



# The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP • PRE-GA 2009

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## From the Director

**F**inally, spring has come to New England. It has been a long, cold winter here and the economic upheaval and intensity of change in the world (albeit much of it good) has made it seem unusually harsh. I doubt that peace, stability, and prosperity will bloom with the flowers as spring blends into summer, but I do see the buds of a greater sense of optimism just becoming visible on the barren stalks of our corporate social life. Of course, fierce thunderstorms can come with spring as well, and fragile buds are sometimes nipped. I pray for hearty buds and mild winds, and if not that, then strong hearts and brave souls to weather whatever comes next.

**The (electronic) Religious Leader.** As announced in the winter edition, this is the first all-electronic edition. If you are a minister, religious educator, church administrator, or musician and you received an email providing a link and letting you know this edition was on the web, we do have your up-to-date email address. If you did not receive that email (i.e. you just found it browsing around or a colleague sent you the link), please send updated information to [mbell@uua.org](mailto:mbell@uua.org). It will be increasingly important to keep us informed of your email address changes as more and more UUA publications (the congregational mailing, *InterConnections*, the UUA Directory) go all-electronic. I know it's hard for some of us (I'm kind of a Luddite, to tell you the truth), but it is the unstoppable direction of things. Remember, people once objected to telephones, too. Meanwhile, please check around to be sure your colleagues at work received the email. I know we can make it through this transition successfully. Thanks!

**Professional Leaders Coordinating Council (PLCC) discontinued.** The leaders of your professional organizations were notified in February that we are discontinuing the PLCC. It began in the winter of 2005 with a day-long meeting of the leaders of UUMA (Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association), LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), UUMN (Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network), and AUUA (Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators) in Boston. SCM (community ministers) was later added, and last year we also added UURMaPA (retired ministers) and the AIMs (interim ministers). At the 2007 meeting a mission statement was adopted: *to promote healthy partnerships among UU professional organizations and encourage the development of strong UU professional leadership teams.* Although the PLCC provided opportunities for the leaders of its member organizations to meet and discuss common concerns and organized joint workshops for GA, it just hadn't coalesced as had been intended.

However, the mission PLCC articulated in 2007 is crucial. Healthy partnerships and strong professional leadership teams are essential to the well-being of our congregations and the efficacy of our ministry in the larger community. How can MPL help facilitate this? Each of your professional organizations and MPL exist to serve you, the professional leaders of our Association, although from different vantage points. Our missions and goals diverge at some points and clearly converge at other points. PLCC was an attempt to create a forum for the convergence points. My hope is that we will find a more effective forum and I invite your input.

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**Vital partnerships are working.** Lest you think we're moving away from partnerships with our professional organizations, the opposite is actually the case. Dreaming Big, a collegial study group for potentially excellent large church senior ministers, is a collaboration between SMOLUUC (Senior Ministers of Large UU Congregations) and MPL with support from the Panel on Theological Education. SCM, UUMA, and MPL are working together on an affiliations' manual for community ministers and congregations. LREDA and the RECC are collaborating on the credentialing of religious educators. Beth Williams has been working with the UUMN to bring their credentialing program into the UUA and the new Worship and Music Resources Director (Erik Wikstrom) meets regularly with their Board. Jory Agate is working closely with CENTER as they move toward major revisions. So far this year I've met with the boards of UUMA, LREDA, and UURMaPA, been to the Diversity of Ministry and SMOLUUC retreats, and been in direct touch with the elected leaders of all the professional organizations. Our number one goal is serving you. To that end, our relationships with your organizations and leadership are essential.

**General Assembly is upon us.** We've mentioned that for financial reasons, there will be fewer MPL staff for fewer days in Salt Lake City. I was expecting fewer days myself, but as things have evolved, I will be there for all of the pre-GA and GA events. If you would like individual time with me, please call or email me and let's set a time. I look forward to seeing many of you.

The time of the Service of the Living Tradition has changed this year from Thursday to Friday evening, 8:30 p.m. Rev. Mary Harrington will deliver the sermon and Ken Ewan will lead the Singers of the Living Tradition Choir. The offering, as usual, will be taken for the Living Tradition Fund and is needed now more than ever. The first group of musicians being awarded Credentialed Music Leader Status will be honored this year. Photographs of all who are being recognized will be shown on the screens. I hope you will be there to remember our deceased colleagues, thank those retiring, and welcome those at the early stages of their careers.

**Transitions changes next year.** Many of you are aware that Rev. Dr. John Weston, Transitions Director, will retire in July 2010. So that ministers seeking new employment who might be interested in becoming the new Transitions Director can simultaneously be in search, I will have a job opening posted on the UUA website by mid-October and will decide by March. If you would like to speak with me about it, please feel free to call or find me at GA. John is also happy to be contacted. His shoes will be hard to fill.

