



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP • WINTER 2006

IN THIS ISSUE

1/2

[Office of the Director](#)

UU Humility—A Short Essay

So How Is the Search for a New Director for MPL Coming?

A Time of Considerable Transition in MPL
Once Again, What Is the PLCC?

2/4

[Ministerial Credentialing/ Internship Clearinghouse](#)

From the Ministerial Credentialing Office
Internship Clearinghouse News

5/7

[Religious Education Credentialing & Renaissance Program](#)

Note from Beth

What's New in the Religious Education
Credentialing Program

New RE Credentialing Policies and Procedures—
Highlights

Religious Education Credentialing Committee
Renaissance Program News
Scholarships

7/8

[Settlement](#)

For Interim Ministry Hopefuls
For Interim Ministers-to-Be

8/9

[Professional Development](#)

Why Go to Church?

10

[Church Staff Finances](#)

UUA Health Insurance—Next Steps

10/12

[Resources & Possibilities](#)

News from Associated Organizations

Congregational Handbook

Attention All Ministerial Aspirants
and Candidates

DRUUMM Seminarians

Office of the Director—David Hubner, A'Llyn Ettien

UU Humility—A Short Essay

Thirty years ago there was a survey of UU values that showed that one traditional religious value—salvation—was definitely a non-starter for UUs. Not only did it fall at the end of the list of things given value, but the survey was constructed so that people could paste labels with their top and less important values in a top to bottom listing.

“Salvation” not only often came last, but some people felt the need to paste it upside down or along the margins of the page.

At the time, I loved the idea that we UUs were so determined to take responsibility for our own development that we didn't need to look outside of ourselves for positive change. Now, years later, I wonder if I read that ranking wrong. That rather than rejecting the need for salvation, we were so needful of being right, of being good, of being correct that we couldn't admit to our own need for help. Along the way I don't think that humility has been one of our strong suits. Generally I don't like UU jokes, but the one about Universalists being so sure of God's goodness that they felt all would be saved and about Unitarians being so sure of their own goodness that they didn't need to be saved comes to mind.

As I move toward my retirement from the UUA at the end of June, probably my deepest hope for us is that we can ease up on ourselves a bit, admit more to our own failings and failures, and understand that being wrong is also part of the human condition. I am not being falsely humble when I tell people that I figure that I'm wrong about half the time. I've learned that one of the most rewarding and pastoral

things I can do, both for them and for me, is to ask my colleagues and friends for help. You have always responded, never with exactly the same answer, but with enough guidance that I can move ahead, grateful that I turned to you for help. •

So How Is the Search for a New Director for MPL Coming?

Well, I think, as I write this on January 16, we are one day past the deadline for applications to be in to Kay Montgomery. I am not involved in the search process itself, but have been contacted by a number of colleagues interested in the position. I know that every effort will be made to make as timely a decision as possible. As you can imagine, I am very interested in who will be chosen. •

A Time of Considerable Transition in MPL

Although I am particularly sensitive to the issue, 2005 has seen the retirement and moving on of a larger number of MPL staff than usual. We have offered our heartfelt thanks and said farewell to very long-term MPL members Nancy Hezlitt, Settlement Assistant, Jean Hartman, Professional Development Assistant, and Griff Bell, MFC Assistant. We warmly and gratefully welcome A'ashia Short, who was already working part time as RE Credentialing Assistant, but who will now also work part time as the Professional Development Assistant

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in Boston; Angela Merkert who will work part time as Professional Development Assistant in Chicago; Marie DePaul, who has joined us as Ministerial Settlement Assistant; and Kate Banks, who has joined us as MFC Assistant. ●

Once Again, What Is the PLCC?

The PLCC (Professional Leadership Coordinating Council) is a consortium representing the five main UU professional groups—UU Ministers Association, Liberal Religious Educators Association, UU Musicians Network, Association of UU Administrators, and the Society for Community Ministries—and representatives from MPL. It started with breakfast meetings at GA three years ago and now has become an informal but effective body for consultation and conversations among

the groups and for joint action to strengthen the ministerial and professional leaders in Unitarian Universalism. Areas for possible collaboration include mentor training, providing opportunities for building a wider understanding of UU history and polity for professionals, and a range of other matters. A key benefit of the collaborative work will, we expect, be a growing understanding of and appreciation for what each group brings to building stronger UU congregations and making our witness in the world more effective. The next meeting of the PLCC will be in Boston on February 27. A PLCC working group has had fun in planning three PLCC workshops at GA and participating in a LREDA sponsored reception for members of the PLCC groups at GA. Watch for details in the next issue of TRL. ●

—David Hubner,
Director of MPL

Ministerial Credentialing/Internship Clearinghouse—

David Pettee, Christine May, Kate Banks, Kim Wilson

From the Ministerial Credentialing Office

The New Year brought a new staff person into Ministry and Professional Leadership whom many of you will get to know. Although we miss Griff Bell, the former MFC Assistant, we were fortunate to have Aimee Santos-Lyons step in on a temporary basis until the permanent person was hired. I am now delighted to introduce Kate Banks, who grew up in the First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. She is a recent graduate of Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, PA where she majored in history. Kate has been a volunteer at Orchard House in Concord, MA for more than ten years, the location where Louisa May Alcott lived and wrote *Little Women*. We are very glad she is with us, and do welcome her when you get the opportunity!

