



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP • WINTER 2008

IN THIS ISSUE

1/2

Office of the Director

From the Director

2/4

Ministerial Credentialing/
Internship Clearinghouse

Ministerial Credentialing Snapshot
Internship Clearinghouse News

5/6

Religious Education Credentialing &
Renaissance Program

What's New in the Religious Education
Credentialing Program

Criminal Background Checks

RECC

Renaissance Program News

Scholarships

7/8

Transitions

For Interim and Consulting Ministers-to-Be
"Consulting"? "Transitional"?

More on Specifically Interim Ministry

8

Ministerial Development

Ministerial Development News

8/10

Church Staff Finances/
UUA Health Plan Office

UU Organizations Retirement Plan

UU Group Insurance Plans (UUGIP)

Salary Survey

Farewell

UUA Health Plan, Chapter 2

10/12

Resources & Possibilities

Wilderness Journey DVD

News from the UU Musicians Network

Administrators Announce New Website

From the Chair of the Ministerial Fellowship
Committee

Liberal Religious Educator's Association Fall
Conference

UURMaPA Task Forces

Office of the Director—Beth Miller, A'Llyn Ettien

From the Director

There's another significant transition in MPL. Many of you have received counsel, guidance, and help from Rev. Ralph Mero, and I know we will all miss his wise presence as UUA staff. Ralph retires effective March 31, 2008, although we hope he will be at GA and Professional Days so we can wish him Godspeed in person. Ralph was ordained in 1965 and has been Church Staff Finances Director since 1996. We are collecting written wishes and remembrances to be placed in a treasure box and given to him upon his retirement. Please send them addressed as follows: For Ralph, c/o A'Llyn Ettien, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. You may also send PDF or Word attachments for Ralph to aettien@uua.org. We need everything by March 19, 2008.

The Excellence in Ministry discussion has caught the attention of many of our colleagues. To recap, last April the UUA Board instructed the Panel on Theological Education "to present recommendations to the Board of Trustees that would make the funding of ministerial formation, development, and excellence the first priority for the use of the Panel's resources, rather than the current singular focus on support for theological schools." For more detail, you can follow the trail of Panel meeting minutes and reports at uua.org/aboutus/governance/board-appointedcommittees/paneltheological/49469.shtml. One exciting outcome has been the funding of a number of small grants for creative ideas to enhance ministerial excellence. See the list of funded projects currently underway

at uua.org/documents/pte/071022_rfp_outcome.pdf. Reports are due back to the Panel by March 31, 2008. The Panel is currently working on plans for a Summit on Excellence in Ministry for late 2008 or early 2009. Stay tuned for news of this and further activity some of the funded projects are likely to generate.

For the Service of the Living

Tradition on Thursday evening at General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale, the preacher will be Rev. Victoria Safford, minister of White Bear UU Church in Mahtomedi, MN. The Singers of the Living Tradition choir will be led by Ian Riddell, Music Director of James Reeb UU Congregation in Madison, WI. Those receiving preliminary or final fellowship will be contacted by my office this spring. If you plan to retire by June 30, 2008, and wish to be recognized at this GA, please notify A'Llyn (aettien@uua.org) by May 15, 2008. As sorry as I am about very strong feelings some of you have regarding the elimination of the walk across the stage last year, feedback was significantly more positive than negative about this and the overall tone of the service. We will work hard to tighten things so the service isn't so long and to improve the camera work so individuals are not missed during the calling of names of those being honored. May we both honor individuals and invoke the sacred.

Speaking of tone, perhaps I'm naive, but the tone of some charges and complaints leveled at UUA staff and volunteers by some of us in discussion of controversial issues surprises and

MPL STAFF GROUP DIRECTORY

FIRST INITIAL LAST NAME@UUA.ORG (EXAMPLE:
BMILLER@UUA.ORG); UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

JORY AGATE
MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
(617) 948-6453

KATI DENEEN
HEALTH PLAN COORDINATOR
(617) 948-4265

MOHAMMED EL-KHATIB
MFC ASSISTANT
(617) 948-6452

A'LLYN ETTIEN
ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF MPL
(617) 948-6406

CHRISTINE MAY
MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING ADMINISTRATOR
(617) 948-6403

RALPH MERO
CHURCH STAFF FINANCES DIRECTOR
(617) 948-6404

BETH MILLER
DIRECTOR OF MPL
(617) 948-6407

MARGARET MONTORE
MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT
(617) 948-6437

DAVID PETTEE
MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING DIRECTOR
(617) 948-6402

JIM SARGENT
HEALTH PLAN DIRECTOR
HEALTHINSURANCE@UUA.ORG
(617) 948-6405

EMILY SCHWAB
TRANSITIONS ADMINISTRATOR
TRANSITIONS@UUA.ORG
(617) 948-6408

JOYCE STEWART
RETIREMENT PLAN SPECIALIST
(617) 948-6421

PAULA WELLING
RE CREDENTIALING ASSISTANT
(617) 948-6418

JOHN WESTON
TRANSITIONS DIRECTOR
TRANSITIONS@UUA.ORG
(617) 948-6409

BETH WILLIAMS
RE CREDENTIALING DIRECTOR
BETHWILLIAMS@UUA.ORG
(617) 948-6417

KIM WILSON
INTERNSHIP CLEARINGHOUSE COORDINATOR
(203) 484-5081

TRACY WITTHY-BROWNE
INSURANCE PLAN ADMINISTRATOR
TWITTHY@UUA.ORG
(617) 948-6401

MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP; 25
BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108; FAX: (617) 742-2875.
LOCATED: 41 MOUNT VERNON, 4TH FLOOR

THE RELIGIOUS LEADER IS PUBLISHED THREE TIMES A YEAR BY
THE MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP.
PLEASE SEND COPY FOR THE PRE-GA 2008 EDITION IN MS
WORD TO A'LLYN ETTIEN (AETTIE@UUA.ORG) BY NO LATER
THAN APRIL 15, 2008.