I look forward to seeing you at your professional days and GA in June. Meanwhile, I hope your ministries are rich and rewarding and if they are not, that you are receiving the support you need. Please let us know what we can do to help. ●

—Beth Miller, Director of MPL

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## GA Appointments

If you would like an individual appointment with Rev. David Pettee at General Assembly please send an email to Chris May ([cmay@uua.org](mailto:cmay@uua.org)) or call (617) 948-6403. David's schedule is usually full by the time GA begins, so please make an appointment in advance. ●

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## RSCC News

The Ministerial Credentialing Office is gearing up for General Assembly regretfully without the presence of two key staff, Chris May, Administrator of the Ministerial Credentialing Office, and Kim Wilson, Internship Clearinghouse Coordinator, due to the UUA's efforts to be financially responsible given the current economic decline. While I will be attending General Assembly, I will not be present during Ministry Days this year.

Considerable time was spent during the last two months to address and plan for the significant projected budget shortfall for fiscal year 2010, which commences in July. The most significant financial impact has been on the RSCC (Regional Sub-Committee for Candidacy) system. Beginning July 1, 2009, all four RSCCs will be meeting only once a year, rather than twice, which has been their custom. The West RSCC and the Midwest RSCC

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will meet in October 2009 and then each fall thereafter, and the New England RSCC and Southeast RSCC will meet either March 2010 or April 2010 and then each spring thereafter.

While aspirants are still expected to see the RSCC in the region where they reside, aspirants from other RSCC regions can petition the Ministerial Credentialing Director to interview elsewhere. Unfortunately, there are no funds available to assist with any travel-related expenses for aspirant interviews. With this change in the frequency of RSCC meetings, there will be up to 48 RSCC interview slots available every six months, which actually represents an increase in the total number of RSCC interviews available per year.

The change in when the RSCC meetings are now being scheduled also impacts the expectation from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee that all interns were to have interviewed with an RSCC prior to beginning their internship in September 2009. The Committee has decided in response to relax this expectation for this fall. However, effective September 2010, all interns will be expected to have interviewed with an RSCC before commencing their internships. Those interns who have not seen an RSCC before commencing their internships will have to arrange to get a waiver from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for their internship to be accepted by the Committee. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions regarding any of these changes!

Finally, another change affecting aspirants preparing for their RSCC interviews is that an interview with a UUA District Staff person (or their designee) is no longer required. District staff people are anxious to find more creative ways to engage with aspirants and candidates beyond a one-time interview. Members of the RSCCs have genuinely appreciated the partnership efforts that the interview hoped to foster and encourage all aspirants to make a point to contact their District staff to find ways to get more involved!

As is my custom at General Assembly, I will make a few half-hour appointment slots available for anyone who would like to meet with me privately. You can arrange a meeting in advance by contacting Chris May, or visit the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group booth in the Exhibition Hall at General Assembly.

I hope to see you in Salt Lake City! ●

In the faith,  
David Pettee, Ministerial Credentialing Director

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## Internship Clearinghouse News

**With GA on the not-too-distant horizon**, it's time to let you know about what's planned regarding all things internship. On Thursday morning at 9:00, Rev. David Pettee will be facilitating the workshop, "Becoming a Teaching Congregation: The Role of the Intern Committee." The panel will include esteemed interns, supervisors, and intern committee chairs. We'll hear a variety of perspectives on best practices for internships and there will be ample time for questions and answers.

Due to scheduling constraints this year, regretfully, we will be foregoing the Intern Gathering. We encourage all current and upcoming interns to consider arranging an informal get-together for schmoozing and trading stories. Please be aware that due to budgetary constraints, I will not be attending GA this year. Anyone with internship-related questions or concerns are welcome to request an appointment with Rev. David Pettee. You can either arrange a meeting in advance by contacting him directly, or you can visit the Ministry and Professional Leadership booth in the Exhibition Hall to arrange a meeting time.

Lastly, a brief reminder: if you are a new intern or a supervisor and have not been in touch with me regarding your internship arrangements for 2009–2010, please let me know your plans as soon as you can. Thanks! ●

—Rev. Kim Wilson, Internship Clearinghouse Coordinator

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Religious Education (RE) and Music Leader Credentialing & Renaissance Programs—Beth Williams, [bethwilliams@uua.org](mailto:bethwilliams@uua.org), Paula Welling, [pwelling@uua.org](mailto:pwelling@uua.org)

## What's New in the Religious Education Credentialing Program

**M**any congratulations to the following religious educators who were awarded credentials by the RECC in April, 2009: Michele Grove—Credentialed Religious Educator Level, Master's Level; Jennifer McAdoo—Credentialed Religious Educator Level; Julie Porter—Credentialed Religious Educator, Master's Level; Amy Popp—Credentialed Religious Educator Level.

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:

Joyce Duncan, MD      Tandi Koerger, WA

RE Credentialing Brochures are now online. They can be found on the UUA website at [uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/religiouseducation/index.shtml](http://uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/religiouseducation/index.shtml). ●

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## RE Credentialing at General Assembly

**W**e will have exciting news to share at this year's LREDA Professional Day in Salt Lake City about the RE Credentialing program at this year's General Assembly. We will begin at LREDA Professional Day on Wednesday, June 24, at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center with two presentations, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Come and learn about the new ways the RE Credentialing program will be more accessible to those entering and completing the program.

