



FOR LEADERS OF UU CONGREGATIONS

CENTER Connections

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First Contemporary Worship Conference

Congregations looking to liven up worship will want to know about the UUA's first Conference on Contemporary Worship, February 22-24, at the First UU Church, San Diego, Calif. The program will feature worship experiences; a keynote presentation by Marcia McFee, (marciamcfee.com), an author, worship designer, preacher, and artist; and 17 workshops, including some led by UUs Jeanne Gagne, Ken Herman, and Sarah Dan Jones, all of whom have created contemporary worship experiences at General Assembly and in their congregations. The fee is \$250; students pay \$100.

For more information visit

uua.org/ya-cm/resources/worship.

Redesign for UUA.org

The uua.org website is undergoing its first comprehensive redesign since its creation in 1996. The first public phase of the new look will be online by the end of March 2007, although work will continue throughout the year. The goal, says website manager Julie Albanese, is a "more user-friendly, intuitive, welcoming, accessible website for all users."

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LEADERSHIP

Several Ways to Create A Social Justice Program

There are at least four ways to inspire a congregation to become active in social justice work.

1. Hire a social justice director who will organize social action projects.
2. Inspire people through a passionate minister or volunteer.
3. Live in a place that's so socially conservative that to do nothing is unthinkable.
4. Find just the right moment when the congregation is receptive to a new way of being.

Many of us yearn for our congregations to be more involved in the world. But making that happen can be a challenge. So we do what we can. And we marvel at those congregations that seem to make social justice a centerpiece of their ministries.

How did they get that way? There is no one answer. Often it was one of the four factors above. More often it was a combination.

Five years ago the UU Congregation of Columbia, Md. (369 members) had a few folks engaged in social justice work, mostly on projects that interested them and on which they could recruit other congregants to help. There was little funding for social action and no congregation-wide projects. Previous ministers and lay leaders had supported social action and urged congregants to be involved, but it was not members' main focus.

Then came a convergence of events. The Rev. Richard Nugent arrived as interim minister in 2001 to guide the congregation through a ministerial transition. According to Steve Von Hagen-Jamar, current social action chair, while Nugent was there the con-

gregation "moved from being preoccupied with internal matters including a building expansion and a ministerial search and our own individual spiritual quests. Richard began to challenge us to do more and to put more money into social action efforts. This marked the beginning of a stronger focus outward than we had had for the previous decade."

About that time the congregation began work on a new vision statement and the result included a strong social justice component.

Things started to happen. The congregation joined with 20 other congregations to form PATH (People Acting Together for Howard County). The interfaith organization, a congregation-based community organization, focuses on affordable housing, transportation, and youth issues. Forty to 60 friends and members of the congregation participate in PATH, Von Hagen-Jamar says.

UCC also now has an environmental activities committee and the congregation is beginning to focus on water issues. It's also working toward becoming certified as a Green Sanctuary, and it's engaged with the issue of marriage equality. Once a month the Sunday offering goes to a social action group in the community, totaling \$12,000 to \$15,000 annually.

Von Hagen-Jamar is quick to point out that at various times in its history his congregation has been very active in social justice work.

"What is changing now," he says, "is not the sense of the importance of social service, but rather the idea of having our efforts be a UCC project

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INTER Connections

MISSION

InterConnections is an ally of board members and other leaders of Unitarian Universalist congregations, providing information and resources that empower them to be as effective as possible in their work to create and build healthier congregations.

InterConnections is a joint service of the UUA's Congregational Services, District Services, and Communications Staff Groups. It is made possible by congregations' Annual Program Fund contributions and the generosity of individual Unitarian Universalists to the UUA.

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WEB RESOURCES GUIDE

Answer congregational questions at *InterConnections Resources*, uua.org/layleader. It has four parts:

- Leadership Quickstart: Answers to your immediate questions.
- Resource Library: All copies of the *InterConnections* newsletter in a database searchable by topic or committee concern. Copy individual articles or whole issues.
- Leadership Events: a calendar of workshops and conferences.
- FAQ: More than 100 frequently asked questions, with answers.

