

**Report to the UUA Board of Trustees
for its January 2008 Meeting
from the
UUA Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group**

**Office of the Director of MPL
Beth Miller, A'Llyn Ettien**

The Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group directors update you below on much of the vital work of our team. Here are a few additional highlights from the Director's seat:

Staff Transitions

Ralph Mero has rescheduled his retirement for March 31, 2008. Joyce Stewart will be promoted to director of the retirement program, a position equivalent to that of Jim Sargent, director of the healthcare program. I am working on a new job description for the Director of the Office of Church Staff Finance (Ralph's replacement) who oversees both Jim and Joyce. It will be posted soon after the first of the year. The job will include oversight and maintenance of our many funds for ministerial relief, support, scholarship, and retirement, helping all of MPL staff to work with Stewardship and Development in seeking additional funding, and oversight of MPL's presence on the UUA website and use of new technology.

John Weston, Transitions Director, has established his retirement date as July 31, 2010. I hope to replace him with two people, one focused primarily on interim or transitional ministries and the other mainly on settlement.

Panel on Theological Education

I am working with representatives of the Senior Ministers of Large Unitarian Universalist Congregations (SMOLUUC) on a pilot program, funded by one of the Panel's current small grants, for those who have potential to be excellent large church ministers. We have engaged Susan Beaumont, large congregation program consultant for the Alban Institute, to help with the design. The grant only covers the design phase. Additional funding will be needed to implement a program. MPL is also engaged in work with the UU Ministers' Association continuing education committee (CENTER) and the Youth Programs Office on other initiatives funded by Panel grants.

Diversity of Ministry Team

In addition to David Pettee, John Weston and me from MPL, we have added Jory Agate, Ministerial Development Director, to the team. I convene one of the task forces which has submitted a draft plan for the ministers of color in-care program. We are hopeful that funding from Association Sunday will soon be available to implement this and other parts of the DOMT initiative.

Community and Military Ministry

Robin Tanner, our ministerial intern (quarter time, 2007-08 and 2008-09, shared with 1st Church Boston), is off to a great start. She has been in contact with all the DEs, the Society for Community Ministry (SCM) and the UU Ministers Association (UUMA) and is working with Jory Agate and David Pettee to help get a handle on where all our community ministers are and what they are doing. We will be developing a survey and hope to create a much more effective way to keep in touch with people once they reach final fellowship. Plans for ways to serve and support them will begin to emerge later in the process. If Board members have concerns, ideas or thoughts to share, please let me know and I will incorporate them into Robin's project.

I will be attending a Military Ministry endorser's training and conference in Virginia and at the Pentagon in January. Our small but growing number of ministers serving as chaplains in the armed services are becoming more connected to MPL. The Rev. George Tyger, in UU ministry since 1996 but only recently enlisted in the U.S. Army as a chaplain, is being deployed to Iraq in the spring. He is working on a project to create a kit of devotional materials to give to soldiers being deployed. I have recently sent letters of approval for three seminarians to simultaneously train for military chaplaincy and have two more applications on my desk.

Ministerial Fellowship Committee

Jackie Shanti's report sums up major activities. We in MPL have spent a great deal of time working on the rules re-write, especially Jory Agate. Beth Williams and Dave Pettee have been working on an implementation plan for the background checks called for. In addition, I have spent much time this Fall on complaints and disciplinary issues with ministers. I am grateful to the Committee on Committees for their recommendations and to the Board for their appointments to the MFC. Phyllis Daniel was a godsend as interim chair for the last two meetings. Wayne Arnason met briefly with the Exec and the whole MFC at the recent meeting in San Francisco, and will be visiting the UUA in January to become further oriented to the current workings of the MFC. We will welcome the other new members in March.

Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association (UUMA)

Members of MPL staff had a very productive meeting with the new UUMA Executive committee in October and look forward to a very positive working relationship. One immediate outcome was the formation of a small working group made up of UUMA, MPL and MFC members to discuss the appropriate flow of communication between the various parties around complaints filed against ministers.