TYPESETTING AND EDITORIAL BY ANNMARIE G. KLYZUB,
KALZUB DESIGN; KALZUB DESIGN.COM.

saddens me. Finding the balance between expressing heartfelt convictions and respecting the worth and dignity of others is challenging, but if we are unable to do so with those who share our basic perspective on faith and life and love, people who are with us in the larger scheme of things, what hope can there ever be for world peace? I implore us to consider *all* of our principles and be respectful when we engage in the very legitimate

debates that inevitably arise among us. As Hosea Ballou said, "If we agree in love, there is no disagreement that can do us any injury, but if we do not, no other agreement can do us any good. Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace." I pray that it will be so among us, dear colleagues. ●

—Beth Miller,
Director of MPL

Ministerial Credentialing/Internship Clearinghouse—David Pettee, Christine May, Mohammed El-Khatib, Kim Wilson

Ministerial Credentialing Snapshot

It has been my custom since 2003 to annually devote a *Religious Leader* column to an informal snapshot of the files from the Ministerial Credentialing Office. I'm a little late in doing this, typically preferring to perform this task pre-GA, but as it turns out, I have more confidence in the information given some research last summer. I hope this information is interesting and useful to others who wonder about who is preparing for ministerial fellowship these days.

After waiting to hear back from aspirants and candidates who had been out of contact for more than three years, and figuring in those students who recently entered seminary, balanced by those awarded preliminary fellowship in September or December 2007, I project that approximately 350 persons are preparing for ministerial fellowship. Of this number, about 65 percent are enrolled in (or have graduated from) about 70 different theological schools other than Meadville Lombard Theological School or Starr King School for the Ministry. This percentage has not changed noticeably in the last 25 years.

I think it is probable that looking back a decade from now, only about one-third of these current aspirants or candidates will eventually be granted ministerial fellowship. There are many reasons why the other two-thirds will not

receive ministerial fellowship, yet only a relatively small number either will be denied candidacy by a Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy or will not be granted fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

The percentage of women in the credentialing process is about two-thirds of the total. The number of aspirants or candidates who imagine serving a ministry of religion education continues to be very few and to steadily decline. Anecdotally, I believe the number of aspirants and candidates who imagine serving a community ministry is currently about 35–40 percent. It is not uncommon for a few of these folks to choose a congregationally based internship to get more Unitarian Universalist experience and then find that they are well suited to serve in the parish after all! In 2007, the median age of men and women receiving ministerial fellowship was 46. From 1994–2000, the average age of men and women being granted ministerial fellowship was a little over 42. From 2001 through the first half of 2007, the average age of those ministers who received ministerial fellowship was almost 46! Should this trend continue over the next seven years, the ministry will be steadily growing older. As an aside, the average age of Unitarian Universalist students at Harvard

Divinity School is younger than those in other seminaries. I imagine that a few of these students will end up serving in academia, and, consequently, less likely to be fellowshipped ministers.

I believe the average debt load for graduating ministers continues to be a source of concern. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee sees an increasing number of candidates who have prepared on a part-time basis, sometimes taking a number of years to complete their education. Many of these candidates have shared with me that they have chosen this path to prevent going into debt. I have wondered if this dynamic might also partly explain why the average age of ministers seems to be increasing.

Finally, five years ago I observed that time-honored theological identities—such as humanist, Christian, pagan, or theist—did not accurately capture how many seminarians self-define. Although I think this is still true, perhaps in response to the conversations that have taken place within the Association over the last five years, around language of reverence for example, I am seeing more seminarians who are willing to claim a more mystical understanding of things seen and unseen. I also have noticed that an increasing number of seminarians seem to be more comfortable with some of the more traditional offices of the ministry, such as the use of prayer. If you have the privilege of being around up-and-coming ministers, be sure to ask them in what they place their faith or in what they currently believe. You are sure to be enlightened and impressed! ●

—In the faith,
David Pettee, Ministerial
Credentialing Director

Internship Clearinghouse News

“Dear Kim: Our congregation has decided to become a teaching site

next fall. I’m hoping you can offer us some guidance about next steps.”

This is my favorite kind of email, and I always get a rush of excitement reading those words. I’m happy we have another internship site available, but I also think, “oh boy—another congregation that’s seen the light!” One more congregation is making a commitment to reach beyond its own walls by actively supporting our Unitarian Universalist ministry; a commitment that usually means healthy institutional growth is going on. Every year I receive maybe five emails from “new” congregations, a very encouraging number.

This year we have about 75 internships in progress, about a third of those part-time. For next year, we have a dozen new intern-internship site matches at this writing, plus current internships carrying over into their second year.