Usually with this column I try to gear my remarks and comments

directly to aspirants and candidates seeking ministerial fellowship. Yet, realizing that many ministers have deep and important relationships with those who are seeking fellowship, it is very common for the subject of letters of recommendation to surface as folks move forward. Let's be honest. Many of us find the request to write a recommendation to be a challenge. Those who get to write recommendations realize that (intentionally or inadvertently) there is the possibility the information communicated may represent the fork in the road that changes another person's journey toward ministry.

At the same time, I fully believe unquestionably that ministers are the best folks to discern the gifts and edges of those who seek ministerial fellowship. It is not uncommon that I get a call from a colleague trying to

figure out how to share fair and balanced news. The desire to withhold painful observations and commentary is understandable, but I am convinced that it is a disservice to deny aspirants and candidates critical information to make informed decisions about their future.

I asked Donna Morrison-Reed, late of our congregation in Toronto and the Canada Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy, to weigh in on this conversation, for I have seen firsthand in the recommendations she has written clear evidence of an approach that has been deeply thought through with care and honesty. Here's what she had to say.

"My goal in evaluating potential ministers is to help them attain a clearer picture of themselves. I want the person to feel comfortable discussing his/her own strengths and growing edges openly and matter-of-factly. I like to talk to the candidate about the group they will be meeting (MFC, RSCC, Search Committee). Given what we've been discussing, what kinds of questions are they likely to ask you? And how are you planning to answer? After our discussion I would like the candidate to have a clear idea of what the evaluating body is likely to zero in on and how he/she is going to answer each area of interest or concern. There should be no surprises.

"When I evaluate a candidate for the ministry I am on a quest for what kind of minister I am evaluating: Where is this person passionate? And which aspects of ministry hold less appeal? Where do this person's strengths and competencies lie? And where is this person awkward and underdeveloped? In which kind of environment does this person thrive? And in which kind of environment would this person find him/herself drowning?

"As I interact with a potential minister, I hold up each of these questions and try to have a deep discussion about each one. I want to know if the person can understand what each question means. I want to know if the person can answer each of these questions in some depth,

using examples from his/her own life. If someone can't come up with any aspects of ministry that hold less appeal, or any areas of awkwardness or underdevelopment, I view this as a danger signal equal to someone unable to tell me where his/her passion lies. I want to know how comfortable the person is in discussing all aspects of him or herself. And finally, I want to know what strategies the person is devising given who he/she is at this moment in time and where he/she hopes to go. In other words, I want to know if the candidate regards him/herself as growing, alive, on a journey, or as a finished product. What journey is this person on? Can he articulate where he has come from? Can she tell me where she hopes to go?

"During the discussion I try to trust my intuition, observe the facts in front of me, and discern my own inner pull. Do I want to be liked by this person? Do I want to impress? Do I feel the urge to take care of him/her? Am I feeling critical? As I write my evaluation, I try to keep all these factors in mind. In regard to how I have felt pulled, I try to counteract the pull in order to be fair and balanced. In writing my evaluation, I give all the information I have gleaned to the body asking for the reference, trying to give concrete examples to support each of my conclusions. (If I find myself without examples, I know my discussion with the candidate did not go into enough depth or detail.) I do not leave out anything essential and I do not try to sugarcoat anything. I try not to put undo emphasis in any particular area. I just try to simply state who I saw and how that person strikes me as a potential minister in our movement.

"In other words, I try to speak as clearly as possible. I do this in order to serve our movement and our congregations and in order to serve the person I am writing the reference for. I do not expect a finished product and I regard perfect ministers as a very dangerous oxymoron. I speak as clearly as possible because I know I am doing no one

any favors if I mislead or if I leave out essential information. I also speak clearly because I trust the process and because I know I'm not the final word on anything; simply one voice among many."

I couldn't have said it better myself. ●

In the Faith,
David Pettee, Ministerial
Credentialing Director

Internship Clearinghouse News

This fall marked a new chapter in the work of the Internship Clearinghouse. For some time now, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee has required that every intern, in conjunction with their supervisor and intern committee, create a plan for learning—what we call the "Learning/Service Agreement." This year, following the revision of the MFC's rules and policies, I was charged with the responsibility of reviewing each Learning/Service

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Agreement and requesting changes or additions when necessary. The reason for this is to help ensure that each intern has a plan that will cover all of the areas of ministerial competence that the MFC expects every candidate to develop.

The majority of internships go well, but there have been instances in which the intern's experience was somehow incomplete or lacking in one or more areas. (And most people would prefer not to have to do a second internship!) Now, in order for an internship to "count," the intern's Learning/Service Agreement needs to be approved by me, and documentation of this approval must be sent to the Credentialing Office to be kept on file. All of us—the MFC and the Ministerial Credentialing Office—hope that this review and "signing off" process will serve to increase the overall chances that an internship will meet both the intern's needs and the MFC's requirements. And, by the way, if you are an intern this year, and I haven't yet received your Learning/Service Agreement (due within 60 days of the beginning of the internship), I'd suggest that you send it to me for review ASAP.