Ministerial Credentialing

David Pettee, Christine May, Mohammed El-Khatib, Kim Wilson

Regional Sub-Committees on Candidacy

The Regional Sub-Committees on Candidacy look forward to welcoming their newly appointed members. The transition of the RSCC Administrators to un-benefited UUA staff is working well. RSCC members will be using time at their annual luncheon at GA

to have a conversation with members of the MFC, instead of having training, given that there is a new chair and possible new MFC Rules.

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression and Multiculturalism

I have observed this fall that there appears to be a rise in interest in congregations desiring to provide internships to interns of color/from historically marginalized groups. Kim Wilson and I are collaborating with Sofia Betancourt in Identity Based Ministries to support these initiatives in concert with the Diversity of Ministry Team (DOMT) plan.

I continue to work with Tracey Robinson-Harris in generating a response to the Truth, Repair, & Reconciliation Responsive Resolution from the 2007 General Assembly. I will be involved in a workshop at GA to discuss what we are learning and to offer next steps and recommendations.

Internship Clearinghouse

During this congregational year, the Internship Clearinghouse is working on creating written guidelines and resources for Internship Committees, based on numerous requests for information which goes into more detail than does the Internship Manual.

The Internship Stipend Grant program, which gives preference to congregational applicants demonstrating a significant commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism, awarded first-year grants to three congregations, and renewal grants to three congregations. Two additional congregations have been identified as having interest in being part of the Seminarians/Ministers of Color Plan that is being shepherded by the Diversity of Ministry Team.

Seventy-five interns are currently in internships, with one-third of these less than full time. The Internship Clearinghouse Coordinator is currently working with interns who self-identify as persons of color/from historically marginalized groups as part of our continuing commitment to offer these interns whatever extra support they may find beneficial during their internships.

Religious Education Credentialing

Beth Williams, Paula Welling

Religious Education Credentialing Program

There are currently 46 active participants in the program: eighteen are seeking Masters Level, twenty-one are seeking Credentialed Level, and seven are seeking Associate Level. At its October 2007 meeting, the Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) credentialed one religious educator at the Master's Level, three religious educators at the Credentialed Level, and one religious educator at the Associate Level. This brings the total of credentialed religious educators at all levels to forty-four. Four applicants were accepted into the program, three participants withdrew from the program, and one participant was put on Inactive status.

Renaissance Module Training for Religious Educators

Six Renaissance module trainings were conducted in the last reporting period, with six additional modules scheduled so far for the remainder of the fiscal year. Leader's guides to all Renaissance modules are now available from the UUA website. This is the beginning of our effort to make Renaissance materials more accessible and to decrease our reliance on printed media.

Interim DRE Training

A regionally based training in useful skills for an interim period in religious education was held for a small group of religious educators in the Pacific Northwest District. A reception for all congregations planning for interim periods of religious education is scheduled for GA 2008.

UU Musicians Network

As UUA Liaison to the UU Musicians Network (UUMN) Beth Williams consulted with the organization as it sought to educate its incoming (2008) Board about development of a new UUMN governance structure (modified policy governance) developed by Dan Hotchkiss of the Alban Institute, and to begin work on the transition to this structure. The move to a new governance structure was precipitated by the realization that the current form of governance of the UUMN was not working as well as it should. It was not working well for the UUMN Exec, which was over-functioning, and overwhelmed, in its assumed role of a working board, and it was not working well for the UUMN Board, which met once a year with no clear role to play in the organization. Additionally, this structure left little time for strategic visioning as the Exec needed to focus its efforts on reacting to problems and immediate issues within the organization.

In the new UUMN governance structure a seven member volunteer Board of Trustees, headed by an elected moderator, will have responsibilities that include setting organizational policy, strategic visioning, and monitoring the over-all health of the organization. The responsibility for day-to-day operations of the organization will reside with a team of seven program directors who will report to the elected president of the UUMN. Depending on the particular program, the director may also have oversight responsibility of a committee which supports the program.