If your congregation needs some help in understanding why the professional development of their DRE is critical to its health and well-being, be sure to encourage its delegates to attend the following workshop at GA: "Our Teaching Elders: DREs Deepening the Call," Saturday, June 27, 2009, 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m., Room 255F in the Salt Palace. Sponsored by the RECC, the primary facilitator is Connie Goodbread, Program Consultant of the Florida District–UUA. Connie will speak on the importance of congregational support to religious educators as they pursue the deepening of their call to religious education ministry. ●

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## Renaissance Program News

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

May 13–15, Curriculum, Thunder Bay, ON, Phil Strapp, phil@cuc.ca

June 5–7, Teacher Development, Houston, TX, Connie Nolan, swduua@aol.com

July 11–17, Multicultural, Ferry Beach, Adam Robersmith, revadamusg@comcast.net

August 20–22, Worship, Concord, NH, Benette Sherman, bsherman@uua.org

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

Roberta Altamari, MB

Martha Dallas, NNED

Joyce Genet, CB

Ellyn Lentz, STL

Carol Yerby, MB

Cindy Beal, CB

Janet Davis, CB

Jennifer Hamlin-Navias, STL

Carla Miller, JP

Laurel Burdon, CB

Joyce Duncan, JP

Chris Higgins, OM

Perry Montrose, MNY

Kathleen Carpenter, TJ

Jan Gartner, STL

Sadie Kahn-Greene, MB

Janet Price, HTLD

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## Music Leadership Credentialing

**On May 1, 2009 Rev. William G. Sinkford appointed** a new seven-member Music Leadership Credentialing Committee (MLCC). On May 7, 2009 the MLCC credentialed the following Unitarian Universalist musicians as Credentialed Music Leaders: Vicky Gordon, Phil Hildreth, Connie Jahrmarkt, Catherine Massey, Emma Jean Moulton, Beth Nakao, and Ruben Piirainen. We congratulate these musicians who are the first ever to be credentialed by the Unitarian Universalist Association, and know that our movement will be blessed by their music ministries.

As the Music Leadership Credentialing Program completes its third year of operation of credentialing for music leaders, and offers a program with cutting edge credentialing courses and other professional development opportunities, we welcome the following new candidates to the program for 2009:

Karen Bauman—Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, Duluth, MN

Linda Niemann—Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA

Shawn McCann—First Parish Church, Groton, MA

Jill Redding—Sepulveda Unitarian Universalist Society, North Hills, CA

Anne Watson Born—First Unitarian Society, Newton, MA

Renaissance Module Leader-in-Training process: Have you ever been so inspired by a Renaissance Module Leader that you have wondered how you might serve in that role? If you would like to be on the leader's list for a module that you have already taken, we invite you to apply for participation in our Renaissance Module Leader-in-Training process. The process requires submission of a current resume, a recommendation from district staff on group facilitation skills, and includes two rounds of successful evaluation as an assistant module leader. For more information about the process and how to apply, please contact Paula Welling at pwelling@uua.org or (617) 948-6418.

"New" Renaissance program policy: Renaissance module leaders will decide how a participant can get credit for the module when a participant is not able to be physically present for the entire module for whatever reason. This was often the practice but now it is policy. ●

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## UUA Interim DRE Training 2009

**Training will be held July 8–10, 2009** at the Eliot & Pickett (E&P) Houses—UUA, in Boston, MA.

Professional Religious Educators meet together for discussion and skill-building around common themes of the interim year. Training begins at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, July 8 and ends at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, July 10. Limited space is available. Priority is given to those in an Interim DRE position in 2009–2010. Application deadline is June 30, 2009

*Registration Fee:* \$400 and includes training program, Tuesday eve reception, lunch and dinner on Wednesday and Thursday, and lunch on Friday.

*Lodging Options* at E&P for Tuesday, July 7 through Thursday, July 9 (breakfast included) are \$255 for a single room and \$165 for a shared room.

For an application or more information, please contact Beth Williams at [bethwilliams@uua.org](mailto:bethwilliams@uua.org) or (617) 948-6417 or visit our web page at [uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/religiouseducation/107495.shtml](http://uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/religiouseducation/107495.shtml). ●

—Rev. Beth Williams, Religious Education and  
Music Leader Credentialing Director; Renaissance Program Co-Director

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Transitions—John Weston, [jweston@uua.org](mailto:jweston@uua.org), Emily Schwab, [eschwab@uua.org](mailto:eschwab@uua.org)

## A Walk in the Park

**S**ome years ago, during a weekend in New York, my wife Susan and I took in the Guggenheim at length. After what must have been two hours, making our way from picture to picture, advancing and pausing, advancing and pausing, we made a mad, albeit limping, dash for freedom and Fifth Avenue, swearing we would never go to another museum in our lives.

What do we do now? Dismissing the prospect of alternative instances of High Culture we hopped a southbound bus the twenty blocks to Central Park Zoo. There, we spent the next hour making our way . . . are you ready? . . . from exhibit to exhibit, advancing and pausing, advancing and pausing. And then, refreshed . . . refreshed! . . . we made it back to the Guggenheim, re-energized, for another hour of delight.

Time and again we have puzzled over what it was at the zoo that re-equipped us to face the pictures, until a piece in the New York Times “Science” section a few weeks ago cleared it up. Everyone is equipped with two neural networks for paying attention, we learned: one for examining phenomena closely, and another for receiving sense impressions spontaneously. Either one of these networks can be overtaxed, apparently, at which point exercising the other one provides relief. The randomness of a walk in a natural setting, where sense impressions come to one unbidden, is thus restorative to hardworking, over-focused people such as Susan and me—and, I daresay you.

