



FOR LEADERS OF UU CONGREGATIONS

INTER Connections

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Useful Congregational Life Articles on 'UU World' Site

InterConnections is not the only source of articles about congregational life. Visit uuworld.org weekly for articles on church life and other topics. You can also sign up to receive a weekly email notifying you of new articles.

Here are recent uuworld.org articles of special interest to lay leaders. Search for them by headline on uuworld.org.

- UUA considers new plans for youth ministry. 5-5-08
- Rochester youth raise money for Mexican border town. 4-28-08
- Unitarian Universalist congregations celebrate Earth Day. 4-28-08
- New Orleans UU churches launch fundraising campaign. 4-7-08
- Florida ad campaign boosts church attendance. 3-24-08
- Churches sponsor drop-in centers for gay teens. 3-3-08
- UUA suspends funding for young adult network. 2-18-08

New Bumper Stickers

Bumper stickers with the new UUA ad slogan, "Nurture Your Spirit. Help Heal Our World," are available for \$2 each (order of 10). Order them online at tinyurl.com/6ebofu.

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NOURISHING THE SPIRIT

Multisite Ministry Another Way to Grow and Serve

The traditional way of growing a congregation and spreading the word about Unitarian Universalism is to create compelling worship, dynamic religious education programs, and close-knit community so that people will beat a path to the church door.

But what if that works so well for you that there's no more room in the church or the parking lot? Or what if you simply know that there are groups of people out there in the far suburbs, or beyond, who would welcome your message if they had access to it? At least three UU congregations are finding the answer to those questions to be the creation of a "multisite" church.

The best example of this is First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, N. Mex. (715 members). Senior Minister the Rev. Christine Robinson came back from sabbatical two years ago having read about the proliferation of multisite evangelical churches. "I knew there were many places out there with a very small number of UUs, but not enough for a standalone congregation," she says. "We researched what it would take and decided to reach out to them."

First Unitarian established two "branch" congregations in the spring of 2007. One is about 70 miles south of Albuquerque at Socorro, where 25 to 30 people gather each week. The other is 30 miles east, at Edgewood, where the East Mountains group draws in 12 to 15 people.

These branches have access to all of First Unitarian's resources. First Unitarian handles their financial and membership bookkeeping. Leaders from First Unitarian, including Robinson, travel to the branches to lead

classes or worship. When one of Socorro's founding members died last spring, pastoral care was immediately available from Robinson and others.

All funds contributed by the two branches are sent to Albuquerque, but come back to them for hiring speakers, paying rent, and other costs. Both branches have lay leaders who organize all of the elements of their weekly worship services except for the sermon, which comes from Albuquerque.

Here's how it works: The Socorro group, which meets at 3 p.m. on Sundays, gets the sermon, which was delivered that morning at the 9:30 service in Albuquerque, in video form via the internet. The East Mountains group meets at 10:30 a.m. and uses the sermon from the previous week, sent on a DVD.

Albuquerque member Roger Hartz, coordinator of the branch program, made frequent trips to both sites for the first few months, helping train lay leaders and providing one lay-led service a month, but now the groups create all of their own services, except for the sermon.

A high quality speaker phone, a Polycom Communicator, lets groups at Albuquerque and the branches talk easily with each other.

Hartz says it is anticipated that Socorro and East Mountains will remain as branches rather than becoming separate congregations. "The advantages to being part of First Unitarian are pretty obvious," he says.

First Unitarian is looking at two other possible branch locations. One is 250 miles distant, Robinson says. First Unitarian is using a \$60,000 grant

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INTERConnections

MISSION

InterConnections aims to be relentlessly useful to lay leaders of Unitarian Universalist congregations and the professional staff who work with them, providing information and resources that help make congregations vital.

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.

EDITOR

Donald E. Skinner is a longtime journalist and an active volunteer at the Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church in Overland Park, Kansas. The editor of *InterConnections*, he reports and writes all stories unless they are otherwise credited.

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from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism and the UUA's Congregational Services staff group to develop its branches ministry. The branches are generally self-supporting now, but, just as any church program is not judged by whether it pays for itself, neither are the branches, she says.