Other essential resources:

Email lists for many areas of congregational life, including membership, finance, and public relations committees: uua.org/lists. Sign up and get help from experienced people in other congregations.

- Congregational services: uua.org/cde
- Worship: uua.org/worshipweb
- Social justice: uua.org/justice
- Young adult ministry: uua.org/ya-cm
- Small group ministry: uua.org/cde/sgm
- Safety and ethics: uua.org/cde/ethics

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rather than just an individual's project."

Nugent, who has been an interim minister for several congregations and is former chair of the UUA Commission on Social Witness, encourages the congregations he serves to look outside themselves. And because that plea comes at a time when the congregation is in the midst of other change, it is usually heeded. "I invite congregations to actively engage in an outward focus," he says. That means not only engaging in social justice work, but also "letting the community know you exist" by publicizing events.

Marion Zenker, the longtime elected lay leader of the Black Hills UU Fellowship in Rapid City, S.D. (44), laughs when she's asked if the congregation is active in social issues. "I don't think any UU can live in South Dakota and not be involved in social justice," she says.

Six of the fellowship's 44 members ran for the state legislature this fall. While none won, they gained valuable experience. Beyond that, members are engaged with Habitat for Humanity, war protests, Native American and bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender issues, and abortion rights.

The South Dakota legislature's extreme conservatism is part of the reason for this activism, says Zenker. It voted earlier this year to ban abortion outright (voters rejected that ban November 7) and tried to prohibit all "quasi-marriages" and to block a medical marijuana bill. "You can't witness all that and not get involved," says Zenker.

So political climate is one reason for the fellowship's activism. Another is that the fellowship supports social action and thus attracts like-minded people. "To a person we are very concerned about what goes on in the world," says Zenker. "People feel welcome, heard, and supported here. That's why they come here and why they give back to the community."

Social action has long been part of the life of the UU Community Church of Santa Monica, Calif. (442). Its social justice committee has been engaged with farmworker and immigrant issues.

When the congregation called the Rev. Judith Meyer in 1993 she encouraged it to integrate social justice into

the whole church, rather than locating it in a committee that might involve only a few people. As a result, the congregation took the unusual step of hiring a social justice intern for nine months to help it develop a new social justice approach.

What it came up with was a 12-member Faith in Action Commission that meets regularly to coordinate various task groups for specific issues. Each fall the congregation votes on the issues it would like to pursue that year. The task groups research an issue, bring an action plan to the commission, and then implement it.

If the congregation approves an issue, the commission is empowered to speak on behalf of the congregation. Otherwise it speaks only for itself about that issue in the larger community. Controversial issues require two-thirds approval.

There are task groups on hunger and homelessness, peace and civil liberties, green living, and bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender issues. There is an annual report to the congregation.

"The congregation has a growing sense that we actually are involved in social justice work and that it's an integral part of the congregation," says Charles Haskell, Santa Monica governing board chair and the Faith in Action Commission immediate past chair.

RESOURCES

For information on developing a social justice program go to uua.org/uuawo and click on "Inspired Faith, Effective Action" in the left column. There is also information, and a new booklet, about working through congregation-based community organizations, at uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html. Information on the Social Justice Empowerment Program, which helps congregations develop social justice programs, is at uua.org/programs/justice/ep.

The organizational structure of the Santa Monica congregation's Faith in Action program is at uusm.org

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FORUM

Readers Respond

I was interested in your article about preschools renting church space. As the president of a parent-run preschool . . . I think that the mix of preschool and religious institution is great, as many congregations don't have much going on during weekdays, and the income from the school can defray costs. Additionally, it is a great service to the community to offer a preschool in a liberal, inclusive environment. A great way to spread our values and to be known for who we are!

—**Allysson McDonald**
Mission Peak UU Congregation,
Fremont, Calif.