I have long known that “a walk in the park” is good for me and for my outlook on life. Thus, I walk four to five miles a day in the city of Boston, and over the last few summers I have backpacked across the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire on the Appalachian Trail, with Maine to come this summer. But let me tell you about the other day in Boston.

I was walking through the Public Garden at about 7:30 on a chilly March morning when I glimpsed a critter running up a tree. It was black, three-and-a-half to four feet long, included a long, bushy tail of about a third its length, surefooted and agile as could be. An oversized domestic cat? An aerial dog?

Nope—it was a fisher, a.k.a. fisher cat, cousin to mink, weasel, and otter. Not a cat, doesn’t eat fish, but a fisher cat nonetheless, looking like the product of the interspecific union of a river otter and a black fox. What was he doing out of the North Woods, running up and down trees in the Public Garden? He was looking for a squirrel breakfast, most likely. In the process, he gave me ten minutes of the purest and most unalloyed pleasure I’ve had in some time—talk about spontaneously received sense impressions!

So, if you find yourself bent over and limping with the sheer psychic weight of attending to phenomena that someone, if not you yourself, feel it’s important for you to attend to, take a walk in the park. Who knows what will reveal itself to you? ●

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## Planning Ahead

In the light of the UUA’s difficult financial situation, I will be at GA for three nights only. The many meetings with colleagues that I usually keep at GA will have to be by phone this year instead. If such a meeting will serve you, please drop us an email at [transitions@uua.org](mailto:transitions@uua.org) with a few times when it would be convenient for you to keep a phone

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appointment in May or pre-GA June. We'll confirm one of them and call on schedule. Please note that I will be on sabbatical and vacation for all of July and the first two weeks of August. ●

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## Sightings

**From 1998 through 2007**, an average of 57 ministers were called annually. By mid-April the count on candidacies (not yet calls) was 43, with another five candidates named in the ensuing couple of months. In 2009, as I write, the count is down to 34, though again, I anticipate a handful of additions. Suffice it to say, the recession has bit deep into our congregations and our ministry.

Last year opportunities for interim ministry eased the pain: we have 104 interim ministries in process, in either their first or second year. However, while last year at this time we had some 65 congregational applications for interim ministries in by now, this year the list stands at a dispiriting 29. We thus continue to work with the Districts in providing consulting ministers to smaller congregations, and with larger congregations in meeting their need for transitional ministries in new positions and changing circumstances.

Takeaway #1: It gives me no pleasure to say that ministers in search of opportunities to serve should develop a Plan B to last for the duration of the recession and, employment being a lagging indicator, likely a year beyond that.

Takeaway #2: Ministers feeling themselves to be in the late stages of their career would do their colleagues, as well as their congregations, a very real service by refusing to be coaxed into longer than optimal service by their own understandable anxiety about finances. The old saw still holds true: We get to leave either too early or too late. Too early is better. ●

—John Weston, Transitions Director

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Ministerial Development—Jory Agate, [jagate@uua.org](mailto:jagate@uua.org), Margaret Montore, [mmontore@uua.org](mailto:mmontore@uua.org)

## Grants and Deadlines

**Continuing Education (CE) Grants**—This past fiscal year, funds for continuing education were exhausted before January 1. As a result, we are changing the way we distribute funds for the coming year. Applications will be accepted beginning June 1 and will be evaluated twice during the year—on July 15, 2009 and January 15, 2010. Funds will be granted in July for all applications received to that point and will continue as new applications are received until 50 percent of the funds are awarded. Any unfunded applications will be held until the January 15 deadline when the second round of grants will be awarded. Applications may continue to be submitted until funds are exhausted.

Awards will be given to ministers in the following order of preference:

- ministers who have received recommendations for continuing education from Review Team or the MFC
- ministers in Preliminary Fellowship
- ministers who did not receive funds in the prior year
- ministers without professional development funds
- ministers with low professional development funds

Beyond that, grants will be made first-come, first-served. Programs applied for must take place during the 2009–2010 fiscal year and should strengthen a minister's current ministry through skills development, spiritual deepening, and/or collegial connections.

To apply for CE funds, please submit a CE grant application form. To find the form, use the Google search on the UUA website ([uua.org](http://uua.org)) and search for “financial aid for continuing education.” The form for fiscal year 2009–2010 will be available beginning June 1. If you have questions or concerns regarding applying for CE funds, please be in touch with our office using the emails listed above.

**Adaptive Leadership: An Intensive Study Opportunity for Ministers**—Ministers and ministry students are invited to join us for four days of intensive reflection on the nature of adaptive leadership as it applies to ministry. Utilizing the book *Leadership on the Line* by Ronald Heifetz, we will examine ways to analyze our congregational systems, understand the contextual nature of ministerial authority, utilize the skills of appreciative inquiry, and support our congregations through adaptive learning. Facilitated by Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, Mass Bay District Executive, and jointly sponsored by the Mass Bay District, CENTER, and the Ministerial Development office, the seminar will take place at the UUA Chapel, 25 Beacon St. in Boston, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., August 10–13, 2009.

