



FOR LEADERS OF UU CONGREGATIONS

# CENTER Connections

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## Tapestry of Faith Course on Commitment

An adult education course about commitment is now online as part of the UUA's new Tapestry of Faith program. Authored by Melanie Davis, Stephanie Haymaker, Craig Hirshberg, and Richard Bellingham, the 11-session course focuses on helping adult couples develop and nurture strong relationships with each other as part of a UU faith journey. Each session is two hours and connects one of Unitarian Universalism's Seven Principles with a principle, quality, or attribute that participants can cultivate in their own relationship. The Principled Commitment curriculum is also useful for couples' retreats, say the authors.

Tapestry of Faith is a UUA-sponsored series of programs and resources that nurture UU identity, spiritual growth, and communities of justice and love. Tapestry of Faith curricula are available at [uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://uua.org/tapestryoffaith). Send questions to [adultprograms@uua.org](mailto:adultprograms@uua.org).

## GA Recordings Available

CDs of many General Assembly workshop presentations are available for \$12 from Content Management, [tinyurl.com/6773ro](http://tinyurl.com/6773ro). DVDs are \$20.

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## NOURISHING THE SPIRIT

# Diversity Efforts Help Congregations Thrive

**F**irst Unitarian Church of Los Angeles has more diversity than many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Its members include people from Central and South America, the Philippines, Mexico, and elsewhere. Its minister, the Rev. Dr. Monica Cummings, is African American. Its neighborhood includes Korean and Latin American communities. First Unitarian's Sunday services, and many meetings, are in both English and Spanish.

None of this happened by accident. The congregation has been intentionally multicultural for decades, says Cummings, who has been there since 2005.

"The rewards for this congregation have been learning about the challenges, opportunities, and struggles of people who don't look like us," she says, "and experiencing the richness of different cultures, including music and the experiences that people bring with them."

**In an effort to help** other congregations become more diverse, the Unitarian Universalist Association has launched the Diversity of Ministry initiative. The initiative, supported with funds from the Association Sunday fundraising campaign that began last year, is designed to help support congregations with ministers of color and those congregations that are committed to calling ministers of color or who are Latino/Latina, Hispanic, or multiracial. The funds will also be used to help seminarians of color.

The Diversity of Ministry initiative grew out of the fact that historically ministers of color have had difficulty finding settlements with UU congre-

gations and that typically their settlements have been shorter. There are currently only 36 such ministers serving in our congregations, 54 in fellowship with the UUA, and 50 who are actively preparing for ministry.

**The Diversity of Ministry** initiative has a goal of creating 12 new ministries led by ministers of color in the next five years. One of those ministries will likely be the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, Pa. The church is located in an urban neighborhood, and people of color comprise one to two percent of its membership. With 425 members and one minister, the Rev. David Herndon, the congregation is ready for a second minister, Herndon believes. The fact that that person could be a minister of color is a bonus, he says. "If we attract more African-American families, so much the better, but that's not the goal."

The goal is simply to help the church and its ministries grow by adding another minister, he says. "This is first and foremost a staffing-for-growth opportunity. At the same time, we do hope this will help our congregation become more acquainted with racial justice and African-American history and perspectives and that it will enable us to speak more knowledgeably about racism and to respond better to it."

Herndon anticipates that the additional minister will be called to Pittsburgh's First Unitarian in September 2009.

The Diversity of Ministry initiative complements the UUA's longstanding commitment to help congregations become antiracist, antioppressive, and

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## INTER Connections

### 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.

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multicultural. Taquiena Boston, director of the Identity-Based Ministries staff group of the UUA, notes that we've learned a few things from watching healthy multicultural congregations.

Congregations that want to become multicultural should keep in mind the following points, Boston says:

- Diversity of membership requires diversity of ministry.
- Diversity alone should not be the goal. Multiracial/multicultural ministry must be part of the mission of the congregation.
- Be intentional about bringing diversity into every aspect of congregational life.
- Achieving diversity in worship, so that it speaks to many groups of people, requires "mixing it up," using music, movement, story, imagery, and ritual delivered in the cultural languages of the communities of which our congregations are a part.
- Staff and leadership of the congregation must reflect the diversity the congregation wants to attract.
- Staff and lay leaders must continually educate themselves about multiculturalism.
- There must be intentional outreach to the community.
- Congregations must be able to meaningfully engage the realities of race and racism in the congregation and the larger community. Simply celebrating multicultural diversity is not enough.