I much appreciated the article in your Fall 2006 issue "Meaningful Worship Requires Attention, Focus." Having conducted worship in our churches and church schools for over fifty years, I have come to some conclusions that might be helpful to your readers. With the exception of some very special Sunday services, our children belong in the church school on Sunday mornings. If you compare the time for church school lessons with the hours children spend in almost any other aspect of their lives, we come off on the very, very short end. Having the children spend fifteen minutes in the adult service watching someone light a chalice or tell a story will not solve our children's or our adults' needs.

—**Rev. David Hicks MacPherson**
Ashland, Va.

I just read "Meaningful Worship Requires Attention, Focus." I enjoy reading what congregations are doing across the nation. But, I am tired of reading about ministers who say that reading a story to children during a service is "the wrong way." This is just not true.

As a religious educator, my joy is to find "just the right book" for a worship service or a children's spirit circle. With amazing grace, an author can bring a listener into a story and leave that listener with a bigger heart. The key is to find just the right book—simple words that bring the reader and congrega-

Cautious, Careful People

"Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences."

Susan B. Anthony
Nineteenth-century reformer

tion into their own transcendent moment in time. Beautiful pictures can be projected on a screen. I love hearing a compelling story read aloud by a good reader capturing the written word of a thoughtful children's author.

—**Karen Brown**
Director of Religious Education,
UU Church of Indianapolis, Ind.

One thing in the latest issue of *InterConnections* concerned me, and it was the comment about "crying babies" in the piece about worship. Your mention of crying babies was listed like an annoyance, and while some people may not like the sound, to me it is a sound of growth and celebration—our UU faith is being passed on to younger generations! When I preach at congregations, I tell them one of the best things they can do is get used to the sound of crying babies and learn to like it!

—**Tera Little**
Director of Lifespan Programs,
Pacific Southwest District/Unitarian
Universalist Association

I was struck by a paragraph in *InterConnections*, Fall 2006, about worship on page 1, where the Atlanta minister "believes four Sunday-morning elements are impeding growth—joys and concerns, announcements, the practice of inviting visitors to stand up and be recognized, and a children's story."

What do the four have in common? The minister is not talking, is not in charge. I happen to find that any one of those four elements is often the most meaningful part of the program, with the sermon or other presentation a time for day-dreaming. I don't especially want a minister in my society, and your article makes me feel more strongly about this.

—**Warren O. Hagstrom**
Prairie UU Society,
Madison, Wisc.

About InterConnections

InterConnections is published four times a year and is sent free of charge to members of governing boards and professional staff of congregations. Others can read it on the Internet at uua.org/interconnections. You can sign up for email announcements to let you know when each new issue is available online, at lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interconnections-l.

And you can answer congregational questions quickly at InterConnections Resources, www.uua.org/layleader.

For details and other essential online resources see the Web Resources Guide section of the masthead on page 2.



CLF's Prison Ministry Needs Letter Writers

Looking for a social justice project that people can do alone, at home, or in groups? Almost 300 prisoners have joined the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Larger Fellowship, and dozens are still waiting to be matched with UU penpals through CLF's "Letter Writing Ministry"

All letters to and from prisoners are sent through the mail and all prisoners' letters are forwarded through CLF's prison ministry. Prisoners are told only their pen pal's first name. The CLF's prison ministry staff makes the pen pal matches and remains available to all penpals for advice and support at PrisMin@clfu.org.

Pen pal groups can have the added goal of meeting regularly to study prison, death penalty, or race/class issues. Study materials on these topics are available from the UUA.

For more on the pen pal program visit the CLF website at clfu.org or write to the CLF Prison Ministry, 25 Beacon St, Boston, MA 02108.

Groundwork Offers Antiracism Trainings

Groundwork, the Unitarian Universalist Youth and Young Adult Anti-Racism Training and Organizing Program (formerly known as AR TOP), has trainers available to conduct antiracism trainings for churches, schools, and community groups. The trainers, youth or young adults, participate in a three-year leadership development program emphasizing empowerment of young people and building relationships with community partners.

Trainings range from four hours to five days. A general guideline for fees is \$50 per participant for the first day and \$25 for each additional day. Small grants may be available. Contact Groundwork at uua.org/ya-cm/ Groundwork, or 617-948-4273.