While most internships bring a wealth of experiences, learning, and rewards to everyone involved, there are instances when it doesn’t go well. While an average of three per year is a small proportion, an internship that ends prematurely is something no one wants to see; a distressing event for intern, supervisor, intern committee, and congregation alike.

If the internship is developing significant bumps, I encourage intern and supervisor to be in touch with me before the point where a departure is anticipated. If it comes to that, I’m here to offer guidance and feedback on negotiating the ending. When an early termination occurs, the parties involved inevitably ask themselves, “couldn’t this have been avoided?” I believe that, in most cases, the answer is “yes.”

Let’s start with the interview. First, it’s very important for the intern to visit the site and meet the supervisor and committee in person. Second, asking the right questions up front can prevent a lot of heartache later. As a supervisor, due diligence includes many things, but I’ll focus on aspects of the ministerial preparation process that can impact the applicant’s readiness

for an internship. Things may have changed since you went through the process yourself, and it’s essential to be up to speed before interviewing an intern so you are comfortable asking questions about where s/he is in his or her process.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee requires that interns be in Aspirant status at minimum, and most will have Candidate status. To attain Aspirant status, the person must complete some paperwork and interview with a minister and his or her District Executive, or designee. S/he must also be enrolled in theological school. An Aspirant will not have had an in-depth evaluation of his or her suitability for ministry.

An applicant in Candidate status will have:

- completed at least a year of seminary,
- had a career assessment,
- agreed to abide by the rules and policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee,
- successfully interviewed with a Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy, and

PROFESSIONAL CONTACT DIRECTORY

AUUA:

CHUCK ROSENE, PRESIDENT
CROSENE@UUA.ORG

GAIL DONKIN, ADMINISTRATOR
ADMIN@AUUA.ORG

LREDA:

SUSAN ARCHER, PRESIDENT
SARCHER@CEDARLANE.ORG

SHANNON HAWKINS, ADMINISTRATOR
LREDA@UUA.ORG

SCM:

DEBORAH HOLDER, PRESIDENT
DEBORAHHOLDER@MINDSPRING.COM

UUMA:

ROBERT ELLER-ISAACS, PRESIDENT
PRESIDENT@UUMA.ORG

JANETTE M. LALLIER, ADMINISTRATOR
ADMINISTRATOR@UUMA.ORG

UUMN:

ELIZABETH NORTON, PRESIDENT
BETHNORTON@EARTHLINK.NET

DONNA FISHER, ADMINISTRATOR
UUMN@UUMN.ORG

UURMAPA:

NANCY DOUGHTY, PRESIDENT
NWDREV@CHARTER.NET

- hopefully joined the Unitarian Universalists Ministers Association (UUMA)!

The Regional Sub-Committee on Candidacy (RSCC) interview is meant to evaluate an Aspirant's potential for ministry and usually makes recommendations regarding areas of personal and professional growth. I encourage you to ask your interviewees about their RSCC status, and their RSCC interview if applicable. If the interviewee is a Candidate, please do not ask for copies of the career assessment, CPE evaluation, or RSCC letter. Part of your due diligence is asking what areas of strength and growth were identified in these documents. What qualities did the RSCC affirm? What areas of concern did they note? What, if any, recommendations were made?

An interviewee who's an Aspirant is not necessarily a bad thing; one-third of current interns are Aspirants. Lacking standard evaluations, the interviewer will have to be creative: ask instead about things such as seminary evaluations, the minister and District Executive interviews, and any other input the person has had about strengths and growing edges.

Hosting an intern and helping that intern grow and develop professionally and personally should go hand-in-hand. No intern arrives polished and perfect! Your task in the interview is to discern whether there is a reasonable chance that the applicant, with your help and support, will be capable of making significant progress in the identified areas. Most supervisors who have gone through the painful process of terminating an internship tell me there were red flags in the interview to which they should have paid more attention. I suspect they would advise you to notice those flags and listen to your gut. Once you are as clear as you can be in your discernment, you're ready to decide whether or not this person is likely to be a good match with you and the congregation.

Aspirants and Candidates, I haven't forgotten you! There are things you can do to help ensure your internship goes as well as possible. First, if you're an Aspirant and know one or more UU ministers well, you might ask them to write a letter describing their perception of your strengths and growing edges. You could also ask a seminary

professor who knows you well to do the same. Include these letters as part of your application packet. Second, be frank and open about what your formal assessments and evaluations say about your strong points and areas for growth. And don't be afraid to ask questions about the supervisor and the congregation! If you haven't yet seen the RSCC, I encourage you to do so early in your process. Their feedback is important, offering specific guidance for growth and development; just the kind of thing you can work on in your internship. Last, and perhaps most important (I can't stress this enough), contact and interview interns who've served at the congregation you're considering. If there are no previous interns, see what you can glean from members of the local UUMA chapter to help determine whether this will be the best match for you. •

Yours in faith,
Kim D. Wilson,
Internship Clearinghouse
Coordinator; kwilson@uua.org;
office hours: T-W-F, 3:00–5:30;
(203) 484-5081 (voice and fax);
mailing address: 766 Totoket Road,
Northford, CT 06472

Schools/Financial Aid

2008–2009 Financial aid application forms for theological school students are now available on the Ministerial Credentialing Office webpage, uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/ministerialcredentialing/16213.shtml. You may also contact your RSCC administrator or the Ministerial Credentialing Office administrator, Chris May, at cmay@uua.org or (617) 948-6403. Application deadline is April 15, 2008.