The Rev. Keith Kron, director of the UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns and a member of the Diversity of Ministry Team, says he still hears concerns from congregations about calling a minister of color.

"We still hear, in 2008, from a surprising number of congregations that 'a minister of color won't be smart enough to serve our congregation,'" he says. "We still hear that 'They won't feel welcome here because they don't know what they're getting into.' We hear that 'This person will be too Christian . . . our worship will change.'"

"The real key to this," Kron adds, "is do you have folks in your congregation who are really open to having conversations around these topics and who are willing to continue to talk about it?"

The Rev. Alicia Forde, Program Coordinator for Multicultural Congregations in the office of Identity-Based Ministries, notes the problem is not just with UU congregations. She observes that more than 90 percent of churchgoers in the United States worship in congregations where 90 percent of the people are like them.

Asked why congregations should consider participating in the Diversity of Ministry initiative or other antioppression programs, Rev. Forde says, "I am often moved by the line in the hymn *As Tranquil Streams*, 'Prophetic church, the future waits your liberating ministry.' We, Unitarian Universalists, are that prophetic church; a covenantal faith moving toward what Rev. Richard Gilbert calls 'the Beloved Community of Love and Justice.'"

Forde continues, "Our Second Principle invites us to covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Fulfilling this covenant, this promise, requires that we attend carefully to systems of injustice in our midst. It requires that we be prophets, daring to work in this life for a future that gets us closer to fulfilling the promise of our Sixth Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. Dismantling systems of privilege and oppression within our community of faith allows us to breathe life into that goal. It allows us to co-create the Beloved Community of Love and Justice that we profess."

Mauricio Tellez is a board member at First Unitarian of Los Angeles. "When there is a high percentage of other cultures and races represented in a congregation, it is great," he says. He encourages people in other congregations to "Talk about it. Learn to be comfortable around people of other cultures even if they speak a different language. Make an effort to relate to people who are different from you. It's a very positive thing for all of us to do."

### RESOURCES

*Congregations interested in participating in the Diversity of Ministry initiative or who want to engage in antiracist/multicultural work in other ways are invited to contact the Office of Identity-Based Ministries at [info@idbm.org](mailto:info@idbm.org).*

*Resources for this work can also be found online at [tinyurl.com/5jbb62](http://tinyurl.com/5jbb62).*



## Change Means Movement

Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict.

**Saul Alinsky (1909–1972),  
a founder of community organizing**

### What's Working In Small Group Ministry

The First UU Society of Burlington, Vt., developed a theme of the month for worship services and gave its Small Group Ministry (SGM) groups the option of exploring the same themes. This approach was a great success says the Rev. Roddy O'Neil Cleary, affiliate minister. Themes have included beloved community, fear, food, death, happiness, God, hope, and change.

O'Neil Cleary says the group members enjoyed the link not only with the Sunday service, but with other SGM groups.

"Overall it has been a unifying force in the congregation," she says, adding, "It even gave a kind of buoyance to sermon preparation. Insights that emerged within our small groups found their way into my sermons."

Covenant groups helped to draw people back into the congregation at the UU Church of Concord, N.H. Personal invitations to join the groups were sent to folks whose names were gleaned from old church directories and who, some thought, might be receptive to a low-key way of getting involved again. And some did come back. Organizers also held a Sunday morning Covenant Group Breakfast open to everyone that included testimonials from SGM members. A new group formed as a result of the breakfast.

The UU Small Group Ministry Network will help local leaders plan regional workshops where you can receive training and guidance in SGM and share ideas, successes, and challenges.

Facilitator-training workshops will be held October 3 and 4 in Portsmouth, N.H., and October 25 in Barre, Vt. Workshops on building and sustaining a strong SGM program will be September 13 in Greenfield, Mass., September 20 in New Haven, Ct., and September 27 in Albany, N.Y.