New Children's Songbook

May This Light Shine is a new songbook for children and youth from the UU Musicians Network. Single copy, \$8; bundle of five plus a director/accompanist book, \$50. Includes worship and holiday, from Mozart to Tanzanian gospel.

Learn more and order the book at uua.org/uumn/resources/csb.htm or call 800-969-8866.

MONEY

Religious Educators Need Responsible Compensation

The attraction of religious education for our children and ourselves is what drew many of us to seek out a Unitarian Universalist congregation. We value the structured, caring environment that's created each Sunday morning and the opportunities for religious discovery and personal and spiritual growth.

Yet we do not always value our religious educators as highly as we should. Many are underpaid and overworked, says the Rev. Susan Archer, president of LREDA, the Liberal Religious Educators Association and minister of RE at Cedar Lane UU Church in Bethesda, Md.

"The old adage, you get what you pay for, doesn't always hold when it comes to religious educators," says Archer. "In fact, you often get much more than you pay for. But that is not a good way of 'doing religion.' We don't live up to our principles when we don't create a just and equitable compensation system in each of our congregations."

Twenty years ago Laurel Burdon volunteered to be part of a team of three religious educators at the UU Church in Brookfield, Mass. (85 members). For two years they were the unpaid religious educators at the church. The RE program had five to seven children, two of whom were Burdon's.

Then about 10 years ago when Burdon was sharing the job with one other person, church leaders decided it was time to pay them—not only because it was the right thing to do, but because it would make it easier to hire someone else if the RE codirectors left.

At first the pay was a stipend, says Burdon, but in the past eight years it has grown substantially to where, now, it's just under the minimum recommended by the UUA. The program now has 40 children and youth.

Each year when the preliminary budget is discussed Burdon expresses her expectation that she be fairly compensated. "But I really don't need to push it with the executive committee," she says. "There are others who now raise this issue on my behalf."

Burdon also makes sure to report all the hours she works. She's paid for ten hours a week and generally reports 14. "I go to as many collegial meetings and workshops as I can and they don't fit into the paid hours, but I choose to go because they help me stay current and informed," she notes.

Peter Liveright is the denominational compensation consultant in the Joseph Priestly District. He says congregations call him most often when they're calling a new minister or educator and want to increase the compensation to attract the best candidates.

"I tell congregational leaders that it's a matter of equality and of living up to our religious principles," he says. "If a congregation doesn't pay its educator fairly then that person is actually subsidizing the congregation." When a church is having trouble coming up with the money he encourages them to develop a plan to raise compensation over several years.

At Countryside Church UU in Palatine, Ill. (300), DRE Colleen Vahey is paid between the minimum and the midpoint on the UUA's recommended scale. "We work hard to protect salaries," says president Mike Gilley. "They're the first item we approve in the budget, and then we stand our ground." Not that there's a lot of opposition. Gilley says the education program, which has about 135 children and youth, has a lot of support, in part because of the hard work of previous DREs and of Vahey and volunteers.

Gilley says the congregation feels continually challenged to meet the ever-higher guidelines and that can be difficult. "The bar keeps getting raised higher. We do everything we can to hold our aim steady at the midpoint."

RESOURCES

Read the UUA's salary recommendations for religious educators and other staff at uua.org/programs/ministry/finances/compensation.html. District compensation consultants can help congregations determine how to meet recommended pay levels.



TOOLBOX

Email Caution Helps Avoid Damaging Situations

When a longtime member of a congregation decided it was time for a new minister she started a derogatory email campaign against the current one. She sent multi-page emails to members of the congregation, listing all of the minister's alleged faults. The congregants quickly chose sides as emails flew back and forth. In the ensuing battle of words several staff and board members quit, and the congregation split.

A district executive who was later called in says that using email let the situation escalate out of control. "The person who started all of this used words in her emails that she probably would not have used face-to-face. The use of email allowed name calling and other bad behavior to happen."