"We want more branches because there are more small towns. I think the first branch was the hardest and they are easier after that," she says.

Richard Sonnenfeld is a lay leader at Socorro. "We're delighted we could benefit from this," he says. "Most of us belonged to UU churches at earlier points in our lives, but here there just weren't enough of us for a separate congregation. This enriches our lives and allows us to enrich our community with our presence."

The Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville, Tenn. (500), opened a second location at Maryville, south of Knoxville, in March 2006, at the request of members who were tired of a 25-minute drive to church. Attendance surprised everyone. At the first service there were 65 people. Now it averages 80 to 85 and often draws more than 100. "Our size took everyone by surprise," says Owen Rhodes, former program chair at TVUUC, and now a member and coordinator of the Maryville congregation. Maryville keeps 75 percent of its Sunday contributions. TVUUC does its bookkeeping, provides insurance, and answers calls that are sometimes forwarded to Knoxville. The congregation sustained itself financially from day one, says Rhodes.

Rhodes says the new congregation will separate from Tennessee Valley probably by the end of this year and become a standalone congregation. "I'd be fine staying a satellite for a long time," he says, "but we have a lot of people who want us to have our own identity."

What made Maryville work? Initial and continuing support from TVUUC, for starters. Plus, it hasn't hurt that the congregation has been on the front page of the local newspaper three times. Also, "We've gone to a lot of pains to make sure we do quality church," says Rhodes. "And we've benefited from the established credibility of TVUUC. That makes us more than just a new start to people here."

First UU Church in San Diego (774) will inaugurate a satellite location this fall in the fast-growing South Bay area next to the Mexican border. It has more than 100 families in that area and many drive up to 40 minutes to church, says the Rev. Arvid Straube, San Diego's senior minister.

Straube anticipates the location could draw 150 to 200 people at the start and grow from there. First-year costs are expected to be around \$90,000 for marketing, equipment, rent, and compensation for intern minister Carol Layne. Straube believes the congregation will be self-supporting in two years.

Layne says that like Albuquerque's two branches, the South Bay Sunday service will be created at South Bay except for the sermon, which will be recorded at a new Saturday worship service and delivered to South Bay on DVD. Will South Bay eventually spin off? "We always answer that if they want to spin off we won't stand in the way, but we hope they will stay a part of First until they are strong enough to thrive on their own," says Layne.

The Rev. Ken Brown, district executive of the UUA's Pacific Southwest District, says that more than 1,500 evangelical and mainstream congregations are using a multi-site model. He believes it has potential for UU congregations, especially those with locations where they cannot expand. It also provides a way for congregations to become part of diverse neighborhoods, he says. "I believe this model is one that Unitarian Universalists who are serious about spreading our faith need to explore." Brown and Angela Merkert, a former UUA district executive and now a congregational consultant, offer a workshop to congregations on multi-site ministries.

RESOURCES

UUA Pacific Southwest District Executive the Rev. Ken Brown has written about multisite congregations and compiled a list of resources available online at tinyurl.com/4gugf7.

Check First Unitarian at Albuquerque's website, uuabq.org, this summer for a detailed report on its branch ministry. The Rev. Christine Robinson also planned to present a forum at the 2008 General Assembly on this topic. A CD recording of it should be available at uua.org/events/generalassembly.



Forum

I was impressed with the articles in the Spring 08 issue about the factors in the growth of Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, Colo. I was surprised, however, that aside from a brief paragraph about children and worship, no mention was made of the congregation's religious education program or leadership as a factor in their growth. Is there more that can be said?

*The Rev. Wayne Arnason
West Shore UU Church
Rocky River, Ohio*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There are approximately 250 children and youth in JUC's religious education program, which operates on a trimester system. The first third of the year is devoted to topics related to Unitarian Universalist history and identity. The second third is focused on Judeo-Christian topics, and the final third is on other religions of the world. Throughout the year there are "Social Action Sundays" devoted to social justice projects. The Our Whole Lives sexuality education curriculum occupies seventh graders. Coming of Age programs happen the following year.*

There is a full RE program during both Sunday morning worship service times. The congregation hired a new director of religious education, Ashley Johnson, in the spring of 2008 and is reviewing its program, including considering ways to better integrate children throughout the church, says Sue Parilla, JUC's volunteer coordinator.