Find a list of workshops and other information about Small Group Ministry, including ways of using Small Group Ministry with youth, lists of session topics, and a sign-up for the newsletter *SGM Quarterly* online at [smallgroupministry.net](http://smallgroupministry.net).

### What You Can Do About Ethical Eating

The issue of Ethical Eating was adopted at General Assembly 2008 as the new Congregational Study/Action Issue. Congregations are encouraged to study the following facets of this issue:

- Religious teachings as they relate to food
- Moral guidelines that should govern food production
- Poverty and hunger and nutrition education
- Guidelines that govern the purchase and use of food in your congregation

Possible actions include supporting sustainable agriculture, including farmers' markets and community gardening, volunteering at food pantries, and becoming an advocate for social justice for migrant workers and organizations that support people who produce and distribute food.

A resource guide to Ethical Eating will be posted around November 1 at [uua.org/socialjustice](http://uua.org/socialjustice).

### DVD, Book Support Multiculturalism

The DVD from "Leading Congregations into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future," a conference that was held last February in San Jose, Calif., is now available.

The conference featured the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis, senior minister at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City, plus the Rev. William Sinkford, UUA president, and Rev. Jason Shelton, minister of music at the First UU Church of Nashville, Tenn.

To order a copy of the DVD and a discussion guide go to [tinyurl.com/6pduft](http://tinyurl.com/6pduft) or send a check for \$5, made out to the UUA, to Diane Martin, UUA, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. Include your name, address and phone number.

Lewis's new book, *The Power of Stories (A Guide for Leading Multi-Racial and Multi-Cultural Congregations)*, is also available for \$16, as part of the Discoveries—Insights for Church Leadership series from Abingdon Press, [abingdonpress.com](http://abingdonpress.com).

### Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop

The Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) program helps UU congregations examine ways they can be more inclusive in their consideration of ministerial candidates. UU ministers who identify as people of color; as Latina/Latino/Hispanic; as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender; or as people with disabilities often have a more difficult time in the ministerial search process because of unconscious congregational biases.

Even in congregations that have called or hired a minister, interim minister, or intern from one of the aforementioned identity groups, biases have also arisen because congregations have mistakenly assumed that because they have called or hired such a minister means that they have adequately addressed diversity issues and need no further work. For more information contact [idbm@uua.org](mailto:idbm@uua.org).

### Social Justice Resources

Some of the UUA's most-requested social justice resources, including the *Social Justice Empowerment Workshop Handbook*, *Socially Responsible Investing*, and others are available online at [uua.org/socialjustice/resources](http://uua.org/socialjustice/resources).



## 2008 Association Sunday Set for October 12

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

The first Association Sunday events were held last fall and raised more than \$1.4 million, with funds going for a national advertising campaign, to support ministers of color and their congregations, and to provide growth grants for individual congregations.

The 2008 campaign is titled "Growing Our Spirit." Funds will be used for lay theological education and for continuing education for ministers, as well as grants for seminary students and support for ministers of color. Go to the Association Sunday website, [tinyurl.com/yq3vd4](http://tinyurl.com/yq3vd4), for details.

Congregations may select dates other than October 12 to hold their events, if necessary. Register online or email your service date and contact information to [associationsunday@uua.org](mailto:associationsunday@uua.org). You can also call Devin Letzer, campaign assistant for Association Sunday, at 617-948-6544. A packet to help with organization of 2008 events is available online, as are an Association Sunday poster and a web banner.

## Useful Congregational Life Articles on [uuworld.org](http://uuworld.org)

*InterConnections* is not the only source of articles about congregational life. Visit [uuworld.org](http://uuworld.org) weekly for articles on church life and other topics. You can also receive a weekly email notifying you of new articles. Here are some recent articles of special interest to lay leaders. Search for them by headline on [uuworld.org](http://uuworld.org).