Email increasingly is a culprit, says the district executive, when congregational conflict flares. "It allows situations to escalate to a much higher level than they would normally."

Deborah Weiner, the Unitarian Universalist Association's director of electronic communication, has advice for using email. "Email is great for arranging meetings," she says, "but not for dealing with complex issues or mediating disputes. Email can easily be misinterpreted because it's impossible to show nuance. I've seen some truly cruel and mean things done with email."

Her recommendations: If you're responding to an emotional situation, let your email sit overnight before sending it. Adopt a measured tone. Don't forward emails of others without their permission. Remember that once you send an email you lose all control of it; it can be copied, sent to others, and quoted out of context even years later.

Every congregation should have rules about email, she says. "We can't live without email these days, so we need to live with it. Using an email list is a privilege, not a right. There is no first amendment right to destroy a congregation with ill-considered emails. Don't assume that everyone knows

how to act appropriately on email. People don't all come from the same place. You need to spell it out."

Other recommendations: Never say anything about someone in an email that you wouldn't want that person to see. If someone wants to have an email conversation about someone else or a complicated issue, invite them to meet with you in person.

Adds the district executive, "Every time I go into a congregation that's in conflict the first thing I tell them is to stop the email. Get face-to-face in a room and see the person you're talking to. It can be horrible to watch people who care about their congregation tear each other apart with email. And every time I say 'Stop the emails,' I hear an 'amen' chorus." Generally, she says, small to midsize congregations have more difficulty with email than larger ones.

Another congregation experienced problems with two church-sponsored email lists. One is for church announcements. The other is for open discussion.

A church leader explains: "The policy has been that anyone can post to the announcements list, and some people abuse it by offering personal items for sale. I wish we had restricted it to just having certain leaders post all the announcements, but to go back and do that now would cause an uproar."

The leader adds, "People misuse the discussion list in ways that are hurtful. They don't understand that humor comes across as sarcasm. Periodically things flare up and people get upset then it dies down. I wish we didn't have this list at all."

And sometimes people confuse the lists and post to the wrong one, the leader says. "As a result, many members have chosen not to subscribe to the church announcement list because they want to avoid hurtful emails. In essence, the church has lost an effective tool for publicizing church news. I'd like to see a church where people can discuss things face-to-face and be in relationship with each other."

Association Sundays Part Of 'Now Is The Time' Stewardship Campaign

Congregations will be invited to participate next fall in the UUA's "Now is the Time" stewardship and development campaign, an effort to create a fund that will be used for various types of congregational growth. The UUA's Stewardship and Development staff group will coordinate the campaign.

Congregations will be asked to set aside Sunday, Oct. 14, 2007, as "Association Sunday," the theme of which will be "Growing Our Faith Through Growing Our Numbers." Funds raised will go to national marketing. Worship materials will be available on this theme, and congregations will be asked to take up a collection to create a UUA fund for national marketing.

In future years, from 2008 to 2011, an October Sunday will be devoted to the campaign as well. Each year will have a theme, one for each of five kinds of growth: numbers, spirit, leadership, diversity, and witness.

For more information and to sign up to participate, contact Cherisse Haakonsen, Congregational Giving assistant, 617-948-6544, chaakonsen@uua.org, or the Rev. Stephan Papa, special assistant to the president for Congregational Giving and Growth Funding, at 617-948-6543, spapa@uua.org.

District Website Makes It Easier for Visitors

Congregations in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C., area have created a district website to help church shoppers find them and learn about Unitarian Universalism.

The website, **BaltWashUUs.org**, includes a clickable map allowing visitors to locate each of the 27 congregations, visit their websites, and create a map from their house to the church. The webmaster is Joyce Dowling of Davies Memorial UU Church in Camp Springs, Md., and the Baltimore/Washington Growth Committee.

The site was inspired by and copies (with permission) some of the features of **uusandiego.org**, the website of the San Diego cluster of congregations. Dowling said her group expects to use the **BaltWashUUs.org** address in newspaper ads, announcements, and press releases. The cost of developing the site was about \$1,500.