There are over 80 internships in progress this year, up from about 70 last year. The Clearinghouse continues to expand its services to prospective and current interns, as well as supervisors and intern committees. From the Internship Clearinghouse web page, there are now links to salary recommendations for interns,

two sample internship agreements (which specify the terms of employment), as well as ten different sample Learning/Service Agreements, reflecting the increasing diversity in the kinds of internships that ministerial candidates are undertaking. We are seeing more part-time internships, more community internships, as well as more "hybrid" internships, which combine parish and community work.

One area in which I'd like to be able to offer more support is the application, interviewing, and hiring process in the parish setting. This is, of course, a process that each congregation is free to conduct as they see fit. However, some ministers and intern committees undertaking this for the first time find the process daunting, while others that have interns regularly have developed systems that work well for them. If you are a supervisor of a congregation that has a process that you would be willing to share, I would very much appreciate it if we could talk further about it. I'd like to develop a sample process that less experienced supervisors and intern committees can access from the Clearinghouse web page, hopefully making what can seem like an overwhelming undertaking more manageable.

As I write this column, it is mid-January, and I note that my records show four interns and congregations that have matched up. I also am aware that, despite the Internship Clearinghouse's recommended timeframe for making applications to sites (Nov. 1–Dec. 1), a

number of folks representing congregations contacted me and expressed concern that they had received few or no applications during that time, and asked that the application deadline posted on their on-line profile be extended. Several years ago, our two theological schools, Meadville Lombard and Starr King, collaborated with the Clearinghouse to create a suggested timeline for potential interns and sites (this timeline can be found both on the IC web page as well as in the *Internship Manual*). My question for all of you who are involved with internships: is this timeline working for you? Or would adjusting some of the dates work better? I welcome your feedback.

I anticipate that over the next couple of months, many matches between interns and sites will be made. If you've been hired as an intern or you are a minister who will be supervising an intern in the coming year, I would be most appreciative if you could contact me and let me know about the match, so I can keep my records current. And, as always, please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or general information needs. ●

Yours in Faith,
Kim D. Wilson, Internship
Clearinghouse Coordinator,
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Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays,
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Drive, Madison, CT 06443

On-line Education at Starr King School for the Ministry

Starr King School offers 14-week on-line courses for fall and spring sessions. On-line courses are open only to students not enrolled at a Graduate Theological Union member school. Register for on-line courses at <http://online.sksm.edu/ce/courses/register.htm>. Visit www.online.sksm.edu/ce/ for more about on-line resources available at Starr King.

Fall 2006 Semester

Our Theological House: An Introduction to Theology for Unitarian Universalists, Roy Phillips

Introduction To Liberal Religious Education, Sheri Prud'homme

Nonviolent Living in a Violent World, Ken Jones

Unitarian Universalist History, Roxanne Seagraves

Note from Beth

As a religious educator you are probably familiar with the concept of interim ministry. A specially trained minister is contracted by a congregation for one or two years after the departure of one settled minister to prepare the way for the next settled minister. But did you know that the same concept can apply to a position in professional religious education? There are particular situations when it makes sense to hire a trained interim religious educator, such as: when a long-tenured religious educator has left; when a major change in religious education staff structure or program is contemplated with the departure of a religious educator; or when there has been significant conflict involving the former religious educator or religious education program.

Interim DREs are trained to help a congregation's leaders: get perspective on its RE history and culture; identify the congregation's unique RE program identity, including its strengths, its needs, and its challenges and develop a vision for the future; model new approaches, practices, and procedures in religious education; evaluate the RE program and its safe congregations policies and procedures; develop skills in navigating transitions; and guide the congregation in focusing their energies on the future in a positive way.

Do you know of a congregation that may need to train a religious educator in interim work? Are you a religious educator considering a refocus of your career, who enjoys helping congregations solve problems in a changing environment?

Then please keep in mind that the next UUA training for Interim Religious Educators will be held in Boston, MA on August 9–10, 2006. For more information, please contact Beth Williams at 617-948-6417 or bethwilliams@uua.org. •

What's New in the Religious Education Credentialing Program

Congratulations to the following religious educators, who were awarded credentials by the Religious Education Credentialing Committee at its October, 2005 meeting:

Credentialed Religious Educator—Associate Level

Carolyn Freud

Credentialed Religious Educator

Kathleen Carpenter
Benette Sherman

Natalie Fenimore
Joyce Zaugg

Credentialed Religious Educator—Master's Level

Jan Devor

We welcome the following religious educators who have been accepted into the Religious Education Credentialing Program and are working toward various levels of achievement. Their commitment to excellence in religious education and professional development are recognized through these efforts:

Tryst Chagnon, TJ
Patsy Hatch Reinertson, BC
Michele Grove, JP

New RE Credentialing Policies and Procedures—Highlights

The Religious Education Credentialing Committee made the following policies at its October 2005 meeting:

- The RECC will place an emphasis on AO/AR and safe congregations competencies.
- UU Polity and UU History will be separate equivalencies, course requirements, and portfolio competency areas at the Master's Level. Learning Theories and Teaching Methods will also be separate.
- A self-assessment of competencies form and a professional context form will now be required.
- Recommendation forms over one year old at the time of the due date for a candidate's completion materials need to be recertified or amended by the recommender. If a recommendation or endorsement form is not adequately completed, it may be returned or the author contacted for clarification.
- For the bachelor's degree equivalency, a candidate will only need to seek equivalency for those credits remaining to be earned, between the minimum of 60 academic credits (semester hours) and the maximum of 120 academic credits (semester hours).
- An RECC Equivalency Sub-committee will meet periodically to evaluate equivalency proposals and waivers. What previously had been published or developed as sample proposals for an equivalency for graduate credit in a specific subject will now be the requirements for that equivalency. A candidate who conforms to the specified requirements will no longer need to submit a proposal for the equivalency. A waiver form will be developed by the Equivalency Sub-committee to be used for a candidate to request a waiver of a specific aspect/s of an equivalency requirement from the Equivalency Sub-committee. The evaluator of an academic equivalency must have

a graduate degree. A standardized format for a proposal for a Master's Equivalency and for a Bachelor's Equivalency are being developed. Candidates will need to submit an amended Equivalency Proposal form if they want to change details of a previously approved proposal. Candidates must consecutively number all pages of the equivalency documentation.

- When future LREDA fall conferences conflict with UUA Board Meetings, both the RECC meeting and the candidate interviews will take place after the conference.
- All RECC decisions made related to issues raised or questions asked during the time for comments will be posted on the UUA website.

Religious Education Credentialing Committee

The RECC has understood from the very beginning of its work that no single path to credentialing will meet the needs of all our congregations and religious educators. This understanding led to the creation of three designations of Credentialed Religious Educator and to the program's commitment to making equivalencies available for most of the requirements. The Committee has been working to provide equivalency guidelines for candidates.

The RECC knows that equivalencies need to be fair both to those who follow a traditional academic path and to those who choose for whatever reason to fulfill the requirement through an equivalency. Equivalencies are an alternative way for candidates to obtain the body of knowledge or experience required by the RE Credentialing Program. There is no easy formula for defining what an equivalency might be. As a committee, we have been struggling with the need to provide some guidelines to candidates desiring help in formulating an equivalency, being open to alternative proposals, and maintaining the standards of the program.

Over the past year, we have begun developing more detailed proposals for equivalencies to the graduate level courses required for the Credentialed Religious Educator—Master's Level. It is our hope that those individuals who are not able to attend an academic institution for these courses will be able to use these formats to meet the requirements. As we complete these sample proposals we are placing them on the UUA's website. Please see www.uua.org/programs/ministry/reco/equivguidelines.pdf for the latest versions. We continue to work through the complex issues involved and will make additions and revisions to those proposals as our understanding grows.

As a way to help candidates be assured that the work they do for an equivalency will be accepted for review by the committee, we ask that an equivalency proposal be submitted and approved by the RECC prior to submitting the actual equivalency fulfillment materials. This assures that the candidate knows the proposed work, if completed

to the satisfaction of the committee, will be accepted as an equivalency. Candidates are encouraged to read the posted guidelines and to contact Rev. Beth Williams, Religious Education Credentialing Director, for more information.

The work the RECC has been doing around equivalencies is proving to be some of the most challenging. We continue to be committed to providing equivalencies and will continue to work on ways to make the process clearer for candidates. ●

Liz Jones,
Chair, RECC

Renaissance Program News

The following are Renaissance program modules scheduled for the coming year:

- Mar. 3–5, Philosophy of RE, Birmingham, AL, Linda Cobb, cobl@cox.net
- Mar. 13–14, RE Administration, Wilmington, DE, Carol Taylor, ctaylor@uua.org
- Mar. 17–19, Worship for All Ages, Long Beach, CA, Tera Little, teralittle@worldnet.att.net
- Mar. 21–22, Multicultural RE, Newton, MA, Sarah Hawn, sarahnwah@earthlink.net
- Mar. 31–Apr. 4, Worship for All Ages, Ithaca, NY, Jacki Thompson, lepican@unitarian.ithaca.ny.us
- Apr. 28–29, Curriculum, Bozeman, MT, Laura Mentch, laura@creekfarm.net
- May 17–18, RE Teacher Training, Bouctouche, NB, Sylvia Bass West, sylvia@cuc.ca
- Jul. 8–14, RE Administration, Ferry Beach, ME, Mindy Whisenhunt, drefuss@capital.net

We are pleased to congratulate the following religious educators who received Renaissance Recognition in the current fiscal year:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Anne Bancroft, MB | Vicki Benavides, TJ |
| John Cavallero, MNY | Connie Dunn, TJ |
| Kelley Gordon, JP | Sarah Ohl, CUC |
| Anne Principe, MB | Donna Renfro, MNY |
| Robin Slaw, MNY | Carol Zoernack, MNY |

Scholarships

A reminder that the Barbara Marshman & Ann Fields Memorial Scholarship is awarded annually to a religious educator who is engaged in a program of graduate study and is serving a Unitarian Universalist congregation. This \$500 prize is given through the generous contributions of those who wish to memorialize and honor the work of these two great religious educators, and through the ongoing support of the UUA. The Veridan Fund for Religious Education Excellence Scholarship is awarded to a participant in the UUA Religious Education Credentialing program in order to undertake a significant professional development experience. This \$3,000 annual prize is given

through the generous contributions of the family, friends, and colleagues of the late Rev. Norma Veridan to honor Norma's life and ministry, and through the ongoing support of the UUA. The VREE Fund was established according to Norma's wishes to provide scholarships to religious educators who strive to strengthen religious education in our UU congregations by advancing their professional development to a new level of expertise, as outlined

in the UUA Religious Education Credentialing program. The application deadline for both scholarships is May 1, 2006. Please contact the RE Credentialing Assistant at recassistant@uua.org for application information. ●

Beth Williams,
Religious Education Credentialing Director

Meadville Lombard Theological School—Summer Intensives 2006

All intensive classes meet for one week; generally Monday–Friday, six hours per day. This is the equivalent of thirty hours of residential classroom work. Reading lists are available and most of the background reading is done several months prior to the beginning of class. Term papers and class projects are completed in the weeks following classroom instruction. Registration by M. Div. students may require permission of the instructor or Academic Dean. Registration deadline is June 1. One-half of tuition is due May 1; tuition is due in full by June 1.