Meadville Lombard

Bradburd Scholarship for Excellence
Merit-based, four-year scholarship; deadline is March 15, 2008.

Prospective Student Conference
Considering ministry? This is your next, first step; April 23–25, 2008.

For more information: www.meadville.edu.

Starr King

Application deadline for fall 2008 courses is March 1, 2008.

Online and on-campus courses

For more information: www.sksm.edu.

What's New in the Religious Education Credentialing Program

Many congratulations to the following religious educators who were awarded credentials by the Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) in October, 2007: Cathy Cartwright—Credentialed Religious Educator Level; Connie Dunn—Credentialed Religious Educator—Associate Level; Dana Regan—Credentialed Religious Educator Level; Tandy Scheffler—Credentialed Religious Educator, Master's Level; Jean Wiant—Credentialed Religious Educator Level.

We welcome the following religious educators who have been accepted into the Religious Education (RE) 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:

Michelle Creech, JP
Denise Noble, CB
Ian Springer-Woods, Heartland

The following RE Credentialing Program documents are now available on the UUA website:

The new *Unified Reading List with Annotations* and the new *Unified Reading Check List*, which is to be submitted with portfolios. The unified reading contains the following features: reading lists for Associate, Credentialed, and Master's level in one document; conforms to new program plan with categories matching competency areas; and more reading options have been added, especially addressing themes of anti-oppression and multiculturalism. The new reading list is required for candidates who have been accepted into the RE Credentialing program since September 1, 2007, and optional for all other candidates. Also new is *Stages of Formation for Credentialed Religious Educators*, a scope and sequence document to articulate to religious educators and their congregations what the RECC sees as the formation process of the Religious Education Credentialing Program and how it expects credentialed religious educators, at each level of credentialing, to function within their congregational roles of religious education leaders. ●

Criminal Background Checks

A criminal background check from an approved vendor is now required for all RE Credentialing candidates before they meet with the RECC or are evaluated by the RE Credentialing Director. Financial aid in the form of partial reimbursement of the cost of the background

check is available by request. In addition, a Criminal Offense Disclosure Form must be submitted to the Office of RE Credentialing by all current candidates and new applicants to the RE Credentialing Program. Please contact Beth Williams at (617) 948-6417 or redirector@uua.org for more information. ●

RECC

We say goodbye with many thanks to long-time Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) members Liz Jones and Sue McGovern, and welcome Gail Forsyth-Vail, new RECC Chair, and the following new members:

Russ Araujo has been a member of Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church in Cincinnati, OH, since 1980, during which time he has served in numerous capacities for the congregation. He served on the Religious Education Committee from 2003–2006, and was co-chair of the committee during a six-month sabbatical of the Director of Religious Education. During this time, he and others stepped forward to perform DRE responsibilities. Other past church involvement has included the Welcoming Congregation Committee (member), Long Range Planning Committee (chair), and congregation Board of Trustees (president). He has been a delegate to several UUA General Assemblies. Russ is married to Rae Jane Araujo and they have two grown children. He earns a living developing software for small businesses and social service agencies, and has a degree in English from the University of Cincinnati and an MBA from the University of Michigan.

Jan Devor has been working in religious education for 17 years. Before that she taught fifth through eighth grades for ten years. She has a BA and MA in education from the University of Michigan, and began working in religious education at First Parish in Concord, MA, heading a large Sunday School program there for six years. During that time she was president of the Mass Bay District Religious Educators, was in the group that began the Mass Bay LREDA chapter, developed the curriculum model that has come to be known as the Pillars approach, and gave many workshops in the area. She is currently the DRE at the First Unitarian Society and is completing her eleventh year. She has been active in the Prairie Star District, helped to start the Prairie Star LREDA group, has been trained in Good Offices, completed the Master's Level Credentialing Program, received the Ellie Morton Award for outstanding contribution to religious education in the Prairie Star District, and has co-taught a graduate course at United Theological Seminary on religious education. The proud mom of two grown-up UU children, she lives with her husband, Cory . . . when she is not at church. ●

Renaissance Program News

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

Feb. 22–24, Youth, Clinton, OH, Lucy Carney,
lucycarney@cox.net

Feb. 29–Mar. 2, Teacher Development, Indianapolis, IN,
Layne Richard-Hammock, laynerh@aol.com

Mar. 5–7, Teacher Development, Buckeystown, MD, Lyn
Cox, lyn@jpd.uaa.org

Mar. 11–12, Youth, Newton, MA, Sarah Hawn,
sarahnwah@earthlink.net

Apr. 11–13, Worship, Richmond, VA, Angela Lawrence,
angielawrence@richmond.uaa.org

May 14–16, Administration, Lanark, ON, Sylvia
Bass-West, sylvia@cuc.ca

We are pleased to congratulate the following religious educators who recently received Renaissance Recognition:

Christopher Buja, MNY	Matthew Kesner, MNY
Laura McNaughton, CUC	Correna Ness, JP
Lisa Randolph, PS	Lori Stump, MD
Katie Ten Eyck, PNW	Jacki Thompson, SL
Laurel Whitehouse, MB	

As the beginning of our effort to make Renaissance module materials more accessible, the *Renaissance Leader's Guides* are now available on the UUA website from the Renaissance Module Resources page. ●