- Two Unitarian Universalists killed in church shooting (Knoxville). 7-28-08
- Unitarian Universalist buildings going green. 7-28-08
- UU congregations support extended sites. 7-21-08
- UUA team studies resource distribution to congregations (Congregations Come First). 6-16-08
- UUA to administer Green Sanctuary program. 6-2-08

### Spread the Word

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

## MEMBERSHIP

# Strong Leadership Creates 'Breakthrough' Churches

**D**ynamic worship, a green building, and strong, effective professional and lay leaders helped four congregations become 2008 Breakthrough Congregations this spring. The four were recognized at General Assembly in June.

**The Bull Run** Unitarian Universalists, Manassas, Va., credit their growth from 159 to 234 members in five years to a dynamic minister, the Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd, an exemplary music ministry, and an energetic RE program led by Interim Director of Religious Education Michelle Grove. RE registration rose from 70 to 100. They hold a family worship service before the regular Sunday service each week, which focuses on the needs of children and youth.

The congregation renovated its building to make it more functional. There are children, youth, and adult choirs, and an orchestra. The offering plate is split each Sunday between the congregation and local organizations.

**At Pacific Unitarian** Church at Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., adult membership has risen from 220 to 300 and RE registration from 52 to 75. Pacific Unitarian places an emphasis on pastoral care, including a dedicated staff person and trained lay pastoral associates. The church also has a strong RE program and a new addictions and recovery ministry.

Pacific Unitarian is a partner church with the Community Church UU in the greater New Orleans area. It designated \$75,000 from the bequest of a member to go to the capital campaign drive of the three New Orleans area UU congregations. Pacific Unitarian has a goal of giving away at least 10 percent of its income each year. The Rev. John Morehouse is minister and Renee Daley is Lifespan Faith Development director.

**The UU Fellowship** of Wayne County in Wooster, Ohio, grew from 64 to 112 members after buying its first building in 1996. When growth plateaued it built a new building, this time an environmentally responsible

one that earned a Gold LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) from the U.S. Green Building Council. Since moving into the building in 2005 the congregation has grown to 150.

The congregation's intentional hospitality begins with a website that includes a map and continues with clearly marked parking places for visitors in the parking lot.

More than a third of the members are involved in a Small Group Ministry program. The minister is the Rev. Elaine Strawn. The DRE is Marge Thomas.

**Unity Temple UU** Congregation in Oak Park, Ill., has grown in a decade from 275 members to 461. Growth came after the congregation began offering two services, overhauled its administrative practices, made Sunday services more worshipful, invested in a full time director of religious education, and adopted a form of policy governance, which allowed the governing board to focus more on visioning and policy. A diverse musical program also was a major factor.

Last year Unity gave away \$45,000 through the Sunday offering and \$13,000 through other means, reaching a goal of giving at least 10 percent of its budget to social missions, on top of Fair Share contributions to the UUA and the Central Midwest District.

Many of these changes were inspired by the Rev. Alan Taylor, who was called by Unity in 2003. "I tell everyone that the congregation did a lot of good work before I came," Taylor says. "And then I did three things. I raised expectations, I raised expectations, and I raised expectations. We made clear that this was not a club where people could hang out, but a spiritual home that asks a lot of people—to the point they are changed."

### Resources

See the *Breakthrough Congregations'* 15-minute GA videos at [uua.org/ga](http://uua.org/ga). Read in-depth profiles about them at [uua.org/interconnections](http://uua.org/interconnections).



## MONEY

# With Wilder Weather, Check Your Insurance

**W**ildfires in California, hurricanes on the Gulf Coast, tornadoes and severe flooding in the Midwest. Is it nature as usual, or is it climate change? Whichever it is, storms seem to be increasing in severity and frequency, and that's a good reason for congregations to make sure their insurance coverage is up to date and to take a new look at their emergency preparedness plans.

Patrick Moreland, vice president of marketing with Church Mutual, the company that insures 60 percent of Unitarian Universalist congregations, has the following advice for church leaders:

- Don't keep the insurance policy in the church building. If the building should be damaged or destroyed getting information about your coverage could be delayed. Moreland recommends asking several members to carry cards with your insurance company's phone number and the policy number so the company can be contacted easily in an emergency. Several church leaders should also know where the actual policy can be found, whether in a safe deposit box or a member's home.