Register on-line at <https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/Meadville-LombardTheological/Registration.html>. Please contact the Office of the Registrar at 773-256-3000, ext. 234 with any questions.

2006 Summer Courses

Spiritual Leadership and Political Ministries, July 24–28, 9:00–5:00

Creation–Evolution, July 10–14, 9:00–5:00

Twentieth Century Liberal Theology, July 17–21, 9:00–5:00

Art as Spiritual Practice, August 5–12, Ferry Beach

2006–2007 Financial Aid Application Forms Now Available

Get them at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/credentialing/preparation/financialaid.pdf. You may also contact your RSCC administrator or the Ministerial Credentialing Office Administrator, Chris May, at cmay@uua.org or 617-948-6403. The deadline for application is April 15, 2006.

Settlement—John Weston, Marie DePaul

For Interim Ministry Hopefuls

If you wish to serve a congregation “in the interim,” please plan to update your Ministerial Record and submit an application for interim ministry on-line by April 1, 2006. Have your interim minister's packet ready to send out by April 21, when I start making recommendations. For additional important information see “In the Interim,” on-line at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/publications/interim/.

The Ministerial Settlement System, for settled ministries, resembles the NASDAQ in affording ministers the opportunity to inform themselves about congregations and to exercise a high degree of individual election. Interim ministry placement works quite differently. Given the press of circumstance and the confusion in which many congregations find themselves following the announcement of a ministerial departure, interim placement operates more like the Soviet economy pre-Gorbachev: central planning, abundant ignorance, and a final scramble, “nasty, brutal, and short.”

Thus the brevity of the application to conduct an interim ministry, asking only about ministers' preferences as

to the Districts and types of interim ministry in which they are willing to serve. Beyond that, it is up to the Settlement Director to provide each congregation with a list of the three ministers best qualified to serve it in light of the needs of all other congregations. Only Accredited Interim Ministers (AIMs) and AIMs-in-Training (AIMITs) are asked for their specific congregational preferences. Given the uneven distribution of preferences among them, even their elections cannot always be honored.

The UUA's interim ministry program looks first to the placement of AIMs and AIMITs, i.e., those who take the extended training, attend the seminars, serve in interim ministry positions year after year, and relocate every year or two. The rationale: AIMs and AIMITs can only be there for the congregations if the congregations are there for them. Given the sharpened sensibilities AIMs and AIMITs bring to their work, this is as it should be.

Those of you that are neither AIMs nor AIMITs will want to know what your chances are of finding a position. In

the current year there are some 85 interim ministries in progress. Of the ministers serving, approximately 45 are AIMS or AIMITs. The balance of 40 or so are ministers in various circumstances: new seminary graduates, transfers into our ministry from other denominations, returnees to the parish from other work, recent retirees seeking only temporary posts, and ministers having grown restive in their prior settlement and wishing to serve in a temporary position rather than continuing in place. While 40 is better than the last couple of years, it is rare for there to be more available positions than ministers seeking them. The more geographical flexibility you can bring to your pursuit of an interim ministry, the more likely you are to find a position. ●

For Interim Ministers-to-Be

Ministers who will be conducting their first interim ministry, or first in five or more years, are expected to attend

the Orientation to Interim Ministry, to take place at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, TN from 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 25 to 5:00 p.m. the next day. Travelers should plan to arrive Monday night.

The cost of the orientation is 1.5 percent of your Salary plus Housing Allowance for the year to come. (Pledges are accepted—due Nov. 1, 2006.) In return, the UUA provides you with room (Monday and Tuesday nights) and board (three meals Tuesday and Wednesday's breakfast and lunch), course materials, and program, and reimburses your transportation costs to Nashville and back.

Ministers who wish to attend the orientation in the hopes of landing an interim later in the summer are welcome to attend. The cost will be \$200 in advance for food, course materials, and program. These ministers cover their own travel and hotel costs. Registration period: May 15–June 25. ●

—John Weston,
Settlement Director

Professional Development—Michelle Bentley, Angela Merkert, A'ashia Short

Why Go to Church?

This e-mail I received says it all.

A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all." This started a real controversy in the Letters to the Editor column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my partner has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this . . . they all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my partner had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!" When you are *down* to nothing . . . God/(Spirit) is *up* to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible. . . .

Your ministry matters! What you say and do every Sunday, and Monday through Saturday matters! This new year, may you find those things that nourish you mentally, spiritually, and physically in order to think and act more clearly, balanced, and creatively so that you may best provide the sustenance for others. I know that sometimes it's a challenge to find the exact workshop, seminar, field study, or context to do that which you seek and need, but as colleagues, we can share our ideas and great finds for enrichment and professional development with each

other and help one another find personal joy and strength even in the midst of such a demanding profession and in spite of such demanding times.

