

Report to the Board of Trustees
John Hurley, Director of Communications
October, 2008

As you will read in the office reports below, three of the four communications offices (Information and Public Witness, Electronic Communication, and Periodicals) were involved in response to, and coverage of, the tragic shootings at the Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville this past July 27th. Communications staff learned of the shootings by 11:30am that Sunday morning, and several of them worked until well past midnight that day creating informational web pages, drafting statements for the media, and coordinating communications among the various constituent groups responding to the tragedy. They developed Google ads so that people searching for information on the shootings could easily click through to uua.org, provided media counsel to Knoxville UUs, and later headed the effort to place a full-page ad in the *New York Times* to proclaim that “our doors and our hearts will remain open.”

The Association’s public witness event at General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale was the most effective and best-attended in memory. The Public Witness Team is already planning the public witness for GA 2009 in Salt Lake City. In other public witness work, communications staff are working closely with Advocacy and Witness staff to help promote the new “Action of the Month” program. We are also working to facilitate communications around the upcoming UUA elections at the Salt Lake GA.

The staff’s strategic marketing group will be meeting in late September to consider next steps in the ongoing efforts to raise the visibility of UUism and UU congregations. And we are finalizing plans for coverage of Bill Sinkford’s trip in Africa in November.

As always, if you have any questions about these reports or the work of the communications staff group, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Information and Public Witness
Janet Hayes, Public Relations Director
October, 2008

The summer quarter was a busy one. After the close of General Assembly the IPW office was busy promoting the new crop of social justice statements and circulating information about the upcoming elections. In particular, the UUA’s work in support of immigrant families has risen in visibility, and we are working hard to share our message of justice and inclusion. This General Assembly topic garnered the most press placements by far and we will continue to make this a top priority in the year ahead.

The IPW Office devoted significant time and energy to communicating about the tragic shootings in Knoxville, Tennessee. All of our staff worked long hours to keep timely and accurate information flowing and to support the Knoxville UU community and UUA staff

who responded directly to the crisis. The media demands were at times overwhelming, but we did our best to respond. We were fortunate to place proactive messages from Bill Sinkford and other members of the Association in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, National Public Radio, network and cable news channels, and many regional print and broadcast outlets. Janet Hayes visited Knoxville to support the Tennessee Valley congregation's work and to manage media relations for their rededication service the Sunday following the shooting.

In June our new Public Witness Specialist, Shelby Meyerhoff, began working for the office on a permanent basis. Shelby brings to this role a passion for electronic media and a deep commitment to promoting Unitarian Universalist values. She has begun developing resources to help congregations and individuals amplify their messages with new media tools such as blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites. The UUA [Blogging Resource Project](#) continues to grow as Shelby adds new materials. She is also managing the UUA's presence on facebook and has developed tips for congregations to use this forum successfully.

Sabe Graham, our Public Information Assistant, is creating new materials for the Visitor's section of uua.org and revising our resources for Coming of Age Heritage Trips to Boston. She is analyzing the results of a survey she designed for DREs and trip leaders who visited last year. Our goal is to make the trip a rewarding and memorable experience that deepens our visitors' connections to their Unitarian Universalist roots and reaffirms their affiliation with our Association of Congregations.

Office of Electronic Communication

Deborah Weiner, Director of Electronic Communication

October, 2008

The 'new' UUA.org is sixteen months old, and – just as with any toddler – we continue to make changes to the website designed to improve ease of access to information and usability.

A major improvement has been the addition of QuickStart Links for different groups of leaders who use our website. Visit <http://www.uua.org/leaders/index.shtml> and you'll see prominent links to take you to groups of key information for:

- [Ministers](#)
- [Church Staff](#) (Paid and Volunteer)
- [Elected Leaders](#)
- [District Leaders](#)
- [Activists](#)
- [Teachers / Parents](#)
- [Youth](#) (14-20)
- [Young Adults](#) (18-35)

There's also an extensive list of hand-picked information on a variety of topics for leaders (see <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/55644.shtml>) -- all designed to provide our ordained, professional, and lay leaders with the information they need and want!

We're currently conducting a web usability survey to inform our discussions about how we can make other changes in our website that will increase user satisfaction. If you are interested in providing feedback, please go to http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=DNXfvbGVJKwSntBnO8JgUA_3d_3d to take the survey (deadline for response: September 30).

