



2016 ~ November

The Bellnote Mini-News

UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF EAST LIBERTY
2231 Jefferson Road, Clarklake, MI 49234
(517) 529-4221 Located 3/4 miles West of U.S. 127

Minister's Column

It's been a long election season leading up to this month, and I'm thankful it's coming to a close. This has been an election where I've struggled more than ever before about the line ministers draw between what we're allowed to say and what would jeopardize our non-profit status. I've seen colleagues struggling with it as well, asking, well, where is that line exactly, and trying to parse out distinctions like, "If I denounce a candidate, but don't endorse a candidate, is that okay?"

People often mistakenly think that for a church or a minister to endorse a candidate is "illegal" and/or against separation of church and state. Neither, in fact is true. Separation of church and state is about keeping the government from endorsing a religion (and not vice-versa). The sole thing that keeps us from endorsing, as far as the government is concerned, is that it would violate our tax-exempt status. So we can endorse a candidate, legally, but if we did so we'd need to start paying taxes.

The reason for all this is that this election, so many of our values feel on the line as never before. And ministers are in the business of paying attention to our values. It feels to me like an artificial line to say I can talk about our values, but not endorse a candidate. Don't our values relate to the platforms of the candidates? Yes, of course they do.

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Sunday Services at 11:00 am

November's Theme: Story

Nov 6 - "Values and Democracy" – Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum -- As we approach Election Day, Rev. Cindy will talk about our religious values and how they inform our vote and our understanding of democracy.

Nov 13 - "Touch the Earth, Reach the Sky!" – Lay Leader: Anita Pepper -- On the occasion of Carl Sagan's birthday this month, we will explore our relationship to the stars, scientific and mystical.

Nov 20 - "Thanksgiving Stories: Defying Hate" – Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum -- Rev. Cindy looks at Thanksgiving through this month's theme of "Story." We will share information about the UUSC "Guest at Your Table" program. This year the GAYT program focuses on the story of Waitstill and Martha Sharp who rescued people from the Holocaust during World War II. You can learn more about the Sharps at the December forum!

Nov 27 - "Life is the Greatest Gift of All" – Lay Leader: Nena Obits -- At this time of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we honor people with disabilities who overcome barriers and become full participants in our community.

Calendar

3 Thurs.	Board Meeting ~ 6:30 pm
3 Thurs.	AUUW Meeting ~ 12:30 pm
3 Thurs	JXN Forum committee ~ 2:30 Carnegie Branch Library
6 Sunday	Daylight Saving Time Ends ~ Set Clocks back 1 Hour
6 Sunday	~~~~ Service ~ Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum ~ 11:00 am
8 Tue.	Election Day ~ Go Vote
8 Tue.	Meet Your Neighbor Coffee ~ 9:00 - 11:00 am
9 Wed.	Membership Meeting ~ 2:00 pm
10 Thurs.	JXN Community Forum ~ Issues with Historic Districts in Jackson ~ 6:30 pm @ JDL
13 Sunday	~~~~ Service ~ Lay Leader, Anita Pepper ~ 11:00 am
13 Sunday	Adult RE Programs, Nancee Scott ~ 12:30 pm – 1:00 pm
13 Sunday	Caring Committee Meeting ~ After the Service
14-17	Rev. Cindy will be out of town for her study group
15 Tue.	Worship Comm. ~ Meets at Members' Homes in the Evening
17 Thurs.	Personal Care Ministry ~ @ 1st Baptist Church, 201 S. Jackson ~ 4:30-6:30 pm
8 Fri.	The Big Bling 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm ~ First Baptist Church
19 Sat.	The Big Bling 9:00 am – noon ~ First Baptist Church
20 Sunday	~~~~ Service ~ Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum ~ 11:00 am
20 Sunday	Holiday Gift Basket Silent Auction ~ Begins
20 Sunday	The Bellnote Newsletter ~ Submissions Due
20 Sunday	Adult RE Programs, John Lark ~ 12:30 pm – 1:00 pm
24 Thurs.	Rental ~ Carole Hartsuff
27 Sunday	~~~~ Service ~ Lay Leader, Nena Obits ~ 11:00 am
27 Sunday	Potluck Dinner and Hanging of the Greens ~ After the Service

Rev. Cindy’s Column Continued...

Nevertheless, there is a strong taboo against ministers speaking about politics, particularly in liberal religion. I’ve been asking this question around of people, not just our members, about how they would feel if their minister got political in the pulpit. And the vast majority want religion kept out of their pulpits. Again, it’s something I wrestle with greatly — my religious values have political implications, in my opinion. Yet, I know that for me to endorse a candidate would alienate more people than it would persuade. Ultimately, it is that reason that keeps me from doing it. I may not understand why others draw this line between the political and religious, but there is no doubt that the line is there.

Ultimately, I will *not* endorse a candidate from the pulpit, just as I haven’t in prior elections. Ministers are free to endorse candidates out of the pulpit, however, as long as we don’t say that we’re doing so on behalf of the church. So I will confine my endorsements to my lawn, my bumper, and my Facebook page.

Meanwhile I encourage you to think about this line between politics and religion. Do you feel your religious beliefs have implications for what circle you fill in on your ballot? Does your belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person or your respect for the interdependent web of all existence match up with one candidate or another for you? I’ll be talking more about our values at stake in this election in an upcoming Sunday service.

One of our values is in democracy itself. Living our values fully might lead different people to different candidates, but one thing is clear is that it leads us to vote. So mark your calendar and get to the polls — it’s a civic duty and a religious value!

Peace,
Rev. Cindy

<http://www.libertyuu.org/newsletter.html>
www.libertyuu.org

WHERE PEOPLE CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER AND CARE ABOUT THE WORLD.

JXN Community Forums

..are free and open programs to encourage dialogue about the challenging issues of our day. The series is sponsored by the Universalist Unitarian Church of East Liberty and the Jackson District Library. All forums are held at the JDL, 244 West Michigan Ave., Jackson, MI and they are usually on the third Thursdays at 6:30-8:30 pm. Childcare may be available for a modest donation. Call Debby Sears at the library at 517-788-4087 ext. 234 for more information or see the JDL website at www.myjdl.com

“Issues with Historic Districts
in Jackson and Michigan”

On the 2nd **Thursday, Nov. 10**
Representatives from the Jackson Historic Commission and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network will discuss recent pending legislation in Michigan to change the rules regarding Historic Districts, and how districts would be affected should it pass.