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A copy of the book and lunch will be provided for registrants. The cost of registration is \$350. A registration form is available on the Mass Bay District website at [www.mbdoua.org/uploads/SummerStudy2009.pdf](http://www.mbdoua.org/uploads/SummerStudy2009.pdf). Contact Terasa Cooley at (617) 816-7231 or Jory Agate at [jagate@uua.org](mailto:jagate@uua.org) or (617) 948-6453 with questions or email [mbd@mbdoua.org](mailto:mbd@mbdoua.org) for more information. If you require housing, you may contact the Pickett and Elliot Guest Houses at (617) 948-4679; however, the cost of housing is not included in the registration fee. Deadline for registration is June 1, 2009.

**Ministers in Preliminary Fellowship**—The summer deadline for applications for renewal of fellowship has changed. All paperwork must be submitted by July 15 to be eligible for review at the September Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) meeting. Late applications will not be accepted. Incomplete applications will be postponed until the December meeting of the MFC.

**First Year Ministers**—If you received Preliminary Fellowship this church year, 2008–2009, please keep an eye out this summer for a “Welcome to Ministry” packet from our office. You will also be invited to a special reception at GA, online workshops this fall describing the process for moving through Preliminary Fellowship, and the First Year Minister’s Seminar in Boston next April 7–9, 2010.

**Attention All Ministers**—Please be sure to update the UUA when your contact information changes, especially your email address. With the current economic crisis, the UUA is using less snail mail and more email for communication. If we have outdated information, you will miss out on important information.

**Regarding Deceased Ministers**—Please notify our office immediately when you learn about the death of one of our colleagues. ●

In faith,  
Jory Agate, Ministerial Development Director  
Margaret Montore, Ministerial Development Assistant

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Worship and Music Resources—Erik Walker Wikstrom, [ewikstrom@uua.org](mailto:ewikstrom@uua.org)

## WorshipWeb Continues to Evolve

Until recently the UUA’s **WorshipWeb** has been your online source for chalice lightings, readings, and even sermons that you can use as inspiration while weaving your weekly worship service. But what if you’re wondering why you’re doing the things you’re doing or how to create a dynamic worship service in the first place? **WorshipWeb** continues to evolve into your online source for all the resources you need to deepen the worship life of your congregation.

A worship theory section was recently added where you can find the complete 1983 Commission on Common Worship report *Leading Congregations in Worship*. You will also find the seminal 1976 essay by the Congregation of Abraxas, *On Worship*. Yet not all of the resources are historical in nature. There are links to various articles that have appeared in *InterConnections* over the years, as well as a chapter from the recently published Skinner House book *Worship that Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists* by Wayne Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz. And for those with a neopagan bent, we received permission to post a chapter from the Druid priest and scholar Isaac Bonewits’ book *Neopagan Rites: A Guide to Creating Public Rituals that Work*. There’s even a short list of the “Top Ten Things You Can Do to Improve Worship” for those who want something they can put to work right away.

The chalice lightings, and readings, and sermons, and benedictions are still there—and more are coming. But the **WorshipWeb** is evolving in exciting ways. Be part of that evolution by being in touch with me (and with each other!) and sharing your ideas, dreams, and resources. ●

—Erik Walker Wikstrom, Worship and Music Resources Director

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Office of Church Staff Finances/UU Health Plan Office—Richard Nugent, [rnugent@uua.org](mailto:rnugent@uua.org), Joyce Stewart (Retirement Plan), [jstewart@uua.org](mailto:jstewart@uua.org), Jim Sargent (Health Plan), [jsargent@uua.org](mailto:jsargent@uua.org), and Liz Oliver (Group Insurance), [loliver@uua.org](mailto:loliver@uua.org)

## The Path We Travel

**W**alking a labyrinth can be deeply insightful. The path, like life itself, is not linear, but full of unexpected turns. At times, we move close to the center only to find ourselves in the outermost ring. But getting to the center is not the “goal” of walking a labyrinth. Rather it’s the insights that arise as we walk the path—a fine metaphor for life itself. Often

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we need help to walk the path. I was reminded recently of this in a very concrete way. More than 30 colleagues gathered along the St. John's River in Jacksonville, FL to explore the path from active to retired ministry. This MPL-sponsored "pre-retirement" retreat was entitled, "Crafting a Culminating Chapter for Your Ministry." The setting, staff, and food were exceptional, but for the labyrinth. Apparently the local Bishop doesn't approve of labyrinths so eight heavy picnic tables were strategically placed to block the labyrinth's use. Fortunately, the center agreed that we could use the labyrinth if we moved the picnic tables ourselves. Working together, we removed the obstacle so that we could continue journeying down this symbolic path of life.