- Moreland reminds that disasters can occur anywhere. "One of the biggest mistakes that people make is assuming that they'll never get hit." Hurricanes aren't limited to the southeast and the Gulf Coast, Moreland notes. Likewise, flooding can inundate areas that have not been flooded before, especially in light of increased urbanization, where paved surfaces increase runoff and drainage systems may be overwhelmed.

- Check the limits on your current policy. "Having adequate levels of insurance is an age-old problem with churches," he says. "When our people go out to do a quote and they do a valuation on a church property it's not uncommon for the value to be much higher than the property is insured for. Whether they sign up with us or someone else, part of our job is convincing them they should increase their cover-

age. And if you've bought more property or acquired an expensive item but haven't mentioned it to your agent, it could affect the amount you can recover in case of a claim."

- Consider flood insurance if it's available in your area, Moreland recommends. "It's not inexpensive, but if you have flood damage it will have been a good decision. A lot of people who should have flood insurance don't. We find that out every time there is a flood." Church Mutual doesn't sell flood insurance, but it is available through a national flood insurance website, so ask your insurance agent.

**When the First UU Society** of Marietta, Ohio, had flood damage a few years ago it learned from the experience, says then-minister the Rev. Diane Dowgiert. For example, the Building and Grounds Committee put together a flood kit, including information on how high the rivers can rise before there will be water in the basement and checklists of what to turn off in advance of evacuating the building: pilot lights, electricity, water lines, etc. Included in the kit are plumber's "test plugs," inflatable rubber devices to be placed in basement floor drains to keep water from backing up into a building, which could have prevented some of the damage at Marietta, Dowgiert noted at the time.

Church Mutual has a "protection series" of 11 booklets on its website, [churchmutual.com](http://churchmutual.com), to help congregations protect against fire, crime, weather, and other risks. It also has a Hurricane Preparedness Guide and a 24-page self-inspection safety checklist for church properties. The American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency also have guides on preparing for disasters, at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) and [fema.gov](http://fema.gov).

One final preparedness tip: It's an excellent idea to conduct regular emergency preparedness tours of your facilities, showing key leaders the location of fire extinguishers, medical supplies, gas and electrical shut-offs, and telephones.

## Trauma, Disaster Resources for Churches

Here are trauma and disaster-related resources that have been compiled by the UUA and other organizations following 9-11, Katrina, and the shootings at the Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville, Tenn., on July 27.

Congregations may find these resources useful in considering how they might prevent and/or respond to future incidents and natural disasters.

- *Making Meaning After Disaster: A Workshop for Unitarian Universalist Adults*, by the Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh. Designed for reflection and healing in the wake of natural disasters, attacks, and other traumatic events whether near or far, this workshop of up to three-and-a-half hours includes time for storytelling, worship, and questions. See [tinyurl.com/5ljsxq](http://tinyurl.com/5ljsxq).

- The UU Leaders Library has other resources, including articles on "Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters," "Managing Your Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting," and "A Resource for Young People who Have Personally Experienced Trauma" at [tinyurl.com/66uf7m](http://tinyurl.com/66uf7m).

- The UU Trauma Response Ministry, [traumaministry.org/resources.htm](http://traumaministry.org/resources.htm), has additional resources, including ways of engaging questions of faith, providing spiritual care following a disaster, and developing appropriate worship resources.

## International Links For Small Groups

Individuals and groups seeking ways to work internationally will want to check out the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council's (UUPCC) new "Paths to Personal Partnership" program. The program facilitates connections that provide educational support for students, support for community development plans, support for economic opportunities through micro-finance programs, and participation in a church and school building fund.

Many UU congregations are partnered with others outside North America. Through the UUPCC, this new program enables individuals and small groups within congregations, including religious education and small group ministry groups, to also make these international connections and share cultural perspectives. Contact the UUPCC at [uupcc.org](http://uupcc.org), or 781-275-1710.



## CLF, CYF Good Options For Many UUs

Congregations with members who have difficulty attending church regularly may want to refer them to the Church of the Larger Fellowship or its Church of the Younger Fellowship.