Congregation Creates Social Justice Fund To Honor Ministry

Looking for a way to celebrate senior minister the Rev. Jon Luopa's 25 years in ministry, members of University Unitarian Church in Seattle, Wash., made a substantial commitment to social justice by contributing \$130,000 to establish the Social Justice Program Fund at the church. One donor made a \$50,000 challenge gift, which inspired other friends and members to contribute another \$80,000. The money will be used to hire a social justice coordinator.

The fund was announced as part of a Celebration of Ministry weekend September 30-October 1, which included a catered dinner, tributes to Luopa by friends and members as well as by leaders of his previous congregations, a performance by the Seattle Labor Chorus, two worship services with a guest minister, and a reception.

The celebration not only marked Luopa's ministry, but that of the whole church. Luopa wrote in the church newsletter: "We were able to hold up not only one person's ministry but ministry as we all understand and practice it together, and as a liberal religious community recommit ourselves to our work toward a more just and sustainable world."

Electronic Newsletter More Fun Than Paper

The Pacific Central District of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is using a new weekly online newsletter format from **constantcontact.com** that is suitable for districts or congregations.

District Executive Cilla Raughley says the online newsletter costs \$35 a month to produce, compared to up to \$3,000 for the district's former hard copy newsletter, which was sent three times a year. The online version permits timely news, higher circulation, has easy to use and modify templates, and permits hyperlinks.

The links make it fun, says Raughley. Subscribers can listen to selections from the new hymnal supplement, see the video of the Rev. Kathleen McTigue on the Bill O'Reilly show, and read an Alban Institute article on congregational conflict.

Email [craughley@uua.org](mailto: craughley@uua.org) for more information.

NOURISHING THE SPIRIT

GA Can Be Rewarding for Congregation Presidents

Denise Rimes made the ultimate sacrifice, leaving a family beach vacation several days early so that she could attend General Assembly this past year. "As the new president of my congregation (First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond, Va., with 425 members), I thought it was important to learn more about the Association so that I could represent my growing congregation."

Rimes was one of 284 presidents who attended GA as part of a program in which the top leaders of all UU congregations are specifically invited to the annual meeting of congregations. The invitation included partial payment of GA registration fees. GA 2006 was the third year of the program.

Rimes came home from GA with more than sand in her shoes. "My experience at GA far exceeded my expectations," she says. "I brought back pages of notes on practical and achievable ideas that other churches have implemented. I met folks from around the country who were filled with good ideas and encouragement. As a new leader, I came to appreciate the mountain of resources that exist at the association and district level."

Susan Lankford, president of the UU Church of Berkeley, in Kensington, Calif. (511), attended her first GA in 2002. "GA was eye-opening for me," she says. "It gave me perspective on our movement and on the commonalities of our congregations and the ways in which my congregation is distinct. I learned that we are behaving in some ways that hold us back. And UU University was a great help in understanding congregational dynamics." UU University was a day and a half of workshops for congregational leaders that preceded GA this year. It will be repeated at GA 2007 in Portland, Ore.

"Being with so many committed UUs clarified for me both my own deep religious identity and the importance of growing it in our congregation, where so many know only our particular church," she says.

Adds Diane Duesterhoef, immediate

past president of First UU Church of San Antonio (336). "Three of our presidents have gone to GA in recent years, and the one thing we all agree on is it helps us feel more connected with the UUA. San Antonio can feel like a long way from Boston."

Jennifer Mason was president of Northlake UU Church in Kirkland, Wash. (98), from 2002 to 2004 and attended her fourth GA last year. "I'm starting to see signs that our church culture is changing," she says. "Our religious education program is growing, we're getting more members, and we have an active social justice committee. I think at least part of that is due to ideas we brought back from GA."

UUA Moderator Gini Courter says the program to bring presidents to GA has been "beyond successful," adding, "Unitarian Universalist congregational polity relies on the participation of congregational leaders, both lay and clergy. If congregations don't send leaders to General Assembly, the GA can't engage in meaningful conversations and decision-making about the future of our faith."