As part of this transitional effort, the Board revisited and reaffirmed the UUMN Mission Statement and Covenant ("To nurture, educate, and inspire UU music leaders to create dynamic and transformative music ministries") and began strategic visioning by identifying its priorities for the next three to five years (UUMN Conference; Certification Program; levels of membership) and goals that correspond to these priorities and the UUMN mission (to make continuing education opportunities more widely available to all members of UUMN; to offer multiple avenues of certification; increase awareness of UUMN and its benefits to congregations; foster creation of music that expresses UU theology and values and raises the quality of UU ministries).

UUMN Certification Program

This office has worked in close consultation with the UUMN Leadership Development Board to continue to develop the administrative functioning of the UUMN Certification Program. Forms and processes have been created and implemented to facilitate curricula development and annual candidate evaluation.

Settlement

John Weston, Emily Schwab

Diversity of Ministry

As part of the Diversity of Ministry Initiative, in the next few months the Transitions Office will be working with UUA staff and consultants to equip Ministerial Settlement Representatives and Accredited Interim Ministers to make greater contributions to congregations wishing to further engage the multicultural world.

MSR Seminar

Each District has at least one Ministerial Settlement Representative, a volunteer whose ministry it is to coach congregations, and especially search committees, as they seek new ordained leadership. MSRs are either lay or ordained; each is jointly nominated by the District and Chapter and appointed by the Transitions Director. All MSRs attend the annual Seminar, this year January 24-6 in Scottsdale, and new MSRs, of whom this year there are five, attend a day of training preceding the seminar. During this year's seminar Keith Kron, OBGLTC Director, will conduct a workshop on "AR/AO/MC Issues: Building on Strengths, Recognizing Challenges." Its goal is to equip MSRs to recognize readiness, provide resources, and give forward-looking counsel to the search committees of congregations who are moving further into the multicultural world.

AIM Seminar

The Accredited Interim Ministers and those in training ("AIMITs") have agreed to commit themselves to assist congregations in addressing a new interim task: "reaching beyond the dominant culture to embrace the multicultural world in social service and social justice." This addition is the first such structural change in the UUA's interim ministry program in many years. At the upcoming AIM Seminar, April 13-17 in Houston, Keith Kron and JUUST Change consultant Paula Cole Jones will conduct a day-long training to equip the ministers for this leadership. The training will include:

- readiness appraisal: how can interim ministers appraise where a congregation is in its readiness to move further in its work of justice-making?
- congregational integration skills: how can interim ministers assist a congregation in integrating its multicultural and justice-making commitments with the rest of its life?
- search committee skills: how can a search committee from its first meeting forward integrate a multicultural perspective into its work?

Ministerial Development

Jory Agate, Margaret Montore

New Assistant Hired

We are happy to welcome Margaret Montore to the office. She worked part-time during November and came on full-time earlier this month. Margaret joins our office after years in computer consulting and special education teaching.

CENTER Committee

The Director attended the fall meeting of CENTER, where specific plans were put in place for Ministry Days at GA this June and in June'09, with long-range plans to "divorce" Ministry Days from General Assembly and provide ministers with an annual five-day professional development conference.

Addictions Ministry

The Addictions Ministry Task Force is pulling together a meeting to develop a mission statement and vision for its future work. Attending will be representatives for the UUA BOT, UUMA Exec., MPL, DE's, Congregational Services, Young Adult Office, YRUU, and Curriculum Development. We are looking forward to bringing together various individuals with portfolios that look at the issue of addictions and how they impact our ministers and our congregations and how we as an Association can respond. We are meeting for two days in January and should have more to report following our conversations.

Ministerial Fellowship Committee

The Committee met in San Francisco in December and voted major revisions of our rules and the UUA Bylaws, which are being forwarded to the Board for consideration at your January meeting. These rules reflect feedback over the past two years from Committee members, the Board, UUMA, complainants, the Board of Review and the MFC attorney, Kay Hodge. We will look forward to implementing the new rules and hope there will not be major issues with them.

First Year Ministers' Seminar

We currently have 46 First Year Ministers and will be bringing them to Boston for a 3-day training in March. This will be our first in-house seminar in 5 years. Rev. Martha Neibank, from Brookline, MA, will be co-leading the seminar with me and we will have lunch on the last day with the Leadership Council. I have also established a First Year Ministers' listserv to help them communicate with one another and obtain support.