The CLF provides a church home to those who are isolated geographically or for other reasons. CLF members receive *Quest*, a monthly worship publication including sermons and meditations, and can participate in online email lists, including shared interest and covenant groups.

The Church of the Younger Fellowship (CYF) is a specialized online ministry of the Church of the Larger Fellowship that is designed to meet the needs of young adults ages 18-35. The CYF currently ministers to hundreds of young adults worldwide at [uucyf.org](http://uucyf.org).

The CLF also has more than 250 complete worship services in its electronic library, plus religious education materials for the use of individuals as well as small to mid-sized congregations. CLF also sells UU notecards, chalice jewelry, and order of service covers. Contact CLF at [clf@clfu.org](mailto:clf@clfu.org), or call Lorraine Dennis, CLF executive director, at 617-948-6166.

## Support Issues, Not Candidates

Unsure what you can do, as a congregation, in this election season and remain on good terms with the IRS? In short, a congregation can support issues, but not individual candidates.

Lobbying for or against issues is permitted. There can be no fundraising for candidates or donation of meeting space. A minister or congregation member may freely support individual candidates, but not from the pulpit or if otherwise perceived to be speaking for the congregation. Nonpartisan voter registration is permitted.

For more details get a copy of *The Real Rules, Congregations and the IRS*, at [tinyurl.com/63d6py](http://tinyurl.com/63d6py).

## Share Your Thoughts

Is there a story you'd like to see in *InterConnections*? Want to brag on something your congregation is doing? Let us know! Send us your comments at [interconnections@uaa.org](mailto:interconnections@uaa.org).

## LEADERSHIP

# Stepping Forward to Help When There Is a Need

**W**hat do you do if you have a vision for your congregation, but no one else holds it? Or maybe others hold it, but no one is coming forward to make it come to life? Maybe you'd like to make worship services better than they are. Or improve welcoming. Or there's a need for a new program. What can one person really do?

Just ask Minnie Venable, past president of the UU Fellowship of Amarillo, Tex. (94 members). When she became president she had a sense that the Sunday services were too informal, too "off-the-cuff." She also wanted welcoming to be better. And she believed that others had the same desires. In fact, they told her as much.

And so she set to work. She attended leadership school where she practiced putting services together. She met with leaders at General Assembly, and talked up a new way of doing things.

"A lot of what I did was simply to listen to people and remind them of what they said they wanted," she says.

Together they tried a few things that didn't work out. And some that did. Slowly, change happened and the services improved.

"What I provided was perseverance in the dream," Venable says. "I refused to give up on the goal, and I refused to let them."

**And then there's Stuart Owen** at First Unitarian Church in Dallas (1,100). When a member of the church donated \$40,000 to purchase a small organ in memory of his wife, Owen enlarged that dream. He raised an additional \$150,000 from the congregation for the purchase of a large tracker action pipe organ.

Owen had a personal interest in this mission. He had learned to play the pipe organ and when the opportunity presented itself to procure one for his church he readily accepted the challenge.

"I was completely committed to this because of my background," he says. But when he found the perfect organ, his work began in earnest; raising

money for it was harder than he had expected.

"There were many points when I thought this is just too difficult," he says. "But I kept trying, kept calling people. You have to do something like this because you love the idea. You can't do it out of a sense of obligation."

At one point he tried to pass off part of the project to someone else, but no one was willing to take it on, although they were willing to help. Finally the funds came in, and the organ was installed in 1990. The campaign for it led to a shift in the congregation's giving practices even beyond the organ, says Karen Lewis, First Unitarian's director of religious education for children and youth.

"Stuart's efforts raised awareness in all of our congregants that we are a can-do church," Lewis says. "This project was the beginning of an increase in generosity from all congregants that has helped us grow to be the church we are today." The congregation is in the midst of a campaign to raise \$9 million for capital improvements.

**When the board** of the First UU Church of Austin, Tex., (600) decided it needed an executive director to run the business aspects of the church and to free the board from "administrivia," as the Rev. Dr. Davidson Loehr put it, one of the people who stepped up to make this happen was Phil Hastings.