One of the best parts about the program is CUURK, the Committee of UUs Raising Kids. CUURK creates community among families with children in sixth grade and younger. Members take meals to parents of new babies, do a monthly Saturday breakfast, a monthly field trip, and welcome new families.

For parents of preschoolers there is SOUPPS, Support of Unitarian Parents of Preschoolers. Two Monday mornings a month moms (mostly) and kids gather for craft projects and to hear a presentation on family life. Older women come to hold the new babies so moms can have time to themselves.

Pre-teens have a group called PT Cruisers, which mixes socializing with social action. "This is when kids tend to drop out of church," says Parilla. "We're trying to build social connec-

tions so they want to come and see their friends."

I read with great interest the article in the Spring 2008 issue of *InterConnections* regarding the Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, Colo. Its welcoming culture can be applied to all congregations and we already do incorporate some of the practices.

I do find one part of the article troubling. With an endowment of \$600,000 and a \$35,000 fundraiser I find it unsettling that JUC has not contributed its fair share amount per member to the UUA for the past two years. I am a member of the Unitarian Church of Southern Delaware with a membership of 109. We struggle financially. I also know that we pay our fair share amount although not always on time. How can a church with 770 members not pay their fair share while our small church, and I am sure many others, struggle to do so?

*Anne Pikolas
UUs of Southern Delaware
Lewes, Del.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *As indicated in the article, JUC has paid Fair Share most years and expects to again next year.*

As a lay leader of a UU congregation with 84 members and one minister I found the articles on JUC useless. They grew from 400 to 770 members and have five ministers. This is like saying you live in a \$600,000 house and can move to a \$900,000 house,

Anything or Nothing

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, Civil Rights Advocate (1820 – 1906)

which is great except that I live in a \$130,000 house, so where do I go? The average pledge at JUC is \$1,467, paltry compared to the average \$2,000 pledge at the congregation I attend. Could you imagine what JUC could do with this type of pledging?

*James Kennedy
Emerson UU Congregation
Marietta, Ga.*

UUA Health Plan 'Strong and Stable'

The UUA's health plan, one year old this past January, is financially "strong and stable," says health plan director Jim Sargent. He reports that 268 congregations and UU-affiliated groups have chosen the plan and that it covers almost 700 employees and another 400 family members. He says more than half of the 400 eligible staff members who were uninsured or underinsured when the plan began are now covered.

Sargent says efforts are underway now to focus on strategies that will protect the long-term financial health of the plan and help members become healthier. Those strategies include encouraging more use of preventive services, more use of the "Blues on Call" nurse hotline program, attracting more staff who are currently uninsured, and making the plan more attractive.

Contact Sargent at jsargent@uua.org, 617-948-6405, or health plan coordinator Kati Deneen MacDonald at kdeneen@uua.org, 617-948-4265, with questions and comments.



Making Volunteering More Attractive

Want to attract members to your committees? Maybe a nice sandwich plate will do it.

The UU Church of Tucson, Az., held a committee fair during a coffee hour where representatives of various committees sat at tables to talk up their committees. That's a pretty common approach for many congregations, but Tucson went a step farther. Each committee provided part of a lunch—salad, lunchmeat, bread, drinks, dessert. To get a whole meal people had to visit several tables.

"It was a great community builder as well as a celebration of the many volunteers it takes to keep our congregation vibrant," says the Rev. Diane Dowgiert.

And did people sign up? Some did. "Maybe more telling is that this year, at the annual meeting, the nominating committee was able to present a full slate for all elected positions, something that doesn't usually happen," she says. "So I think the volunteer fair did give the people in positions of recruitment a larger pool to draw on."

Association Sunday Planned Again This Fall

The date for the UUA's second annual Association Sunday is October 12. The UUA is asking congregations to hold events on that date to recognize and support the Association's work.

More than 600 congregations participated in the first Association Sunday, held last fall, which raised more than \$1.4 million. Funds went to a national advertising campaign, to support ministers of color and their congregations, and to provide growth grants for congregations.