"Every year," she says, "we have a larger number of leaders at GA. The change in the delegate body at GA is real and audible. There is less 'me,' and more 'my congregation.' That's success."

Courter says GA has become more responsive to congregations' needs in the following ways: providing presentations on breakthrough congregations that have overcome difficulties to achieve growth and vitality; workshops specifically for congregational presidents; and shifting the schedule so that all of GA takes place within the same week to better fit vacation schedules. The UUA's program to bring presidents to GA continues for GA 2007. Courter noted that GA is both a "state fair" which has something for everyone, and now there is more emphasis on also making it a "town meeting" where congregational leaders can gather to do the work of the Association. Look for details in late winter at



MEMBERSHIP

Congregations Respond To Racism, Oppression

When Debra Gray Boyd of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio, went to the microphone on the last day of General Assembly in June and invited all other UUs to do something about racism before the next GA they pretty much did what she said.

Hundreds of them went home and either got behind existing antiracism and antioppression programs in their congregations or started new ones. UUA Moderator Gini Courter, who has spoken to many groups since GA, says that Boyd's request, which became a GA resolution, was taken to heart. "I'm blown away by the number of congregations that are picking up the GA resolution and running with it," she says. "I'd guess that at least half of our congregations are actively responding to it."

What does it take to get a congregation involved in antiracism work? It could be one committed individual such as Sarah Berel-Harrop of the Unitarian Fellowship of Houston.

At GA 2005 she was moved by an antiracism workshop she attended. At GA 2006 it was Boyd's resolution that compelled her to bring an antiracism dialogue to her congregation. This fall she helped organize a group that read the book *Soul Work*. The group plans to present a worship service on what it learned. The congregation also participated in the Amnesty International weekend of faith on the death penalty and has incorporated information about racism into worship services. It also purchased the course "Weaving the Fabric of Diversity" and will present it next spring.

Berel-Harrop, partly inspired by the resolution and partly by her own experiences, felt driven to become involved with antiracism work—and to involve others. "There were some members I approached," she says, "who expressed a similar attitude toward antiracism as they did about Welcoming Congregation—'Aren't we past that? Aren't we already antiracist?'" She says she hopes that

people who respond to the resolution will do more than just work on a specific issue. "Part of the problem as I see it is a desire to equate antiracism with some kind of advocacy. That's to some degree a way of avoiding introspection into how oppressive systems work and where we fit into them."

The First Unitarian Church of Portland, Ore., began seven initiatives in response to the resolution. They include a church audit on barriers to diversity, adult classes on antioppression, and a workshop entitled "Class Matters." It has also created and will begin selling a documentary, *Heart Beat of the People*, which shows how the arts can help change racist attitudes. First Unitarian has also called a third minister, Leela Sinha, to help create an alternative worship service that will intentionally appeal to young adults and communities of color.

Debra Boyd's congregation in Columbus sent several youth to two district antiracism trainings and they will share their experiences and also hold a discussion about the PBS show "Race, the Power of an Illusion." Two youth groups plan to see and discuss antiracism movies as well.

Boyd says she was moved to stand up at GA and make the plea for antiracism work because of a group of youth, who, just before she spoke, talked about discrimination they had experienced at GA. Says Boyd, "I was very moved by them. They spoke very clearly about the need for all of us to address this issue in a very active way. This is important spiritual work for us to do individually and collectively."

Resources

Resources for congregations wanting to engage in antiracist, antioppression, and multicultural endeavors are available online at uua.org/programs/justice/antiracism/leaders. More information is at the UU Allies for Racial Equity website, uuallies.org.

Send stories about what your congregation is doing to respond to these issues: ResponsiveResolution06@uua.org

Corrections

The description of an Alban Institute book, *When a Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct*, in the Fall 2006 issue of *InterConnections*, should have included the Rev. Deborah Pope-Lance as a co-author. Pope-Lance, a UU minister and licensed marriage and family therapist, is an affiliate community minister with the First Parish in Wayland, Mass.

