

A LETTER FROM OUR NEW MMUS PRESIDENT, HELEN OBRIST

Friends:

Thank you for the honor you have shown me by making me the President of May Memorial Unitarian Society for the coming year.

Never before have I taken on a job of this magnitude and I am approaching it with a bit of apprehension; so I am going to need all the help I can get from you.

My largest area of concern is the budget. As you have been told in the past, we are operating on a \$10,000 deficit. --- Think about it. \$10,000. Some of that has been made up, but the remaining \$7,000 is still a large sum - really too large to balance off with fund-raising activities.

If MMUS is important to us as a socially conscious and concerned organization, as a meeting place for casual as well as formal intellectual discussion, as a personally stimulating and richly rewarding community to be part of, we need much more generous contributions from all of us.

We have a philosophical obligation to the Syracuse community to provide a Unitarian presence. Our past leadership as a congregation and as concerned individuals has provided the catalysts which sparked growth and needed change within the city. Now is the time to look to the internal health of the institution known as MMUS so that we can return to being that catalytic ingredient which sparks social action. Without meaningful pledged contributions from each of us, this catalytic ingredient could well stop functioning.

As an example of costs, which most of us are blithely unaware of, let me cite two examples which we should have been able to budget for the current year. The first: What does it cost to sit in a pew on Sunday morning? For an average of 100 people on any given Sunday over the 40 week church year, we projected a budget of \$19,200 for worship, and \$3,695 for music, to make a total of \$22,895. Divide that by 4000 person days and the direct cost for that one activity is \$5.73 each per Sunday! The second: What does church school cost? Predicating the same 100 attendees for a budgeted \$24,350 over 40 weeks yields \$6.87 per Sunday for each child! And you know what inflation does to any projected figures.

Gone are the days in the last century when a few Trustees met and decided how much of the budget they would each subscribe, and then felt free to call the tune for the entire Society; now we are perilously close to the bind that Cazenovia College finds itself in.

May I urge all to raise your current year pledges, as some of us have already done, and then send the Treasurer as much as possible during the summer when receipts are traditionally low and when expenses go on?

What I thought was going to be another area of concern has almost evaporated! It is that of filling standing committee posts. So many of you have said "Yes" to my requests for time and talents that there are only a few slots left to fill. Please look over the lists posted on the easel and sign up where you can.

Our goals for this year are simple ones to state; perhaps not so simple to achieve. Financial stability, of course, is the first. The second is to be achieved by your enthusiasm, energy and talent.

Years ago, a former member of MMUS, who has since moved away, told me that he felt that the Unitarian Church was his liberal voice in the community; saying for him what he was too shy to say for himself, or what conventional business restraints kept him from voicing aloud. I think the time for introspection is over and the time has now come for again becoming that liberal voice in the community; that progressive force and influence in the Greater Syracuse area which has been our heritage for 135 years.

With our efforts and Nick Cardell's guidance, we can meet both these goals.

May Memorial Unitarian Society
Syracuse, New York
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