The CENTER Committee (the continuing education arm of the UU Ministers' Association) is serious about providing nourishment for the mind, body, and spirit. We last met in November in Seattle to continue developing plans for the 2006 Ministry Days' workshops and theme speakers. You will be pleased to know that the 2006 theme speaker is Sharon Salzberg. Ms. Salzberg has studied and practiced meditation with Burmese, Indian, and Tibetan teachers for the past 25 years. She directs meditation retreats throughout the United States and abroad and is the author of *Lovingkindness* and (on audio) *Lovingkindness Meditation*.

The 2007 Ministry Day theme speaker is Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright. Mr. Wright is senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ: one of, if not the largest and fastest growing UUC congregations in the country.

CENTER is also considering reconstituting the Preaching Seminar, which has served as an important professional development opportunity.

In addition, the publication of a Mentor/Mentee Resource for new ministers and their mentors is being worked on in collaboration with members of CENTER, LREDA, and the MFC—an important formation tool for new ministers and seasoned colleagues.

CENTER has recommended to the UUMA Executive that they ask the UUA Board appointed Commission on the 2005 GA and Youth of Color to hold a Collegial Conversation during Ministry Days 2006.

Today CENTER has representation in equal parts of ministers working in community, religious education, and parish. This balance feels great. ●

Ministerial Fellowship Committee

The end of the tenure of our able and fearless leader, Phyllis Daniel, has come and sister Jory Agate is the new MFC Chair. In addition, we welcome Kate Banks as the new MFC Administrative Assistant. We start the year with a full staff, in shape, and in good spirits.

In the Settlement Working Group of the MFC, we continue to work on the details and issues related to preliminary fellowship and transitioning from ministerial tracks to *ministerial specialties*.

We also continue to work on revising and deepening *the reading list for ministerial candidates* by incorporating works by scholars of color and Latino/as, and strengthening areas in social analysis and religious education. ●

DRUUMM Annual Member and Family Conference

DRUUMM attended the November conference held at Murray Grove Camp and Retreat Center in New Jersey. Highlights of this gathering include listening to several of

the youth of color present at GA 2005 reflect their thoughts and the establishment of The White Allies Group. ●

New Colleagues in Professional Development

Welcome Angela Merkert and A'ashia Short as the new Professional Development Assistants! The Professional Development Assistant position in the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group is now a job share. Duties will be shared in the following manner: *Angela Merkert*—Professional Development Information, Continuing Education and Counseling Grants, Professional Development Training Programs, and Leadership Assessment and Evaluation Materials, amerkert@uaa.org or 708-209-5546, (¾ time from our Chicago office). *A'ashia Short*—General Office Support, Ministerial Death Notices and Obituaries, and Surviving Partners, ashort@uaa.org or 617-948-6437, (¼ time in Boston, in addition to her ¾ position as RE Credentialing Assistant in MPL). ●

Continuing Education Opportunities

Check out the newly updated Professional Development pages of the UUA website (www.uua.org/programs/ministry/development/index.html) for resources available to support your continuing education goals and ongoing professional development. If you have recommendations for additional resources or questions regarding any of these training sessions please send to Michelle Bentley (mbentley@uaa.org) or Angela Merkert (amerkert@uaa.org).

The Sankofa Archives of UU People of Color/Hispanic Descent

Archiving the achievements, accomplishments, and journey of Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay leaders of African, Asian and Pacific Island, Native American, Latin, and Hispanic descent was an idea hatched by Michelle Bentley four years ago that is now coming to fruition. As Director of the Archives (true name yet to be determined) and in conjunction with Meadville Lombard Students of Color and Latina descent, the Department of Ministry and Professional Leadership, and Meadville Lombard, we have begun collecting and archiving materials that were gathered over decades by Mark Morrison-Reed, Meadville, me (Michelle Bentley), and others. We are also working on putting a virtual archive on-line to be accessed by interested parties from around the world. This way of staying connected with Rebecca Sienes, President of the Unitarian Universalists of the Philippines, and with our liberally religious sisters and brothers in India and Japan is important. It is equally important for seminarians and youth to have access to and knowledge of their history in the Movement. It is an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to learn, through books, reports, photographs, videos, and other media, the journey of struggle and joy that UUs of color/Latino/a/Hispanic have endured, and what they have contributed to the conversation and development of Unitarian Universalism, liberal religion, and society in general. Soon you will be asked to contribute to the collection—hope to hear from you.

Training Programs Update from Professional Development

The First Year Ministers' On-Line Seminar is scheduled for May 15–26. First year ministers and second year that did not participate in 2005 have been sent invitations to register for this series of on-line facilitated conversations. Registration deadline is March 31, 2006. Questions? Did we miss you in our mailing? Contact Angela Merkert at amerkert@uaa.org or 708-209-5546 or Michelle Bentley at mbentley@uaa.org or 773-643-6988. We will also gather for a luncheon and workshop during Ministry Days 2006.