Scholarships

A reminder that the Barbara Marshman & Ann Fields Memorial Scholarship is awarded annually to a religious educator engaged in a program of graduate study who is serving a Unitarian Universalist congregation. This \$500 prize is given through the generous contributions of those wishing 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 (VFREE) Scholarship is awarded to a candidate 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 VFREE Fund was established according to Norma's wishes to provide scholarships to religious educators striving 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, 2008. Modest scholarship assistance for training in religious education leadership is also available to all religious educators serving UU congregations. Please contact Paula Welling at pwelling@uaa.org for application information. ●

—Beth Williams,
Religious Education Director

Ministerial Scholarship Fund

The Natalie Gulbrandsen Ministerial Scholarship Fund for International Studies has been established to provide opportunities for ministers and ministerial candidates to engage in meaningful ways in a developing country for academic, interfaith, or social justice purposes.

Ministers and candidates interested in broadening their liberal religious knowledge and understanding and strengthening their international sympathies by immersing themselves in or studying in a developing country are encouraged to apply.

Guidelines: 1) Grants will be made to UU ministers serving in a congregation or community setting, or to candidates for ministerial fellowship. 2) Grants will be made to individuals so that they may have meaningful exposure to developing countries. The goal is that their ministry may be informed by an understanding of the nature and consequences of poverty and of the economic differential between nations and regions of the world. 3) Developing countries shall be defined as those falling in the lower 50 percent of the nations of the world economically, as determined by the United Nations Human Development Report or other such indices. 4) Grants of at least \$1,000 will be made for projects of an academic, interfaith, or social justice nature.

For more information or an application, contact Margaret Montore at mmontore@uaa.org.

For Interim and Consulting Ministers-to-Be

Ministers who will be conducting their first interim ministry, or their first in five or more years, are expected to attend the Orientation to Transitional Ministry, to take place at Boston University from 5:00 p.m. Monday, July 28 to 4:00 p.m. Thursday, July 31. Travelers should plan to arrive Monday afternoon. We hope to gracefully integrate consulting ministers into this program as well.

The Orientation will largely be conducted by faculty from the Interim Ministry Network, an Alban Institute-initiated ecumenical group that has successfully developed and advocated for research-based and theologically informed interim ministry for two decades.

The cost of the orientation is 1.5 percent of your Salary plus Housing for the year to come. (Pledges are accepted—due Nov. 1, 2008.) In return, the UUA provides you with room (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights) and board (dinner Monday, three meals Tuesday and Wednesday, and Thursday's breakfast and lunch), course materials, and program, and reimburses your transportation costs to Boston and back. Please register only once your interim position is secure.

Ministers who wish to attend the orientation in the hopes of landing an interim later in the summer are welcome to do so. The cost will be \$400 in advance for room and board, course materials, and program. These ministers cover their own travel costs. Registration period is May 15–June 30. ●

“Consulting”? “Transitional”?

Time out of mind, the Transitions Office has offered congregations two flavors of ministry: settled or interim.

Q: What is interim ministry?

A: Ministry that isn't settled.

Two unfortunate results flow from this restrictive menu. One is that interim ministry risks being looked upon as a universal wrench, when in fact it is just one of the tools in the box. The other is that congregations needing a time-limited ministry for any number of reasons wind up being treated with the interim wrench, whereas they may need other tools entirely.

Moreover, over the years the Districts have placed a large number of ministers often called “consulting.” How many? No one knows. But it is safe to say that in any year, more consulting ministers—i.e., ministers who serve on a time-limited contract, usually year-to-year, and

usually at less-than-full-time—than settled and interim ministers combined are placed by the Districts.

At the request of the District Executives, the Transitions Office is developing the capacity to serve the Districts, the ministers wishing to serve, and the congregations that seek to hire consulting, as well as interim, ministers out of season, as well as in. You can get a notion of the goals of this project by reading the new Transitions Office publication, the *Interim and Consulting Ministries Handbook*, now available on the Transitions website. Over the next year, during which the Ministerial Settlement System will be completely reconditioned, room will be made for consulting ministry options and for the District involvement that is so key to its success. ●

More on Specifically Interim Ministry

In 2007–2008 there are 95 interim ministries in being, down from 2006–2007's 105, but up from 2005–2006's 89, and only 67 the year before that. It's a turbulent market!

Colleagues wishing to prepare themselves to serve a congregation “in the interim,” please plan to update your Ministerial Record and submit an application for interim ministry online by April 1, and to have your interim ministry packet ready to send out by April 22. That's the date on which I start making recommendations. The new *Interim and Consulting Ministries Handbook* should be your guide.

As most of you are aware, 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.

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 Transitions Director to provide each congregation with a list of the four 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 neither AIMs nor AIMITs will want to know what your are chances of finding a position. Of those 95 ministers serving this year, 50 are AIMs and AIMITs. What the demand may be in the year to come is as yet a closed book. ●

—John Weston, Transitions Director

Ministerial Development—Jory Agate, Margaret Montore

Ministerial Development News

A lot has been happening in the Ministerial Development Office. First of all, please join me in welcoming our new office assistant, Margaret Montore. Margaret is available to assist you in finding continuing education resources. She is also handling logistics for our meetings and programs and is the contact person if you hear of a colleague's death. I know you will enjoy working with her.