"I put my weight behind it because I felt it was an idea whose time had come," he says.

After more than a year's work, including formation of a task force, the project finally came together this past summer, when candidates were interviewed for the position.

Owen offers the following advice to those tackling similar projects: "Make sure you're committed and put consistent energy into it. Keep the congregation informed. Involve all necessary constituencies so you will have their support when you need it. And remember what Thomas Edison said, that most of his achievements came from perseverance."



## TOOLBOX

# Top-Selling Books at GA For Church Leaders

**A**mong the top 10 best-selling books at the General Assembly booth of the Unitarian Universalist Association Bookstore this year were the following, which can be found at [uabookstore.org](http://uabookstore.org).

*Worship That Works* (\$16, Skinner House), by the Revs. Kathleen Rolenz and Wayne Arnason, coministers of West Shore UU Church near Cleveland, Ohio. The authors used a sabbatical period to travel across North America in search of transformational worship experiences in UU and other congregations.

*Worship That Works* grew out of that experience. The Rev. Thom Belote, who reviewed the book for the UU Ministers Association, notes, "*Worship that Works* will appeal to a readership of lay people who are involved in worship and want to deepen their understanding of it. It will also be a valuable resource for clergy looking to help those in their congregations to become more informed and articulate about worship."

*Witnessing Whiteness: First Steps Toward an Antiracist Practice and Culture* (\$29.95, Rowman & Littlefield), by Shelly Tochluk. The author illustrates how racial discomfort leads white educators toward ineffective teaching and poor relationships with students and colleagues of color. This book questions the implications of this for educational institutions, school reform efforts, and diversity initiatives.

*Wrestling With Adulthood, Unitarian Universalist Men Talk About Growing Up* (\$15, Skinner House), edited by the Rev. Ken Beldon. UU ministers and lay leaders explore the challenges they faced and the choices they made while growing up; how they came to be committed to justice, love, and compassion; and how they came to understand themselves. See [uuworld.org](http://uuworld.org) for an excerpt, "The Call of Self," by one of the book's contributors, the Rev. Manish Mishra.

*Beyond Fundraising, The Complete Guide to Congregational Stewardship*, by Dr. Wayne Clark, the UUA's director of

Congregational Stewardship Services. (\$20, Skinner House). The UUA's top-selling guide to stewardship issues, including how to conduct stewardship drives, how to talk about giving, strategic planning, capital campaigns, endowment funds, and determining if a new building is necessary.

**The UUA Bookstore** also has reading lists on a variety of topics, from stewardship to nature, worship, and UU history. There are currently at least three books on the topic of contemplating one's own death, useful for adult education courses. The authors are the Rev. Forrest Church of the Unitarian Church of All Souls, New York; UU singer-songwriter-minister the Rev. Ric Masten; and Randy Pausch, a UU and a professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Titles are, respectively, *Love & Death: My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow* (\$22, Beacon Press), *Going Out Dancing* (\$12, Skinner House), and *The Last Lecture* (\$21.95, Hyperion Books).

The UUA's 2008 meditation manual, *A Sonata for Voice and Silence* (\$8, Skinner House), by the Rev. Mark Belletini, was also a top seller as was the book of essays, *Did I Say That Out Loud? Musings from a Questioning Soul* (\$12, Skinner House), by the Rev. Meg Barnhouse. Belletini is senior minister at First UU Church of Columbus, Ohio, and was chair of the commission that produced the UUA hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. Barnhouse is minister at the UU Church of Spartanburg, S.C.

*Come Into the Circle: Worshiping with Children*, by Michelle Richards, a religious education program consultant for the Central Midwest District and a credentialed religious educator. This book (\$15, Skinner House), is a how-to guide for creating meaningful religious experiences for children, including suggestions on the form, style, and elements of worship, plus a collection of opening words and chalice lightings, meditations and prayers, stories, songs, and sermons, many contributed by UU religious educators from around the country.

## Sign Up for Monthly Social Justice Actions

The UUA's Advocacy and Witness staff group is beginning an initiative called Action of the Month to help congregations engage in social justice work. Each month it will make UU resources available that will enable congregations and individuals to address one particular issue at the same time as other congregations for maximum impact.