So too, working together, we are able to do so much to support each other. The Office of Church Staff Finances (OCSF) strives to walk together with administrators, ministers, musicians, religious educators, retirees and spouses, and other congregational staff to help them do their jobs better. OCSF manages the Health, Retirement, and Group Insurance programs and oversees many of the aid funds providing financial assistance to ministers, surviving spouses/partners, and other church staff. We also shepherd development of the Salary Guidelines and coordinate the District Compensation Consultants program. Even more varied are taxation issues (housing, stipends, professional expenses, and so on) and other compensation issues from religious professionals and congregational leaders. ●

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## Service Gratuity/Aid Funds

**With the Unitarian Service Pension Society**, our office manages the service gratuity program providing quarterly checks to ministers (and their survivors), aged 66 or older, with 20 or more years of service. A few months ago, we mailed checks totaling \$100,000 to more than 57 newer ministers to help reduce student loan debt. The average check was for \$1,754 against the average outstanding loan balance of \$49,163. The need is great. Our source of funding for this particular grant is the Living Tradition Fund. We also respond to individual needs as financial and other emergencies arise. We work closely with the Society for Ministerial Relief and the Massachusetts Congregational Charitable Society, which provide stipends to individuals with extremely limited retirement funds. If you are experiencing a financial emergency, or desire more information about our aid funds, please contact me at [rnugent@uua.org](mailto:rnugent@uua.org) or (617) 948-6456. ●

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## Health Plan Gets Non-Profit Approval from IRS

**The UUA Health Plan received its IRS approval** as a tax-exempt 501 (c) (9) organization, concluding a year of legal work, data gathering, and an extensive question and answer process with the IRS. OCSF wishes to thank everyone that participated in our extensive effort to assemble data on staffing, work hours, and insurance status—all critical to satisfying IRS non-discrimination rules. The data gathering highlighted another emerging reality: because we are so deeply involved in providing high-quality benefit plans for our congregations—life, dental, disability, health, and retirement—the need to collect and maintain accurate data about who we cover and the eligibility status of those who have not yet enrolled is essential to staying in right relationships with both the IRS and the Department of Labor. ●

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## Layoffs and Health Plan Eligibility

**OCSF is seeing a surge in requests to add coverage** either for spouses previously enrolled under another employer's plan or to enroll a congregational staff member losing coverage due to the spouse/partner getting laid off. There are two important things you should know:

- Loss of coverage is a qualifying event, which means we can add your staff member if they haven't been previously covered, and we can add their laid-off spouse/partner (as long as the employee is also covered).
- COBRA rules have changed temporarily—but significantly. For 2009, people who are laid off from a company subject to COBRA will get a 65 percent subsidy for up to nine months for the health insurance they had at the time of termination. If you have a staff person affected by a partner's involuntary termination, you should urge them to explore COBRA first—depending on your congregation's contribution structure, staying with COBRA could be a less expensive option.

If you have any questions, you can contact Health Plan Director Jim Sargent at [jsargent@uua.org](mailto:jsargent@uua.org) or (617) 948-6405, or Liz Oliver, Health Plan Coordinator, at [loliver@uua.org](mailto:loliver@uua.org) or (617) 948-6401. ●

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## Don't Go without Long Term Disability Insurance

**Sadly, every year several congregations are faced** with an employee becoming disabled due to a health problem or accident. Invariably, some of these employees were not enrolled in the UUA Long Term Disability program that provides 60 percent of pre-disability salary following 90 days if our insurance provider, MetLife, confirms disability. In these circumstances, congregations are faced with extraordinarily difficult decisions particularly with long-tenured employees. If you or others within your congregation are not covered, please consider enrolling in this important insurance program. ●

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## UU Organizations Retirement Plan

The **OCSF**, in cooperation with the Council of Church Staff Finances, the Compensation, Benefits, and Pension Committee, and key UUA staff are evaluating the proposals to manage our retirement plan submitted by Fidelity, our current manager, and TIAA-CREF. If a change is made, it is likely not to occur before January 2010, and only after extensive planning and notice to all participants to ensure a smooth transition. Contact Joyce Stewart at [jstewart@uua.org](mailto:jstewart@uua.org) or (617) 948-6421 for any retirement plan-related questions. ●

—Joyce Stewart, Director, UU Retirement Plans

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### Resources & Possibilities

## From the Youth Ministry Office

### Exciting Report on Youth Ministry—a Must-Read for All UUs!

In April, the UUA announced the release of the highly anticipated Youth Ministry Working Group Report. The report, available at [uua.org/youthministry](http://uua.org/youthministry), offers comprehensive recommendations for youth ministry at all levels of our Association—from the local congregation to the national headquarters staff. Its goal is a youth ministry that is spiritually deepening, faith developing, inclusive and anti-oppressive, and that provides multiple pathways for youth involvement in congregational life.

“This report brings into being the most exciting paradigm shift for our congregations in over a quarter century—not only for youth ministry, but for the whole of our shared Unitarian Universalist community,” said Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, Minister of Religious Education at the UU Church of Arlington, VA, and former UUA Trustee. “We are called to acknowledge and live out the reality that all people in our congregations—no matter their identity or age—are the church, and need to be involved in the whole ministry—serving and being served.”

The Youth Ministry Working Group was established by UUA President Bill Sinkford in 2008 to craft a new imagination and structure for UU Youth Ministry based on the findings of the Youth Ministry Consultation and the 2007 Youth Ministry Summit.