Out of Compliance Ministers

One of my goals is to assist the 53 ministers who are in Preliminary Fellowship, but have not received a renewal of Fellowship in at least three years, to either complete their renewals towards Final Fellowship, move to Associate Fellowship Status (Inactive Status if new rules are passed), or be removed from Fellowship. Since September one minister has been removed from Fellowship, five have filed extensions and will submit a renewal

within the year, one has been moved to Associate Fellowship Status, five have consulted with me on completing their renewals, and one has retired.

Continuing Education & Career Counseling

Since the beginning of this fiscal year that began July 1, 2007, more than \$26,217 has been allocated to approximately 58 ministers for continuing education grants. The average grant amount is \$452. Over \$9,297 has been granted for sustenance to 10 ministers for longer-term counseling and career assessments.

Natalie Gulbrandsen Scholarship Fund

Application procedures have been established for the Gulbrandsen Fund which will support ministers and seminarians doing work in developing countries. The Fund will be announced this winter and administered by my office.

Deceased Ministers

Elium Gault, March 9, 1922 - November 15, 2007

Patricia M. Bowen, April 14, 1934 – September 14, 2007

Martha Scott Newman, May 16, 1923 - August 14, 2007

We will remember them...

Friends and colleagues are encouraged to share their reflections on their ministries at this site: <http://uuminmemorialpage.blogspot.com/>

Office of Church Staff Finances

Ralph Mero, Joyce Stewart, Tracy Withy-Browne, Jim Sargent, Kati Deneen

UU Organizations Retirement Plan

Bill Sinkford; Tim Brennan; Vern Blodgett, Chairman of the Compensation, Benefits and Pension Committee; and Joyce Stewart of the Office of Church Staff Finances met on October 31, 2007 with four highly placed representatives from Fidelity Investments. This meeting was in response to a letter Bill Sinkford sent to Fidelity in May requesting a meeting to discuss Fidelity's ownership in shares of companies (which have subsequently been divested) whose royalties to the Sudanese government were believed to be contributing to the Darfur genocide. The meeting was very open and productive and both the UUA and the Fidelity representatives left it with a new and deeper understanding and respect of each other's objectives and priorities.

UU Group Insurance Plans

Effective with the renewal date of January 1, 2008, the rates and benefits for the UUGIP plans have changed for the good of our plan participants! The Life Insurance premiums and benefits will remain constant at \$0.32 per month per thousand dollars of coverage. Dental premiums will also remain constant at \$41.90 for individuals and \$101.60 for families of any size, but the annual individual maximum benefit will be raised from \$1,000 to \$1,500. And, finally, the Long Term Disability monthly premiums will be

lowered to 1.0% of the amount insured from 1.2%, with the benefit of 60% of income replacement remaining constant. We continue to be very pleased with MetLife and are especially pleased with these new, favorable rates.

Salary Survey

The Office of Church Staff Finances will conduct a congregational salary survey in the spring of 2008. We will use the data received from this survey as a basis to developing the 2009 Salary Range recommendations for our church staffs. We plan to do the survey electronically this time, via email and “Survey Monkey.”

UUA Health Plan

The UUA Health Plan will complete its first year of operations on December 31, 2007.

The 2008 open enrollment is still being processed; indications are that that we will see membership growth of approximately 15%. Health plans perform better when there is a steady influx of new members, so we take that as encouraging news.

Plan financial performance exceeded all expectations. We will end 2007 with a surplus in excess of \$700,000, after funding reserves for unreported claims at the full actuarial recommendation of \$425,000.

The plan’s strong performance enabled the Trustees to authorize some significant benefit improvements for 2008, including an annual vision exam and doubling of the outpatient mental health benefit. These changes were in addition to lowering the eligibility threshold to 750 hours worked per year and making special provisions for seminarian-interns.

As the plan began to collect claims experience in 2007, we were able to work with the plan actuaries to assess the nature of the UUA group. The Trustees adopted the actuaries’ recommendation to increase rates by 4% for 2008, substantially below national trend for medical costs, but still including an appropriate margin for adverse claims fluctuation. Our ability to offer this kind of rate stability was well received by the congregations.