This month we gather stakeholders together to create a vision for how we might respond as a religious community to issues of addictions in our religious leadership, congregations, and community at large.

The first week of March we are gathering together ministers in their first year of settlement or hire. Sixty-five ministers have been invited for retreat, reflection, and resource sharing. We look forward to establishing this as an annual in-house seminar.

So far this year, \$31,367 in continuing education grants have been made to 72 ministers, allowing them to take advantage of programs including preaching seminars, spiritual formation, conflict management

training, religious education, and international pilgrimages, to name a few. Money is still available, so if you have identified a program that helps you be a better minister, please don't hesitate to apply. Send a request by email to Jory Agate at jagate@uua.org, including:

- brief description and estimated total cost (travel, registration, food, and so on) of program;
- an indication that the continuing education plans are supported by the congregation or institution you serve and how the course will benefit your ministry;
- the address to which a check should be sent.

A reminder to all ministers in Preliminary Fellowship: when completing evaluation forms for your renewals, please be sure to download the most recent forms from the website. A number of changes have been made in the forms in recent years and it causes confusion for the MFC when outdated forms are used. ●

In faith,

Jory Agate, Ministerial Development Director

Church Staff Finances/UUA Health Plan Office—Ralph Mero, Joyce Stewart, Tracy Withy-Browne, Jim Sargent, Kati Deneen

UU Organizations Retirement Plan

During this market correction time, UU plan participants may be concerned about the prospects of having enough money for retirement. Experts tell us the two most important ways to provide for adequate retirement funding are aggressive savings and an appropriately diversified portfolio. The 2008 contribution limits on pre-tax voluntary contributions remain at \$15,500 and "catch-up" contributions for participants over the age of 50 remain at an additional \$5,000 for a total of \$20,500 for the calendar year.

Our plan has 24 fund options, ranging from conservative bond funds to more aggressive stock funds, both domestic and international. A recent review showed almost one-half of participant account balances had only one or two funds. Most experts agree that four or five

funds, spread among different categories of investments, provide sufficient diversification. Plan participants are urged to take the time to visit their accounts at www.fidelity.com/atwork. Click on "Investment Choices and Research" for a wealth of information about fund options in our plan. You can easily change future contributions, existing account balances, or both, through the "Change Investment" link on the same site.

Please contact Joyce Stewart at (617) 948-6421 or jstewart@uua.org with questions about your retirement plan account. ●

UU Group Insurance Plans (UUGIP)

Good news! Effective with the new renewal date, January 1, 2008, rates and benefits for the UUGIP plans have changed—in the right direction! 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. Finally, long-term disability monthly premiums will be lowered to 1 percent of the amount insured, with the benefit, 60 percent of income replacement, remaining constant. We continue to be very pleased with MetLife and are especially pleased with these new, favorable rates.

Please contact Tracy Withy-Brown at (617) 948-6401 or twithy@uua.org with questions about our Group Insurance Plan. ●

Salary Survey

The Office of Church Staff Finances will conduct a congregational salary survey in the spring of 2008. We will use the data from this survey as a basis to develop 2009 Salary Range recommendations for our church staffs. We plan to do the survey electronically, via email and “Survey Monkey.” Keep an eye on your church office email for this important survey. ●

Farewell

With this issue I am pleased to announce my retirement from the UUA on March 31, 2008. My 11½ years with the Association have provided many opportunities to be helpful to our congregations and those who serve them—for which I am grateful. I look forward to spending more time with the garden and in nature. ●

—Ralph Mero,
Church Staff Finances Director

UUA Health Plan, Chapter 2

What did it take to launch a nationwide, self-insured health plan when many employers were dropping health plans, healthcare costs had doubled in six years, and our congregations had been without a UUA-sponsored health insurance source for eight years? The simple answer is vision, commitment, and hard work; the real story is in the details.

Credit for the vision goes to Ralph Mero, Church Staff Finances Director, who worked tirelessly to document the need, present his findings to the Compensation, Benefits, and Pension Committee, and ultimately to the UUA Trustees, and locate the necessary expert resources. Commitment from the UUA Trustees to take this on, as both a social justice issue and a financial benefit to our congregations, supplied necessary institutional backing and visibility among our congregations. The work was supplied by the newly

formed Trustees of the UUA Employee Benefits Trust and the staff of the Health Plan Office.

Reaching our 2007 goals—a recap

The Health Plan had three major goals in 2007: reach a critical mass of subscribers; enroll as many as possible of those congregation staff members with poor health plan coverage or no coverage at all; and put the Health Plan on solid financial footing for the future. We reached the first milestone—500 employees enrolled in fall, 2006—and in the end exceeded our minimum threshold by 20 percent. In the process we were able to cover half the 400 people with no or substandard coverage; fewer than 100 eligible staff are still without coverage now. In its first full year, the Health Plan achieved its financial goals, ending the year with all financial obligations covered, plus a substantial claims stabilization fund that will allow us to move confidently into 2008 and beyond.