Perhaps the most extensive web coverage of the summer went to our materials created in response to the violence in Knoxville which occurred on July 27. The special section <http://www.uua.org/news/knoxville/> offers users a one-stop location for news from UUA.org and UUWorld.org, press releases, messages from Rev. Bill Sinkford, worship resources, media coverage, community resources, opportunities for generosity, and additional materials related to the UU response to violence in Knoxville.

In the wake of Hurricane Ike, we have begun coverage on disaster response from the Southwestern Conference (<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/119313.shtml>) and will make updates to this coverage as events dictate.

Other highlights:

- Our General Assembly 2008 coverage was completed in record time, with most articles and video posted within a week of GA's finish. If you missed events or want to re-live the experience, visit <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/2008/index.shtml>.
- The UUA election website has seen the addition of several new pieces of content. The elections-1 email list has been launched, and is open for subscriptions (to sign up, please go to <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/election-1>). For more information on UUA elections, you can use our drop-down "I am interested in" menu – shown on every page of UUA.org – and pick "UUA Elections," or select links on the front page of the members' and leaders' sections of the web – or just go to this section directly, using <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/elections/index.shtml>.
- We were pleased to feature an article on UU author and computer scientist Randy Pausch, which ran as a tribute on the day following his passing in late July (see <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/117142.shtml>). A new Google Adwords campaign, in partnership with our Office of Congregational Services, is focusing on Pausch and his "Last Lecture," while another Google campaign is aimed – given current political discussions -- at increased interest in the effectiveness of comprehensive sexuality education and the UUA's fine history of providing values-based sex education to our children, young adults, and adults.

Julie Albanese, Assistant Website Director, has now completed her sabbatical leave. As our reliance on the web for information, news, and resources has increased, our

work over the last year has been ably assisted by Andrea Fiore, a temp who works from her home in Las Vegas, Nevada. If you write to web@uua.org you may hear from Kasey Melski, Julie Albanese, or Andrea in response to your request. As always, the Office of Electronic Communication is committed to providing quick and friendly web services and customer assistance.

Periodicals Office
Chris Walton, Editor
October, 2008

Recent highlights from *UU World*, *uuworld.org*, and *InterConnections*:

- In the Summer *UU World*, Richard Higgins examined the **Pew Forum survey** that suggested that 0.3 percent of U.S. adults—approximately 675,000 people—identify as Unitarians (www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/108007.shtml)
- The Fall *UU World*'s **General Assembly coverage** includes four stories, plus an article about the UUA presidential candidates forum (starting on page 36).
- We have published more news coverage of the **Knoxville church shootings** on *uuworld.org* than we have of any other event except Hurricane Katrina:
 - “Two Unitarian Universalists killed in church shooting” (7/28): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117286.shtml
 - “Knoxville stands with grieving UUs after shootings” (7/30): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117514.shtml
 - “‘I’ve never been so proud to be a Knoxvillean’: Interview with John Bohstedt” (8/1): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117599.shtml
 - “Fund raises \$41,000 for Knoxville church shooting victims” (8/11): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117808.shtml
 - “Knoxville church adapts to aftermath of shooting” (8/11): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117807.shtml
 - “Joe Barnhart remembers friend Linda Kraeger” (8/18): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117995.shtml
 - “Knoxville UUs tear garment to mourn shooting victims” (8/18): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/117993.shtml
 - “UUA’s ‘New York Times’ ad affirms justice stances” (8/25): www.uuworld.org/news/articles/118622.shtml
- The **Summer *InterConnections*** features multisite congregations, church planters, and green construction programs (www.uua.org/publications/interconnections/117061.shtml)

Readership continues to grow slowly at *uuworld.org*, where visits are up 12 percent this quarter over the preceding quarter (but only 7 percent higher than this quarter the previous year). Our weekly email newsletter, **uuworldWeekly**, now has 2,300

subscribers. (Sign up at www.uuworld.org/subscriptions/emailnewsletter.shtml.) We are beginning an 18-month **redesign process** for *uuworld.org*, and plan to introduce **paid advertising** to the site by the end of the current fiscal year.

Our office also launched an **internship program** in June, and we are currently interviewing candidates for the fall internship. See www.uuworld.org/about/internships.shtml for more.

Publications and UUA Bookstore Patricia Frevert, Publishing Director October, 2008

Skinner House Books

For the 12 months ending in August 2008, Skinner House sales were \$293,849—down 6 percent from the same period a year ago.