Here are the monthly campaigns planned for this fall and winter:

- **September: Darfur** Assist Darfuri women in their struggle against violence.
- **October: Iran** Prevent armed conflict with Iran.
- **November: HIV/AIDS** Support evidence-based, comprehensive HIV-prevention programs in the month leading up to World AIDS Day, December 1st.
- **December: Peace** In the season of peace, participate in the Congregational Study/Action issue: Peacemaking.

A one-page description of the Action of the Month will be included in the monthly mailing to congregational offices. Sign up at [uua.org/socialjustice](http://uua.org/socialjustice) to receive the following:

- Emails with resources, action opportunities, and congregational stories.
- Descriptions of Actions of the Month ranging from "anyone can do it" to "very committed." For example, you could sign a petition and/or you could come to Washington, D.C., for a rally.
- UUA.org coverage of the actions.
- Blog posts about the monthly actions: [uuasocialjustice.blogspot.com](http://uuasocialjustice.blogspot.com).

To learn more, email the Advocacy and Witness office at [socialjustice@uua.org](mailto:socialjustice@uua.org).

### 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](http://uua.org/interconnections).

People can sign up for email announcements when each new issue is available online, at [lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interconnections-l](http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interconnections-l).



## 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](mailto:interconnections@uua.org).

**Q** What is the best way to be quickly informed when something happens in one of our congregations, such as the tragedy in Knoxville?

**A** At least one person in each congregation should be subscribed to the UUA email list UUA-L. The announcement-only list is for key announcements from the UUA. Traffic is light on the list, with generally less than two emails per week.

Topics in recent months have included reports on the UUA Board of Trustees, deaths of prominent UUs, General Assembly announcements, details about major program changes, and significant media appearances by UUA staff and UU ministers and lay people. Subscribe to UUA-L and other UUA-sponsored email lists at [uua.org/lists](http://uua.org/lists).

You can also go to [UUA.org](http://UUA.org) and [uuworld.org](http://uuworld.org) for further information on current news events. Discussion of news topics that appear on UUA-L and [UUA.org](http://UUA.org) can take place on lists such as UU-LEADERS. To limit the amount of email you receive ask to receive emails on high volume lists like

UU-LEADERS in digest form. You'll still get all the emails, but they'll come grouped together once a day or every few days.

**Q** It has been three years since Hurricane Katrina. I know that UUs there, and New Orleans itself, still need help, but what is the best way to provide it at this point?

**A** A joint Unitarian Universalist Association-Unitarian Universalist Service Committee program that has placed some 2,000 volunteers in Louisiana and Mississippi since 2005 was transferred to local leadership in New Orleans this past summer. The volunteer program is now operated as the New Orleans Rebirth Volunteer Center.

"There is still an enormous need for volunteers, even nearly three years after Katrina," says the Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger of First UU Church of New Orleans. "Some experts predict that it may take as much as a generation for full recovery to take place. We've learned, a little painfully, that recovery is a marathon, not a sprint."

Volunteers are housed at First UU or

Community Church UU, in Metairie, in addition to other places around New Orleans. For more information about individual or group volunteer opportunities this fall and winter and next summer, contact Quo Vadis Gex Breau, executive director of the center. Call during business hours (Central Time) at 857-928-6791 or 504-866-4170.

Donations to the New Orleans Rebirth Volunteer Center can be sent to First UU Church New Orleans, 2903 Jefferson Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70115. (Sunday collections are encouraged.) Checks can be made out to "New Orleans Rebirth Volunteer Center" or just "Volunteer Center."

According to Breau, "The Rebirth Volunteer Center provides service opportunities for volunteers from the United States and beyond. Volunteers come to give, as well as to find that they have received the gifts of gratitude, knowledge, and the fellowship of standing in solidarity with residents and other volunteers."

For more information on the New Orleans Rebirth Volunteer Center, or to contact the center, visit [tinyurl.com/5vrjws](http://tinyurl.com/5vrjws).



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*For Lay Leaders of UU Congregations*

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