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## News from the UUMN

For congregations that wish to nurture, educate, and inspire their music leaders to create dynamic and transformative music ministries, the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network (UUMN) invites attendance at the 2009 Conference in Portland, OR: “The Care and Feeding of UU Musicians,” Tuesday, July 28 through Sunday, August 2. Musicians

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attending UUMN conferences report greater awareness of UU music and ideas, more repertoire knowledge, and a sense of collegiality and connectedness. Highlights include Rev. Jennifer Crow leading a Professional Development Day on “Musician as Pastor.” The headliner, clinician Rodney Eichenberger, is an internationally known choral conductor and consummate teacher. The UUMN has invited leaders from LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries), and ARE (Allies for Racial Equity) to participate in this conference. Between the plenaries, workshops, concerts, and worship services, attendees will leave refreshed for the upcoming year of music ministry. Scholarships covering the cost of registration are available. For more information, visit [uumn.org](http://uumn.org) or contact Keith Arnold, UUMN President, [keitharnold@jeffersonunitarian.org](mailto:keitharnold@jeffersonunitarian.org) or call (303) 279-5282, ext. 17. ●

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## Association Sunday

Through Association Sunday you are helping to Grow Our Faith. And, you are strengthening the connections that already exist among us, both as individual Unitarian Universalists and as an Association of Congregations. I am truly inspired by your generosity, and the creative ways you’ve affirmed our common bonds and purposes through your celebrations.

In central Pennsylvania, nearly 600 people from six area congregations joined together in song and celebration for a revival service on Association Sunday 2008, which featured music (from a choir, an orchestra, and a rock band), a dramatic presentation of a story for all ages (featuring a mime, the participation of ten UU ministers, and the UUA moderator, Gini Courter), and they even had a post-service BBQ lunch to which all were invited!

In southern Georgia, a cluster of congregations organized a pulpit exchange for their Association Sunday celebration. Ministers from the congregations involved traded congregations for a day, speaking at a neighbor’s Association Sunday service! This exchange rejuvenated members by exposing them to different UU perspectives—and showing that their ministers serve not one congregation, but our entire Unitarian Universalist movement.

Please join us in celebrating the third annual Association Sunday this fall, to help Grow Our Diversity. We hope that you, too, will find new ways to connect colleagues and congregations and help to prove, again, that we are better together. To register your participation, and for more information about these and other stories of generosity, visit [uua.org/associationsunday](http://uua.org/associationsunday). ●

In faith,  
Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa, Special Assistant to the President for Growth Funding

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## The Mosaic Project Report Is Now Available!

Many of our Unitarian Universalist communities and events include Youth and Young Adults of Color and/or Latina/o and Hispanic and Multiracial/Multiethnic descent. However, most communities are not prepared to fully meet their needs. The Mosaic Project report focuses on identifying these ministry needs and considers the role of congregations, districts, People of Color Communities, and the UUA.

“Younger UUs feel that the denomination has a responsibility to be intentionally inclusive. I feel particularly let down [in the] lack of interest in anti-oppression work. Perhaps there’s a way . . . to bring this to the forefront of all UU leaders’ minds.”—Asian/Pacific Island descent young adult.

“The thoroughness of the Mosaic report is impressive. Its clear steps will enable all congregations and our Association to start now, today, to reach out effectively and embrace youth and young adults of color, providing them with the loving support all young people need to achieve their full agency. By implementing the steps outlined in the Mosaic Project, [we] can truly be as Theodore Parker calls us to do, to ‘have a church for the whole person.’” —Rev. Archene Turner, Coordinator of Senior High Ministry, Cedar Lane UU

The Mosaic Project report is available at [uua.org/mosaic](http://uua.org/mosaic). Contact [mosaic@uua.org](mailto:mosaic@uua.org) for more information. ●

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## LREDA

The Liberal Religious Educators Association wants to see you at General Assembly! Please stop by our booth to learn more about how LREDA supports Religious Education professionals and the congregations they serve.

- Our Professional Day theme speaker will be Rev. Dr. Nancy Jay Crumbine, author of *Humility, Anger, and Grace*. Nancy is a Unitarian Universalist minister, professor at Dartmouth College, writer, actor, and public speaker well-

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known as a UU revivalist and religious education advocate. She will be joining us for the day on Wednesday, June 24, for: “Religious Education: The Heartbeat of Our Movement.” We invite you to bring your spirit, enthusiasm, and voices, as music and humor will permeate her talk.

- Our FAHS Lecture on Thursday will welcome the Rabbi Sandy Sasso! Well-known author, her talk is entitled, “Nurturing the Spiritual Imagination of Children.” All children have a spiritual life. Despite their desire to talk about God, religious education has often discouraged children from asking the big questions of life’s meaning. Discover ways to give our children the language to encourage the life of the spirit.
  - Suite Talks return on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday in the LREDA Hilton Suite!
- Learn more at [www.lreda.org](http://www.lreda.org). ●

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## News from Stewardship and Development

We are pleased to announce the President William G. Sinkford Fund! Having begun his service in June 2001, Rev. Sinkford will leave the Association with many profound and lasting gifts, including initiating national and regional marketing, the innovative Diversity of Ministry Initiative, and support for lay theological education and ministerial development programs.

To honor his legacy in the years to come, the Sinkford Fund will further Rev. Sinkford’s visions by providing scholarships for promising and passionate Unitarian Universalist ministerial students who identify as people of color, Latino/a, Hispanic, and multi-racial.