The 2008 campaign is titled "Growth in Spirit." Funds will be used for lay theological education and for continuing education for ministers, grants for seminary students and to support ministers of color. Congregations are free to select dates other than October 12 to hold their events, if necessary. Register online at uua.org/associationsunday or email your service date and contact information to associationsunday@uua.org. You can also call Devin Letzer, campaign assistant for Association Sunday, at 617-948-6544.

A final report on the 2007 Association Sunday is at uua.org/associationsunday.

LEADERSHIP

Church Founders Thrive On Different Challenges

A different kind of church is being founded in Turley, Okla., a semi-rural area next to Tulsa, where the Rev. Ron Robinson has opened "a progressive Christian-style UU center" in a storefront called "A Third Place." Open most days, the building has free internet service, cable TV, computers, a library and videos, and a bargain room with used clothing and household items. A health clinic comes twice a week. Many people who come to A Third Place don't have cars, says Robinson, and find its services convenient.

This kind of nontraditional congregation is now referred to as an emergent congregation. "What Ron is doing is a lot like the very first gatherings of Christians," says the Rev. Thom Belote, of Shawnee Mission, Kans., who is leading a discussion on emergent congregations at Ministry Days before General Assembly this year. "They met in homes, shared meals and prayers, did service together, and grew in community. It's a new way of envisioning what a church can be."

Robinson's ministry itself is called the Living Room Church. On Wednesday night whoever is in the building is invited to participate in a potluck meal, an educational session (a recent series was on world religions), and then a 20-minute worship. There is no Sunday worship. Some Sundays people might go to either All Souls Unitarian Church or Church of the Restoration, UU congregations in Tulsa.

Robinson describes Turley, where he and his wife grew up, as "an edge place, with high diversity, a high rate of poverty, and low life expectancy." His group is working with students at the University of Oklahoma on urban improvement projects. "We grow people's faith doing ministry in the world, not on church committees and at spectator worship events," he says.

Most of those who participate in the Wednesday night sessions are non-UUs and most have been unchurched. Robinson says there are about eight regulars on Wednesday nights. On any

given day 15 to 25 people come through the building. Robinson says he'd like to create many small micro-churches in places such as Turley.

The Living Room is supported by donations. Robinson has a second ministry as executive director of the UU Christian Fellowship. Costs for the center are about \$1,500 a month. "We pretty much get down to zero in our bank account every month," he says.

In Chicago, the Rev. David Owen O'Quill is also gathering people who are unchurched. He started a year ago inviting mostly young people to occasional sessions in a bar, where they would get acquainted and he would share "little parables" about life. "It's Unitarianism 101, like Theodore Parker was teaching—one God, the humanity of Jesus, everybody is saved," he says.

In August he will begin regular Sunday services in a theater. "We'll use local bands. I'll do a Jon Stewart kind of presentation where I talk and then interview someone. It'll be high on sarcasm and humor with some religious content. And there will be an invitation to a small group ministry."

The name of his ministry is Micah's Porch, drawn from Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord your God require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

O'Quill has raised \$30,000 to do this and needs about \$70,000 more to keep it going for a year and a half, long enough to determine if it will be successful, he says. "I feel called to do this. I don't have a choice." He adds, "So many seekers of religion only find fundamentalist options. As UUs we need to elevate our game. There are people who need us."

Other UU congregations can help ministries like his, he says, with money, letting him know of unchurched people he can invite to his services, and volunteering to help at the services.

For more on these programs visit progressivechurchplanting.blogspot.com, livingroomchurch.net, and micahsporch.org.



MEMBERSHIP

UU Addictions Ministry Movement Growing

A 10-year movement to bring addictions ministry into Unitarian Universalist congregations is bearing fruit. More than 100 congregations now have such ministries.

The movement was started by the Rev. Denis Meacham at First Parish in Brewster, Mass. (516 members). Meacham, a recovering alcoholic, saw a huge need to minister to people who were struggling with addictions and to provide help to their friends and family members.