Forming a new trustee group

No enterprise of the UUA Health Plan’s scope can exist without a knowledgeable board. Our Plan is self-insured, meaning we are responsible for all aspects of benefit design, pricing, and financing. As a separate 501(c)(9) trust, the trustees are also fiduciaries, with clear responsibilities to plan members. We were fortunate to attract board members who were both dedicated UUs and expert in various elements of health insurance, healthcare management, finance, and multi-employer plans. During 2007, trustees Kathy Burek, Paul Bluestein, Mindy Scharlin, Brent Wilkes, David Tedesco, UUA Financial Advisor Dan Brody, and UUA treasurer Tim Brennan forged new bonds, allowing them to wrestle with issues of plan design, financial solvency, eligibility, relationships with vendors who supply our claims processing, actuarial, legal, and other services, and the future direction of the Plan.

2008—chapter 2 for the UUA Health Plan

What are the challenges for 2008? That’s a simple question with some complex answers.

First, we want to continue expansion of eligibility, as we try to reach more people with limited access to health insurance. For the 2008 open enrollment, we lowered the eligibility requirement from 1,000 hours worked per year (roughly half-time) to 750 hours, and broadened access for interns. Enrollment was up 10 percent for January, and we expect that number will increase during the first half of the year, as congregations evaluate insurance renewals, plan new budgets, and bring on new staff. Further Plan growth is closely connected to congregations being able to contribute toward the cost of employee insurance, and we will continue to explore that relationship.

Second, we want to closely evaluate how people used Plan benefits in 2007 and use that knowledge to shape future benefits. For example, how effectively did doctors

encourage use of preventive services? How well did we do making sure people with chronic diseases were properly tracked and treated? How can we communicate better with members? Already for 2008, we have added an annual vision exam, expanded coverage for adult immunizations, and doubled coverage for outpatient mental health visits. The trustees will be evaluating more options as they move into 2008.

Third, we will have to face the challenge of rising healthcare costs: we anticipate that doctors, hospitals, labs, and pharmaceutical companies will combine to drive up costs at least 10 percent this year. For this past open enrollment we were able to hold the overall rate increase to 4 percent (compared to the national trend of 12–15

percent), but holding the line that way in the future will take real creativity.

Finally, we want to continue improving customer service. Achieving that goal falls to Health Plan Director Jim Sargent and Health Plan Coordinator Kati Deneen. They are the Health Plan Office that handles your questions, concerns, and comments, drawing on resources at Highmark Insurance and other vendors to give you the best experience possible with your health plan.

Jim can be reached at jsargent@uua.org, Kati at kdeneen@uua.org. Both welcome your input on any aspect of the UUA Health Plan. •

—Jim Sargent, Health Plan Director

Resources & Possibilities

Wilderness Journey DVD

You can now purchase the DVD *Wilderness Journey: The Struggle for Black Empowerment and Racial Justice within the UUA (1967–1970)*. This “oral history” of firsthand participants in the so-called Black Empowerment Controversy within the UUA of the 1960s and 1970s is available through the Office of Congregational Services. They are \$5 each or \$20 for five copies. It’s a good educational, historical, and antiracism resource for any congregational collection. Send check (payable to UUA) to Diane Martin, UUA, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108. Please indicate that it’s for the *Wilderness Journey* DVD. •

News from the UU Musicians Network

On January 1, 2008, the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network (UUMN) implemented a new governance structure to generate clear strategic direction and allow for unencumbered programming. Our new Board of Trustees, led by moderator Rev. Gretchen Woods, develops vision and policy, while as president I lead the program directors in overseeing development

and implementation. The Board completed a year-long governance examination with the assistance of Alban Institute consultant Dan Hotchkiss; the results divide responsibilities, formerly held by solely by the president, into two separate areas.

My vision as UUMN President for the next three years includes:

- immediate recognition of the UUMN by congregational leaders
- clarity for UUMN members on how to receive assistance and offer skills and gifts to the organization
- ubiquitous understanding in Unitarian Universalism of the power of music in worship life
- clear infrastructure for UUMN Program Directors
- creation of publications and recordings that further our mission
- deepening of relationships with UUA staff, UUA officers, and General Assembly Planning Committee

If you are reading this article, you are in a position as a religious leader to assist with the realization of this first vision: to recognize the UUMN and know how your congregation can interact with the Network. It is always a surprise to

discover music leaders who have never heard of their professional organization, whose mission is to nurture, educate, and inspire UU music leaders. To discover how your congregation and music professional (paid or volunteer) can benefit from or contribute to the UUMN, please visit our website at www.uumn.org. I look forward to the conversations we will have, whether your role is primarily in your congregation, your district, or our larger movement.

Save the Date: UUMN Conference, Boston, August 5–10, 2008

Keynote Speaker: Rev. William Sinkford, UUA President; *Choral Clinician:* Nick Page, song leader and unique multicultural resource; *Plenary sessions* by Rev. Burns Stanfield, rock and roll musician, and Josh Jacobson, director of Zamir choral of Boston, who will present Jewish music appropriate for Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Come a day early for UUMN Professional Development Day and Rev. Mark Belletini’s presentation on UU History through UU Music, “Singing Our Living Tradition . . . Literally and Joyously,” on August 4, 2008.

For more information contact Donna Fisher at uumn@uumn.org. •

—Keith Arnold,
President, UUMN

Administrators Announce New Website

The Association of UU Administrators (AUUA) proudly announces our new website: www.auua.org. The new site was redesigned to better further our purpose, with improved links for members and non-members alike.

Information on the UUA Health Plan, AUUA Professional Day and activities at General Assembly, the Administrator Certification Program, and the AUUA shop can be found here.