Visit [uua.org/giving/sinkford](http://uua.org/giving/sinkford) for more information. ●

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## Religious Education News from the Church of the Larger Fellowship

Check out RE Express Plus from the Church of the Larger Fellowship at [www.clfuu.org/re/express.html](http://www.clfuu.org/re/express.html). It has resources, plans, and projects to build your religious education program. Each month subscribers receive via email:

**CLiF Notes:** A Monthly Curriculum for Families and Small Groups. This comprehensive UU curriculum, delivered monthly via email, is engaging and easy to implement. It is designed for use by small, mixed-age groups of children, but can be adapted for different age levels.

**KidTalk Web page.** With links to activities and information about holidays around the world, featured people from UU history, social justice projects, spiritual practices, ways to practice our principles, and a forum for kids to ask questions on religious topics, KidTalk provides a way for kids to connect to UUism, and for parents and religious educators to glean great ideas for religious education.

**REsources for Living.** This column invites kids (and grown-ups) to reflect on matters such as how to celebrate holidays and what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist.

This is free to CLF members; and \$129 annually for non-members.

For more information visit [www.clfuu.org](http://www.clfuu.org) or call (617) 948-6150. ●

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## UURMaPA News

Not surprisingly our Board continues to hear stories about financial hardship for our retired members given the current economic conditions. Of our 530 retired clergy, some have been retired for over 25 years, while others retired just a year or two ago, so we know individual circumstances vary widely. We know that many of our members have seen their UUA pension fund accounts drop dramatically. We do not know how much this is affecting our member’s daily lives.

In order to understand the scope of the financial situation and how it affects our members, our Board has sent a survey to members about their financial circumstances. From the results of the survey we expect to gain a more complete understanding of the individual and collective financial situation faced by retired clergy and their families, which will assist us in advocacy for our members. ●

—Nancy Doughty, UURMaPA (Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association) Board President

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## From the Chair of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee met in Chicago from March 26 to 29, 2009. Rev. Bill Haney of Columbia, MO acted as a substitute member for Rev. Cynthia Kane. Rev. Greg Stewart had to miss the meeting due to illness. We were delighted to welcome Rev. Justin Schroeder and Rev. Amanda Poppei as liaisons to candidates. We interviewed twenty-three candidates with following results: 11 ones, 7 twos, 4 threes, and 1 four.

The Committee devoted a full day to its commitment to ongoing Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression and Multicultural Training, working with Paula Cole Jones of All Souls Church in Washington, DC. We learned about the innovative structures being put into place by churches, districts, and institutions to make AR-AO-MC integral to their institutional and community life.

In considering the current economic downturn, the MFC Executive began to consider new ways in which we could complete our responsibilities in shorter timeframes and in less expensive venues. We will meet in Boston twice next year, with the December meeting only to be held out of Boston, MA in San Francisco, CA.

We reviewed the learnings from the Summit on Excellence in Ministry. As a result of the summit, the MFC had been encouraged to undertake an evaluative review of our practices and goals. The Committee spent some time discussing whether this was something we felt able to undertake internally or whether it required outside eyes. We decided that such a review should be comprehensive rather than piecemeal and that it does require consultation and representation from outside the committee's membership. We have begun a conversation with the UUA Board of Trustees about how such a review can begin.

We said farewell to two departing committee members, both representatives of the UUA Board. Rev. Burton Carley is completing his Board service, and Jackie Shanti, while continuing on the Board, is moving on to other responsibilities. They have each brought extraordinary insight to our work from their long clerical and lay careers in our faith, and we will miss them. We have heard that the new Board appointees will be Rev. Jose Ballester, Trustee at Large, and David Friedman, Trustee from St. Lawrence District.

We also heard of the impending resignation of our MFC Administrator, Mohammed El-Khatib, to enable him to enter a graduate program at Georgetown University. Our emotions were very mixed, because Mohammed has done a fine job in this role and at the same time we are delighted to see him take this next step in his career.

We look forward to seeing ministers and candidates who would like to know more about the MFC and meet some of our members at our annual GA Workshop: Meet the MFC on Saturday, June 27 in the Program #4 slot, from 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. ●

—Wayne Arnason

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### Important 2010 Directory News

To reduce both our budget and our impact on the environment, the 2010 edition (available Oct. 2009) of the *UUA Directory* will reside solely online. To ensure your privacy, personal contact information will not be included in the Professional Leaders section. Under your name will be the name, address, and phone number of the congregation you serve (if you serve one), followed by an email contact code. One may contact you using this code through a secure email request service that will forward a message to you. You then have the option of contacting the person who is trying to reach you. Information in the other columns will be the same as in the past. Stay tuned for more detailed information.



## The Religious Leader

NEWS FROM THE UUA MINISTRY & PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF GROUP

MPL STAFF GROUP CONTACT INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT: [UUA.ORG/ABOUTUS/PROFESSIONALSTAFF/MINISTRYPROFESSIONAL/INDEX.PHP](http://UUA.ORG/ABOUTUS/PROFESSIONALSTAFF/MINISTRYPROFESSIONAL/INDEX.PHP)

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