Meacham says that every time he visits a congregation to talk about addictions he asks congregants to raise their hands or stand if they have a friend or family member with an addiction. "Almost always half to three-fourths of the congregation stands," he says.

Kristen Parman-Bethard is chair of the addictions ministry team at Saltwater UU Church (177) in Des Moines, Wash. The team, formed after a survey of the congregation indicated a need for such a program, has done two "Recovery Sunday" services, created a substance abuse library, held a class on prescription medications, and started an Alcoholics Anonymous group that supports more than Christian beliefs. "Now, whenever our minister is approached by someone needing help, he can refer them to us," says Parman-Bethard. "We have a ministry that is visible and supportive."

She adds, "Our church has been helped by making this a topic that is more open for discussion. People who have concerns about themselves or loved ones now have safe people to talk to."

The Rev. Alex Holt of the Woodinville, Wash., UU Church (165), has become the facilitator of a Unitarian Universalist Association task force on addictions ministry. His district, the Pacific Northwest, has one of the first district-wide addiction ministries.

"The majority of people who are trying to deal with this tend to be the families and friends of those suffering from addiction," he says. He emphasizes that the purpose of an addictions

ministry team is not to personally "save" someone, but to refer people to the best resources and to provide a supportive presence to people suffering from addiction and their friends and family so that they will not feel alone.

Unitarian Universalism can approach this issue in a unique way, he notes. "We're trying to give people options other than the traditional 12-Step AA program with its Judeo-Christian language." He notes he has started a 12-Step Buddhist group, for example.

The task force that Holt heads up is also working for official recognition and support of addictions ministry within the UUA. The Rev. Jory Agate, the UUA's Ministerial Development director and a member of the task force, noting that addictions befall ministers as well as lay people, says, "Our vision is that this ministry would be a joint effort involving the offices of Ministry and Professional Leadership, Congregational Services, Youth and Young Adults, and others. We all need to work together on this issue."

At Shoreline UU Church (129) in Shoreline, Wash., an addictions ministry team presents workshops and worship services, provides information to congregants, and hosts a small group once a month for people coping with addictions, and their families. Says team member Bill Norton, "It is not the purpose of our team to replace recovery or treatment programs, but through the information that we provide, and the very existence of our team, people feel that our congregation is a safe place to find support for dealing with addiction issues."

RESOURCES

The Addictions Ministry Handbook, written by the Rev. Denis Meacham, is available for \$18 through the UUA Bookstore, uuabookstore.org. See UU World (uuworld.org) July/August 2004 for a cover article on Addictions Ministry and Denis Meacham. Questions about addictions ministry can be directed to revalexholt@earthlink.net.

Racial Justice Resources Now Available Online

Resources to help individuals and congregations respond to the 2007 General Assembly Responsive Resolution on racial reconciliation are available at tinyurl.com/686zxx.

The resources include information on "sundown towns" where black people were excluded, justice for Native Americans, and cultural misappropriation.

The site also has the story of how First Church in Belmont, Mass., responded to the murder of a young black man and how the UU Church of Bloomington, Ind., is working with black communities on racial justice issues.

CLF Religious Education Resources for Lay Leaders

The Church of the Larger Fellowship offers the following religious education resources to lay leaders:

- RE Express Plus is a monthly email with week-by-week lesson plans that include projects, stories, crafts, poetry, and meditations. RE Express Plus now has a searchable index.
- Between Sundays is a website to help parents and other adults answer young people's religious questions.
- Online Courses, such as For New Unitarian Universalists (ongoing), Writing a Personal Mission Statement (July 7–August 1), and A UU Approach to the Bible (October 13–December 8).
- CLF also offers online opportunities to connect, including CLF-RE, an email list for CLF families, focused on home-based religious education and worship.

Contact CLF at clfu.org or 617-948-6160.

UU Women's Conference Planned for Houston

The International Convocation of UU Women conference will explore ways for women to expand their opportunities, including within congregations in areas such as equality and social justice. It will be held in Houston from February 26 to March 1, 2009.

Sponsors for the conference include the UUA, UU Partner Church Council, and Southwest UU Women. Speakers will include the Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt, composer Carolyn McDade, the Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman, and the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, president of Starr King School for the Ministry.