The board has decided to keep the listserve, church-admin-uu, open to member and non-member church administrators, but plans are in the works to develop a “members only” section on the site with documents, templates, policies and procedures, job descriptions, and much more!

Special thanks to AUUA board member Beth Marshall, who did the “heavy lifting” on the site redesign, and for the much appreciated feedback from AUUA board members and AUUA Administrator, Gail Donkin.

Please consider supporting your church administrator by adding AUUA membership to their professional development line in your church budget—thank you! •

—Chuck Rosene,
AUUA President

From the Chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

At its December 2007 meeting the MFC interviewed 17 candidates: eight men and nine women from ten theological schools around the country. Ten received a Category I, three a Category II, three a Category III, and one a Category IV. Six ministers who submitted renewals were awarded Final Fellowship.

This meeting was both routine and poignant, marking the final meeting for several respected MFC

members. Every few years the stars line up in a way that produces a significant shift in membership and leadership for the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. The past six months has seen such a time. Long-serving members have completed their terms and five new members have been appointed as of January 1. Three new clergy members are Wayne Arnason, Cleveland, OH (chair); Howard Dana, Harrisburg, PA (UUMA appointee); and Cynthia Kane, San Diego, CA. The new lay members are Karen Eng, Oakland, CA, and Tony Stringer, Atlanta, GA. Board of Trustees appointee Burton Carley is also in the midst of his first year of service. Six newer members out of 14 is a lot!

We bid farewell to UUMA appointee Patrick O'Neill, and to long-time members Marc Belletini (vice chair), Jim Brown, and Betty Bobo Seiden. Our MFC has been blessed by their service.

Interim (and former) chair Phyllis Daniel also completed her four months of intense service, and we are deeply grateful for her experience and wisdom in this role during a critical time. Outgoing chair Jory Agate's transition to a staff role with the committee has proceeded well and ensured valuable continuity.

With this second staff transition in 18 months, you would think all these changes would result in some shift in the culture of the MFC. Changing personalities and leadership style do bring changes, of course, but it is striking for me, coming back after a two-year absence and in the midst of such transition, to see how stable the culture of the committee as a whole remains. It is a culture of common dedication to excellence in ministry. It is a culture of deep respect for the journey of ministerial formation. It is a culture that respects precedent and the wisdom of guiding policy, but does not hesitate to innovate when change is warranted.

A good example of such innovation is the recent battery of rule changes presented to the UUMA annual meeting for discussion in June

2007 and offered in January 2008 to the UUA Board of Trustees for approval. This final draft, created after consultation with UUMA leaders and the Board of Review, was approved by the UUA Board of Trustees at the January 2008 meeting.

Among these changes are streamlined procedures for disciplinary procedures, recognizing that the MFC is not a judicial body, but a credentialing body. The MFC can award, suspend, or remove, the privilege of fellowship as a UU minister recognized by our association of congregations. These functions all require the same kind of discernment. We are therefore broadening our options for reviewing a person's fellowship standing to include not only alleged ethical violations, but also questions of competence, with a new option available to us of requiring a period of probation.

Another important change removes the requirement for congregational affiliation for community ministers in final fellowship. This change recognizes that the MFC sees the privileges of final fellowship applying equally to all ministers.

Encouraging and presuming the best, but being prepared for the worst, is the ongoing task of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. I was honored to be asked to chair the committee and I pledge you my best efforts as we go forward together. •

—Wayne Arnason, MFC Chair

Liberal Religious Educator's Association Fall Conference

**Friday, October 24–Monday, October 27,
2008: Albuquerque, NM**

Come explore ways to strengthen our shared multigenerational ministry.

Theme Speaker Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker will share her vision of our UU congregations as integrative, holistic sites fostering wholeness and liberation.

She will be bringing her newest theological work to help us deepen our commitments in these areas.

Workshops led by UUA staff leaders and others will address services and resources for our multi-generational congregations, including ministry to and with youth, young adults, and elders.

Registration packets will be mailed this spring. For more information see www.uua.org/lreda. ●

UURMaPA Task Forces

As a new member of the Professional Leadership Coordinating Council, the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and

Partners Association (UURMaPA) has appointed two task forces to develop guidelines for right relations for our clergy and partner members.

We recognize our clergy members are in covenant with colleagues through the UUMA guidelines: one task force, with Andy Backus as chair, will draft language to affirm that relationship.

We have been repeatedly asked by partners of retired ministers about expectations for partners when ministers retire (when or how partners should continue activities in a congregation, whether partners should mirror the guidelines of retired ministers, and so on), but no guidelines presently exist for partners. A task force chaired by Barbara

Prairie, with Eleanor Richardson, Chris Lilly Backus, and Peter Haslund as members, has been appointed to draft a guideline statement for our partner members' consideration. The group meets in late March and welcomes suggestions for its work. Send thoughts to Barbara Prairie, bprairie@adelphia.net.

As he nears retirement, I want to thank Ralph Mero, on behalf of UURMaPA and its 850 members, for his heartfelt concern, thoughtful attention, and wise advocacy for the well-being of our members. His leadership has made a difference in the lives of so many. Thank you, Ralph! ●

—Nancy Doughty, UURMaPA
President



The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE UUA MINISTRY & PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP

Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Boston, MA Permit No. 8652

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
25 BEACON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02108