She has been researching, writing, teaching, consulting, and coaching on the ethics of ministerial practice and congregational life, specializing in the challenges of leading congregations in the aftermath of clergy misconduct. She wrote the title essay in the UUA's first *Creating Safe Congregations: Toward an Ethic of Right Relations*, which was recently updated in *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in our Faith Communities*.

The first and last books are available from the UUA Bookstore at 800-215-9076 or uua.org/bookstore.

The name of the Rev. Gordon B. McKeeman was misspelled in the Summer 2006 issue, in a reference to the UUA Commission on Appraisal's study, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*.

The name of Jennifer Dant, author of the new children's book, *Unitarian Universalism is a Really Long Name*, was misspelled in the Fall 2006 issue.

Church Seeks, Signs For-Profit Tenant

Interested in renting your church building? Emerson UU Church in Houston, Tex., recently sought out and signed a specific company, a for-profit adult education program that will use Emerson's building on weekday nights and Saturdays.

Laura Emerson, coordinator of the church's Building Use Committee, says the contract is for more than \$100,000 a year.

The school's presence improves the church's exposure in the community, and the firm is in line with UU values, she says.

Spread the Word

Don't worry about copyright: Make all the copies of *InterConnections* you want for others in your church.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In this feature we seek out answers to questions of broad interest, drawing on experts in congregations, the UUA, and elsewhere. To submit a question, please write to *InterConnections*, 8800 Norwood, Leawood, KS 66206, or email dskinner@uua.org.

Q I'm looking for back issues of *Small Talk*, the newsletter for small congregations.

A *Small Talk*, published by the Rev. Jane Dwinell, and its back issues are online at nhvt.uua.org/publications.htm. If you forget, just go to the New Hampshire/Vermont district website and click on Publications on the left side.

Q We started a small group ministry program two years ago and the groups really took off, but now we're starting to see problems with several of them. Is that normal?

A Peter Bowden, a church consultant and a cofounder of the UU Small Group Ministry Network, smallgroupministry.net, says, "In my consulting work I have yet to find a congregation with a 'mysterious' reason for small group ministry failing. Across the board, problems are the result of some failure to implement a viable model or a failure to support this ministry prior to launching. Sustaining a healthy small group ministry requires a great deal of time, energy, and resources. Small group ministry isn't

rocket science, but it is hard work. And well worth it."

"After the establishment of a new program," Bowden continues, "it is common for congregations to let small groups run on autopilot, especially when more urgent matters demand attention. However, it takes regular vision casting and support between group facilitators and skill training for small group ministries to not only stay on track, but to thrive."

Another reason for failure, he says, is that while groups are designed to build intimacy and connections they can sometimes become too inward-looking, at the expense of being open and welcoming. Also, over time the focus of groups naturally drifts toward the interests of group members, Bowden says. Such "small group drift" can move the focus of the group away from leadership development, shared ministry, and outreach.

The UU Small Group Ministry Network offers members a quarterly newsletter addressing the "perils and promises" of small group ministry. An email list, [covenant_group_ministry](mailto:covenant_group_ministry@uua.org), is available at uua.org/lists.

To join the UU SGM Network mail a check made out to "UU SGM Net-

work" (\$35 individuals/\$60 congregations) to UU SGM Network, 155 Everts Street, Newport, RI, 02840. Include an email contact and a brief description of your program.

Q We're struggling with our nominating committee. It seems to take form a few weeks before our annual meeting, works like mad to come up with a slate of candidates, then disappears after the election. Is there a better way?

A Lynn Thomas, district executive of the Clara Barton District, wants congregations to transform their nominating committees into something more useful. She says, "Your congregation doesn't need a nominating committee that just functions a short time each year. It needs a leadership development and nominating committee. What would our churches be like with a year-round committee asking boards and committees what skills they need and then asking newcomers, "What really gets your juices flowing? What is it that you would really like to do here?" Contact Thomas at lthomas@uua.org for more information.



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For Lay Leaders of UU Congregations

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