New and Upcoming Titles from Skinner House:

A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers, edited by Eliza Blanchard. Graces, prayers and blessings from Hindu, Sioux, Islamic, Jewish, Christian and Unitarian Universalist traditions, to name only a few. Illustrated in full color. Hardcover. Ages 4 and up. \$12 (June 2008)

Going Out Dancing: Poems, Ric Masten. New and previously published poetry from troubadour and folk singer Masten, who is best known for the popular hymn "Let It Be a Dance." This collection reveals the poet's humor as well as his unflinching look at living with a terminal illness. \$12 (June 2008)

In Between: Memoir of an Integration Baby, Mark Morrison-Reed. The author looks back on integration, black radicalism and the racism he experienced as a young boy in Chicago and as a youth growing up away from home in Europe. Includes the Civil Rights era, the call to ministry, being an early black UU minister, and interracial marriage and family. Throughout, he relates his own life to the experiences and character of his parents and ancestors. Eventually he comes to confront his anger and feel whole. \$18 (October 2008)

Come Sing a Song with Me: A Songbook for All Ages, UU Musicians Network. edited by Melodie Feather. Twenty-five popular and accessible songs from *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*, in simple arrangements and larger format. For home, religious education, summer camp, and multigenerational worship. Spiral bound. \$14 (October 2008)

Welcome: A Unitarian Universalist Primer, edited by Patricia Frevert. This handsome introduction for newcomers presents common prayers, worship readings, quotable quotes and a glossary, plus short essays on UU history, religious education and social justice. 88 pages. \$5 (December 2008)

Be the Change: Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers, Stephen Shick. Readings to inspire and sustain activists and others who are working for a better world. Draws on the wisdom and stories of activist heroes, both celebrated and obscure. (March 2009)

Earth Day: An Alphabet Book, Gary Kowalski. Celebrates the earth and all living things, from A to Z. Illustrated in full color. Hardcover. Ages 4 and up. \$12 (April 2009)

For more about these and other Skinner House titles, see the UUA Bookstore website: <http://www.uuabookstore.org/>.

Skinner House in the Press

A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers

Slated to appear in *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly* (in magazine and in class notes section in back), University of Chicago alumni magazine, Harvard Divinity School bulletin

Reviewed on "Everyday Unitarian" blog

Reviewed on "Massachusetts Mom" blog

Feature upcoming in *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* religion pages (local minister writes book angle)

Uncommon Community: One Congregation's Work with Prisoners

Slated to appear in *Walking Rain Review*

Posted on these websites: Realcostofprisons.org, Communityarts.net

Slated to appear in University of Kentucky alumni magazine and University of Texas Pan American alumni magazine

Upcoming feature in *Houston Chronicle* religion pages (local minister writes book about local issue)

UUA Bookstore

Staff

Ryan Shelby, one of our customer service representatives, celebrated his five-year UUA anniversary on September 11, and he's our newest employee!

Sales

UUA Bookstore sales were \$1,052,723 for the 12 months ending August 2008, down 16 percent from the same period a year ago. The downturn in sales is largely due to the poor economy, as well as weak sales at GA this year.

New Titles from Other Publishers

Wake, Now, My Senses. The third CD from the Musicians of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland. 23 songs from *Singing the Living Tradition*, *Singing the Journey* and *Songs for the Celebration of Life*, performed by large and small choirs. (First Unitarian Church of Oakland) \$15.00

Something Happened, Cathy Blanford. Picture book for children and parents on the subject of miscarriage. Includes a box on most pages with words of advice to help parents explain the loss to their children. (Cathy Blanford) \$12.95

Honoring Motherhood: Prayers, Ceremonies and Blessings, edited by Lynn Caruso. Multi-faith ceremonies honor aspects of motherhood such as: becoming a new mother (through birth and adoption; welcoming children into the larger community; acknowledging the experience of losing a child. (Skylight Paths) \$19.99

Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth, edited by W. Lance Bennett. Discusses how online networks might inspire conventional political participation, as well as how creative uses of digital technologies are expanding the boundaries of politics and public issues. (MIT Press) \$16.00

Bookstore marketing update

We are offering “Nurture Your Spirit/Heal the World” canvas tote bags free to customers purchasing \$50 or more of merchandise. This offer is promoted on the Bookstore’s homepage and in our e-newsletter.

We are publishing a new and improved monthly e-newsletter to a list of 3,000+ subscribers using the software Constant Contact. Our newsletter offers incentives, shares information about new books, includes periodic interviews with our authors, and much more. (If you don’t already subscribe, you can sign up on the Bookstore’s homepage.) We are also using the software to announce new titles to targeted audiences.

We are updating the front page of the web site weekly with fresh content, interviews with authors, special deals, and new titles.