's *Skylight*, my first thought was "February" and my second one was "Groundhog Day." I then began to wonder about the origins of this tradition. It turns out that in this country, the tradition of using a hibernating animal to foretell the future was brought to Pennsylvania by German immigrants who had long used hedgehogs for the same purpose in their European homelands.

But that didn't explain how it got started in the first place. Apparently, it turns out that no one really knows why it evolved, but it did come from the sixth or seventh century Christian holiday of Candlemas, which is also known as the Festival of the Virgin. This Festival originated in Europe and was widely celebrated through the Middle Ages. Its intent was to celebrate the end of Mary's "unclean" time, which ended forty days after the birth of Jesus. For various theological reasons, the idea of Mary ever being unclean fell out of favor, but one of the traditions of the Festival was for the priests to bless the candles that were to be used for the rest of the winter. People began to count how many candles it took to get them to spring, and would use the dwindling number to actually predict when the cold weather would end.

How the transition to using a hedgehog instead of candles as predictors remains unclear, but you can at least see how it could have progressed. However, the tradition goes back even further in time with various Greek, Roman, Celtic, and British rural traditions that honored one god or another whose favors were sought at this time of the year for good plowing weather, better fishing, good livestock births, and other nature related events.

Finally, this series of evolving traditions from Pagan rituals to Christian Festivals to secular celebrations involving *Marmota monax* on Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania reminds me of a concern that often comes up in UU churches: the misappropriation of other cultures' traditions. It is sometimes a complaint that UUs take what we want from other religions' rituals, traditions, or cultures in a way that shows a lack of respect, or at least a disregard, for their original intent or meaning. I, personally, have little tolerance for these kinds of complaints, and lack an understanding of just what the offense is. I would see it as an honor if I found out that another church was adapting a ritual that we use to help fulfill their own spiritual needs. Isn't that what we are supposed to be all about? Anyway, the next time the argument against adapting other traditions comes up, I'm going to refer to the history of Groundhog Day as an argument for adapting older traditions to fit our own needs.

Have a great month.

Jeff Madzia, President UUCOV Board of Trustees

Greetings Refreshments

Feb. 7- Carole and Jean Feb.	7- Janet
14- Lee and Harriet	14- Meg
21- Bob and Jean	21- Madzias - Potluck
28- Janet and Gloria	28- Liz

If you are unable to serve on your scheduled date, please trade with somebody or contact Jean.

Dates to Remember:

Board Meeting – first Sunday of the month at 9:am.

Discussion Group – second Sunday of the month at 9:00am.

Lunch Bunch – Vines and Wines, bar and restaurant across the street from the Fish Market Feb 8th at 11:30.

Scheduled Worship Services:

February 7 - "The Gift of Poetry", presented by Ginny Helms. Bring your own poetry to read. Not just one but as many as you would like, If you don't want to read your poetry, Ginny will read them. If you haven't written anything you want to share, bring poetry that you like.
Coordinated by Carole Ryder.

February 14 "On the Ides of February", Valentine's Day and the beginning of Lent, Presented and coordinated by Paul Cameron (Feb. 10 is Ash Wednesday).

February 21 “Into the Light”. Just back from Uganda, Dr. Renee Waun will offer an update on the various projects and programs going on at ABC Divine Foundation School in Mutundwe, which we support. Fair Trade African crafts will be available for sale. Presented by Rev. Renee Waun, coordinated by Carole Ryder

February 28 “The Spirit of Drumming”. A service exploring the Drum as a historically spiritual tool. Members of the congregation will be invited to experience the meditative power of rhythm in unison with a brief drum circle to conclude the service. Please bring a percussion tool of your own to if you wish to participate. Presented by Grant Coleman, coordinated by Jeff Madzia