Green Sanctuary Program To Become a Part of Congregational Services

The Green Sanctuary program of the UU Ministry for Earth has a new home. As of July 1 Green Sanctuary is operating under the umbrella of the UUA's Congregational Services staff group.

After years of being nurtured by the UU Ministry for Earth, the program has grown too large for UUMFE to continue to administer, says the Rev. Katherine Jesch, UUMFE's director of Environmental Ministry. More than 50 congregations have completed the requirements to become Green Sanctuary congregations since the program began in 2001.

Jesch says turning Green Sanctuary over to the UUA will allow it to continue to grow. "It will help to institutionalize it and raise its status in the Association. The UUA has a better capacity to manage it over the long term." She acknowledged that it was a little hard to let it go, "because it's our core program."

Wayne Clark, the UUA's director of Congregational Stewardship Services, will have responsibility for Green Sanctuary. He said a program manager will be hired for day-to-day management. "This is a logical extension of the stewardship work we already do," he says. "I could not be more pleased." He says he anticipates no immediate changes in the program. "We do want to work to make it a bit more formal," he says. The Green Sanctuary website, now a part of UUMFE's site, will be moved to the Congregational Services website on UUA.org.

Jesch says she has agreed to help guide the program through its first year following the transition. She acknowledges that this transition will be challenging to the UUMFE financially. The UUMFE has made much of its income from selling Green Sanctuary handbooks at \$30 each. She notes that the handbooks will probably, at some point, be made available for free online by Congregational Services. Jesch says she will continue with UUMFE and will focus on environmental justice and

sustainability issues, especially sustainable food production.

UUA Initiates Blogging Resources Project

The UUA Office of Information and Public Witness has launched a new initiative to support bloggers in promoting Unitarian Universalist ideas, congregations, and social justice programs. Blogs are easily updated websites that can be used by ministers or laypeople to share news, discuss ideas, and publicize events of interest to congregational members and the general public.

The Unitarian Universalist Blogging Resources Project encourages prospective UU bloggers to start blogs and creates opportunities for established bloggers to share best practices. In addition, the project provides information about the UUA and its member congregations to help bloggers cover Unitarian Universalist initiatives and events.

To find helpful tips for UU beginner bloggers, and other resources, visit tinyurl.com/449jze.

For more information, please contact pw_specialist@uua.org.

Election Year Resources Available From UUA

The UUA has two resources to help congregations engage in nonpartisan electoral activities this year. Rob Keithan, director of the Association's Washington Office for Advocacy, notes, "The IRS places certain restrictions on what congregations can do, and those boundaries need to be respected. However, there is a wide range of totally acceptable activities, and I sincerely hope that many congregations will choose to get involved. These two resources should help."

- Updated version of *The Real Rules: Congregations and IRS Guidelines on Advocacy, Lobbying, and Elections*. Includes the latest information on what congregations can and cannot do. Find *The Real Rules* online at tinyurl.com/5pv9h.

- Election-year resources and opportunities from Faithful Democracy. Faithful Democracy, faithfuldemocracy.org, is a nonpartisan online clearinghouse made up of national faith-based organizations. Its goal is to educate and engage people of faith about the role they can and should play in the demo-

cratic process, thus increasing the number of informed faith-based voters in elections.

The Faithful Democracy website includes information about what religious groups can do and how they can do it, in areas that include voter registration, education, mobilization, and poll monitoring. The site also features theological reflections from a variety of religious leaders on the connections between civic participation and religious values. The Unitarian Universalist Association helped to found Faithful Democracy in 2004 and remains an active participant.

At the UUA Bookstore

Our Whole Lives: Sexuality Education for Young Adults, Ages 18-35. The popular OWL program for preteens is now available in a version for young adults. Authors are Michael Tino, Sarah Gibb Millsbaugh, and Laura Anne Stuart. Item 1124 / \$40.

Sexuality and Our Faith: A Companion to Our Whole Lives for Young Adults, by Mandy Keithan, T. Michael Rock, Lynn Young. Item 1125 / \$18.