An Addiction Seminar has been scheduled for March 22–24, 2006 in Hyde Park, Chicago. We're pleased to say that Ministry and Professional Leadership has received some dedicated financial resources, enabling us to address issues of addiction. Knowledgeable UU ministerial colleagues and a couple of experts in the field of addiction will gather in Chicago for discussion and planning on how best to disseminate important information. Our thinking to date is that the best way to stretch the effectiveness of these resources is by means of a CENTER presenters program for UUMA chapters (a workshop on addiction for our ministerial colleagues, addressing their own potential for addiction and their obligations to respond to addiction issues in their colleagues, their congregation, and their family).

A Minister of Color/Latino/a/Hispanic On-line Seminar is tentatively scheduled for May 1–15, 2006.

UUA Health Insurance—Next Steps

The UUA lost its health insurance plan for staff of local churches in 1998, and since then we have been unable to find a nationwide carrier to serve the needs of more than 1,000 congregations spread across the U.S. In response to a growing crisis in lack of affordable coverage, the UUA Trustees voted on January 22 to consider the design of a self-funded health insurance program at their meeting in April. Enrollment in such a plan would be open to church staff who work at least 1,000 hours per year, plus self-employed community ministers and staff of urban ministries and camp and conference centers. If approved in April, the plan will be rolled out at the June 2006 General Assembly and publicized through all the UUA's channels of communication.

Whether the UUA can deliver a self-funded plan with reasonable assurance of financial success depends upon the number of persons who actually enroll. Insurance risk is reduced when spread among a large number of enrollees, so long as the enrollees reflect a population with typical healthcare needs. A minimum of 400 UU employees with 250 dependents would be a desirable for the plan to break even, and the actual number will have to be known in October. With sufficient enrollment, the plan could begin operations in January 2007. If the needed enrollment does not materialize, the proposal will be cancelled.

In January 2005 we surveyed congregations about their staff who already had health insurance. The vast majority of respondents indicated they were either "likely" or "very likely" to switch to a UUA plan if one was made available. A follow up survey in December by the UUMA, LREDA, the AUUA, the UUMN, and the Society for Community Ministries reports that over 350 ministers, educators, administrators, musicians, and others

who work for UU congregations have no health insurance at all, or are in plans where the benefits are thin and participants bear a heavy cost for what they receive.

In the event this self-funded health insurance plan moves ahead, the UUA could offer a standard PPO plan with the largest national network of physicians and hospitals, plus a High Deductible Plan with lower premiums that could be linked to a Health Savings Account. It is expected that employer-congregations would pay 80 percent of the premium cost, with the remaining 20 percent paid by the enrollees. The UUA does not have the resources to subsidize a health plan from endowment income, so the premiums collected would have to carry the claims and operating costs.

Unfortunately, we should not assume that a UUA plan would be cheap. There is no "cheap" anymore in meaningful health insurance, and because of rampant inflation in the health industry, ever increasing premiums loom as far as the eye can see. Or until something like Medicare is made available to all U.S. citizens.

On a related topic, we have been derelict in announcing the prizes in our health insurance sermon contest that were awarded last year. Readers selected the winners from 39 entries, with the first prize of \$1,000 awarded to Diane Teichert; \$750 to Lyn Cox; \$500 to Liz Brown; and \$250 to Jaco ten Hove. The goal of this contest was to educate congregations about the health insurance crisis in the U.S., and to stimulate further activity toward reform. The funds for this contest came from a donor who has insisted on anonymity, but for whose generosity we are very grateful.

I still advocate that every minister preach one sermon a year on a topic that is causing intolerable suffering, driving millions of Americans into bankruptcy, and siphoning off money that could go to more useful purposes, including financial support for local religious bodies. ●

—Ralph Mero, Church Staff Finances Director

Resources & Possibilities

News from Associated Organizations

MFC News

Report from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee Meeting, November 30–December 4, 2005, Berkeley, CA. The Committee and its Settlement Working Group have been working on the implications of

the shift from fellowshiping ministers in a category of ministry, to recognizing ministers with a specialty in a specific area of ministry following three successful renewals in that area. The Renewal, Mentor, and Endorsement forms were changed to reflect this new process. In addition, the committee voted a change to Rule 9 to bring it in line with current practice, deleting the following sentence: "No applicant shall be considered for more than one category

of ministry at the same interview." All rule changes also must be voted on by the UUA Board before taking effect.

Other business at the meeting included initial work on revising the MFC Reading List and a review of our commitment to our work on anti-racism and anti-oppression. The Committee is committed to dedicating time at all future meetings to issues of A/R A/O. A number of waivers were granted to ministers

and candidates. Eight ministers were awarded final fellowship, eleven received a second renewal of their preliminary fellowship and six received a first renewal of their preliminary fellowship.

The committee interviewed twenty candidates (six men and fourteen women). Seventeen were encouraged to move forward toward preliminary fellowship, with varying contingencies; one was encouraged to continue in preparation for ministry but to return for another interview; and two were discouraged from continuing to pursue a career in the ministry.

Leslie Takahashi-Morris and Susan Conrad served as liaisons to candidates. Roberta Dianne and Rachel Anderson from the Western RSCC served as substitutes for absent committee members. We bid a fond farewell to members attending their last meeting: Ken Reeves, Stephan Papa, and our illustrious chair, Phyllis Daniel.

The MFC will next meet March 30–April 2, 2006, in Chicago, with a student event to be hosted at Meadville Lombard Theological School on March 30. The open portion of the business meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m., April 2. Enquiries and comments may be directed to mfc@uaa.org.

—Jory Agate, Chair, MFC

AUUA News

This fall the Association of UU Administrators accepted its first candidates in the AUUA Certification Program. Ten capable administrators are enrolled in our pilot program, hailing from Alaska to Massachusetts and many states in between. The AUUA congratulates these worthy participants and wishes them the best of luck in their endeavors to become certified.

We very much appreciate the verbal support and encouragement we have received from the office of Ministry and Professional Leadership, the Office of Church Staff Finances, several UUA staff

members, and the members of the PLCC. The AUUA sends its sincerest appreciation to Rev. Paul Johnson and the UU Council on Church Staff Finances. This prestigious group awarded a \$2,000 grant to the AUUA for the purpose of training mentors for our certification program. We hope to have this program planned soon.

AUUA Professional Days planning is almost complete, and we are proud to announce that Richard Hammar, leading specialist in legal and tax issues affecting churches and author of more than 25 books, will speak with us. We have decided to open this portion of our Professional Days to other church professionals. If you are interested in hearing Richard Hammar speak, please contact AUUA Administrator Gail Donkin at gdonkin@aol.com for details.

Administrators: watch the mail in February for your newsletter outlining this year's Professional Days. ●
—Sandy Leyenaar, President,
AUUA

Society for Community Ministries News

Rev. Nadine Swanberg was named "Community Minister of the Year" by SCM for her work in drafting the code of Professional Practice for Community Ministers after SCM members authorized her to take on the task of updating and editing the Code at their annual meeting in 2003. Nadine is a member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, with a pastoral practice in Lakewood, CO, affiliated with Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, CO.

With consultation from Community Ministers Tom Korson and Joan Van Becelaere in Denver, SCM Member and Assistant District Attorney Tom Kirkman, and other SCM members who offered comments to the draft code, SCM membership overwhelmingly voted to adopt this Code as criteria for membership in the Society on December 31, 2004.

Correction: The web address published in the last issue for the Borden Sermon Award winners was incomplete. Please see www.uaa.org/programs/ministry/development/borden.html for the list. ●

CLF

We Hear You! The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) is offering *RE Express*—a monthly e-mail bundle of three great resources that appears in your in-box automatically every month.

CLiF Notes: A Monthly Curriculum for Families and Small Groups: Complete curriculum plan with a session each month on UU Identity, World Religions, Principles in Practice and Worship.

KidTalk Web page: Monthly information and activities on everything from holidays around the world to spiritual practices and social justice projects.

REsources for Living: Featured in our *Quest* publication, this column speaks to UU kids and families about how we practice our free faith.

RE Express is free to CLF members (just let us know you want it), and is available to non-CLF members at an introductory one-year subscription price of \$99.

For more information about RE Express and/or CLF membership, contact CLF at www.clfuu.org or 617-948-6150. ●

Congregational Handbook

The 2005 Web edition of *The Congregational Handbook* is now on-line at www.uaa.org/cde/handbook/, with updated key information from within the UUA (including all program staff groups) and outside (including the Alban Institute, the UU Service Committee, Faith Communities Today, and the Red Cross).

There is no printed document to accompany this edition: it is solely

web based and will be updated with current information as needed.

The web edition of *The Congregational Handbook* comprises links to services covering a wide range of congregational needs and aspirations, including substantial sections on congregational committees, professional staff of congregations, and outreach. ●

Attention All Ministerial Aspirants and Candidates:

You are invited to join the UUMA Executive Committee for the annual UUMA Student Breakfast on Thursday of General Assembly. Come meet the leadership and learn more about your professional organization. Contact UUMA Administrator Janette Lallier at

administrator@uuma.org or 617-848-0498 for more information. Please RSVP by June 1 if you are interested in attending. ●

DRUUMM Seminars

Seminarians who are members of DRUUMM or who identify as Latino/a, Chicano/a, Asian, Pacific Islander, African, American Indian, Indigenous Native, Arab, Biracial, or Multiracial Persons of Color are invited to join the DRUUMM Seminars Caucus. We currently have 30 members and meet twice monthly for teleconferences, with regular special guests. This Winter/Spring we will have Rev. John Crestwell, Rev. Chester McCall, and many others. Please contact Joseph Santos-Lyons at jsantoslyons@hds.harvard.edu for information and dial-up instructions.

Schedule (all teleconferences take place at 7:00 p.m. Eastern, 6:00 p.m. Central, 5:00 p.m. Mountain, 4:00 p.m. Pacific):

Tues., Jan 3: David Pettee and Sofia Craethnenn, UUA

Credentialing and Race Concerns

Mon., Jan 23: Robette Dias, Crossroads Ministry

Mon., Feb 13: Rebecca Parker, President, Starr King

Tues., Feb 28: Mark Morrison-Reed, Black Pioneers in a White Denomination

Tues., Mar 7: Rosemary Bray McNatt, 4th Universalist

Mon., Mar 20: TBA

Tues., Apr 4: Bill Sinkford, UUA President

Mon., Apr 24: Manish Mishra, DRUUMM President incoming

June GA: William Sinkford, Friday June 23, 2006 10:00 a.m. President's Suite ●



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE UUA MINISTRY & PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP

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