Wrestling with Adulthood: Unitarian Universalist Men Talk About Growing Up, edited by Ken Beldon. Eleven men share their stories about becoming adults. What unites them is a shared commitment to justice, love, and compassion. This book would be useful for men's groups and other settings. Item 4725 / \$15.

Sonata for Voice and Silence, the 2008 UUA meditation manual, by Mark Belletini, chair of the commission that produced the UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*. Item 4717 / \$8.

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times, by Peter L. Steinke. Steinke's insights and examples are designed to offer inspiration to leaders during rough times, provide clarity in the midst of confusion, and uplift them in joyous times. Item 7016 / \$18.

Welcoming Children with Special Needs, by Sally Patton. Resource for accepting special needs children into congregations. Focuses on why and how to implement an inclusive ministry for children with special challenges. The book offers spiritual guidance and practical information. Patton shows how to raise awareness and offer sensitivity training about disabilities. Includes personal stories of successful strategies. Item 3823 / \$18.

Spread the Word

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



MONEY

Green Construction Helps Us Live Out Our Principles

Buildings don't get much "greener" than the new sanctuary belonging to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Wayne County in Wooster, Ohio (151 members). The building uses low-volatility paints and carpets, fluorescent lighting, a cistern whose water is used to flush toilets and irrigate plantings, windows that open, and a permeable "Grass Track" parking lot. Plus, seven percent of building materials were recycled products, most construction waste was recycled, and electricity comes from a wind power program.

Wayne County is just one of many UU congregations going green. When Paint Branch UU Church in Adelphi, Md. (229), lost part of its building to a fire, it rebuilt and added a geothermal heating system. The new building of First Unitarian Church of Duluth, Minn. (217), has an underground garage, a roof planted with native grasses, and a pond to capture storm water runoff. The UU Church of Fresno, Calif. (353), has low-flow water fixtures, waterless urinals, drought-tolerant landscaping, recycled plastic restroom dividers, and a dais in the sanctuary made of renewable bamboo.

Increasingly, congregations are putting the Unitarian Universalist Association's Seventh Principle—into respect and care for the earth—into practice, says the Rev. Katherine Jesch, director of Environmental Ministry for the UU Ministry for Earth, the UUA-affiliated organization that inspires and guides environmental action by congregations and individual UUs.

When congregations think about going green one of their first calls is to Jesch. Rising energy costs have made going green an easier decision, she says, but many congregations are already committed to that path. "They want to do the right thing even if it costs a little more," she says.

The Rev. Bryan Jessup says building green was an easy sell to his Fresno congregation. "We have so many people who volunteer for environmental causes," he says.

He adds, "Building green has been inspirational. It increased contributions to our capital campaign. And when visitors come, our building helps demonstrate our principles."

At Paint Branch it was a long-term member who suggested, near the end of a congregational meeting, that they include geothermal. "It came out of the blue, but it just felt to the congregation like the right thing to do," says the Rev. Jaco ten Hove. The congregation raised an extra nearly \$50,000 for that purpose. The payback on utility bills was estimated at 20 years, says ten Hove, but energy prices have spiked since then, reducing that period.

One consideration for congregations is whether to seek LEED certification. The U.S. Green Building Council, a nonprofit committed to sustainable building practices, has established four levels of "greenness": certified, silver, gold, and platinum. The UU Fellowship of Wayne County has the distinction of having the first place of worship in the United States to be LEED gold certified. The new Buchan Education Building, which houses the UU Ministry for Earth offices at First Unitarian Church of Portland, Ore. (1,114), is also gold certified.

Wayne Clark, the UUA's director of Congregational Stewardship Services, notes that some congregations are going green without obtaining LEED certification. The LEED process requires the completion of a checklist of projects, but some congregations are finding that rather than completing all of those items, they can make themselves greener by spending their money in other ways. Awards from \$5,000 to \$10,000 are available from Clark's office for those congregations that earn LEED certification.

RESOURCES

Contact the UU Ministry for Earth at office@uuministryforearth.org, 503-595-9392, or uuministryforearth.org. Some congregations mentioned in this article have detailed descriptions of their green building projects on their websites.

Clarification

Full-time ministerial internships with congregations and community ministry sites are now required to be nine months, rather than the six-to-nine months as reported in an item about internships in the Question and Answer column in the Spring issue of *InterConnections*. The nine-month period was approved at the April meeting of the UUA Board of Trustees. The change was requested by the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee, says the Rev. Wayne Arneson, MFC chair.

New Youth Ministry Website Created

A new website for progress reports about the UUA's evolving youth ministry program should be available by the time this issue of *InterConnections* reaches you. You can find a link to it—the URL was not available at the time of publication—at the Office of Youth Ministries website, tinyurl.com/594mcx.

A two-year effort to gather information on youth ministry from across the Association, called the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth, was completed last year and work is now underway by youth, UUA staff, religious educators, and others to create a youth ministry program that is more congregationally based than the current program.

Sara Eskrich, UUA Youth Ministry associate, says, "One of the most radical assertions of the Consultation process has been that youth ministry is the responsibility of all Unitarian Universalists."

Universalist DVD

A DVD titled *A Home for Our Heritage*, describing the early years of Universalism in New England, is available from the Universalist Heritage Foundation, PO Box 6441, Nashua, NH 03063-6441. The DVD is narrated by the Rev. Richard Gilbert and Joyce Gilbert. It may be useful for religious education programs, new member sessions, and discussions of UU theology and history. A \$5 donation is requested for the DVD. Learn more about the Universalist Heritage Foundation at its website, universalistheritage.org.

Planned Giving

Promote planned giving in your congregation through the resources of the UUA's Office of Legacy Gifts. Find these resources at uuu.org/giving.



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, write to *InterConnections*, 8800 Norwood, Leawood, KS 66206, or email interconnections@uua.org.

Q We have several members who have difficulty hearing the sermon and other parts of the Sunday service. We know there is equipment out there to help in such situations, but how do we tell if it's right for us?

A For the second year, the UUA Office of Accessibility Concerns is lending congregations a demonstration kit of assistive listening equipment to help those who have difficulty hearing worship services.

For the cost of shipping, a congregation can use, for a week, a suitcase of FM equipment, including instructions, says the Rev. Devorah Greenstein, program coordinator for Accessibility Concerns.

One congregation that tried the equipment reports: "One of our congregants, an elderly gentleman, was almost in tears. He has been faithfully attending and has been given a printed copy of the sermon when we remember. He was able to hear the entire sermon and even all the announcements. He said it was the first time he had heard a service in years! It was a most joyous moment."

Adds Greenstein, "The response has

been overwhelmingly positive." She says some congregations borrow the equipment to help them determine what kind of system they wish to buy. Others use it to help educate the congregation as to the need for such equipment. For information, contact the Accessibility Concerns office at access@uua.org or 617-948-6475.

Q We do a lot of social justice work, but sometimes it seems that most of it is done by members of our social justice committee. How do we get the rest of the congregation involved?

A Valley UU Church in Chandler, Ariz., has long had an active social action ministry, says Lynn DeMuth, chair of the church's social action ministry. Members volunteer monthly at a local shelter to prepare and serve meals to the homeless. In 2006, the church received the Creating Justice award for its support of the UU Service Committee. The church has served as the venue for various community presentations. Social action workshops and projects are a regular part of the church's religious education program for children and youth.

In 2007, the church instituted a congregation-wide process for selecting an annual charity to receive five percent of money raised at church fundraisers and each month's first Sunday offering (known as "Share the Plate Sunday"). The social action ministry also coordinates regular volunteer opportunities and provides information to members about the chosen charity's work in the community.

Recently, the church has been supporting a community center in Chandler that houses a food and clothing bank for people and families in crisis.

Each year church members and friends nominate local nonprofit organizations to support. Nominations are reviewed looking at:

- Opportunity for religious education involvement.
- Opportunities for church member involvement.
- Compatibility with UU principles.
- Other funding received by the organization.

The social action ministry reviews the nominees and presents its top two or three choices to the board of trustees. The board then selects one and the congregation votes on it at the annual meeting.



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For Lay Leaders of UU Congregations

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